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Continuing the Legacy: Communication and Healing Among Holocaust Survivors, Their Children and Grandchildren

Holly Renee Levin Cohn

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination
Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
March 2000

Referee, Professor Michael A. Meyer

This Thesis is dedicated to my grandpa Jack Stein (*Yankel Sztein*)

who reminds me all the time that tomorrow will be a better day

and to the memory of my grandma Ann Stein (*Hancha Terkeltaub*)

who inspired my interest in knowing more about my history.

L'dor V'dor, from generation to generation,

may the survivors always be for a blessing

and their experience remembered.

2000

MANY THANKS

First and foremost, I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Michael A. Meyer, for believing in me and sticking by me. His patience and understanding was appreciated. His guidance has led me to a work for which I am very proud and hope to develop further one day. His feedback helped to sculpt my writing and strengthen my ability to effectively communicate my thoughts.

I wish to thank Ephraim and Stephanie Kaye, and Kathryn Berman of the Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies for emphasizing the magnitude and importance of such a project and the worthiness of devoting an extra year to writing and research, for I have the rest of my life to be a rabbi. This year was truly a gift.

I wish to express gratitude to all the grandchildren who spoke with me and gave of their time. Their insight and honesty truly made this thesis what it is. I also want to thank members of the staff of the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust Studies and Gail Mermelstein, President of the Combined Generations of the Holocaust of Greater Cincinnati who led me to the many grandchildren I interviewed.

To those who read drafts of this thesis - Sam Cohn, Susan Conforti, Marilyn Levin, and Gail Mermelstein - whose time and comments were sincerely appreciated and very beneficial, I thank you. Finally, I wish to thank Sam Cohn, my husband, for sticking by me through the entire process and for giving me the space that I needed to succeed. I could not have completed this thesis without his encouragement and support.

SUMMARY

The following thesis explores intergenerational relationships between Holocaust Survivors, their children, and their grandchildren. Its focus is the transmission of a legacy from one generation to the next: what is embraced and what is discarded? It traces the Holocaust family from liberation to the present day, looking at everything from how survivors were received when they first arrived in the United States and what their needs were to recognizing the needs of the third generation today and their desire to feel included in this powerful legacy of remembrance.

It documents the silence within the survivor community when no one wanted to listen. It describes reasons for marriage and having children, bonds of friendship among survivors, making a living and giving back to the community. It shows that most survivors did not give up on life when the rest of society thought that they would. Today, we know the silence has been broken. We have heard the stories told from the lips of eyewitnesses, we can read memoirs, and we can watch documentaries to hear what happened. Many survivors are still involved in Jewish life despite what being Jewish meant during the Holocaust. This thesis explores all of these aspects of life including pathology. Even though renewal of life has occurred for the survivors, it is not without scars.

The second generation is the bridge. They are directly affected by their parents' experience, which is revealed in their family life, psychological tendencies and values, the way that they express their Jewish identity, their involvement in Holocaust organizations and in teaching their children. Their lives are molded by a time they did not experience directly. There are many factors that affect the transmission of this legacy to the second generation, which is explained within the context of this thesis.

Finally, the crux of the thesis is the third generation. Based on original research, 24 face-to-face interviews, the legacy unfolds. This generation does grapple with their identity in connection with their grandparents' experience, some more than others. They do want to preserve this legacy that has been handed down to them and most wish to maintain ties with the Jewish community because of a sense of obligation to their grandparents. This is a legacy in transition as the third generation turns despair into pride. Many have learned lessons and developed values with their grandparents' guidance and by watching them. This thesis shares these lessons and values. The lens of the third generation is used to understand the transmission of trauma and the healing that accompanies living life and sharing experience.

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INTRODUCTION

You must look at them carefully. Their appearance is deceptive...They look like the others. They eat, they laugh, they love. They seek money, fame, love, like the others. But it isn't true. Anyone who has seen what they have seen cannot be like the others, cannot laugh, love, pray, bargain, suffer, have fun or forget like the others. You have to watch them carefully when they pass by an innocent-looking smokestack, or when they lift a piece of bread to their mouths. Something in them shudders and makes you turn your eyes away. These people have been amputated: they haven't lost their legs or eyes but their will and their taste for life. The thing that they have seen will come to the surface again sooner or later.

- Elie Wiesel

Holocaust survivors were affected and still are affected by their war-time experience and their post-war journey. Even the next generation, their children, have had their lives touched by a time they did not live through. The children of Holocaust survivors did, however, live through their parents' nightmares, the stories, and for some, the unbreakable and unbearable silence. The survivors' Holocaust experience shapes family dynamics as it flows from their memory to the minds and imagination of future generations including the grandchildren.

Surviving the trauma and living with its consequences becomes a family legacy, a shared history passed from one generation to the next. Now, as the next link in the chain continues to learn and vows to remember their grandparents' fight for freedom it is important to understand the intergenerational relationships. It is important to know how each generation learned of its personal connection to the Holocaust and how this experience manifests itself within the members of the second and third generation. The

survivors, for the most part, were alone when they arrived in America. They had no guidance counselors to aid them through their suffering and pain. They had no one to chart their next steps or show them how to live with their new found freedom in a strange land with a different language and foreign customs. However, even if they had been dealt with appropriately there would surely have been repercussions after such a traumatic experience. Transmission of trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are very real and legitimate consequences of such an experience as the Holocaust.

> The essential feature of PTSD is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person: or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.[1]

In her book, *Children of the Holocaust*, Helen Epstein recalls a lecture she heard at Stanford University in 1977. The speaker was an Israeli psychiatrist who was on sabbatical. He said, "The trauma of the Nazi concentration camps is re-experienced in the lives of the children and even the grandchildren of camp survivors."[2] The parent-child relationship is critical because even when transmission is not recognized the effects are felt. In this thesis not only will the survivor generation's interaction with

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[1] Post traumatic Stress Disorder: Diagnostic Features, DSMIV (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* IV)

[2] Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 218

their children, the second generation, be studied, but grandparent - grandchild relationships will be explored as well.

As Yael Danieli, noted clinical psychologist and co-founder and director of the Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and their Children, points out, "Awareness of transmitted intergenerational processes will inhibit transmission of pathology to succeeding generations."[3] "The task," as psychotherapist Florabel Kinsler explains, "is to reverse the stance that being a survivor is synonymous with victimization and to promote the view that being a child or grandchild of survivors is both empowering and honorable."[4] This thesis will describe the experience of the survivor generation, their children, and their grandchildren, from liberation to the present day, from suffering to healing. Chapters one and two, the survivor generation and their children respectively, will be based primarily on secondary sources, some memoirs, and some original writing, both fiction and autobiographical. The third generation, chapter three, is based on original research, interviews I conducted, face-to-face, one grandchild to another.

I used personal contacts and my networking ability to contact interviewees. In Cincinnati, I ran a brief statement about my thesis in the newsletter of the Combined Generations of the Holocaust of Greater

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[3] Yael Danieli Ph.D., "As Survivors Age: Part 1", *Clinical Quarterly* (Winter 1994), p. 5
[4] Florabel Kinsler, Group Services for Holocaust Survivors and Their Families, p. 62 - 63

Cincinnati. I also spoke with the current president of the organization, Gail Mermelstein, for contacts. In Dallas, I ran a similar statement in the newsletter of the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust Studies. I spoke with various people at the center. However, they are very protective of the confidentiality of survivors' phone numbers so my grandfather's phone book became my greatest resource in Dallas. Two grandchildren are from Minneapolis. I met them by chance. I was explaining my thesis to a congregant in Hopkins, Minnesota, only to find out that she was a child of survivors and had two children who fit my age requirement of 13 years old or older.

This thesis grew from a personal interest and curiosity. I have always felt connected to the side of my family that survived the Holocaust. Academically, I have studied the subject intensely at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Hebrew University, and Yad Vashem. Holocaust studies is my passion. I feel that I honor my grandmother's memory when I study the Holocaust, and I show respect to my grandfather and my many surrogate grandparents, their friends who are all survivors, when I learn from them and listen to their stories.

I do not remember how old I was, or who first told me about the Holocaust. It was just a part of my life, part of my familial legacy, my Jewish legacy. I am a third generation Holocaust survivor. This is a large part of my identity as a person and as a Jew. I am proud of my heritage and

do find myself empowered and honored by my grandparents. I do not feel better than anyone else (of which I have been accused), but I do feel different. I wish this were not a part of my heritage; I wish my family were not personally linked to such a dark time in Jewish history; I wish so many members of my family were not gassed and murdered, but it happened and it is my reality and my grandfather's reality each night when he goes to sleep and when he wakes up in the morning. The memories cannot be erased, and they seem to be emerging more frequently as he ages and as his health declines.

My maternal grandparents survived the horror. They met at a train station in Czestochowa, Poland in 1945 and were married soon after. As a child, I remember the number on my grandmother's arm. I remember times when she would be asked about her past, begin to speak and then break into tears. I also remember her strength in helping with the initial development of the Holocaust center in Dallas, Texas, but, at the same time, I remember her frailty and vulnerability. When we would enter the center with my grandmother, we always entered through a side door because the main entrance was an actual box car. I remember my Great Uncle Harold having a hard time sleeping in a bunk bed when we were visiting some other family members who had just not thought about where they had arranged for him to sleep.

For Holocaust survivors their wartime experience did not end with the German surrender in 1945. Each and every day they live with the memories and reminders of what was. For some these memories are more vivid than for others, but no matter if they discuss their experience or suppress it, it is believed that the effects of trauma are passed from one generation to the next. Some scholars estimate that this phenomenon of the transferal of trauma will continue to the sixth generation. According to Dr. Robert Sapolsky, "In many species stress hormones cross the placental barrier in the third trimester of pregnancy." He further advises, "Such stress hormones may reappear over six generations, although the genetic material is not itself altered."[5] The victim is not the only one who feels the pain of his suffering. Whether or not transmission of such a legacy continues to the sixth generation among Holocaust survivor families we can not yet measure; at this moment we can only understand as far as the third generation.

There has been research done regarding the survivor generation. The following questions have been explored: What was life like before the war? What did they experience during the war? What are the effects of those experiences on their psyche today, on how they raised their children; and how have they rebuilt a life for themselves and their families? As they age, how does their Holocaust experience manifest itself in their daily lives?

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[5] Ibid. p. 61

In addition, much has been written about the second generation. Published materials include psychological perspectives as well as personal testimony, stories, and poetry. Helen Epstein was one of the early writers to focus her attention on this group with her book, *Children of the Holocaust*. Abraham J. Peck also wrote on this subject, publishing *The Children of Holocaust Survivors* in 1983. Riveting books receiving much praise and criticism are *Maus I & II* by Art Spiegelman, himself a child of survivors. In all of the literature, there is clear evidence that the second generation, the children of Holocaust survivors, is affected by their parents' trauma.

This regeneration of life began when the survivors had their own children and is continuing through the grandchildren (I will refer to this group as the third generation). Of this generation we know much less. What effect have the survivors had on their grandchildren and vice versa? What is the second generation's role in this exchange? Do children of survivors view their parents differently after having children of their own? Does proximity to the grandparents, the survivors, affect these intergenerational relationships? How is this Holocaust legacy transferred to the third generation? What traits are passed from one generation to the next that can be attributed to survivor trauma? The third generation is fortunate to be living when survivors are more freely discussing their experiences, for it has only been in the past ten to fifteen years that Holocaust survivors have

so widely and publicly shared their stories. Personal testimony prior to 1980 exists, but is rare.

There are many profiles of survivor lifestyles and patterns as well as descriptions of second generation characteristics. This is well documented and has been written about and studied at length through the lens of oral history and psychiatric charts and records. Both Aaron Hass and Yael Danieli have done extensive research in this area as have other noted psychologists (see bibliography). This is not the case with the third generation. The third generation, as a group is now reaching adulthood and having families of their own. Yet published information focuses only on Israeli and German society; therefore, I wish to explore the experience of the third generation living in the United States. I will use the Israeli and German research only for guidance because of the impact environment has on one's psyche. A 20 year old in Israel has had much different life experiences than a 20 year old living in the United States. Most third generation survivors living in the United States have never experienced the effects of war or had to learn to use a gun and carry one at all times. Likewise, someone in Germany, surrounded with daily reminders of the culture in which their grandparents were enslaved and abused, geography and language, experiences life differently. The third generation, living in the United States, is not surrounded by a language and culture whose ancestors are guilty of the atrocities that victimized their families.

Unlike the published material which focuses on family dynamics and interviews of members of all generations, I will structure this aspect of my thesis around only the third generation. I wish to use their lens of perception for analysis. Background information on the survivor generation and the second generation will serve as building blocks toward understanding the third. Each generation plays an active role in the family dynamic and in altering past feelings. As one writer who has studied three generations of Holocaust survivors in Israel and Germany wrote, "Our experience has shown accordingly that the way the first generation interacts with the second and third generation can change their own perspective on the past."[6] She compiled a number of narrative-biographical interviews with at least one member of each generation involved. Dan Bar-On also used this interactive-intergenerational method when studying the structure in Israeli families. I chose to isolate the third generation in order to best understand this group's reflections on their grandparents and their sense of what such a family legacy brings to their lives. I wanted them to feel uninhibited and free to talk openly without feeling the need to protect feelings or censor their opinions.

In this thesis, I look closely at the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors who chose to settle in the United States and Canada following

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[6] Gabriele Rosenthal, ed., *The Holocaust in Three Generations: Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime* (London and Washington: Cassell, 1998), p. 2

World War II exploring issues of Jewish identity, religious observance, and the third generation's connection with the Jewish community. After exploring the effects the Holocaust survivors' experience has had on their children and grandchildren, I further explore the perception the third generation has of the survivor generation and second generation. Finally, I share lessons learned by the third generation from their survivor grandparents. How does this legacy shape the third generation's outlook on life in general? Do they plan to teach the next generation? Will they support organizations that teach and perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust?

Aaron Hass points out, "The third generation, one generation removed from the survivor, provides a more comfortable and, in some cases, more receptive and interested audience. Survivors can relax somewhat, therefore, as they and their stories are assured of continuity."[7] I have experienced this to be true. I want to know if other grandchildren have, too. What motivates the survivor to open up? The third generation sheds some light on the subject, though no absolute conclusive evidence is revealed because of the small size of the group interviewed. What is apparent, however, is that these families do experience moments of healing. The wounds do not completely

[7] Aaron Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 162

disappear but they do close, leaving scars in their place. The sense of suffering is minimized and the pain less frequent.

Healing is possible. As Rabbi Steven L. Jacobs writes, "Though the wound itself continues to fester - hardly a day goes by without the appearance of a new book, newspaper article, radio or television comment - survivors and their offspring, as well as those indirectly affected, continue to experience healing." He adds that each new generation furthers the healing process. "Indeed, the very fact that there are offspring of those who experienced the unspeakable is, in and of itself, one measure of that healing. That this second generation in turn chooses to have children furthers that healing, and may very well be the loudest response to Adolf Hitler's quest for a world *Judenrein* (Jew free)."[8] The third generation, overwhelmingly will not forget. They will honor their grandparents' memories, learning the stories so that the next generation will know what happened to the Jews during World War II. To them it is not simply a page in history books; their family was affected personally. The stories of pain, the stories of courage, the stories of triumph and despair will not die with the last survivors but will live on in the grandchildren. Open communication brings healing over time.

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[8] Steven L. Jacobs, *Rethinking Jewish Faith: The Child of a Survivor Responds* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 1

THE PRICE OF LIBERATION

A survivor will go to a party and feel alone.
A survivor appears quiet but is screaming within.
A survivor will make large weddings, with many guests,
but the ones she wants most will never arrive.
A survivor will go to a funeral and cry, not for the
deceased but for the ones that were never buried.
A survivor will reach out to you but not let you get
close, for you remind her of what she could have been,
but will never be.
A survivor is at ease with other survivors.
- Cecilie Klein, survivor[9]

In the spring of 1945 liberation meant freedom for those who lived through Nazi persecution. While these people now had a chance at a new life, a chance for a renewal of body, mind, and spirit, they would remain scarred, some externally, most, if not all, internally. It is important to understand that their freedom, after all they had seen and experienced, was not without loss. Liberation did not mean an end to the Nazi atrocities.[10] So, what then did this new-found freedom mean? Many were the sole survivors of their families. Many had nowhere to go, no home to which they could return, no food to eat, and no means for a career. "I was new born," survivors often said when describing the condition they found themselves in after the liberation. This meant that they were, of course, happy to be alive, and that they were ready to take up the life that had been given back to them. But the phrase had a darker meaning, too, as survivors used it. It

[9] William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 229
[10] Aaron Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 3

suggested that those who had been left alive after the Holocaust were not only without a place in the world and without possessions, but also had no past life; the roots and ties to that life - mothers and fathers, husbands, wives, children and holdings - had been erased entirely. "It was as though I had not come from anywhere."[11]

> The problem was adjusting to freedom. And about that time I began to feel this incredible hatred for Germany. It became apparent to me how much I lost as far as youth, life, education, not to speak of family and material losses. It was life itself they had taken from me. [Jack Goldman][12]

> My dream was to return to life the way it had been before the war: our sunny apartment, our close family, my friends, a navy silk dress with a full, sweeping skirt. Five years ago, I had been thinking of parties, dances, boys, going to art school. Instead of parties - mass murders. Instead of dances - Mengele's selections. Instead of art school - the art of death, dehumanization, and despair.[13]

Was this really a time of liberation? With so many changes and such a high degree of loss, what were survivors to do? In one survivor's words, "The Jews suddenly faced themselves. Where now? Where to? For them things were not so simple. To go back to Poland? To Hungary? To streets empty of Jews. To wander in those lands, lonely, homeless, always with the tragedy before one's eyes...and to meet again a former Gentile neighbor who would open his eyes wide and smile, remarking with double meaning, 'What Yankel! You are still alive?'"[14]

> Here I was free, but I had no parents, no money, nothing. What do you do when you are free? There was nobody to

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[11] Hass, p. 87
[12] Sylvia Rothchild, ed., *Voices From the Holocaust* (New York: A Meridian Book, 1981), p. 373
[13] Lucille Eichengreen, *From Ashes to Life: My Memories of the Holocaust* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1994), p. 130
[14] Abraham Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America* (New York & London: Garland, 1992), p. 250

> give us some advice when we came out of the concentration camp. The Americans gave us chewing gum. But I was fifteen. Why didn't they put us to a school or to a home?...I was a child...You missed your mother, your father....War was over but it's never been over. Even after the war, I didn't understand why I couldn't live in my home, why other people had everything what belonged to my family.[15]

> Even though liberation seemed to promise a return to a normal life, it did not bring happiness. Instead, it revived feelings that had long been numbed by the daily struggle for both mental and physical survival - feelings of guilt, loneliness, and utter devastation. The reality of liberation was so different from what I had imagined. I had dreamed of a great party, with fanfare, music, dancing, and fireworks. There was, however, only renewed sorrow for the dead and little hope for the living. Liberation had come quietly, and it had brought with it the realization that thousands of us had not lived to see this moment. Many of us would not live even until the end of the week.[16]

Literally the survivors were a free people, they could move about as free people, but psychologically and physically they would be forever held captive by the Holocaust. "While life was safer and certainly more bearable, adaptation was by no means easy."[17] Their wartime experience, whether they were in a concentration camp, a ghetto, in hiding, passing as a Gentile, on the run, or fighting with the partisans, impacted their lives in ways that would continue into their future. "The survivor was disconnected from a personal and generational history. An identity was dismembered."[18] A new identity took shape from the fragments. This life altering experience, this identity constructed out of the ashes of the Holocaust, would become a

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[15] Hass, p.100
[16] Eichengreen, p. 126
[17] Martin S. Bergman, and Milton E. Jucovy, eds. *Generations of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.5
[18] Hass, p. 106

part of their legacy and the legacy of their future generations. Even today, Dr. Aaron Hass believes, "the orientation of many survivors is never simply to the present. Their perspective always widens to include previous losses."[19]

> I guess I'm always searching for ways of understanding society and values. I lost the people who created me and the world I was created for, and America took my life over. The influences of my parents remained with me, however. [Marika Frank Abrams][20]

In order to understand this legacy, it is important to understand the various characteristics of Holocaust survivors - a very heterogeneous group, but one that stays together. Though I will make generalizations, it is important to remember that simply because one is a survivor does not mean that he or she encompasses all, or even any, of what is described. This was due to a variety of factors: the nature and degree of persecution one had experienced, the presence of other surviving family members, a prewar personality predisposition, a greater ability to deny sadness, a more supportive postwar milieu, a personal meaning ascribed to one's survival...the bottom line is that each survivor must be treated as an individual and there is no easy answer or formula for describing every survivor.[21] Even the definition of who is a Holocaust survivor, based on what year they left Germany or other places of Nazi occupation, varies. Some will say that a person who left in the 1933 - 1941 is a survivor

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[19] ibid., p. 76
[20] Rothchild, p. 320
[21] Hass, p.101

especially if they left their family behind. Others will argue that these people are refugees and survivors are those who left after 1945 having survived the labor camps, concentration camps, in hiding, or on the run. These factors are important to realize when relating to and trying to understanding the Holocaust survivor regarding other issues as well. The details are important to know. If one was in a concentration camp, which camp?, for how long?, what was his or her job?, did they know other people? This information does influence a survivor's attitude toward life after the war. Knowing whether or not he or she was helped and emotionally supported by another, thus allowing him to retain a faith in humanity does make a difference. These people were treated as less than human, both emotionally and physically. After liberation some were still taken advantage of by strangers and even family and friends.

"During these first years after the war, the energies of the survivors were absorbed in finding their way back to some semblance of conventional life."[22] Twenty-five percent of survivors came to the United States, 140,000 people.[23] Most were between the ages of seventeen and thirty-nine for this was the age group most likely to survive the labor and concentration camps.[24] Some lived in Displaced Persons (DP) camps where they were neither free nor imprisoned. Many had few options of where to go.[25]

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[22] Bergman & Jucovy, p. 5
[23] Hass, p. 16
[24] Helmreich, p.25
[25] ibid., p.21

Immigration was not easy. Many were not up to the challenge of immigrating to Palestine; life there was hard, Great Britain set many restrictions, and survivors were tired and lacked the energy to be pioneers and fight authority.

> In 1948 we considered going there to live, but after the camp I didn't feel strong enough to expose myself to a war again. And I was afraid of going and having to leave. There is a curse in the Talmud for anyone who leaves Israel, and I didn't want to be involved in such a possibility. But I hope to go there to retire when all our children are settled. [Bernard Brown][26]

The United States also had restrictions on immigration. If one did decide to immigrate, added to their trauma was the need to adjust to a new environment, new customs, and a different language.[27] As mentioned earlier, many could not return to their home, if they even had a home to which to return. The United States, while it did allow for some immigration, had to adjust its refugee policy following the war.

> The majority of the DPs entered the United States after June 1948. Until then, perhaps 50,000 Jewish refugees had passed through U.S. customs officials. Eligibility was based on a quota system for each country. On June 2, 1948, however, the Senate by a vote of 63-13, passed the Displaced Persons Act, allowing up to 200,000 DPs, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to gain admission over the next two years. Shortly thereafter, the House passed a similar measure by an equally lopsided margin or 289-91. The final version increased the number to be admitted to 205,000 and also granted permanent residence to 15,000 DPs who were already in the United States on a temporary basis.[28]

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[26] Rothchild, p. 337
[27] Paul Chodoff, M.D., "Psychiatric Effects of the Nazi Oppression", paper presented at the American Psychiatric Association Divisional Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, November 21, 1964, p. 6
[28] Helmreich, p. 46

However, there were lots of provisions that favored Christians over Jews. One provision was that one had to be living in Germany, Austria, or Italy prior to Dec. 22, 1945. Many Jews who entered these countries after the 1946 pogroms in Poland were not eligible . Also, preference was given to applicants from Baltic countries, and those involved in agricultural pursuits, most of whom were not Jewish.[29] Finally, on June 16, 1950, Truman signed into law an amended version of the 1948 Displaced Persons Act, expanding to 415,744 the number of DPs to be admitted. In addition, the bill abolished the previous provisions which favored Christians over Jews. [30]

Welcome to America

Leaving Europe was both exciting and the ultimate goal of so many, yet it was also difficult, especially for those who had developed friendships during the war. One survivor who was so desperate to leave the DP camp recalls her feelings on the day of her departure. Assuming that she would feel release, rebirth, and exhilaration, she found other feelings weighing on her heart as well:

> Instead, I discovered to my surprise that it was difficult, almost painful, to leave the friends I had made over the past four years. We had, after all, shared experiences that few others could ever understand: the camps, the loss of loved ones, the death, the hunger, the beatings, the dehumanization, and finally, liberation.[31]

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[29] ibid., p. 47
[30] ibid., p. 50
[31] Eichengreen, p. 160 - 161

Once survivors made it to America, they faced many obstacles.

> It was a hard time, a time of adjustment to the language and the food, to the way of life and the mentality of the people. And our bodies gave out after we arrived here. A lot of time was wasted in sickness the first two years. I had all these pains but they couldn't find anything wrong physically. It was just probably from all the pressures and hardships we had gone through before. [Lydia Brown] [32]

Their adjustment often reflected how they were greeted upon arrival. Many arrived penniless, physically and emotionally drained, and with personal losses that words and numbers could not describe.[33] They had few expectations for they were not taught about American culture before their arrival. Their only knowledge was based on what little prewar information they might have had.[34] Their first exposure to Americans was crucial. For some that began with the compassion of the American soldiers who liberated the camps. Some survivors felt intense loyalty and even a sense of patriotism for the United States shaped by this experience alone.[35] One thirteen year old refugee remembers her voyage to America claiming, "That boat trip was the physical and emotional and cultural transition from darkness into light."[36] For others, it was stepping onto American soil for the first time. First impressions, however, were not always positive.

> Hella and I clutched each other's hands tighter and tighter, communicating nonverbally our ever-increasing disappointment. The shabbily dressed people reminded us too much of war-torn Europe. Only the hope that we were observing the worst kept us from jumping off the bus and

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[32] Rothchild, p. 340
[33] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 251
[34] Helmreich, p. 32
[35] ibid., p. 20
[36] ibid., p.21

> becoming stowaways on the first ship destined to go back to the old continent.[37]

Each adjusted in his or her own way, having chosen to come to the United States for a variety of reasons. Some had family in the United States, family that was still alive simply because they had come to America before the war. Others, as mentioned earlier, chose to come to America based on a perception that life would be easier than it would fighting a war and being a pioneer in Palestine. Finally, the size, diversity, and separation of church and state "offered the promise of being able to fit in, to disappear, and, hopefully, to put the past behind them."[38]

When the immigrants arrived, there were many different organizations waiting to greet them. Some helped with dollars, others with temporary housing, transportation, and a brief orientation to the city the survivors would call their new home. The Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) and the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) were specific Jewish organizations ready and eager to help those in need. The U. S. Committee for Refugees assisted children in their resettlement. The National Catholic Welfare Conference was organized to help Christian DPs and the Traveler's Aid Society helped all refugees. There were also organizations that offered assistance while the survivors were still in Europe such as the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Finally the Jewish DPs

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[37] Georgia M. Gabor, *My Destiny: Survivor of the Holocaust* (Arcadia, CA: Amen Publishing Company, 1981) p. 1: Book 2

[38] Helmreich, p. 26

were offered assistance by the United Service for New Americans (USNA).[39] These groups helped initially but then often retreated when it came to continued support and guidance. Some were better than others at attempting to understand and assist the survivors.

Many survivors expected to find love and sympathy, especially those who were meeting relatives in the United States, but this was not always the case. Often among family members there were cultural clashes and generational differences. For some it was difficult to accept relatives they had never met.

> Our papers were arranged by relatives in New York who came at the turn of the century. We sensed in our correspondence with them that they were willing to help us but didn't want any emotional involvement with us. We were the "poor remnants of the family after the Holocaust." They were sorry for us but not interested in us. [Maurice Diamant][40]

These feelings were confirmed upon arrival to New York.

> We came to New York in a fog so thick we never saw the Statue of Liberty. I remember calling our relatives and finding that they were not interested in meeting us. [Maurice Diamant][41]

When survivors arrived, if they were not greeted by family or friends, they were welcomed by the port and reception workers and various agencies. They would then proceed to a screening interview which would determine where they would be sent to live. If they already had a destination they would receive a brief orientation and then be sent on their

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[39] ibid., p. 29-30
[40] Rothchild, p. 354
[41] ibid., p. 355

way by train. Once they arrived at their destination, they were assisted by local agencies. The purpose of these agencies was to help new arrivals with their day-to-day affairs such as finding an apartment. They would also provide them with an allowance for furniture, food, and clothing. Some attempted to find employment for them. Many of the survivors chose to enroll in night school to learn English and basic facts about their new country: where to go for medical services, how to ask a policeman for directions, and other basic survival skills. In addition, they needed to pass their citizenship exam. In large cities Jewish family service agencies assumed this role while in smaller communities Jewish leaders formed ad hoc committees to offer help to the immigrants.[42] The way in which survivors were treated by their local community was a key factor in the survivor's adjustment to his or her new life. Some communities wanted the survivors and embraced them while others set restrictions such as not wanting Shabbat observers because of employment problems or not accepting those with medical problems, the aged, artists, or musicians.[43] Some who would open up their home had ulterior motives. "Though they implied the opposite, I could feel their cold and calculated reason for wanting me: they needed a baby sitting maid."[44] This is exactly what her role became even to the point of sacrificing her own social life and school.

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[42] Helmreich, p. 53
[43] ibid., p. 68
[44] Gabor, p. 9 : Book 2

Oftentimes the response of the general population would reflect the leader of the community.[45] Some survivors adapted more quickly than others; most had the drive to look toward the future rather than dwelling on the past. Despite everything, despite any initial help and reception, in America, the survivors found themselves in another kind of exile, another kind of prison.[46]

Some who were too young to be on their own were given places to live and were told where and how they would spend their time. One survivor remembers being taken by her social worker to the Jewish Family and Children's Service's main office, from where she was taken to Camp Kingswood in Maine. Her reaction,

> Oh, the camp was nice, and the American children were thrilled to be able to spend even a few weeks there, but for us refugees it seemed like an undeserved punishment. We longed for a home, a permanent residence where we could begin establishing our new life![47]

Silence

As Elie Wiesel describes the survivors reception, "People welcomed them with tears and sobs when they stepped off the boats, then turned away."[48] Many did not understand the survivors; this caused a sense of alienation especially from the American Jewish community.[49] They were met by Jews who did not want to hear about what happened. One woman

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[45] Helmreich, p. 69
[46] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 251
[47] Gabor, p. 3 : Book 2
[48] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 251
[49] Hass, p. 90

recalls the first couple she stayed with in New York. They were the parents of one of the friends she had before the war. In fact, they had known her parents in Hamburg. Even with this connection, "They didn't know quite what to say to this 'creature' from the concentration camps. Most of our time was spent in uneasy silence."[50] When she began to have nightmares which woke the household, she was asked to leave. Americans felt they already knew what happened from reading the newspaper.[51] Bystanders' guilt led many to regard the survivors as pointing accusing fingers at them.[52] In addition, many Jews and Gentiles never had the guts to ask questions.[53] Others, who did listen were simply in disbelief and could not relate or even empathize with the survivors. One survivor was even complimented by an American-born Jewish neighbor in Brooklyn on her 'terrific imagination.' In fact, after hearing tales about selections and gas chambers, she was told that she should write "stories".[54] Others told the survivors to forget their past. They reminded them that they were in North America now and that it was time to begin a new life![55] Even though many were forward thinking, forgetting the past was no easy task and one, despite outward achievement, they could never do. Other people told them not to talk about their

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[50] Eichengreen, p. 176
[51] Helmreich, p. 38
[52] Danieli, Yael, Ph.D. "The Treatment and Prevention of Long-Term Effects And Intergenerational Transmission of Victimization: A Lesson From Holocaust Survivors and Their Children" in *Trauma and its Wake: The Study and Treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.* C. R. Figley ed. (New York: Brunner Mazel, 1985), pp. 295 - 314.
[53] Hass, p. 102
[54] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p.251
[55] Abraham J. Peck, "She'erit Hapletah: The Purpose of the Legacy," *Midstream* (April 1991), p. 28

experience because no one would want to hear it, and they would not make new friends if they were always talking about such horrific subjects.[56] Even their own children were unwilling to listen to the stories of those terrible years their parents had endured.[57]

> Over the years my wife and I had tried to tell our children about what we had been through. And they always evaded the discussion. They really didn't want to hear. We didn't force it. When they were ready they asked questions. Only in the last two years or so [as adults]. [Maurice Diamant][58]

> In the beginning we didn't talk about our wartime experiences at all. I had to put like a lid over my experiences and my feelings. We just went on with keeping busy and never looking back. Now the children are older and they themselves want to know. [Lydia Brown][59]

Sometimes the survivors themselves wondered, "How could others understand or accept what I went through, when it is still incomprehensible to me?"[60] "Who will listen?"[61]

The survivors also heard such comments and demoralizing analogies as, "During the Depression, we too had scarcities such as very little food to eat," and "During the war, we were subject to gas and food rationing." "Don't bother telling us about your horrors, we had our own deprivations to bear."[62] Sometimes the insensitivity was simply a matter of ignorance. For example, many Americans were unaware of the meaning of the numbers on

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[56] Helmreich, p.38
[57] ibid., p. 134
[58] Rothchild, p. 258
[59] ibid., p. 342
[60] Hass, p. 123
[61] Peck, "She'erit Hapletah: The Purpose of the Legacy," p. 30
[62] Hass, p. 17

the survivors' arms. One person when asked about his number would say that it was his girlfriend's telephone number. Some even thought it was a phone number or "laundry numbers."

> Is it your medical insurance number? Why don't you write it on a piece of paper and carry it in you pocket-book? - When I first came here the most ignorant people in the whole country about the Holocaust were Jews.[63]

One survivor speaks of being at a dance with other Jews when a girl standing next to her in the bathroom said, "Oh, I didn't get a number."[64] Such comments and the previously mentioned reactions and advice, led to a period of silence that would last for decades. A period often referred to as the "conspiracy of silence." The silence was verbal but also non-verbal. Some survivors had their tattoo removed to avoid misinformed remarks. One survivor even had her Uncle make the suggestion of a skin graft.

> Uncle Harry suggested that Molly and I have skin grafts done over our tattoos. I'm thinking about it. The past just doesn't fit in the present. If I choose to remember it, it should be my perogative instead of being exposed to ignorant questions. [Dana][65]

This silence was harmful to the survivors. Only later was it recognized as detrimental to their familial and sociocultural (re)integration by psychiatrists, psychologists and sociologists. It affected their psychological well being and their healing process.[66] For some it was a silence provoked because the world had a need to forget. "Survivors who

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[63] Anton Gill, *The Journey Back from Hell: Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors An Oral History* (New York: Avon Books, 1988), p. 285

[64] Helmreich, p. 69

[65] Alice Birnhak with Patricia Defer Bonadonna, *Next Year God Willing* (New York: Shengold Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 443

[66] Peck, "She'erit Hapletah: The Purpose of the Legacy," p. 28

immigrated to America encountered a culture which glorifies success, optimism, and happiness, while shunning failure, pessimism and suffering. To be accepted into that society, survivors were urged to "put all of *that* behind you." In a sense, they were asked to betray their memories and hide their pain. Especially painful was the perception of some Americans that "those who had come owed their survival to a willingness to be cruel to others in the camps."[67] Or that they had performed immoral acts in order to survive.[68] Some even felt they had to apologize for surviving when they would get questions like, "How come my brother didn't survive and you did?"[69] The survivors were surrounded by ill founded assumptions, some expressed blatantly and others unspoken, but universally understood.

Other survivors were silent about their wartime experience because intense individual and collective defense mechanisms functioned to ward off preoccupation with, and memories of, traumatic experiences. "During this period of latency - the decade after 1945 - the compelling need of the survivors was to deny and repress their experiences."[70] Survivors live in a constant dichotomy. On the one hand, they feel an intense need to remember every detail of their trauma while, at the same time, feelings of guilt, humiliation, and powerlessness increase their desire to continue to

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[67] Helmreich, p.38
[68] Danieli, p. 5
[69] Helmreich, p. 41
[70] Bergman & Jucovy, p. 5-6

repress such unpleasant memories.[71] "If it was not their own embarrassment, then it was concern for the children's welfare that made many survivors hesitate to discuss their experiences."[72] They did not want to cause their children what they felt was unnecessary fear or pain. They felt their own children might resent them because they did not know how to talk and people would make fun of them.[73] They were silent from the pain of rejection, the perceived disinterest of American Jews, and their strong desire for acceptance. The anticipation of an accusatory inquisitor was frightening as was the indictment of exaggeration. Finally, silence ensued because reliving those times might prompt memories and images that could elicit survivor guilt,[74] an emotion felt by many survivors, which will be explained in more detail later.

> We didn't speak about our past. Libby, my wife, would have terrible nightmares if the subject came up, so we avoided it most of the time. I have the tattoo on my arm, so I sometimes have to speak of it when someone asks me what it is, but I know that it is something which no one can understand if they didn't go through it. [Bernard Brown][75]

Even psychiatrists and psychoanalysts neglected to confront the psychological problems of survivors. Regarding rehabilitation, material assistance was emphasized and psychiatric issues were ignored.[76] Money was often not an issue in regard to aid, people knew how to give money, it

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[71] Hass, p. 134
[72] Helmreich, p. 134
[73] Hass, p. 135
[74] ibid.
[75] Rothchild, p. 337
[76] Bergman & Jucovy, p. 7

was the heart that should have followed.[77] Many simply did not know how to talk with the survivors. Programs of reparations did not help matters because the *wiedergutmachung* was based on physical issues of health and not mental issues. The psychiatric element was not added to the basis of reparations until much later. The blinders were difficult to remove, even from the most educated and open-minded people. This factor has had long range effects on the survivor population and even their children, as will be explained later. Social workers and doctors could not understand what they were being told by survivors. Many did not believe their stories. They seemed too horrible and unreal.[78] In addition, it was often difficult for the survivors to trust and believe the social workers when they did try to help. There is a story of children who hid bread in their pillowcases because they did not trust that they would be fed regularly.[79] Agencies tried to help the survivors to regain trust in both themselves and others.[80] It would take more than a decade, however, for survivors' psychological issues to be addressed in medical and psychiatric journals.[81] Something that seemed so obvious was frightening territory to explore and expose.

The end result was that when people did not want to hear or did not demonstrate belief in what they did hear, survivors were silent about their

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[77] Helmreich, p. 70
[78] ibid., p. 54
[79] ibid., p. 32
[80] ibid., p. 84
[81] Bergman & Jucovy, p. 9

experience and decided that staying busy was their best option. By staying busy by constantly *doing*, they would not have time to think about what had transpired.[82] They would work hard, start new families, and chisel a place for themselves in their adopted homeland.[83] Others remained silenced because they simply could not find adequate words to articulate the full measure of their ordeal. And again they believed that those that were not there could not possibly understand or even imagine their torture.[84]

Marriage and Children

"The survivors often internalized the negative stereotypes that many Americans had of them. Some felt that others looked down upon them and this sometimes made them timid in their relationships with their new neighbors. They were self-conscious about their accents, their lack of education, and their unfamiliarity with American ways."[85] This led to many survivors gravitating toward one another.[86] They "sought out one anther's company, not only to fill the social void in their lives, but also to exchange information and ideas and to renew interrupted ties."[87]

> We survivors stick together because we share a common experience, and it's easier to communicate. You can be sitting round the table with friends, and let's say you're eating something nice. One of us will say: 'From this I would like to have *Nachschlag*." Well, nobody else will understand this expression, but in the KZ [*Konzentrationslager* - Concentration Camp] it meant an

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[82] Hass, p. 79
[83] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 252
[84] ibid., p. 118
[85] Helmreich, p. 71-72
[86] Hass, p. 86
[87] Helmreich, p. 46

> extra little helping of food - a bit of bread, a spoonful of soup. It was given as a bonus, for extra work, for example. It's not something you can easily explain to the outside world.[88]

Good friends often times became more understanding and better than family.[89] "We are like a family with our Greek-Jewish friends who were in the camps, or hiding." [Tillie Molho][90] In addition, many chose other survivors as marriage partners as well as friends. In fact, about eighty percent married other survivors. Survivors could understand one another and could comprehend traumas and deprivations.[91]

Many of these unions were "pragmatic marriages," based on a sober assessment that living together was mutually beneficial.[92] "He already had an apartment, a job. He is strong. I can depend on him. Sole surviving members of a family, particularly if female, latched on quickly."[93]

> I felt so alone that I contemplated suicide. . . . Then I met my present husband, and my outlook on life changed. He is twelve years older than I, he finished medical school before the war. Ian was in Auschwitz for a few months just before liberation. His parents managed to survive in hiding. They are quite rich. I feel that I can always rely on him, he's very considerate, and I am safe and secure with him. [Basia][94]

Many marriages were out of loneliness.[95] (Or, as my grandfather has said, out of pity. He married my grandmother because he felt sorry for her. When he saw this 75-pound woman with very little hair who was wandering

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[88] Gill, p. 297
[89] ibid., p. 41
[90] Rothchild, p. 426
[91] Hass, p. 121
[92] Helmreich, p. 121
[93] Hass, p. 121
[94] Birnhak, p. 455
[95] Hass, p. 120

in the Czestochowa train station, a simple knapsack slung over her back filled with stale, hard bread, and a note sending her to a dangerous address where Russian soldiers were known to take in women and rape them, he told her to come home with him. There is more to the story, but this was how they met. What he does not include in his story is that my grandmother had a mother and sister living in America. My uncles feel he was riding her coat tails to America, hence, a practical union.) Other marriages were out of gratitude.

What was also important to some survivors was marrying someone from the same city or area, maybe even a distant relative; there was a need among the survivors for the familiar.[96] This connection would also provide a physical tie to the past. Prewar social class barriers and religious-secular distinctions melted away as prerequisites for marriage partners.[97] Educational status, lifestyle, and age did not matter for these many "marriages of despair" formed on short acquaintance.[98] For many, romance and love were not in their vocabulary or even part of their initial marriage experience. Safety and security were more important priorities when finding a partner as explained above by Basia. Those lucky enough to marry for love, who had the opportunity to date, felt alive once more. "I happily

[96] ibid., p. 99
[97] ibid., p. 121
[98] Danieli, p. 4

anticipated Dan's calls; my spirit renewed, I felt a rebirth of excitement and enthusiasm for living."[99]

Marriage and parenthood was often rushed into as a way to fill the void felt after liberation.[100] Survivors had a desire to rebuild, an eagerness to distance themselves from the immediate past. This also contributed to marrying quickly.[101] Also, some simply wanted to know if they could even have children. There was not a moment to waste after so many years of their life had been robbed from them. Many even went so far as to take "five years from their birthday because they didn't have those years."[102] Others chose a new date all together for a variety of reasons. "And on 18 April, which I celebrate today as my birthday, we escaped."[103] (My grandmother had two or three birthdays: her actual date, the date she arrived in America, and perhaps one more to which I do not know the significance.) Others altered their birthdate to qualify for emigration of to receive Red Cross benefits.

Soon after marriage, the survivors did not hesitate to have children. In fact, the DP camps had the highest birth rate of any Jewish community in the world, demonstrating the future oriented outlook of the survivors and their will to carry on with their lives. This surprised visitors to the camps

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[99] Eichengreen, p. 183
[100] Hass, p. 33
[101] ibid., p. 99
[102] ibid., p. 45
[103] Gill, p. 286

who had expected the exact opposite.[104] They just wanted to feel whole once more and carry on with their lives. "Recreating a family was a concrete act to compensate for their losses, counter the massive disruption in the order and continuity of their lives, and undo the dehumanization and loneliness they had experienced."[105]

The most tangible fulfillment of hope was to bring a child into the world.

> Our two sons were born in 1952 and 1956, and I, who once had not wanted to bring new life into such a degenerate world, found much joy in the arrival of these two small souls. Dan and I felt great satisfaction when they, as Jews, continued their ancient, rich heritage. We gave them the Hebrew names of their murdered grandfathers: Benjamin and Mosche.[106]

These children were often named after those who had perished. Yet some gave their children Gentile first names as a way of protecting them if history should repeat itself.[107] Children were often viewed as a blessing, a miracle, a gift, a symbol of victory.[108] Some were even referred to as their parents' "memorial candle", especially the first born. Some parents noticed a difference in themselves based on the number of children they have had. On speaking about her younger son, one woman recalls how she was a very different mother to him.

> He got the least attention but is the most independent. He really made it easy for me and never made me feel guilty

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[104] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 250
[105] Danieli, p. 4
[106] Eichengreen, p. 191 - 192
[107] Hass, p. 127
[108] Danieli, p. 4

> for what I did or didn't do. I guess I was no longer so depressed when he was born. I really felt his birth brought us good luck. Everything was nicer and easier after he arrived. [Helene Frankle][109]

Very few survivors decided not to have children following the war. Those who chose this option did so because they would not allow themselves to become emotionally attached for fear of another precipitous separation.[110] They were afraid to have children after what they had experienced. Many did not want to bring children into the world only for them to experience their same fate. Some were afraid that they would not be able to feel love for children again. Despite these fears, most had children. Often they were motivated by a need to replace those who were lost, a need that was frequently accompanied by a belief that having children proved that Hitler's grand design ultimately failed.[111]

The children were the focus for many survivor relationships, particularly the unhappy unions. Many survivor parents were overprotective of their children. Having been torn from their parents, they feared being torn from their own children. They had no living role model from which to learn how to parent. In a survivor home, love is often expressed and emphasized by material possessions.[112] These were tangible ways parents could show they cared. In addition, they valued education and they raised their children to value it as well. "Many survivors felt that having been

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[109] Rothchild, p. 369
[110] Hass, p. 3
[111] ibid., p. 127
[112] ibid., p. 129

deprived of educational opportunities themselves they would do their best to provide their children with them."[113] Because many had missed out on an education, they themselves were very sensitive about being viewed as lesser individuals. They did not want this for their children. They are very proud of their children's educational achievements and love them for this, but at the same time they want their children's respect despite their own failures to achieve a similar level of formal training.[114] In fact, many learned as their children learned.

> When our little boy started to go to kindergarten and first grade I learned how to read by following his books. I never went to formal classes, but I learned with my children to read the English language. [Lydia Brown][115]

With these hastened unions and subsequent births, what became of these relationships and these children born, many in DP camps, so soon after the war? (Chapter 2 will focus on the children in detail). Did these pragmatic survivor - survivor marriages work out better? "Perhaps so," according to William B. Helmreich, a professor of sociology and Judaic studies at CUNY Graduate Center and City College of New York and author of *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America*, "since survivors who married Americans were about twice as likely to divorce as are those who married survivors. Possibly survivors' unions last longer because the couple can better understand each

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[113] ibid., p. 129
[114] ibid., p. 133
[115] Rothchild, p. 341

other's problems. It might also mean, however, that those survivors who linked up with Americans were, or became, more Americanized and were therefore more willing to consider divorce as a solution to marital strife."[116] To most survivors marriage is a life commitment no matter what. (As my grandfather often says, "It is best not to be alone.")

Friendship and Understanding

Survivors live in close proximity to one another, worship together, and socialize together. Despite their many successes, they tend to remain a subgroup within most Jewish communities in which they live.[117] "So important is maintaining contact with their friends that survivors will sometimes endure sustained abuse just to be in the company of their peers."[118] For example, one man married a Christian German woman after the war. Behind his back, his survivor friends referred to her as a prostitute, saying he was only interested in "a pretty face." They also say things to his face, expecially because his wife refuses to convert. Still, he plays cards with them every Saturday night.[119] The shared history is the glue that binds such friendships. For most this is a collective history; many met after their wartime experience. For some, however, friendships built in the camps, in hiding, on the run, etc. are maintained to this day. For example, survivors of

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[116] Helmreich, p. 126
[117] Peck, "She'erit Hapletah: The Purpose of the Legacy," p. 28
[118] Helmreich, p. 172
[119] ibid.

Lodz have an annual reunion. Others get together on a smaller scale on an annual basis.

> That afternoon, 18 January 1945, at 4 p.m., Auschwitz ceased to exist for us. It was cold, - 18 degrees C. Those of us who are still alive still get together on that day to remember. [Ernest Michel][120]

Survivors are comfortable in their own circles. As mentioned earlier, many of their friends are also survivors. They are a tight-knit group and very loyal to one another. "American-raised Jews who married survivors sometimes felt estranged from their spouse's circle of friends. They perceived themselves as interlopers, barely tolerated, because they did not go through the war and sometimes they were, in fact, treated that way."[121] Survivors have even developed an unspoken hierarchy of suffering among themselves. They sometimes evaluate each other according to these terms.[122] The ones who "suffered the most", (i.e. were in concentration camps), the "worst places," have more of a right to talk than those who were "*only* in hiding or a work camp." Those who lived through milder circumstances are often hesitant to speak of their experiences, deferring to the others.[123]

Making a Living and Contributing to the Community

Some survivors connected with other survivors through their post-Holocaust profession. This link sparked social interaction and lasting

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[120] Gill, p. 294
[121] Helmreich, p. 174
[122] ibid., p. 173
[123] Hass, p. 9

friendships. "Many survivors tended to concentrate in the same occupations. As a result, the work, while perhaps humdrum, gave them an opportunity to be with other survivors and this heightened their sense of group identity, united them, and caused them to interact socially to a greater extent than might otherwise have been the case."[124] They enjoyed each other's company. They would come together for informal gatherings and they also formed and joined organizations. They wanted to be with one another.[125] They needed each other. In these organizations survivors were both members and leaders. In his research, Helmreich found that survivors were more likely to join organizations and become involved than American Jews. "About 67 percent of the survivors belong to Jewish groups versus 48 percent for American Jews."[126] This is part of the European culture they left behind. They have a feeling of communal responsibility, a central feature of Jewish culture. Also, depending on their experience upon arrival in the United States, they have a desire to show appreciation for assistance given to them when they first set foot on American soil and an understanding of what it meant to be turned away when requesting help from others.

"In general, the survivors joined organizations that emphasized religious activities, combating anti-Semitism, preserving Yiddish culture, communal work, and Israel."[127] Many joined *landsmanshaftn*, the

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[124] Helmreich, p. 107-108
[125] ibid., p. 149
[126] ibid., p. 203
[127] ibid., p. 204

hometown societies that provided, among other things, financial aid, moral support, and fellowship through their many activities. Connection with these groups held a special meaning for the survivors because so many of these communities had now been totally wiped out. "Even if the towns still existed, they were now devoid of any real Jewish life, and the memory of what had once been could only be preserved through the efforts of their former denizens."[128]

Another organization popular among survivors is B'nai B'rith. The organization is structured very much like a *landsmanshaft*, divided into lodges with an emphasis on fellowship. The members feel that they are a part of a close-knit group of people.[129] This camaraderie is important to the survivor population. There are also those who fear being part of any organized group which may have a roster. As one man relates, "To this day I have to overcome a strong resistance to joining an organization - no matter what kind - or putting my name on a petition or even a visitors list of a museum or funeral home."[130]

A strong work ethic was also a part of the survivor mentality. Providing for one's family, financial security, is another important aspect of the survivor's life after the war. Many succeeded in business and commerce. Their experience of survival helped them to endure the "slings and arrows"

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[128] ibid., p. 150
[129] ibid., p. 157
[130] Weinberg, p. 155

of such a career choice.[131] Others found work as "blue collar" workers. "Approximately 1,500 Holocaust survivors and their families selected farming as an occupation after the war."[132] "A study published in 1947 noted that out of one thousand survivors, only forty-five were professionals."[133] Rebuilding a life was not easy. Professionally, many had to start over. "Their prewar professional training or degrees were now useless. Having been accustomed to a certain level of intellectual achievement or status, their lack of fluency in English was frustrating and, at times, humiliating."[134]

There were many obstacles to finding a career. Antisemitism was an employment barrier. One survivor recalls how he left his first company when he found out their attitude toward Jews was antisemitic. Later, he set up his own office.[135] The religiously observant often changed careers so that they would not have to work on Shabbat. For example, a musician chose to be a furrier when he realized that American musicians in first-rate orchestras had to play on Shabbat.[136] Regions of the country varied, the Deep South being more problematic for survivors than other areas.[137] But most survivors did overcome these obstacles. They simply had to be creative and

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[131] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 252
[132] Helmreich, p. 63
[133] ibid., p. 93
[134] Hass, p. 103
[135] Rothchild, p. 330
[136] Helmreich, p. 99
[137] ibid., p. 101

willing to learn quickly. Many would have been happier in their own profession, but they knew choices were limited.

> The university was paying very little in 1952 and my degree wasn't worth anything. I went to the steel mill and lasted only one day; the noise was unbearable. Then, because I was involved in trying to sell my farm, I learned something about real estate people and answered an ad for a real estate salesman. That's how I started to make a living. [Stanley Bors][138]

Survivors were determined to succeed. They came with a strong work ethic and wanted to succeed on their own. Despite the lack of education many possessed, their street smarts were highly developed. "By 1953, the USNA (United Service for New Americans) could say that, to its knowledge, less than 2 percent of those Jews who had arrived in the United States since 1945 required financial assistance, and, of these, nearly all were aged, sick, or physically disabled."[139] What determined a survivor's success or failure? Those who worked hard, had determination, skill or intelligence, good fortune, and a willingness to take risks would often succeed.[140] Other traits of one who achieved levels of success include flexibility, assertiveness, tenacity, optimism, distancing ability, group consciousness, assimilating the knowledge that they survived, finding meaning in one's life, and courage.[141] Those who demonstrated excessive caution and a reluctance to take chances often did not succeed.[142]

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[138] Rothchild, p. 330
[139] Helmreich, p. 109
[140] ibid., p. 111
[141] ibid., p. 267-268
[142] ibid., p. 117

Work became therapeutic for many because it gave them little time to reflect on the past. There is no required explanation for the goal of building a new life and working hard. Survivors had, and continue to have, a strong interest in tangible security. For example, they invest in real estate whenever possible.[143] Many made their fortunes this way. To a survivor, financial security means independence. It means controlling one's own destiny. After being deprived of all autonomy during the Holocaust, this sense of control, of success, was vital when they first began their careers in America. Many worked independently, trusting only themselves. When they did enter partnerships, it was usually only with other survivors.[144] In friendship, marriage, and business, survivors stuck together and still maintain close relations with one another.

Many worked long hours and were aggressive in business.[145] "For the initial forty years of their postwar life, most survivors escaped the brunt of their past calamities by working, by *doing* not thinking, by *doing* not feeling."[146] In addition to their involvement with work, many also found time for culture and recreation. They built a cultural network which included plays, lectures, newspapers, and radio programs. As new American they would gather at local parks, lakes, and beaches, areas that

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[143] ibid., p. 109
[144] ibid., p. 102
[145] ibid., p. 232
[146] Hass, p. 21

were popular among many immigrant groups, because it was an inexpensive form of recreation.

Some, however, admit that free time frightens them.[147] Free time allows them too much time to think. When they are busy working, their mind is preoccupied with their job and the need to provide for their family. Work means life for those who survived, free time has the potential to bring with it sadness. If survivors do take extended free time, to travel for example, many have a preference for traveling to Israel. Perhaps they have relatives there and/or simply feel a strong connection to the country. Others use their travel time to return to their birthplace. They go for a variety of reasons, despite the sadness and bitterness which accompanies their journey.

> For some there is a sort of morbid curiosity, the peculiar yet vaguely reassuring feeling that they can walk through their hometown with some semblance of safety, a privilege denied them during those horrible years. For others, there is the additional feeling, more likely a desperate hope, that by returning to their homes again, the place where it all began, they can in some way make their world whole again, even as they know it cannot happen.[148]

> In the end, it was our need to know that tipped the balance, for we had many unanswered questions: had the Germans and Poles changed in their attitude toward Jews? Had they experienced some remorse, some regrets? What was the present state of Jewish life and culture in Germany and Poland? Were any of the buildings we had known as children still standing? I also wanted to satisfy a personal need: to visit the graves of my parents.[149]

The survivors who make this journey are often the ones who will speak of their experience, but not always. (I have known survivors on both

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[147] ibid., p. 102
[148] ibid., p. 167
[149] Eichengreen, p. 194

sides of the spectrum). Their ability to connect their past with their present rejuvenates memories. Some will visit the land of their birth to show their children or because of the interest and encouragement of their children.

> I wanted my children to know what I had been through, and to learn about the camps as soon as they were old enough to understand. I took them to Germany, and I took them to *Dachau*, to show them a camp.[150]

Others have no desire to set foot into their past literally or figuratively.

> I still have problems with Germany. I can't stand it for more that a few days. I don't mind the young people, but with people my age and older the idea of "What were you doing at the time?" is always uppermost. [Dr. Hilda Branch][151]

Breaking the Silence

Earlier, the reasons for silence were explained. This "conspiracy of silence" lasted for decades. What enhanced and maintained the silence and what broke the silence? The silence was enhanced by the fact that the world veiled the topic of the Holocaust with a "curtain of silence." In the mid-1950s, children did not hear about the topic in school or on television, so they did not ask questions. The survivors' focus at this time was not to dwell on their suffering and to try to put it behind them.[152] Often survivors did not volunteer information to others, especially to their children. Some would share with interviewers what they would not even tell their own family. One survivor, when asked if he ever speaks about the war to his

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[150] Gill, p. 289
[151] Rothchild, p. 334
[152] Helmreich, p. 133

children, replied, "No, because I am very soft. To a stranger I can talk but if I speak to my kids, I'll start crying."[153] Others wanted to open up but knowing what their children thought of them made them think twice.

> [Speaking about his son] He was always ashamed of me. I had an accent. He refused to speak anything but English with us, so he never learned Greek or French like he could have. He could never understand our experiences. He wouldn't listen, really. [Rene Molho][154] p. 419

Some could hear their family's response before uttering a word. The desire to speak was strong but they ultimately respected their family's feelings over their own needs.

> The urge to bear witness was still with me, but even in the family I would still hear, "It's over and done, let's not wallow in it." The women would say, "Don't give me nightmares. I'd rather not hear about it. [Simon Grubman][155]

> My husband did not like me to tell the children about my background. He would say, "Don't start about that again, Chella. You have had so many nightmares." But it was in my head and my soul. I felt it was important for my children to know their mother as a human being. [Rachella Velt Meekcoms][156]

Often when survivors told their children about the Holocaust it was only enough information so they would be generally aware and have the ability to see signs when it happens again.[157] Sometimes one child in the family was told more or wanted to know more than than another. As time passed, survivors found it easier to share their experiences with their children.

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[153] ibid., p. 97
[154] Rothchild, p. 419
[155] ibid., p. 384
[156] ibid., p. 407
[157] Hass, p. 135-136

> When our older boy was growing up our stories overwhelmed him. He didn't want to listen. When our younger son came along we could look at our experiences in a more detached way. We could feed it to him in more controlled doses and he took it much better. He showed more interest and understanding. [Simon Grubman][158]

Most survivors wanted their children to know about the Holocaust and, even if they did not share their personal story, they did encourage them to read books and see films on the topic. "Several felt that their children had an obligation to do so and were deeply disappointed if the second generation failed to show much interest."[159]

In the 1960s, the survivors were forced to confront their silence when the topic of the Holocaust began to emerge once again. In 1961, the Eichmann trial flooded the media and unleashed the memories of many survivors. One survivor who testified at the trial remembers returning to America after the trial.

> Upon returning home, our rabbi, Abraham Maron, who knew about my testimony against Eichmann, asked me to speak one Friday night at temple. After that, word got around and I began to get requests to speak to different Jewish organizations. *The Evening Outlook,* a Santa Monica newspaper, and the *Los Angeles Examiner* interviewed me; and Paul Coates invited me to be a guest on his TV show. . . . At first I wondered if I should even bother speaking about what had happened; it had been so many years. But then I thought, *Yes, the world should know more about what happened and learn about the facts. It is a necessity.*[160]

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[158] Rothchild, p. 386
[159] ibid., p. 135
[160] Siegfried Halbreich, *Before - During - After* (New York: Vantage Press, 1991), p. 135

This resurfacing of information forced survivors to deal with their past.[161] Many remained alive during the Holocaust because of their motivation to tell the world what they had witnessed[162] and this resurgence was a welcome advancement. Now they were given the opportunity, even the permission, to talk. Still, many people did not want to listen; however, when someone did want to listen, survivors were usually grateful to share their experience.[163] What drove many to speak is a sense of educating others so that what happened to them will never happen again. They feel driven by this mission; speaking is not simply a matter of catharsis.[164]

> Even though I could not speak about it in the early years I believe it has to be told to the young generation. It has to be brought out in its entirety. The Hitler regime must not be turned into some kind of heroic part of history. [Lydia Brown][165]

Others did not realize the effect speaking in public would have on them, until they did it. One person recalls the first time he was asked to speak in public. He was very nervous about his spoken English and was assured that it would be a small group.

> What they didn't tell me was that they'd advertised the meeting in the college newspaper under the dramatic banner, FROM AUSCHWITZ TO PORT HURON, and most of the college turned up. Had I known beforehand, I would have cried off and sunk through a hole in the floor, but by the time I arrived it was too late to do that. I'd never given a speech before in my life, in any language, but I started to speak, and I have to say that it was catharsis for me, because for the first time I was speaking about my experience, and to people of my age, about what it meant to

[161] Helmreich, p. 133
[162] Hass, p. xiv-xv
[163] ibid., p. xv
[164] Helmreich, p. 199
[165] Rothchild, p. 344

> be totally deprived of everything you had; of school, family, livelihood, home, even language. I spoke for I don't know how long - something just took over me. And finally I stopped, because I couldn't go on any more, my throat was bone dry. Later I was told that I'd spoken non-stop for 90 minutes. I had talked the experience out of me and even more importantly, I realized that that was possible. There really and truly hadn't been a chance to talk about it before; I'd been so busy since liberation, and there had been so many new things happening. This was the first time that I had had an opportunity to open up, and I realized how much I needed to.[166]

At the end of the 1970s, the silence broke. With the 1967 and 1973 wars in Israel, people realized that Jews were still vulnerable. The Holocaust became an American obsession. Toward the end of the 1970s, the President of the United States even issued a mandate for a national museum.[167] In 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the President's Commission on the Holocaust chaired by Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel. The "taboo" was abolished. The nation was curious. People began to ask questions, and the nation began to listen. The inquisitiveness of others implies permission for the survivor to remember.[168] This heightened awareness and recognition of their past, for many, sparked public speaking and writing. A torrent of words and thoughts was unleashed by survivors who had been silenced for much too long. "They had the belief that only by telling the story could a repetition of these horrors be avoided."[169] As one survivor explained, reminders are difficult, but speaking is necessary.

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[166] Gill, p. 288
[167] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 252
[168] Hass, p. 138
[169] Helmreich, p. 135

> I don't read books about the Holocaust or see movies on the subject. The first time I went to Israel I found it impossible to go to Yad Vashem. The second, I tried to go in but found it very difficult. I see no sense in getting involved with gruesome things even though I speak to prevent such things happening again. [Claude Cassirer][170]

The 1980s, called the "decade of the survivor" by Abraham Peck, was a time when many survivors were invited into classrooms and asked to speak into the cassette recorder. But even then, they were, in the words of Terence Des Pres, "both sought and shunned: the desire to hear the survivor's truth is countered by the need to ignore him. Insofar as we feel compelled to defend a comforting view of life, we tend to deny the survivor's voice."[171]

> In recent years I've had the feeling that there is a change in American Jewry. I see an awakening of consciousness, but also some confusion about reality. American Jewish teachers invite me into their classes to speak, but they do not want me to make the Holocaust a sad experience. They want me to turn us into heroes and to create a heroic experience for all the survivors. There is a book they use, The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance, but the Holocaust was never a history of courage or resistance. It was a destruction by fire of innocent people, and it's not right to make it something it never was. [Sally Grubman][172]

Despite this mixed reaction to the survivors' experience, they are speaking out publically about their experiences - at schools, churches, synagogues, and museums; to Jews, Christians, children and adults - they speak to those who want to listen.

> There is a tremendous interest in the Holocaust that we didn't see when we came. I get these frantic calls from

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[170] Rothchild, p. 350
[171] Peck, *Holocaust Survivors in America,* p. 252
[172] Rothchild, p. 381

> twenty-five-year-old teachers. *The Diary of Anne Frank* is required reading and the children are asking questions and they want me to explain why normal, good people are living hidden behind bookcases and closed doors. So I come and talk, on different levels depending on the age of the children. [Sally Grubman][173]

In addition, as survivors age, they tend to reminisce more about their past.[174] They begin to ask questions such as "Who will remember me? Will the memory of my people and the Holocaust perish?"[175] "The more your children and family life departs, the more your mind turns to the past," remarked one survivor.[176]

> Personally, there is a circle we are now closing, from the horror of what happened, to the liberation, through the busy years of building and raising a family. Now that the children are out of the house and we have the financial security to enjoy a few pleasures, the enormity of what happened starts to dawn on us. It may seem strange that the terrible feeling of loss of our fathers and mothers weighs on our souls much heavier now than it did years before. It now hits us that our parents went to their deaths for no good reason, and what a good life they could have had here with us - in the first country where we've had the feeling of patriotism. [Simon Grubman][177]

> The rest of the world, the generation of the forties and fifties, did not want to hear our stories. Of course, people were shocked by the horrors of the extermination camps, stunned by the reports of the carefully, coldly, calculated genocide. But hearing about it once was enough; the whole subject was too morbid, too depressing, to bear repeating. My past came to seem like a guilty secret. Only now does a new generation seem interested in listening to the truth.[178]

Perhaps society's willingness to listen reversed the silence. Perhaps, it is the aging of survivors and the resurfacing of memories. As one survivor

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[173] ibid.
[174] Hass, p. 119
[175] Peck, "She'erit Hapletah: The Purpose of the Legacy," p. 27
[176] Hass, p. 21
[177] Rothchild, p. 388
[178] Jack Eisner, *The Survivor: An Inspiring True Story* (New York: William and Morrow Company, Inc., 1980), p. 318

recalls, "For a time, my thriving business and my growing family pushed aside the shadows of the past."[179] Now with retirement, there is time to remember. Perhaps, it is having grandchildren who ask questions and also represent the natural progression of the generations and continued life. No matter what sparks conversation the important thing is that communication between the generations is taking place. Survivors are no longer silenced.

This testimony, listening and paying attention, is important when so much of what is said is hard to believe. Even survivors who lived through such gruesome experiences are shocked when they realized what was once their reality. They are in disbelief that one people could be so cruel and heartless to another. On a trip back to Europe in 1991, one survivor realized the impact and force of what she had lived through.

> I had not dreamed this nightmare. I had lived it. I had known every nook and cranny of this place. Yet even as I stood on these same ghetto streets, it seemed impossible that this had been my reality.[180]

If the survivors are bewildered and amazed, what will be the response when non-survivors are retelling the stories?

It is hard to know what exactly contributes to one survivor remaining silent and another demonstrating the ability and desire to speak. The mental health and psychological background of the Holocaust survivor is complex. Even if not verbalized, the past always remains in the mind of a Holocaust

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[179] ibid., p. 317
[180] Eichengreen, p. 207

survivor. "Every time my business took me to Warsaw, I went back to the past. . . . I spent time with other survivors. We understood one another's silences."[181] As Hass wrote, "It is far easier to extinguish a man than to extinguish his memories."[182] "For most, including Jews, the Holocaust is already a piece of distant history. For survivors, the Holocaust was yesterday...and today."[183] "Holocaust-survivorship is terminal."[184] Survivors will agree that no matter what they have achieved since coming to America, they cannot forget where they came from and what they lived through. Often the outward signs of fulfillment - a home, family, a business, friends - masks inner feelings of emptiness. Survivors can lead "normal" lives, but as one survivor puts it, "We all have broken hearts. There isn't one survivor who doesn't have chipped off a piece of heart."[185]

> Most survivors lead a seemingly normal life. But I believe that in many cases the appearance of normality is heavily paid for by a constant and merciless struggle under the surface, but an undue expenditure of nervous energy in order to keep up the appearance. Who knows how many of the survivors we see so well adjusted and functioning beautifully, continue to push wagons and carry stones under the crack of the SS whip, with no mercy in sight anywhere?[186]

For some the memories are psychological and internal, for others they are quite physical.

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[181] Eisner, p. 317
[182] Hass, p. xii
[183] ibid., p. xvii
[184] Werner Weinberg, *Self-Portrait of a Holocaust Survivor* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1985), p. 151
[185] Hass, p. 70
[186] Weinberg, p. 157

> Diagonally across the street was the little red-brick house with the white trim and the black iron fence around it - the Kripo, short for Kriminalpolizei. It looked totally unchanged, except that in now appeared innocent and peaceful. But I could still feel the German's fist on my face and taste the blood on my tongue. And I still suffered the consequences, a dull deafness in my left ear. The damage had been permanent.[187]

Many claim two lives, one outward primarily for the children and one inside which is more depressing.[188] They are protective of what others might think when they are introduced as a survivor of the Holocaust. Questions rise to the surface.

> How do these people think I managed to survive - by luck or, maybe, at the cost of others? How many may think secretly: Was this person a collaborator, an informer, perhaps a capo? Many a survivor cannot help feeling defensive, even if no accusing word is ever spoken.[189]

Jewish Life

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin once said, "What makes Jews remarkable is not that they believe in God after Auschwitz, but that they have children after Auschwitz. That they affirm life and the future."[190] They also affirm their connection to the Jewish people.

> . . .my son's bar mitzvah gave me a lot of personal pleasure. It was an affirmation of continuity, a link in the chain, and I was pleased that my son was part of that link. It was telling, in a way, those who had wanted our destruction that we were continuing. [Maurice Diamant][191]

They support the Jewish communities to which they belong both financially and with their participation. They want to make a difference

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[187] Eichengreen, p. 204
[188] Hass, p. 118
[189] Weinberg, p. 151
[190] Hass, p. 120
[191] Rothchild, p. 258

within the Jewish world. "My real pleasure is derived from the causes which serve the Jewish community." [Herman Herskovic][192] One would think that survivors would be inclined to abandon the one thing they were persecuted for, being Jewish. But, as one survivor explains, "I believe you have to be positive about Jewishness. You can't run from it. You can't hide it." [Jack Goldman][193] Most are loyal, even if only as a statement of spite. As if saying to Hitler, "You did not get all of us," and "you did not 'kill' Judaism."

"Approximately one-half of those survivors who were believers before the war remained believers throughout the Holocaust and until today. Those who were ultra-Orthodox before the war were the least shaken in their beliefs by subsequent events."[194] For others the decision to remain Jewish was not so simple. There are those who had no intention of maintaining any sense of Jewish identity be it an issue of faith or communal belonging. They felt that they should sever their ties to the Jewish community, but found they could not stay away.

> When I came back from camp I didn't want to do anything that was Jewish. I didn't keep kosher. I didn't lay tefillin. But after a while it all came back, little by little, until I ended up more religious than I ever was. [Bernard Brown][195]
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> We belong to Temple Beth-El and go to the Jewish Center on Sunday night to hear the lectures, and my husband goes to the Hebrew classes. I reminded my husband that we

[192] ibid., p. 393
[193] ibid., p. 375
[194] Hass, p. 151
[195] Rothchild, p. 338

> decided during the war when we were in hiding that we would never join any organization or put our name in any temple records. We were going to deny that we were Jewish and hide it as much as possible. Now I would have to laugh to have such an idea. It was from a time of insecurity. Now it wouldn't occur to us to deny or be ashamed of being a Jew. [Vera Steiner][196]

Nevertheless, there were also those survivors who lost their faith and openly admit it, or who never believed to begin with.[197] "Approximately three-fourths of the survivors who were nonbelievers before the Holocaust have retained that stance."[198]

Most survivors appreciated and welcomed the religious freedom they found when they came to the United States. They, too, wanted to openly express their religious identity. "One Hasidic Jew relates how he immediately began to grow a beard when he stepped off the boat." They were happy to see children running around in *yarmulkes*. They knew that discrimination against Jews did exist in the United States, but it was nothing compared to what they had experienced in Europe. The high level of observance and affiliation among survivors lessened the likelihood that they would assimilate rapidly. In fact, Holocaust survivors are highly sensitive about issues of intermarriage, and assimilation for symbolically they represent the purposeful destruction of the Jewish people.

> There are only four or five religious families of the forty or fifty families in Portland who were saved from the concentration camps. It's sad for me to think that they were

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[196] ibid., p. 448
[197] Helmreich, p. 246
[198] Hass, p. 156

> saved from those terrible things to disappear as Jews in the United States. [Lydia Brown][199]

Survivors are angry that Jews may do to themselves what Hitler could not complete.

> I would like Jewish continuity. I'm a strong supporter of Israel. And I tell my children that for Judaism to survive it's terribly important for them to marry Jews. If we don't continue our Jewishness and raise our children as Jews, it will be as if Hitler succeeded. "If you forget you are a Jew, they you forget your mother" is what I say, and I made my son cry and we both cried because it came from my heart. [Rachella Velt Meekcoms][200]

Survivors frequently feel a strong sense of failure as a parent if their own child should intermarry.[201] Some especially feel like a traitor if their children do this and then choose to raise their children outside of the faith.[202]

> On a personal level, probably no other subject is as troubling to survivors as that of interfaith marriage. This is so for many reasons. First, marrying out of the faith is seen as breaking with Jewish tradition and history, or even leaving it altogether. Second, there is the feeling of a personal affront. Third, a decision of this nature raises a fundamental question for survivors: Is it really possible to trust a Gentile?[203]

Some blame themselves if their children marry a non-Jew.

> Both our sons have been to see Vienna. They've seen the places of my youth and heard the story of what happened. They both have strong feeling of Jewish identification, but they have both chosen young women who are not Jewish. I have a strong regret that I did not pursue the actual practicing of religion. It might have strengthened their feelings of belonging to the Jewish group. [Edmund Engelman][204]

> I believed, however, that there was a Jewish inheritance, something inborn, whether we follow the religion or not.

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[199] Rothchild, p. 343
[200] ibid., p. 407
[201] Helmreich, p. 137
[202] ibid., p. 247
[203] ibid., p. 136
[204] Rothchild, p. 362

> There is a common experience, common feelings that are precious. So I regret that I never put a religious stress, or any stress, on my children. [all four of his children married non-Jews.] [Felix Magnus][205]

Others feel injured and personally attacked when their children stray.

> There is a lot of bitterness for us about our son. What Hitler couldn't do to us with killing, he has done. My daughter-in-law is a very nice girl, a very excellent girl - but not Jewish. But what could we do? He was twenty-six and on his own. That's why we say maybe we need a little more anti-Semitism in this country, so people wake up before it is too late and we are all gone. [Rene Molho][206]

Many survivors lack trust of anyone outside of their own family. For some life revolves around the question, "Is it good or bad for the Jews."[207] Many affiliate with the Jewish community embracing it as their new extended family.

> Once a year we got together with Sephardic Jews in the Sephardic Temple in San Francisco, all survivors, and also with survivor friends we have weddings and bar mitzvahs. [Rene Molho][208]

They show a high devotion to Jewish causes, especially Israel. Within the Jewish community, Holocaust survivors are the most ardent and single minded supporters of Israel.[209] They buy a lot of Israel bonds.[210] (I remember this to be a cause to which my grandmother devoted her time. I still have Israel bonds maturing today.) As only 2% of the American Jewish

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[205] ibid., p. 404
[206] ibid., p. 420
[207] Hass, p. 60
[208] Rothchild, p. 419
[209] Hass, p. 84
[210] Helmreich, p. 185

population, survivors have bought 10% of Israel Bonds sold in the United States.[211] They view their devotion to Israel as a religious duty.

> ...our experiences in Europe make us strong supporters of Israel. We can't foresee the future in America, but we know that if, God forbid, things go badly we would have a place to go to. [Stanley Bors][212]

In one study 90% of survivors living in America had visited Israel compared to only one-third of American born Jews.[213] They feel pride in the State of Israel because it depicts Jews as a proud and strong people.[214]

As mentioned earlier in conjunction with joining organizations, the feeling of belonging is very important to survivors. Joining a synagogue brings them in contact with other Jews and makes them feel that they are a part of something.[215] On the other hand, some, when asked if they participate in a synagogue, reply, "How can I go to the shul and thank God that I survived when others didn't? What, was I better than others?..."[216] Still to many, particularly the older survivors, the synagogue remained with them even after they discarded other observances. Why the synagogue? "It was a concrete embodiment of the old country that could, at the same time, anchor them in their adopted home."[217] The following statistics, based on interviews conducted by Helmreich over a six year period from the late

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[211] Hass, p. 159
[212] Rothchild, p. 331
[213] Hass, p. 159
[214] Helmreich, p. 255
[215] ibid., p. 245
[216] Hass, p. 33
[217] Helmreich, p.159

1980's to the early 1990's, paint a picture of religious observance among Holocaust survivors:

> Turning to religious identification, among the survivors 84 percent came from observant homes compared to only 62 percent in the case of American Jews. It is therefore not surprising that they are far more likely, by a 73 to 47 percent margin, to belong to a synagogue. Survivors are twice as likely to keep a kosher home as American Jews. They are more apt, though not by a wide margin, to observe Shabbat. About 41 percent of the survivors identify themselves as Orthodox, 38 percent as Conservative, 5 percent are Reform, and 16 percent are unaffiliated.[218]

Survivors affiliate with congregations and Jewish movements for a variety of reasons.

> Organized religion in a Reformed American congregation seemed to me to be a social organization. People joined because it was the accepted thing to do. We joined because otherwise if, God forbid, one of us were to die we wouldn't have a place to be buried. And the second reason was to send our kids to Sunday school to give them a feeling of belonging. [Simon Grubman][219]

> I'm a humanist, a universalist, but I'm also a Jew with a sense of tribal pride that is like the pride of a family. Reconstructionism serves as an anchor for me and Helene as well. I learned that I have to anchor myself to a special part of humanity without renouncing the broader sense of brotherhood or sisterhood. [Maurice Diamant][220]

Holiday observance is another story. One survivor recalls, "Holidays are hell for me. Literally hell. The loneliness...the memories of what happened...how I used to celebrate them...my family, the joy, the beauty..."[221] Others took these pleasant past associations and remarked how such observances have aided them in keeping near to their lost family and

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[218] ibid., p. 209
[219] Rothchild, p. 386
[220] ibid., p. 259
[221] Hass, p. 45

concurrently engendering a feeling of loyalty and respect for the murdered.[222] Many go through the motions to retain just such a closeness to murdered parents and grandparents. It allows them to communicate, in an abstract but crucial way, with their parents and others who were close to them. "It meant that though physically dead, those who were gone from this world remained very much alive spiritually. For the survivors, ritual observance and cultural involvement became the vehicles for honoring and commemorating those no longer present."[223]

There are many reasons why survivors have remained a part of the Jewish community:

> (1) belief in God based on personal experience
> (2) general theological explanations
> (3) preserving linkages to tradition and to their prior European-Jewish lifestyle
> (4) identifying with the contemporary Jewish community
> (5) a richer more rewarding way of life[224]

Remaining in the community and observant is a tangible way of continuing in the path of those who died.[225] In survivor families not only was a secular education important, Jewish education was also a value of many survivors. In fact, their children were twice as likely as American Jewish children to attend a Jewish day school.[226]

> Our children went to Sunday school and Hebrew school. My son was Bar Mitzvah. They are both very conscious of being Jewish. They have gone out with non-Jews but there was never a question but that my daughter would marry a

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[222] ibid., p. 153
[223] Helmreich, p. 244
[224] ibid., p. 238
[225] ibid., p. 243
[226] Hass, p. 130

> Jew. They're very conscious of my experiences. I never sat down and told them the story of my life, but they heard things and I told them things. [Rose Rosenthal][227]

Judaism is a value the survivors hope to pass on to the next generation. Perhaps this desire for Jewish continuity is what motivates the survivors to remain a part of the Jewish community. They want their children to remain Jewish. They pray that they will have Jewish grandchildren. Dispite this motivation, they are not always so confident that their efforts will pay off.

> [Talking about his daughter] I do not know what her feelings are about Jewishness. We did everything we could to give her Jewish feelings and education. She went to Sunday school and sang in the choir. She knows that by some miracle we survived Hitler. We didn't tell her all the details of our past experiences. Maybe we should have told her more. [Stanley Bors][228]

But it wasn't only for the children. When Aaron Hass asked the survivors he interviewed, "How do you feel about being Jewish?" He received the following responses:

> I'm very proud I'm Jewish. I wouldn't change for anything. Even if I had to go through it again, I would still be a Jew.
>
> If Hitler was like the Inquisition in Spain, I would probably be one of those who would have converted. I wouldn't dare risk my life to go to a gas chamber if I had a choice. But after the war, someone in my group had a baby boy and he didn't want to circumcise him because he didn't want his son to have to go through life as a Jew. Gee, was I mad. I screamed at him!
>
> I feel more Jewish now than before. I'm not ashamed I'm a Jew. I'm proud I'm a Jew. Before, if I would see Jews in the street going with their 'Jewish uniform' - *yalmulkes*, and *tzitzit* in the front and back, I didn't like it. Today, if I see a Jew with the *tzitzit*, I'm proud. Today I don't believe in God, but I believe in Jews.

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[227] Rothchild, p. 430
[228] ibid., p. 331

> Before the Holocaust, I always felt different. You didn't want to be Jewish. We were told we were the cause of everything bad. The Holocaust made me feel good about being Jewish. Now whenever I can, I make it a point to let people who deal with me know that I am Jewish.[229]

Observance of holidays and rituals, identification with being Jewish, or even involvement with prayer does not always equal belief in God.

> The gray stone marker that read "Benjamin Landau" was worn. Pale letters spelled out my father's name and the dates of his birth and death. I broke down and cried. I wondered if I should recite the *Kaddish*, the Hebrew prayer for the dead. Its words glorify God and his mercy, but after Auschwitz, I had stopped believing in either one. Nevertheless, I said the prayer, if only to show respect for my slain father. Afterwards, as is the Jewish custom, I left small pebbles on the top of the gravestone.[230]

There was a definite decrease in the number of believers after the war. Although the majority of believers did not become atheists, the Holocaust did create doubts about the nature of God and God's relationship to human beings.[231] For example, many who are still a part of the Orthodox community, who still define themselves as highly observant Jews, no longer have faith in God.[232] Some are mad at God yet still continue to believe in God.[233] For other survivors, God is the Parent who abandoned them. Before the war God was a God who intervened. "He was an all seeing, all-knowing God who punished individuals for their sins and rewarded individuals for their good deeds. He was the Parent who judged fairly, who loved His

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[229] Hass, p. 158
[230] Eichengreen, p. 199
[231] Helmreich, p. 238
[232] ibid., p. 210
[233] ibid., p. 241

children, who promised His shield."[234] For many this image was shattered as their lives had been shattered.

Pathology

Even though a good number of survivors have picked up their shattered pieces and reassembled them, some still feel debilitated by what happened to them personally and by what they witnessed.[235] "Ironically, for many survivors the anguished legacy of the Holocaust commingles with an enhanced confidence in one's abilities to prevail in the future. 'I survived Auschwitz. I can survive anything' is the theme echoed by those who lived in extremes."[236] Even "in their happiest moments, the survivors remain aware of how human beings can be made to suffer."[237] Their Holocaust experience has affected their mental health status as has many post liberation factors such as the extent to which one perceives the Holocaust to have affected one's physical health, marital satisfaction, economic resources, the presence of supportive family and friends, religious affiliation, and the extent of self disclosure of Holocaust experiences.[238] Such things as the loss of immediate members of family, relations, homes, and livelihoods, "a dashing of the inflated hope for post-War utopia, prolonged and debilitating residence in DP camps, downward change in socio-economic status, and

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[234] Hass, p. 144
[235] ibid., p. 13
[236] ibid., p. 14
[237] Helmreich, p. 225
[238] Hass, p. 7

emigration to a strange land with a different language, tempo of life, and custom," also play a role in the developing psyche of the Holocaust survivor.[239] For some, dignity is restored through post-war accomplishments.[240] Inner strength is established when they convince themselves that their own survival required this, in addition to sheer luck. "Look what I made it through while millions did not or could not, they reflect."[241] This same thought leads others to a phenomenon called survivor guilt which I will address shortly. Many measure inner strength by material and familial attainment and equate this to emotional health. When survivors are asked if they consider themselves normal most answer in the affirmative.

> Toward their own kind survivors may pretend perfect adjustment to normal society - not because they have overcome all handicaps, but because they cannot admit that they, too, failed to rise above the depravity of the concentration camp.[242]

There is a penalty for admitting to abnormalities. "To not be normal would be to acknowledge that one's *spirit* had been broken."[243] The truth was that many were afraid and their spirit had been broken.

> I still have trouble in believing in permanency and security in my life. There is today but what about tomorrow? The gas chambers have been gone for a long time, but they are too deeply entrenched in my consciousness, and the fears are still here. Neither my loving and rich aunt and uncle nor the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights can give me back my sense of security.[244]

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[239] Chodoff, p. 10
[240] Hass, p. 40
[241] ibid., p. 40
[242] Weinberg, p. 156 - 157
[243] Hass, p. 70
[244] Birnhak, p. 448

Despite what we know today about Post -Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), beginning in 1945 and for decades following, the majority of survivors never sought psychiatric assistance.[245] In fact, fewer than 10% sought psychotherapeutic help. And, if they did, it was not for problems Holocaust-related but rather for reasons such as marital or child rearing issues. Some survivors did not seek psychiatric help because they feared being blamed by their psychotherapist for particular actions or for their inactions during the war. Others had a powerful need to forget past humiliations and reacted by demonstrating an exaggerated intolerance for human weakness. "Only the weak or debilitated need psychological help, they believe." Also, they did not wish to examine closely the compartmentalization of their past for fear of it spilling over uncontrollably onto their present adjustment. "While fear and rage and grief lurked in the background, the survivor attempted to keep himself in the foreground, moving ahead to life and farther away from death."[246] Some survivors equate psychotherapy with complaining and feel, "What right do I have to complain when others died?"[247] Finally, some associate "getting well" with forgetting their murdered parents and siblings and forgiving the persecutors.

Many have experienced long term personality alterations such as seclusiveness, helplessness and apathy. Their view of the world is marked

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[245] ibid., p. 5
[246] ibid., p. 80
[247] ibid., p. 81

by suspicion, hostility, and mistrust. These are traits which interfere with interpersonal relationships.[248] Some suffer from sexual insecurity. For many young girls, their first experience with sexual intercourse was sexual assault in the concentration camp, whether an observed or personal experience. "Their adolescence, a time for sexual experimentation (albeit in a muted fashion, given the mores of the environment), was denied them."[249] Many are bitter because their inner purity was completely destroyed at such an early age.[250] Some suffer self-hatred because of the humiliation and utter powerlessness they experienced.

Unease with or fear of authority is another trait shared by many who lived through the war, as is fear of helplessness.[251] As survivors age, this fear of helplessness increases. "Advancing years bring a continuous loss of physical ability. Survivors are particularly sensitive to this decline because of their previous terror and feelings of vulnerability. The network of social supports also fades away as spouses or friends die and children move away."[252] As their health deteriorates, they are affected psychologically. Some feel lonely and dependent. Some of these feelings also stem from the lack of work in retirement and the departure of children. As mentioned previously, this gives the elderly more time to reflect . Repressed images

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[248] Chodoff, p. 7
[249] Hass, p. 98
[250] ibid., p. 61
[251] Helmreich, p. 235
[252] Hass, p. 22

and feelings are brought to the surface. In addition, lack of work meant certain death during the war and signifies certain death in the minds of many survivors today.[253] Most did not see their parents age, and as a result have no models of aging.[254]

"Old age, in itself, is potentially traumatic for survivors."[255] When their children leave home or their spouse or friends die, it is as if they are reliving their massive losses during the war.[256] This renewed sense of loss can spark latent Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. "For traumatized people time may not heal, but may magnify their response to further trauma."[257] Entering a nursing home, for example, some survivors experience a recurrence of the disruption of their lives, of being uprooted, dislocated, and incarcerated. They are again confined and given numbers and must submit to the humiliation of being helpless and being told what to do "for their own good" by authorities whom they have learned to mistrust. "They may see doctors as Nazis and medication as a return to helplessness. They may feel they are being tested, restrained, and operated on as though they were undergoing Nazi experiments."[258]

Survivors are constantly encountering symbols and situations that induce anxiety. Uniforms and dogs are the most common symbols. Sights,

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[253] Yael Danieli Ph.D., "As Survivors Age: Part I", *Clinical Quarterly* (Winter 1994) p. 3
[254] ibid.,
[255] ibid.,
[256] ibid.,
[257] Yael Danieli Ph.D., "As Survivors Age: Part II", *Clinical Quarterly* (Spring 1994) p.22
[258] Danieli (Winter 1994), p. 3

sounds, smell, items, situations, and even people may trigger a memory and emotion such as sadness, fear, or anger.[259] Harmless things may spark anxiety: an unexpected phone call or knock at the door, smoke from a chimney, hearing the German language, long lines, pushing, maybe even taking a shower.[260] These triggers will vary considerably from person to person. Everyday life provides continual reminders of their previous fate as the following descriptions, from a number of survivors, illustrate:

> Whenever I see a crane [I think of the Holocaust]. I witnessed the hanging of inmates. You know when you hang someone, he falls down and breaks his neck. When I was in Nordhausen, if a machine broke, they said it was sabotage. One day they took prisoners by the dozens and hung them with piano wire onto an iron bar. They had a crane pick up the iron bar and those people just were dangling there for days.
>
> When I see a line at the movies I see a line at the gas chambers.
>
> A day doesn't go by without seeing certain things. We lived eight kilometers from Sobibor and we used to smell the burning bones. When I go to the dentist and he drills my tooth, that always brings back memories of Sobibor.
>
> A few months ago I saw an apple on the street while I was walking in the morning. I remembered when we were on work detail in Kaufering. We were being marched to work. I saw an apple by the side of the road and quickly ate it. When we got back, the Jewish Kapo called me out of line. I got fifteen lashes.
>
> The deepest blow was the fact that I lost my parents...and *how* I lost them. *That* I can never make peace with. Yesterday I was in the car with my husband and we were behind a bus. The exhaust from the bus was large and I started to faint from it and I started to think how my mother and father felt when the gas was coming. You see you lead a normal life, but it never is...it could never be. It's an instant.

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[259] Hass, p. 63
[260] Helmreich, p. 233-234

> During the [Clarence] Thomas hearing...It had nothing to do with the Holocaust, but it reminded me how such seemingly decent people could do such things....It reminded me of the nice people who were killing innocent human beings...men, women, and children...and living such an outwardly beautiful, gentle life, and pretending they never did anything wrong.[261]

> And then the baby was born on July 20, 1947. I think the doctor is shaken up by the experience to this day. When I woke up form the anesthesia I thought I was back in the camp. Having seen so many children killed right after the delivery I thought that was going to happen to me. My mind was very clear and I explained to the doctor in German, "I swear this baby is not mine, " I said. "It's a Christian baby, even though I'm Jewish. Doctor you know this is not my baby. So don't kill the baby." I yelled, I screamed. I made them bring my sister as a witness that it was not my baby. The doctor though I was in postnatal shock, and called my sister because he didn't know what to do with me. [Sally Grubman][262]

> In between the two births was a miscarriage, which I remember because of another strange episode. I was sorry but not frightened by the miscarriage until my sister wanted to call a police ambulance to get me to the hospital. And then I became frantic. I remember jumping up and down and saying that they will never bring me back if they take me in a police ambulance. I'm well adjusted but it took me a long time to cope with the sight of a policeman. I crawl into a shell. I'm just afraid. [Sally Grubman][263]

Early on one survivor wondered, "how long it would take to control the invasion of images from the past."[264] Today she would probably answer, never. Even a particular time of day can spark fear in a survivor. For example, one woman tells of how her mother calls her every day at 3:30 sharp to ask if her kids came home and, if they haven't, she goes crazy. "One time, when the kids were twenty minutes late, she got in a cab and came over here [Brooklyn], all the way from the Bronx, during rush hour."

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[261] Hass, p. 109-110
[262] Rothchild, p. 378
[263] ibid., p. 379
[264] Eichengreen, p. 169

She did this because 3:30 is the exact time she was taken away from her parents in the ghetto in Poland and she never saw them again.[265]

These reactions are very real and valid. Some psychiatrists call this anxiety Concentration Camp Syndrome (CCS), other refer to it as Survivor Syndrome or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (only in 1980 did this become listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, 3rd ed., pp. 236-238)[266]. No matter what it is called, the symptoms are the same: anxiety, irritability, restlessness, apprehensiveness, startled reaction to ordinary stimuli,[267] guilt, intense feelings of loneliness, and paranoia,[268] chronic depressive states, some disturbances of cognition and memory, a tendency to isolation and social withdrawal, an inability to verbalize trauma, psychosomatic complaints (of almost all organ systems, but most common are weakness, fatigue, and gastrointestinal symptoms)[269], and in some extreme cases, an appearance that suggested a similarity to the "musulman" or "living corpse" stage of concentration camp prisoners who had regressed to such apathy and hopelessness that death was imminent.[270] These characteristics are worse at night and are usually accompanied by insomnia and nightmares.[271]

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[265] Helmreich, p. 233
[266] Danieli (Winter 1994), p. 2
[267] Chodoff, p. 7-8
[268] Helmreich, p. 225
[269] Chodoff, p. 8
[270] Bergman & Jucovy, p.11
[271] Chodoff, p. 7-8

> My nights were long and black, and sleep came only for short periods at a time. What had been a reality in the past now repeated itself in recurring nightmares: German boots chasing me through the dark of the night, flashlights searching me out. The horrors remained vivid and alive.[272]

Many fear falling asleep as well as early morning awakenings.[273] Nightmares were often more frequent in the years immediately following liberation.[274] But, the frequency of nightmares increased for many when the topic of the Holocaust increased in popularity. The dreams were attributed to having read books or seen films on the Holocaust. Some, however, reported no apparent trigger. "According to one study, more than four out of five survivors experience upsetting dreams."[275] With old age these dreams seem to reappear.

The cause of CCS is attributed to massive emotional and physical stresses to which the prisoners were exposed.[276] Some even think that it can be ascribed to organic brain disease resulting from injury, illness, and malnutrition incurred during the internment.[277] The severity, duration, and proximity of an individual's exposure to the traumatic event are important factors. There is also some evidence that social supports, family history, childhood experiences, and personality variables, and preexisting mental disorders may influence the development of this disorder. Depression, one

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[272] Eichengreen, p. 157
[273] Bergman & Jucovy, p. 11
[274] Hass, p. 64
[275] Helmreich, p.223
[276] Chodoff, p. 9
[277] ibid., p. 10

of the most common symptoms, often is the result of delayed mourning since most survivors were unable to engage in ceremonial mourning for their dead.[278] Closure is difficult.

Many survivors suffer from an inability to express emotions. Some experience a dulling of affect.[279] This "Psychic numbness" or "psychic closing off" is directly linked to their past.

> During the Holocaust, while they were experiencing the overwhelming losses and stresses and the resultant intolerable anger or fear, survivors blocked out all capacity for emotion in the interest of continuously adapting to their changing, hostile environment. Emotional awareness would have brought the potential for demoralization, and it would have distracted from the task at hand - surviving one more day. Although this defense was valuable at the time, its lingering deployment was obviously maladaptive.[280]

Of the emotions survivors do feel, guilt is significant. Sometimes this guilt is associated with a specific episode; for example, when a prisoner had taken an action which led to the saving of his own life at increased risk to another.[281] If they feel they behaved selfishly, even if there was no other way to survive, they feel guilty.[282] Some feel guilt regardless of their individual behavior and for no reason except that they are alive when so many others died, this is what is known as "survivor guilt". Some feel guilty because they feel that they could have, or should have saved their loved ones

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[278] ibid., p. 10-11
[279] Helmreich, p. 103
[280] Hass, p. 4
[281] Chodoff, p. 11
[282] Helmreich, p. 224

who died. Even if they could have done nothing to help, they find themselves asking over and over, "Why did I live and not them?"[283]

> Coming to terms with the loss of Karin, of Mother and Father, was impossible. My desolation and despair over their deaths made me question my own right to survive. And I was alone with my guilt.[284]

When survivors experience luxuries in their new life in America, there is usually a nagging sense of guilt.

> Restaurants, concerts, movies, theaters. What a life! In the back of my mind I have the feeling that I don't deserve this, as though I hadn't paid dear enough for my survival. [Dana][285]

Those who are sole surviving members of a family are more likely to experience survivor guilt than those who are left with a parent or a sibling.[286] Also, those whose children were murdered during the Holocaust experience a great deal of survival guilt, and they also find it difficult to complete the mourning process.[287]

Some claim their survivor guilt comes and goes. "When I couldn't cope with the kids [I had survivor guilt]. I said, Why me? Why did I survive? What for? With all the troubles."[288] What alleviates guilt? For many, it is finding a meaningful purpose for their postwar life such as replenishing their family and the Jewish people.

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[283] ibid., p. 224
[284] Eichengreen, p. 133
[285] Birnhak, p. 446
[286] Hass, p. 29
[287] ibid., p. 50
[288] ibid., p. 31

> I think we should learn from our guilt feelings if we have them. We should get something positive out of it. To keep on living as Jews is the main thing. [Jack Goldman][289]

Finding meaning helps to justify their having beaten the odds. But again, when their children are not successful or when they inter-marry, survivors are stripped of a sense of purpose, particularly if they blame themselves for the outcome. "Survivor guilt may also serve to motivate an individual to bear witness to the Holocaust and continue to remember those who were murdered." This ensures education and future commemoration of victims. "However, survivor guilt also has the potential to compel an individual to remain mired in his past to the relative exclusion of his present or future."[290]

Those who experienced the loss, torture, hunger, abuse, and dehumanization and have lived to tell their story have been termed many things.

> Immediately after the war, we were "liberated prisoners"; in subsequent years we were included in the term "DPs," or "displaced persons." Eventually, we became "emigrants" and "immigrants," as well as "refugees"; in the United States we were sometimes generously called "new Americans." Then for a long time the facts of liberation and migration were not reflected in a name assigned to us, and there was a good chance that we, as a group, might go nameless. But one day I noticed that I had been reclassified as a "survivor."[291]

Being "categorized for having survived adds to the damage I have suffered; it is like wearing a tiny new Yellow Star."[292] These are people

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[289] Rothchild, p. 377
[290] Hass, p. 25
[291] Weinberg, p. 150
[292] ibid., p. 151

with feelings. Each an individual. Robert Spitz who survived who survived *Bergen-Belsen* and *Theresienstadt* sums it up best,

> Survivors should not be placed under one identifying umbrella. I can remember the arrival of the trains and the extraordinary variety of people coming into the camps. I was astonished to see the Sephardic Jews from the Balkans and Greece, so different from any Jews I'd ever seen. I think of all those different kinds of people when I examine the regional differences of American Jews. There is no such thing as a typical American Jew, and there is no such thing as a typical survivor.[293]

We can learn much from listening to their stories. Each experience carries with it lessons. It is important to hear their words so that we can become their witness. About one third of survivors who came to America have died.[294] Survivors are concerned.

> I hope that the memory of what happened will not die with the deaths of us survivors. I do everything possible to ensure that it doesn't. That is why I support what you are doing [said to the interviewer], and that is why we are building up tape libraries, video testimonials, and stressing the importance of educating young people in Holocaust studies. But it is true that the impact of the Holocaust will be reduced once there is no one left alive with direct experience of it, because the actual experience is hard enough to communicate even directly from a survivor to a non-survivor, so terrible was it. Let me say again that I am a rarity: I am one of the few who has been able to put the memory aside, or rather turn it to positive use. Most of the survivors are still living under the direct impact of what happened to them; and maybe you won't meet those survivors who have survived physically, but who are deeply and terribly scarred; whose lives are permanently spoiled - you won't meet them because they won't talk to you. Maybe they wouldn't help you. But do not forget that they are there. Surviving the KZ is not necessarily a success story, ever. [Ernest Michel][295]

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[293] Rothchild, p. 443
[294] Helmreich, p. 15-16
[295] Gill, p. 291

Soon there will be no more survivors living to talk of their experience, to show us the numbers on their arm and other visible scars as well as the scars that we know exist, deep within their soul, out of our sight. These scars, though they appear to have healed, we know they have not.

Nonetheless, despite the price of liberation, survivors are a very resilient group. Their ability to work productively and creatively, their capacity to build a family anew, their desire to enjoy life, their commitment to the continuity of the Jewish people demonstrate this. Few are noticeably depressed.[296] On the surface they appear "normal" and successful. When asked if they feel joy, some will answer that "joy after Auschwitz is sacrilegious. Joy would imply a betrayal of all those murdered. Happiness would distort all which had occurred."[297] Others emphasize how much they appreciate their good fortune because they have known the other side. The issue, however, was not so black and white. One survivor recalls her wedding day as a mixture of joy and sorrow.

> We married in New York on November 7, 1946, in the study of Rabbi Lieber with only a few friends and some of Dan's relatives in attendance. As I stood under the *khupe*, the rabbi's voice seemed to fade away. I was happy, yet I had also never been sadder or more painfully aware of the emptiness left by the loss of our families. I thought about my mother, my father, Karin, and Dan's parents. If only we could have received their blessings - if only they could have shared our joy. Why had the Nazis murdered them? Why?[298]

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[296] Hass, p. 92
[297] ibid., p. 77
[298] Eichengreen, p. 184

When asked about their greatest success post-liberation, "many survivors, rich or poor, religious or irreligious, educated or not educated, identified raising a nice family as their chief accomplishment."[299] Others identified financial security and the ability to give to charity. To help those less fortunate is a moral imperative. "The survivors' ability to create a social living space for themselves in a land that was unfamiliar to them, while at the same time becoming part of American society, demonstrates further that these people were determined not to allow their past tragedies to defeat them."[300]

> My experiences left me with a great love for life. I place a great importance on the meaning of life, the value of every human being. [Jack Goldman][301]

> My Holocaust experiences left me with an ability to cope with life to a greater degree than I had before. I see things more clearly. It gives me a tremendous sense of value - a feeling about what is important and unimportant in life. In a way it made me more philosophical rather than emotional. In order to pick up the pieces and continue through life, not as a cripple, but as a human being, I had to build some kind of shell around me. I didn't isolate myself, but I tried to temper any hurt that might come out of an emotional issue with another person. [Simon Grubman][302]

They were hurt, scared and cautious. When offered the choice between living in an enlivened state or a deadened state, most continue to choose living life to the fullest and enjoying what they have. This realization took time for some people.

> And then little by little I realized it wasn't the first time. It happened a hundred years ago and two hundred years ago.

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[299] Helmreich, p.258-259
[300] ibid., p. 266
[301] Rothchild, p. 376
[302] ibid., p. 385

> In our generation it was just on a bigger scale. I just let time be a healer. You cannot live and have grudges forever. [Herman Herskovic][303]

Lessons such as this are what impact the future generation, especially the grandchldren. The next gereration restores hope to many. Some will even argue that perhaps the most dominant leverage determining psychological well being was the degree of *naches* (joy) derived from children[304] - their own children, and also the ones who write them letters of appreciation and enlightenment after hearing their stories. One survivor told me that she saves every letter she receives and looks forward to her speaking engagements. The survivors realize that just as it has happened in the past, so too could it happen again if children are not taught the result of hatred.

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[303] ibid., p. 394
[304] Hass, p. 104

THE TRANSFERENCE OF LEGACY

The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.
- Jeremiah 31:29

Liberation took its toll, not only on the survivors, but also on their children. The Shoah remains an unmastered and unmasterable trauma even for the next generation.[305] From the moment these children were born, they became part of this legacy of survival. Whether or not their parents discussed their wartime experiences, the effects of the Holocaust made their way to the children.[306] Psychologists agree that social pathology is transmitted from one generation to the next. These children, born after World War II, inherited a distinct and defining identity that manifests itself in a variety of ways.

Despite the fact that this is a heterogeneous group, diverse in their personality profiles, levels of achievement, religious and sexual orientations, Rabbi Steven L. Jacobs, himself a son of survivors, believes, "all members of this group are defined and united by a central paradox: The most important event in their lives occurred prior to their birth."[307] A daughter of survivors, author Julie Salamon, reminds her readers how the event is at the

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[305] Alan L. Berger, *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 58
[306] ibid. p. 178
[307] Steven L. Jacobs, *Rethinking Jewish Faith: The Child of a Survivor Responds* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. xvii

"core of your being."[308] "Like the second children of Job these second-generation witnesses attest to an event that they never lived through but that ineluctably shapes their lives."[309] This overrides any differences in temperament, religious belief, lifestyle, ambition, and personal priorities. This group is "witness to memory" and therefore united as one.

In 1997 it was estimated that about 150,000 children of survivors were living in the United States.[310] A child of a survivor is an individual who was born after the Holocaust, and, while not himself or herself subject to persecution, this child does have at least one parent who was subject to persecution.[311] Many seek to find others like themselves. Many wonder if their childhood, and now adult experiences are similar to other second generation witnesses. Most find that this factor of family history is a bond that anchors them to others in this category.

Helen Epstein, a child of survivors and author of *Children of the Holocaust*, one of the first ground breaking books documenting the lives of several second generation Holocaust survivors (referred to as "the Bible" of the second generation[312]) describes her motivation for the book as wanting to find others who like herself are "possessed by a history they had never lived." Reading her book and being exposed to the lives of this generation

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[308] Berger, p. 96
[309] ibid., p. 1
[310] ibid. p. 100
[311] Erica Wanderman, "Children and Families of Holocaust Survivors: A Psychological Overview" in *Living After the Holocaust: Reflections by the Post-War Generation in America*, eds. Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975), p.118
[312] Berger, p. 17

makes it apparent how varied from one another these people are, yet at the same time they embrace many shared characteristics. This is most evident in their experiences during childhood and the parenting they received.

Like Epstein, Aaron Hass also embarked on his book with no prior hypothesis. He was simply interested in finding out the extent to which other children of survivors had experiences similar to his own. He writes, "I wanted to know if there were attitudes and patterns shared by those who had grown up in the shadow of the Holocaust."[313] Aaron Hass is a clinical psychologist, university professor, husband and father, but describes himself as being "foremost a child of an earlier era." He writes, "Events that occurred fifty years ago, before my birth, follow me."[314]

Since the late 1970's psychologists and psychohistorians have studied this group. Interviewing both children who seek psychological help and those who have not, studying individuals and groups, this population, the children of Holocaust survivors, has been written about extensively over the last 20 years. Most studies began when children of survivors were teenagers or in their young twenties, the age when many of their parents were surviving the "Final Solution". This age was extremely difficult for many of the second generation because it corresponded so closely with their

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[313] Aaron Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 2
[314] ibid., p. 1

parents' traumatization.[315] These children providrd the data for statistical and analytical analysis.

When the early studies began, some children of survivors were taken aback by their findings; most were psychiatric studies which made strong remarks regarding the negative traits found in the personality of this population.[316] In the late 1970's there was very little research, though research did begin appearing as early as the late 1960's. As stated previously, these studies were a direct reaction to "adolescents of survivors who experience psychological problems and sought professional help."[317] Up until that point, no one considered that the Holocaust might transfer to the next generation.[318] In the year 2000 we know differently. We also realize that the range of traits passed to the second generation is broad in scope from exceptionally well- functioning individuals to those with serious problems in living.[319] Before we can understand the issues faced by the second generation, their tendencies and values, it is important to look at how this group learned of their family history and how they functioned within their family structure.

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[315] Norman Goldwasser, *Effects of the Holocaust on Survivors and Their Families* (Virginia Commonwealth University), p. 239
[316] Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 21
[317] Deborah Jill Schloss, *The Transmission of Traits From Holocaust Survivors to Their Children - A Holistic Approach* (Los Angeles: HUC-JIR Thesis School of Communal Service), p.4
[318] ibid.
[319] Robert M. Prince, *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 187

Transmission of Holocaust Memory

Parents, the survivors, faced a challenge - how do they tell their children of their Holocaust experiences without causing anguish? Is this even possible? Life was to continue and survivors had to figure out how to move forward without forgetting their past. They wanted their children to know of their family history, but this was not an easy task.

> Survivors, above all, wished to foster a normal family life once again. And while some children of survivors actively sought information from their parents, others indicated (usually nonverbally) that reminders of their parents' Holocaust past were simply too painful to admit.[320]

If the children were not listening, who would pass on this legacy? Who would remember? In 1983, Benjamin Meed, a survivor and then President of the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, expressed a hope:

> ... while we are still blessed with life, we must do what we can to see that our past is not forgotten, that our heritage is passed on to our children and to the future generations of the world, that the legacy of our struggle and survival may in turn continue to survive.[321]

He believes this necessary. "Our sons and daughters will carry forward our legacy of pride, of heroism, of an obligation to keep the memory alive and to warn the world again and again: Don't let this happen again."[322] It is now up to the second generation to speak up, to provide a voice for their survivor parents, many of whom have died or are aging. This

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[320] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 72

[321] Caryle Murphy, "Giving Thanks, Honoring the Dead" in *The Obligation to Remember: The American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Washington D.C. April 11 - 14: an Anthology*, ed. The Washington Post Staff (Washington D.C.: Washington Post, 1983), p. 18

[322] ibid.

reality will not vanish from their lives. Thane Rosenbaum, an author and child of survivors who is now married and is a parent himself, attests that his second-generation legacy makes him "part of an army where there is no possibility of draft-dodging."[323] And, as Art Spiegelman, author of *Maus I* and *II* explains, "the Shoah is both a barrier and bond between father and son."[324] Even when knowledge of it may push some children away, it also has a way of holding families close together.

Survivors' children find ways to cope and build relationships with their parents. Spiegelman is able to continue his relationship with his father through his books. Another author explains how he uses his writing as a compensation for the years of childhood silence. He knew his mother was in Maidanek and his father in Bergen-Belsen, but neither spoke about their lives in the camps. Many second generation authors, actors, screen writers, cinematographers, and artists find that these media allow them to explore their Holocaust legacy in a creative venue. For many this was a legacy comprised of terrible secrets that threatened to overwhelm them.[325] Now, as adults they realize they are "direct inheritors of a legacy that Jews all over the world have sworn never to forget."[326] Yet, some refuse to cooperate in that effort; others are undecided.

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[323] Berger, p. 79
[324] ibid., p. 62
[325] ibid., p. 186
[326] Helen Epstein, "Children of the Holocaust: Searching for a Past - and a Future", *Present Tense Magazine*, p. 25

What should they remember; what are they obligated not to forget? And what if they don't have a sense of personal history and only know a collective historical perspective? Thomas Friedman was born in Hungary in 1947 to a mother who survived Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz and a father who was in a forced-labor brigade in the Ukraine. Friedman paints a wonderful analogy with his words, "Post-Auschwitz second-generation identity is comparable to putting together pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. In order to achieve this task, daughters and sons of survivors pursue several paths of self-discovery in an attempt at *tikkun atzmi*, repair of one's personal self. Their parents' testimony serves as impetus to learn more about what happened during the Holocaust, which, in turn, helps this generation better understand itself."[327]

It is important to understand how this legacy was transmitted. How did these children come to learn of their parents' past? Some overheard stories which their parents told to friends or surviving relatives. If their parents never spoke directly to them, they did not let their parents know what information they did know. Some learned from books and made assumptions about their parents' background based on this shared history. Lucy Steinitz writes,

> I taught myself about my parents' lives from books, obsessed with novels about Jews during World War II. The heroes of the stories I read began to take on the features of my mother and father, and I became terrified of my parents'

[327] Berger, p. 45

> world. I tried to imagine myself in their position; would I have had the courage to go on? They had proved their stamina, their bravery, their heroism - I had not, could not, do the same.[328]

Others actually preferred books, "You see, it's one thing to read about it and sit there and cry about it, but to actually hear that this is what happened to my sisters and brothers - it was too much to bear, something I wasn't able to do, so I preferred to hear it from a book." (Dina's parents had children who were killed during the Holocaust).[329] Others found that books and a collective history were their only option. Reading would allow one "to try to pass through a parents' silence, to try to understand them."[330] While books and historical facts provided a refuge for some, others felt that their personal link was enough. Knowledge of general history about the Holocaust was not necessary. They knew all they needed to know even if that was only that their parents had survived and many in their family did not.

Some children grew up knowing that there was a "War" with a capital "W". That was it. They knew details of pre-war and post-war experiences, but nothing more. They could ask questions about their parents' lives before the war, before concentration camps, even about ghetto life - and they knew details about after 1945, how their parents met again, how they were rejoined, how they got married, even about DP camps. But there's a real

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[328] Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, eds., *Living After the Holocaust: Reflections by the Post-War Generation in America* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975) p. i

[329] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation" , p. 37

[330] Berger, p. 114

sense of six years that are simply not there.[331] For many children, the specifics are foggy, but the mood and behavior of their parents when speaking are vividly etched in their minds. One remembers, "My mother got very sentimental and sometimes she cried and I hated that..."[332] Another recalls her mother, "She would tell me about terrible things and would make them almost into a nice fairy tale with a happy ending."[333] When memories came spontaneously or parents were reminded of the past, children remember their parent becoming either sad or agitated.[334] This sent a message, communication with words was not necessary for Holocaust memories to be transmitted.

Some parents were talkers, others were not. Some, when asked a question, would answer; however, many were never asked because children were too fearful of hurting their parents. Their faces spoke volumes and were often perceived as a signal not to ask. They somehow knew that their parents were broken and fragile, even if they appeared strong. How could they not be after what they had experienced? They had suffered enough, so their children too were silent. Questions filled their heads but never exited their lips. Did these children want to ask or did they want to keep silent because they feared the answers would fuel their own dormant anxieties? These children would often refrain from approaching their parents for

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331 "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p. 39
332 Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 39
333 ibid.
334 Prince, p. 33

information until adulthood, when their fears and anger were more effectively controlled.[335] In addition, "in their thirties and forties they are more likely to demonstrate a valuing of their family's European history. Feeling different from one's peers is perhaps most disconcerting during adolescence."[336]

Those who could not ask or did not ask, do feel a loss. They hurt themselves and their parents with the silence. Most realize this when they have their own children and nothing to tell them or when a parent dies and they can no longer ask. They face raising the issue with dread - but also realize it is their duty to know and tell their children.[337]

Those who did ask questions were afraid that otherwise they would never know. In fact, many parents did not talk with their children simply because they felt that it had nothing to do with them.[338] Helen Epstein knew better and was afraid that without the questions she would experience a hole instead of a history behind her.[339] Children do want to fill in the details of their family history that was cut short. Many longed for grandparents and felt robbed. "The absence of grandparents meant another anchor, source of comfort, and evidence of secure continuity of life was missing."[340] "Grandparents were the ones who gave you the goodies and love you a

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[335] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 79
[336] ibid., p. 89
[337] Abraham J. Peck, The Children of Holocaust Survivors (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), p. 309
[338] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 25
[339] ibid., p. 39
[340] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 52 - 53

lot."[341] Children wondered about relatives who had been killed. They wanted to fill in the gaps and therefore had to ask questions.

Those that did not have to ask had the parents who talked. They went over and over the details as if nothing else existed. Children in these families often did not want to hear it:

> I remember the torture [when they talked of their Holocaust experiences]...They would want to go on and talk and talk and talk. I'd have to yell to stop them. I'd have to block my ears and yell "I don't want to hear!" or leave the room to make them stop.[342]

> When I was a kid, I couldn't stand them talking about anything that had to do with the war. They would show me pictures of the family and I didn't want to see them. I would get enraged. I would get furious. I couldn't look at them.[343]

There were those, however, who cherished the stories and guarded them as a treasure. As Epstein explains, "They proved my parents came from someplace, where people knew who they were. They were also my folklore: they taught me lessons and truths. . . . I felt as if I carried unwritten plays inside of me, whole casts of characters who were invisible and voiceless, who could only speak through me."[344] She continues, "I asked for the stories again and again because they made my parents heroes, and also because they explained certain mysterious behavior."[345] Another person recalled, "I love hearing my mother's stories because I like to hear

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[341] Prince, p. 140
[342] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 27
[343] ibid., p. 228
[344] ibid., p. 165 - 167
[345] Epstein, "Children of the Holocaust: Searching for a Past - and a Future", p. 22

about her family, and I always ask, and the next day she'll say, well, I dreamt about it last night." "In addition, many subjects reported that they experienced their parents' descriptions of the past as enriching their own lives by providing them with an affiliation to a world which no longer exists."[346] Others gained a feeling of trust and closeness with his or her parents. These disclosures were welcomed and seen as a sharing of a private and painful part of their parents' life.[347]

But words were at times superfluous in transmitting history. It was what came between the words or what accompanied the words that mattered. For example, "My sister would ask the questions and I would condemn her for asking. I never needed to hear words. It was the looks, the vibrations which gave me the feeling I have."[348] Findings show "a higher level of nonverbal transmission of Holocaust experiences by parents and an awareness of that background at an early age by children produced higher educational attainment by sons but greater psychological difficulties for daughters."[349] Also, the older child of survivors found it more difficult to listen to a parent's narrative. The younger children often perceived the story to be like those he or she heard from books.[350]

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[346] Prince, p. 45
[347] ibid., p. 44
[348] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 180
[349] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 80
[350] ibid., p. 81

Silence brought negative consequences as well, such as psychic devastation to the offspring. Silence implies no history. Silence implies shame. "Silence has a cost, particularly for children who grow up sensing deep pain in their family but having no context for understanding."[351] When the silence was broken, the shame would often disappear. Many survivors were waiting to talk. They wanted to talk and simply needed the opportunity to open up; a question gave them permission to do so. Children are curious but also cautious. In one study, "The specific questions children had in mind invariably involved some particular aspect of the parents' concentration camp experience. Several subjects wanted to know if their parents had ever stolen food or killed someone."[352] It is apparent that conflict exists in their minds as to whether or not such personal questions are appropriate. Dare they ask and do they want to know the answer? How do they know to question in the first place?

When second generation adults are asked when did you first learn about your Holocaust legacy, they respond that it is as if they had always known. Physical trauma, it is believed, is passed on to children from the moment they are born. Even before they have the ability to speak, children are able to perceive and absorb their surroundings - sadness, excessive

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[351] Moshe Lang, "The Shadow of Evil", *Networker* (September/October 1995), p. 59
[352] Prince, p. 46

concerns, emotional absence.[353] Many could not answer the question. They simply did not know when they first learned of their Holocaust legacy; it was a part of their being just as an arm or a leg is a part of their body:

> I don't know how or where or when I heard stories from the war. It's as if they came through thin air to my ear. I only picked up on the heroic parts, on the human parts. I could never remember the details.[354]

> I don't remember when my mother sat down and told it to me for the first time but I always harbored a knowledge that my family's history was unusual and that it bore a special message for me.[355]

> As long as I can remember, I feel like she's always been telling them [referring to her mother's communications to her about her experiences in the concentration camps]. When I could understand, that's when she started telling them.[356]

> I couldn't really say, I guess it's something that I've always known, five or six I would say . . . I couldn't remember the first time I heard about it. [357]

> All subjects had known of their parents' survivorhood for as long as they could remember. Not one subject could remember a time he did not have at least a dim awareness of his parents' experiences of persecution. Although a few subjects had only fragmentary knowledge of isolated details. There were a few subjects who did not know anything about their parents' experiences beyond the fact that they had been in a Nazi concentration or slave labor camp. Not one subject's description of his parents' experiences approached the horrifying portrayals which are readily available in the literature that has arisen out of the Holocaust.[358]

> Children of such families, although remembering their parents' and lost families' war histories "only in bits and pieces," attested to the psychological presence of the Holocaust at home at all times, verbally and nonverbally,

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[353] Felice Ailberfein, "Children of Holocaust Survivors: Separation Obstacles, Attachments and Anxiety," in *A Global Perspective on Working With Holocaust Survivors and the Second Generation*, ed. John Lemberger (JDC Brookdale Institute: Jerusalem, July 1995), p. 346
[354] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 179
[355] ibid., p. 321
[356] Prince, p. 29
[357] ibid.
[358] ibid., p. 185

> or in some cases, reported having absorbed the omnipresent experience of the Holocaust through 'osmosis'.[359]

With this innate awareness, the second generation faced a dilemma: how would they learn about the past and at the same time avoid confronting their parents? They did not want to cause unnecessary pain to their parents who had suffered enough already. There were many methods for gathering information without having to ask directly: (1) Discoveries were made by going surreptitiously through their parents' papers; (2) They listened carefully when others asked the questions they were afraid to ask; (3) They asked friends of their parents to tell them about their parents; (4) they relied on pretext, for example saying that the information would fulfill requirements for a school paper.[360]

Others reported having studied the Holocaust extensively.[361] Many had formally studied it in college. Others had chosen to write papers on it for general history courses or had done considerable independent reading. They felt that their extensive study of the Holocaust was in the service of understanding their parents rather than of understanding the historical event.[362] Several had visited the sites of concentration camps which have

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[359] Yael Danieli, Ph. D., "The Treatment and Prevention of Long-Term Effects And Intergenerational Transmission of Victimization: A Lesson From Holocaust Survivors and Their Children" in *Trauma and its Wake: The Study and Treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder,* C. R. Figley ed. (New York: Brunner Mazel, 1985) p. 6

[360] Prince, *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation*, p. 47

[361] ibid.

[362] ibid., p. 76

been preserved as memorials.[363] This journey, including a trip to their parents' home town, connected them to their past and put the "pieces of stories" in context . Some studied European history and Yiddish literature to gain perspective. And there were those who devoured collective histories and political events of the preceding several decades as if this would yield a composite picture of a family past.[364]

And yet, with all of this available to them, there were still gaps. Children fill these with fantasies. They create myths, especially in families engulfed in silence.[365]

> The parents' participation in a "conspiracy of silence" means that the son must fantasize about what happened during the Kingdom of Night. He muses:
>
> I torture myself with dreams of my mother bidden to do whore's service and Father forced to choose between feeding wife or child with final crusts. But because I don't know them as they were before their transformation into who they are, I see my mother as a child woman being possessed by Father who, after her days in Bergen-Belsen, might have recalled the uncertain safety of her own father. . . . So for me mother remains a victim.
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> In fact, these imaginings reflect a form of second-generation denial that is common in families where parents do not speak readily of their Holocaust experience.[366]

When asked for a full chronology, few members of the second generation could relate all the details of their parents' war years.[367] Stories were often told in bits and pieces. These children of survivors would have

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[363] ibid., p. 84
[364] Hanna Wirth-Nesher, *A Dual Legacy: How is the Child of Holocaust Survivors Different From Other Children? Moment Magazine.*
[365] Aaron Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 140
[366] Berger, p. 41
[367] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 69

to create an order out of the fragments of memory. Most memory tends to be associative rather than chronological anyway.[368] "It is almost as if the child had been given a jigsaw puzzle which had most of the pieces missing. For example, few children of survivors knew any of the details of their parents' incarceration. They tended not to know how long their parents had been in the camp or even the name of the camp. Often critical information about their parents' history was learned by accident."[369] The haphazard nature of information gathering has led to a patch work of history. The only thing shared among the children of survivors is an anguished collective memory.[370]

Bearing witness, especially to something that happened before one's birth, is not an easy process. The responsibility of learning another person's memory is an issue which has been repeatedly discussed in group sessions among the second generation. This group realizes that they have been unable to rid their parents of memories of the atrocities experienced and witnessed during the war; therefore, they have sublimated revenge into a promise to remember. Being the transmitter of memory creates both pain and conflict for children of survivors. These feelings are generated since they want both to be able to forget the pain and be like their peers, as well as

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[368] Berger, p. 146
[369] Prince, p. 30
[370] Vivian Eskin, The Impact of Parental Communication of Holocaust Related Trauma on Children of Holocaust Survivors, " in *A Global Perspective on Working With Holocaust Survivors and the Second Generation*, ed. John Lemberger (JDC Brookdale Institute: Jerusalem, July 1995), p. 384

to remember their promise to their parents, and to the memory of the Holocaust.[371] It is all a process. "Immediate responses to their parents' account included isolation of affect, denial, horror, guilt, anger at the world, and anger at parents for subjecting them to horrors of the past."[372] The response to knowledge of the parents' experience is one that evolves over time.[373]

Memory shapes identity. The *Maus* volumes are an example of this. They bear graphic witness to the process by which the second generation inherits Holocaust memory and how, in turn, this memory shapes identity.[374] This is a personal testimony for Spiegelman; he openly discusses this feature of his books. They demonstrate how the Holocaust both shapes and is shaped by second-generation identity.[375] Melvin Jules Bukiet writes as a second generation survivor trying to recapture pre-Holocaust shtetl life. He bases his stories on stories told to him by his father. "He articulates a distinctively second-generation lesson concerning remembrance: the deliberate remembrance, the refusal to forget," writes Bukiet, "the commitment this entails for creating a life worth living in a better future, whether this means America, Israel, or something within the individual self,

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[371] Vera Muller - Palsner "The Influence of Traumatic Memory in the Second Generation: Myth or Reality," in *A Global Perspective on Working With Holocaust Survivors and the Second Generation*, ed. John Lemberger (JDC Brookdale Institute: Jerusalem, July 1995), p. 322
[372] Prince, p. 186
[373] ibid., p. 42
[374] Berger, p. 66
[375] ibid., p. 71

is the only free choice we have to make."[376] Preserving memory is the path to *tikkun atzmi*, repair of the self, for many second generation survivors.

This generation will develop and has developed their own rituals for the purpose of memory. "Listening to survivors' testimony is itself a second generation witness ritual."[377] The second generation, for the most part, is telling their children. The desire to tell their own children - the third generation - about the Holocaust is "one of the few discrete traits held in common among children of survivors."[378] They are finding their own voice. "The contemporary children of Job work through the Holocaust in a manner that empowers them to interpret the meaning of their parents' experience."[379] Remembering does take place whenever a *yahrtzeit* (memorial) candle is lit, whenever Yom HaShoah is observed, when listening to a survivor's oral history, or hearing Yiddish or an Eastern European accent. Even when their own name is spoken an inherited memory is triggered. This is true because many children of survivors were named after someone who died in the Holocaust:

> I was named after both my grandfathers who were murdered by the Germans. Although it's a weak substitute for not having grandparents, I've always felt that having their name enables something to live on in me.[380]
>
> At times, my life seemed to be not my own. Hundreds of people lived through me, lives that had been cut short in the war. My two grandmothers, whose names were mine,

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[376] ibid., p. 73
[377] ibid., p. 36
[378] ibid., p. 104
[379] ibid., p. 186
[380] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 23 -24

> lived through me. My parents, too, were living through me.[381]

Some children of survivors are themselves viewed as memorial candles. Memory is filled with the question, could I have done what they did and survive? "Some need to prove it, others don't, but it is something that a child of survivors always thinks about."[382] They want to know the stories; they are scared to ask. What is most important, however, is that they are ready to listen. "To use a biblical metaphor, the second-generation witness can be seen as learning the lesson of Lot's wife. If one looks back too soon - or engages in confronting the enormity of the Holocaust before the appropriate time - the result may be fatal."[383] But one must confront the enormity of this legacy eventually. After all, as Helen Epstein points out, "Extended family is 'preserved only in a few cracked photographs of strangers.' 'Born in stillness,' it is up to the second-generation witnesses to educate themselves about details of the Shoah."[384]

Family Life

In survivor households many roles were confused. When children were the focus of a survivor parent's energy, often this was because the survivor was in an unsatisfactory marriage which lacked warmth and meaning. Rather than facing separation, loneliness or loss they remained in

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[381] ibid., p. 170
[382] William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 142
[383] Berger, p. 15
[384] ibid., p. 45

these marriages and instead demanded from their children attention that might typically be requested of a spouse.[385] They would derive pleasure in life from the children rather than each other.[386] In fact, many survivors believe that the reason for their survival was to have children. This was their purpose for life. To these children the prospect was frightening. "It implied expectations I could never meet," stated one child of such survivors. "It made me special, important, and precious but it deprived me of carelessness, the carelessness of childhood."[387] Survivors overvalued their children, "perceiving them to represent murdered relatives, if not European Jewry as a whole."[388] The child in this situation is idealized and imbued with qualities beyond what is realistically feasible, resulting in his continuous, unsuccessful attempts to meet expectations.[389] As mentioned earlier, "There is a crushing psychological burden placed on the children by their parents to be 'memorial candles' for those who perished."[390] This is one extreme.

The other extreme is the parents who feared another precipitous separation and would not allow themselves to become emotionally attached, even to their children.[391] Distancing is a common phenomenon among survivors. And while it may help them avoid confronting their own pain, it

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[385] Ailberfein, p. 344
[386] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 12
[387] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 170
[388] Berger, p. 113
[389] Ailberfein, p. 348
[390] Berger, p. 98
[391] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 9

does increase the pain of their children.[392] Parenting was not easy. Psychological conflicts, the absence of their own parents, the desire to have their needs met, are only a few aspects of a survivor's life that hamper their parenting ability. They simply did not know what they were doing. "Many survivors displayed an acute lack of empathy for their children's problems and emotional needs, particularly as they compared them with their own....(They did attend to material and physical needs)...They bought their children things. They urged their children to eat."[393] Their Holocaust experience led to flawed parenting skills. They simply could not relate to their children:

> Still other subjects described their parents' concentration camp experiences as having resulted in an impairment of their ability to relate to their children. These said that having been survivors made it impossible for their parents to understand them or respond to them in a way that would be helpful.[394]
>
> Other evidence of parents' unavailability to their children included descriptions of parents who were unable to share feelings with their children. For example, one subject described his father as having 'difficulty expressing warmth and concern for me except by slaving and money.' Parents' unavailability may be inferred from descriptions by children of their own inability to communicate with their parents. For example, one subject said, 'I could never share feelings and emotions with them.[395]
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> This unavailability often extended to the lack of simple communication between parent and child. For example, one subject said, 'They're not conversationalists, it's very hard to sit down with either of them and have a conversation.[396]

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[392] Berger, p. 114
[393] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 91
[394] Prince, p. 51
[395] ibid., p. 59
[396] ibid.

> They used to take me places when I was a kid, like the park on Sunday, but talking, I could never really talk to them, on no level could they comprehend what I was talking about . . . I had no one to communicate with for most of my childhood.[397]

Others were abusive both verbally and physically. "Emotional explosions and irrational reactions were common in many survivor homes."[398] Frequent and violent verbal arguments and parents' unpredictable temper tantrums characterize survivor families.[399] When children misbehaved, did not listen, or caused anxiety to their parents, they would hear phrases like: (1) "You will finish the job the Nazis started!" (2) "How could you do this to me after all I suffered?" (3) "For this I survived Auschwitz?" (4) "How can you cause me pain?" (5) "How can you dare not respect me? How can you talk back? I wish I had my mother here." (6) "For this I survived the Nazis?" (7) "For this I survived the camps?" (8) "For this I went through hell?" (9) "How can you add to our suffering?" (10) "You don't know how hard a life I've had growing up without parents." Some children recall specific instances of verbal abuse:

> My brother dropped his fork, splattering gravy on the table. 'Pigs! You eat like pigs in a pigsty - not like children from a good family! You should be grateful you have meat to eat and instead you poke around your plate. Brats! Miserable brats! Do you know what we would have given for a meal like this! Seven hundred calories a day we were given! And we didn't spend the day in school![400]

> When she got to the end of her rope she used to say, 'Did I leave Auschwitz for you?' I would be rendered speechless

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[397] ibid.
[398] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 64
[399] Prince, p. 64
[400] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 57

> by that. Everything was taken out of me in that one phrase. My whole life. I felt as if someone took a hypodermic needle and sucked all the life from me. I was nothing. I was weak. I'm weak right now even remembering it. I'm just empty. She said that a few times. When things got crucial and she came to the end of her rope, that's what she said. And she used to break down and cry.[401]

Unfortunately, words were not the only things flung in survivor households. Misbehavior was a trigger that released a rage which was there all the time, locked away inside the pain.[402] "She threatened and sometimes delivered quick slaps that stung."[403]

> The clearest evidence of the free-floating rage evident in many survivor families was provided by some subjects who described their parents as often hitting them. One such subject described his mother as 'nervous and free with her hands.' Another described his mother as losing her temper when he would do something that displeased her, for example, not eating or having bad school marks. Still another subject described his father hitting him until he reached adolescence and was as big as his father.[404]

This rage was "emotional blackmail - pure and simple...." "Everything they did, their bad temper, their nerves, their judgments - everything was justifiable because of the war." One person even accepted it realizing that her father is the "type of person who will criticize an awful lot, but he will rarely compliment because he wouldn't want it to go to my head." "One may speculate that the parents' critical attitudes had the joint aim of withholding positive emotional supplies and of actively humiliating the child in order to express aggression."[405]

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[401] ibid., p. 186
[402] ibid., p. 57
[403] ibid., p. 49
[404] Prince, p. 64
[405] ibid., p. 65

Others simply did not want to experience any further loss. They had lost family, friends, their home, even their childhood and young adult years. This loss of years led many to live vicariously through their children. "The children represented the new versions of parents, close relatives, or offspring lost in the Holocaust."[406] There were those that pledged an absolute loyalty to parents. "We saw ourselves, in part, as torchbearers whose success was not only personal but a vicarious one for them."[407] "Children give special meaning to their parents' empty lives: They restitute lost objects, goals, and ideals, and vindicate the suffering the parents have endured. Thus, the child is invested with meanings and expectations which far exceed his own, treated not as an individual but as a symbol of all the parents lack in their own lives and hope to attain through the child."[408]

The second generation is the continuation of a legacy. As one child describes her parents and herself, "These two people represent the links of a chain Hitler failed to break and I see myself as a further link in it."[409] More than one child described themselves as a *naches* (joy) machine.[410] With achievements came pride. "The importance of the child's being a success was expressed by one parent who would typically say, in response to any positive event in her son's life, 'It's good that this happened to you, it gives

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[406] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 106
[407] ibid., p. 310
[408] Wanderman, p.116 - 117
[409] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 306
[410] Abraham J. Peck and Uri D. Hirscher, *Queen City of Refuge: An Oral History of Cincinnati's Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1989), p. 234

me the strength to go on."[411] Parents felt like they had "made it." Parents wanted superachievers: "If one does not succeed. . . the guilt is tremendous." Hass comments on this issue:

> For survivors, their children were symbols of rebirth and restoration. These parents may have harbored unconscious magical expectations that their offspring would undo the destruction of the Holocaust and replace lost family members, provide meaning for their empty lives, and vindicate their suffering. Survivors' children may also have provided the justification for their survival, thereby expiating survivor guilt. The direct or indirect communication of these overwhelming expectations created a need in many children of survivors to achieve a great deal in order to compensate for their parents' deprivations.[412]

They wanted their children to live out the dreams and aspirations that they had had for themselves before their lives were crushed by the Holocaust, and also to re-create, in their own lives, the loved ones who were lost. Several subjects were pursuing the professions that their parents had intended to follow.[413] In addition, it seemed that it was extremely important for parents to present their children as successful to others. Often, for example, parents who were very critical about their children, were described as also boasting about them to neighbors. One subject, who is married but lives in the same neighborhood as her parents, explained, "I represent them in a way, in a very strong way, especially in this community."[414] Children were the focus of their parents' lives. "We were sent to art, music, and dancing schools; taught to skate, ski and play tennis; escorted to the opera,

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[411] Prince, p. 68
[412] Berger, p. 138
[413] Prince, p. 67 - 68
[414] ibid., p. 69

to concerts and circuses - all on a budget that, before I was ten, had to be buttressed by loans to meet the rent."[415]

Many felt responsible for their parents' well being; their safety and happiness were always of great concern. "Nothing I could do would ever make up for what my parents had lost, but if I failed them I would be another victimizer of people whose small remaining trust in life was placed in my keeping."[416] They were caretakers to their parents.[417] They were regarded as the ones necessary to perform unique functions for their parents.[418] This caused many second generation survivors to mature more rapidly than their peers. "I felt very wise as a child. I always wanted to be more of a child and I wasn't - because of that awful knowledge."[419] Parenting thier parents and knowing what they did robbed them of their childhood.

> She had a sense of never having had a childhood or even childhood friends. On this score, she described how, throughout her life, her friends have always been older and how, even now, she was bored by people her own age and considered the things her peers paid attention to trivial: 'I had real concerns as a child, I was burdened by many problems. . . . My parents would talk about money with me, with the result being that I thought about them, I was concerned about things like life and death and these kids never were. . . I could never get into frolicking. . . ' She always felt confused about how old she was because nobody treated her like a child or talked to her like a child.[420]

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[415] Epstein, "Children of the Holocaust: Searching for a Past - and a Future", p. 22
[416] ibid.
[417] Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust*, p. 130
[418] Eskin, p. 384
[419] Epstien, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 193
[420] Prince, p. 132 - 133

One child recalls, "We had to be gentle with our parents." They had an added responsiblity when younger, yet many tended to remain engaged in the interpersonal behavior associated with separation and identity formation at ages older than their peers.[421] Issues of age are blurred with issues of responsibility among children of survivors. And, even as adults, they feel the need to protect their parents from future pain.

Many children maintain a physical and emotional proximity to their parents their entire lives.[422] It is difficult to become an individual and abandon the felt obligation to care for survivor parents.[423] "Often, children of Holocaust survivors are caught in excruciating dilemmas, obliged by bone-deep feelings of filial loyalty to make up for their parents' suffering, the specifics of which they may never have been told and the extent of which are beyond the possibility of reparation. Nonetheless, the children of survivors may be implicitly expected to substitute and console their parents, becoming their dead relatives, somehow embodying in themselves an entire, idealized, vanished network of human connections."[424] These children were unusually involved in their parents' lives.

The blur in roles also occurs when parents live the childhood and adolescence they were denied. To a survivor, their child was "more than a

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[421] Prince, p. 108
[422] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 44
[423] Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust*, p. 8
[424] Moshe Lang, "The Shadow of Evil," *Networker* (September/October 1995), p. 58

leaf in the future," he or she could also recapture the best of their past.[425] One says of her mother, "My mother was like the youngest child in the family. We felt we had to make her happy in order to make up for all her losses. She lived so vicariously through us. Everything we were living, we also lived for her. It was a shared life. I don't know that she raised us with that intent, but I think that was the result...We were always careful not to let her know if anything bad happened to us."[426] "I'd never come to her [her mother] with anything I didn't think she could handle. . . . If something was really bothering me, she wouldn't be able to handle it because she'd get upset for me."[427] Mothers were often protected more than fathers. "In general, contact between children and the survivor father was sparse."[428] One son explained "I felt I never had a father at all. I was ashamed of him...I didn't know how to act as a man...I had no concept of how men behaved together."[429] And a daughter, when asked about her past relationship with her father commented that she perceived him as younger, as if he were the child; "He couldn't speak English when I was little. I knew very definitely that I was looked to as the authority."[430]

As "parents" to their parents these children had a perception that their survivor mothers and fathers simply may not have the resources to cope with

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[425] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 57
[426] ibid., p. 63
[427] Prince, p. 60
[428] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 87
[429] ibid., p. 225 - 226
[430] Prince, p. 130

further disappointments; therefore, they do not share the knowledge of their imperfections, weakness, anxiety, or unhappiness with them. "I've always felt that my parents had more than their share of suffering and that I certainly did not want to add to it by not being good or respectful toward them."[431] Those who were overly protective toward their parents often hindered opportunities for relationships outside of the home, for example, intimate relationships.[432] They simply had no time to be social. In addition, many children of survivors had high expectations of who a friend is. A friend was someone who would be willing to "die" for them or "come in the middle of the night" if they were needed.[433]

Mutual protectiveness is a vicious cycle plagued by silence; parents did not want to burden their children and vice versa. This led some children, as explained earlier, to overly protect their parents even though many saw their parents as all-powerful, indestructible people who had literally made it through hell, notwithstanding the infirmities they suffered as a result. They were also not blind to their ill-fitting clothes, heavy accents, short height, and unfamiliarity with American culture making them appear frail and weak.[434] This often caused embarrassment and shame, especially when the children were young.[435] One person was even relieved that her mother did

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[431] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p.307
[432] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 30
[433] Prince, *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation*, p. 112
[434] Helmreich, p. 139
[435] ibid.

not have a number on her arm for it would have been another perceived source of embarrassment. Taking everything into account, they rarely, if ever, compared their parents to other parents. This would be treason.[436]

Outward appearance aside, "some children expressed shame and even hostility at their parents' passivity. These were the children who felt cheated in a different way. What they missed, needed, and wished for was a father and mother with enough energy and youth to be a pal as well as a parent, someone to play catch with, to run races with them, to take them on a roller-coaster ride. For many of the [Holocaust] survivors those days were gone forever, destroyed by the vicissitudes of their lives."[437] With age, members of the second generation began to shift from feelings of guilt and shame to pride and appreciation. Their Holocaust legacy and their parents were seen in a more positive light. "With age, they were more likely to recognize the inherent strengths of their parents and perceive them to be positive role models."[438] As one member of the second generation expressed it, "I grew up a mere mortal in a world of martyrs who had suffered (and) heroes who had survived."[439] Another remarked, "I think about my parents and what has been done to their lives, and I feel compassion for them. I marvel at all they were able to do despite that and at how little cynicism they have,

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[436] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 63
[437] Helmreich, p. 141
[438] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 88
[439] Abraham J. Peck, The Children of Holocaust Survivors (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 310

considering it all."[440] They were frustrated that all reports of "Survivor Syndrome" ignored the strengths that many observed in their parents. Another child of survivors expressed, " The world should know about us and what we went through. I think we're a unique group. Our parents in particular. They're the real heroes."[441] "My father was like God to me. Unquestionable. He was strong. He was good. So giving, so generous. I felt my father had been appointed to survive."[442] Eli, when interviewed by Helen Epstein, summed it up best:

> My parents had come through that ordeal and I had boundless admiration for both of them, for surviving with dignity, for pulling the pieces together and succeeding so beautifully in their new life. I'm very proud of the fact that my father, my uncle, and my cousin, who arrived in this country as penniless refugees, managed to create a highly successful business instead of succumbing to despair. I never thought of my parents going through indignity or humiliation. I don't remember ever being angry at them or ashamed of them because of what they went through.[443]

He continues, "I am in awe of my parents. I often wonder if I could have survived myself and I doubt whether I could have."[444] Many have wondered this under many different circumstances.

> When I became aware of myself, I began to wonder whether I, in the same circumstances, would have survived. If I was unhappy, I would wonder whether I would have sustained the drive to stay alive through several years of the most abject misery. When I failed at something, whether it was at making friends or at finding a job, I wondered whether I would have had the ingenuity, the skill, the craft, to have kept myself in food and shelter and

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[440] Toby Mostysser, "The Weight of the Past: Reminiscences of a Survivors' Child" in *Living After the Holocaust: Reflections by the Post-War Generation in America*, eds. Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975), p.20
[441] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 5
[442] ibid., p. 178
[443] ibid., p. 29
[444] ibid., p. 31

> out of the hands of the Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles. And now I sometimes wonder whether I'm the sort of person miracles would have happened to.[445]

Many children accept their lot. They understand to the best of their ability who their parents are and what they experienced during the war. People in this category often end up giving their parents a "blank check" to behave in any way because of what they went through[446] A common phrase heard among the second generation about their parents is, "After what they've been through, what do you expect?"[447] "A feeling of profound admiration and respect was produced in survivors' children when they considered the circumstance their parents had endured."[448] "I had no right to get angry at them - and they were the only people I ever remember feeling angry at."[449] This "blank check" allowed for many emotions, but ultimate loyalty to their parents:

> Survivors' children report feeling 'sympathetic,' 'tolerant.' and 'understanding' of their parents. This reaction extended to making sacrifices, sometimes major ones, for parents. For example, one subject took a job because he felt a need to 'make things easier for them.' Another subject, who described herself as wanting to move out of her parents' home, has continued to live with them out of consideration for their past hardships. Still another subject described going to synagogue every Saturday, even though he despised doing so, out of a similar consideration.[450]
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> Another aspect of this response to parents was to be more 'understanding' of them. Often when parents were behaving overly intrusively or overly protectively, the child

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[445] Mostysser, p.6
[446] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 118
[447] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 97
[448] Prince, p. 50
[449] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 41
[450] Prince, p. 52

> 'understood' and excused this behavior on the basis of its having roots in the experience of persecution.[451]
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> No matter how controlling and intrusive parents were, their children still felt that, at least consciously, their parents had had their best interests in mind. Some subjects had the understanding that their parents wanted very much to help them with their problems, even if they could not because they were too threatened or too unequipped to do so. Although the image of the parents' struggle to give their children what they themselves had been cheated of - even coupled with the constant reminder of the sacrifice - constituted a tremendous burden, it could also be taken as proof of the parents' love. Thus many children emerged from their relationships with their parents with a real sense of a stable and loving object.[452]

Not everyone had such positive images of their parents. "Children of survivors regret that their parents had been so self absorbed and so unable to demonstrate empathy. They wish there had been more room for their feelings. They are angry because their problems were trivialized when they were compared with those of their parents. However, survivors, too, craved understanding. Many wish their children had been more interested in their past. They needed to speak and longed for the moment when a child would ask so they would not feel the guilt of burdening."[453] Mutual respect and understanding was longed for but, for many, may never have been achieved. To be listened to was all that many children wanted. "I wanted my voice heard and my parents never responded. They didn't listen to me the way they listened to a business partner.[454] They also wanted to be loved.

> I'm ambivalent. Of course, it's not their fault what happened to them, but they suffered so much that they

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[451] ibid.
[452] ibid., p.73
[453] Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust*, p. 142
[454] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 182

> couldn't express love, and so I felt unloved all the time I was living with my parents, and still do. I feel somehow that all these years, their main concern has been the material things - money, a roof over their head, and food, rather than love - and so I've been hurt. They really didn't do their job as parents. A child needs to be appreciated and loved. I even wonder if I really love as much as I might be able. But I've been lucky - with my wife I can find love, and it's filled up this void I've had for so long.[455]

Children of survivors grew up in situations of great complexity. Each household was unique, yet, when members of the second generation open up to one another, they find that they share many similar feelings and experiences from childhood. For most, the Holocaust was a daily part of normative family experience.[456]

Yael Danieli, Director of the Group Project of Holocaust Survivors and Their Families in New York City, has developed four major categories of survivor families: victim families, fighter families, numb families, and families of "those who made it." Each family displays distinct characteristics. In each she describes and explains the meaning found within these family structures. In her opinion, most Holocaust survivor families fit one of these categories.

Members of <u>victim families</u> are characterized by depression, worry, mistrust, fear of the outside world, and symbiotic clinging within the family unit. The family is a closed system shut off from the outside world. One learns to trust only the immediate family in these households. The first-born

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[455] Goodman, p. 23
[456] Jacobs, p. 3

is usually the most traumatized by their parents' experience. Role reversal is prevalent and overprotection mutual. All decisions are seen as a matter of life and death and catastrophic overreactions to everyday changes are common.

In these families, everyone has a role. Fathers make a living and take a subsidiary position in the emotional and interpersonal life of the family. Mothers are more aware of homelife, overprotective, but not usually nurturing. They tend to be more verbal than their spouse and often berate their husband in front of the children, "I would never have married you if it hadn't been for the war or Hitler." Children are the mediators with the outside world as well as in the home. They serve as confidants and parent their parents. They also have to compensate for parents' disappointment in marriage. Parents are unable to serve as authority figures. They often use guilt as one of the most potent means of control...keeping children from questioning parents about their war experience, expressing anger toward them, or "burdening" them with their own pain. Guilt helped to maintain a semblance of familial continuity while operating also as a vehicle of loyalty to the dead, keeping both generations engaged in relationships with those who perished.

In a victim household, many children, though bright, ambitious, and talented, did not always excel to their full potential. Success meant standing out. Some even believed that to surpass their parents [academically or

professionally] meant leaving them behind. Their fear of being wrong and their inhibition of anger and assertiveness, tended to block creative self-initiated tasks. They are, however, a sensitive group, overly concerned not to hurt and very aware of the pain others feel. Many make careers in the helping professions. Establishing outside relationships is also difficult because of their overprotectiveness and overinvolvement in their parents' lives and well being. Many are afraid of having children of their own, to whom they might transmit their legacy and upon whom they would inflict a world that might suffer another Holocaust.

In these homes, there are never any locked doors and everyone is accounted for at all times. Parents often check their children's' breathing during the night to make sure they are still alive. Physical problems are far more acceptable than mental problems. Psychological help is seen as a threatening intrusion into the home life. Psychological problems are viewed as Hitler's posthumous victory within these families. Joy, self-fulfillment, and existential questions are seen as frivolous luxuries. Physical survival, nutritional and material, is the most important concern.

Fighter families derive their name from how survivors described their physical or spiritual role during the war or their posture afterwards to counter the image of the victimized Jew. Many, however, who were fighters during the war became victims following the war. The home is filled with

compulsive activity, an atmosphere of intensity, a strong drive to build and achieve. Pride is a virtue. Relaxation and pleasure are superfluous.

This group also does not trust outside authorities, but they do permit and even encourage aggression against and defiance of outsiders. Any behavior that might signify victimization, weakness, or self-pity is not permitted. Illness is only faced when in a crisis state. Both physical and psychological issues are seen as narcissistic insults, the former more than the latter. These are seen as ways of gaining attention.

There is an intolerance for dependency, yet, there is intergenerational overinvolvement and overprotectiveness among family members. Children have difficulty sharing and delegating responsibility both interpersonally and professionally. They have to establish a fighter/hero identity in order to belong to the family and to separate from it as well. Many create for themselves dangerous situations. They do this as a search for validation and esteem, and perhaps, proof to their parents that they too are survivors.

In the numb families often both parents are sole survivors. Many had a spouse and children before the war. The atmosphere at home is filled with silence and no emotion. Parents are protective of one another and children protect their parents. Children often take care of themselves and are expected to grow up on their own. At the same time, they are to understand that they are loved. Their parents' pained effort to support them financially is their proof.

To fill their void, the children frequently adopt outside authorities and peers as family in an attempt to seek identification models and to learn how to live. Or they adapt by numbing themselves, which results in their appearing less intelligent and capable of achieving than they are. Others try to adapt by being perpetually angry in an apparent effort to evoke negative attention instead of none at all. These children are too frightened to imagine what could have allowed such constriction and lifelessness in their parents. As a result, their own inner spontaneity and fantasy life is severely restricted. In their unconscious fantasies, their (future) spouses serve as parental figures of which they are deprived. They want so much for someone to take care of them. Their powerful need to be babied often curbs a desire for children.

Families of "those who made it" are a less homogeneous group than the prior three. The parents here are motivated by a wartime fantasy. They used to dream of "making it big" should they live. Material success became their personal defeat of the Nazis. This group seeks higher education for themselves and their children, social and political status, fame and/or wealth. Their money benefit their children. They are more assimilated, at least outwardly. Some even deny or avoid their past, so much so that children of this group report feeling cheated and bitter at finding out, usually indirectly, about their heritage.

Denial fills the atmosphere in these homes - inner numbing, isolation, and somatization. They deny the long-term effects of the Holocaust upon themselves and their children and would rarely discuss the Holocaust as a factor in their psychological lives. They tend to participate in psychotherapy only when it is the "in" thing to do for Americans in general. This category shows the highest rate of suicide. Children often feel emotionally neglected. Parents in these families are dominant and demand a strong outward appearance be maintained at all times. Unconsciously, however, they encourage semi-delinquent behavior in their adolescent children, using their money or position to rescue them from the consequences of their actions. This is not the only way they use their money and power, many have devoted their careers to demand commemoration of and knowledgeable attention to the Holocaust, and dignity for its victims.

Often survivors in these families were young at liberation and married years later. Some married non-survivors and even non-Jews. This is also the only one of the four family structures with a high rate of divorce. The general attitude among other survivors regarding divorce is, "Breaking up Jewish families is what Nazis did, we don't!"

What Danieli has contributed with her four family models helps to simplify a complex matter. It places emphasis on the family structure which for most second generation was a guiding force in shaping their identity. The entire family plays a role, parents and siblings. It was extremely rare to

have a living grandparent and the numbers of aunts and uncles were limited. [My mother did have a grandmother because her grandmother went to Canada in 1938 with one child, leaving behind four. One child left behind was my grandmother]. Survivors' children would look at their peers and wonder why other children had grandparents and they didn't have a single one. One child remembers asking why? "When I asked my mother about that, she said that bad people had killed them. - I wasn't aware of any connection between their being killed and their being Jewish."[457] Knowing about relatives being killed created an atmosphere of wonderment. What were these people like? Many created images in their minds. Also, to fill the void, whatever grandparents were around were sort of "adopted"; One woman recalls, "I had 'adopted grandmothers' at different stages of my life."[458] Also, they chose to replace the grandparents, aunts and uncles they did not have with their parents' friends. Many were also survivors and were like family. Helen Epstein writes, "There's this close bond that I've always felt with survivors. You feel they're like your parents and like all the people who died. I associated all survivors with my parents and I was very simplistic in my view of them."[459] They too were granted a "blank check." You behave differently with survivors than with other people. You're more

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[457] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 25
[458] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p.41
[459] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 314

tolerant. You make allowances.[460] Some even adopted parental surrogates, whether real or imagined. These surrogates represented transitional objects who prepared and enabled the children to turn from their family to the world.[461] Others tried hard to make their community of peers an extended family.[462]

As far as siblings are concerned, there are often rivalries. Much of this can be attributed to displaced anger. Since it is difficult to oppose a parent who has already suffered so much, feelings of tension are directed elsewhere.[463] Often siblings are the nearest target. In addition, among siblings, there are different reactions to the "inheritance" of their parents' Holocaust legacy. They differ as far as interest in the history of the Holocaust or the unique experience of their parents. Some are more debilitated by fear, anger and feelings of deprivation than others.[464] Sometimes a survivor discloses more to one child than the other. In the same household one may be an avoider of the Holocaust topic and another, very active in gathering information.[465] This could be attributed to birth order. When siblings are interviewed, the oldest seem to be the most knowledgeable and to have been affected to a greater extent by the parents'

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[460] ibid., p. 314
[461] Prince, p. 109
[462] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation" , p.41
[463] Samuel Goodman Jeffery, "The Transmission of Parental Trauma: Second Generation Effects of Nazi Concentration Camp Survival" (Ph. D. dissertation, California School of Professional Psychology, Fresno, 1978), p. 18
[464] Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust*, p. 9
[465] ibid., p. 139

continuing distress.[466] Also, the firstborn children absorbed the brunt of parental insecurities simply because they were born in closest proximity to the Holocaust and their parents newly adopted status of immigrant.[467]

Psychological Tendencies and Values

Children of survivors experience a variety of emotions, fears, and difficulty with interpersonal interaction. The early reports which focused on children of survivors who seek psychological help also highlight the fact that members of the second generation have similar symptoms to their parents. It is as if they themselves had actually lived through the Holocaust. Symptoms include impaired object relations, low self-esteem, anxiety, fear, narcissistic vulnerability, personality constrictions and affect impairment. These children have to deal with their parents' suffering and often associate images of their parents' experience to ideas about their own death.[468]

> In many instances, the adult children reported that they were acting like survivors themselves. One woman related, 'I walk around with a lot of impending doom. I lived with it growing up.' This need to deprive themselves as adults was also a replay of parental expectations of doom. . . . Many recalled that as children they were fearful of parents being captured again and of Hitler trying to destroy them also.[469]

Fears of the second generation reflect fears felt by their parents. "The vulnerability felt by the parent infects the child."[470] Many heard fear spoken

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[466] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 85
[467] ibid., p. 166
[468] Eskin, p. 383
[469] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 130
[470] Ibid., p. 30

about freely in their home.[471] In addition, those who were raised by overprotective parents have a tendency to be phobic. Others reacted to overprotectiveness by rebelling. Some who overidentify with their parents report feelings of depression as do those who are sensitive to their Holocaust related deprivations such as the lack of grandparents or the desire for a more emotionally available parent.[472] This also leads to anger. Anger is felt on many levels, but often never expressed out loud.

> For a time, I was very angry - at my grandparents for lacking the foresight to leave a country in which they were clearly doomed, at my parents for giving me such a complex and oppressive inheritance, at every rock star, clergyman and politician who took the vocabulary of the Holocaust and used it to describe his own situation.[473]

It is a vicious circle for many as the internalization of anger results in depression as well.[474] Others have taken an opposite approach and chosen to separate themselves from their Holocaust - filled environment. Problems arise, however, when this group sees themselves as "abandoning anguished loved ones who are in emotional need."[475] How can I be mad at my parents after they've been through so much? How can I rebel against my parents and cause them so much pain? The pressure to live up to parental expectations is overwhelming.

Juxtaposing their lives against the knowledge they have of their parents' lives leads to depression and also feelings of guilt. Some feel they

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[471] Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust*, p. 58
[472] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 165
[473] Epstein, "Children of the Holocaust: Searching for a Past - and a Future"
[474] Wanderman, p. 117
[475] ibid., p. 8

cannot validate their own feelings and are not entitled to feelings as basic as anger or happiness. "Anger seemed to be a privilege that my parents earned that I had not."[476] And feelings of guilt and shame are associated with the capacity to enjoy life and gratify desires.[477] Some, on the other hand, felt like they had to be happy children in order to make up for the past. It was an expectation, yet as one child of survivors relates, "I was taught that the most terrible thing is to be selfish. To put yourself first. I equated that with being happy, so my conclusion was that I didn't deserve to be happy even if I was expected to be."[478]

Children of survivors feel guilt when engaging in any behavior that they maintain in the service of their own individuation and at the expense of their parents' symbiotic demands on them. When standing up to their parents and being independent, guilt persists.[479] When not being good enough, for growing up in easier circumstances, for feeling anger toward one's parents, for inflicting further pain on a survivor and for having been excluded from the Holocaust that consumed their relatives, guilt is felt. They also feel guilty as they prepare to move out of their parents' homes.[480]

Issues of separation are extremely difficult within Holocaust families, even when a natural separation occurs like children leaving for college;

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[476] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 254-255
[477] Prince, p. 119
[478] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 42
[479] Helmreich, p. 131
[480] Prince, p. 62

parents see this as abandonment.[481] This is because many survivor parents have no memory of what it is like to separate from a parent. For many their separation was abrupt and even premature. Many have not resolved this moment in their life.[482] Leaving the family of origin is seen as betrayal.[483] But, not only is separation from family difficult, separation from items can also be difficult for some. Perhaps the habit of 'saving everything' represented the desire, the wish of keeping the past alive.[484]

For some separation from their family can be frightening. Many did not know how to trust anyone. This mistrust of others is reinforced by survivors being angry and suspicious of the non-Jewish world.[485] Some are afraid of being taken advantage of, both psychologically and physically. Many are reluctant to be honest about thoughts and feelings and can be very guarded around new people. Human nature is viewed with cynicism.[486] Much of these tendencies can be traced to overprotective parenting. "Overprotectiveness portrays the message to their children that the world is full of danger and causes children to cling to their parents."[487] Survivor parents feel that they are only looking out for their child's welfare.

Children were taught not to expect much from the world. "The things I heard left me with little faith, in the world or in myself. The world, as my

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[481] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 177
[482] Ailberfein, p. 346
[483] Lang, p. 58
[484] Prince, p.181
[485] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 29
[486] ibid,. p. 39
[487] Schloss, p.6

mother depicted it, was filled with more demons than even the imagination of a child could conjure."[488] If they set their expectations low they would not be disappointed. They realize that humankind is not perfect. Knowing what people are capable of, many strive to better themselves and also help others be better people.[489] In addition, they realize they should look out for themselves. But at the same time they feel the responsibility to look out for others. This sense grows from their Jewishness and their Holocaust legacy.

> What happened in Germany, and the "Final Solution," causes me, I think, to make a commitment to make sure that I am not the one to break the chain. I want to be as strong a link as I can. A link in a chain that can speak up to the world, to prove to the world that no matter how hard anybody tries to eradicate the Jewish people or anybody else, that there is a right to live, and a right to live the way you want, as long as you harm no one else, and it shall continue that way.[490]

Children of survivors have an affinity for social and/or political action work.[491] "You have to make sure no one's civil rights are trod upon. And you have to make sure that you yourself won't be trod upon."[492] Because others stood by while Jews suffered, this generation feels obligated to react when they hear about oppression in other countries and in their own "backyard."

"Children of survivors frequently identify with and feel compassion toward other groups who have been discriminated against because they too

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[488] Mostysser, p.7
[489] Schloss, p.29
[490] Peck and Hirscher, p. 245
[491] Schloss, p. 28
[492] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 249

are seen as being out of the mainstream, in a way not a part of the gentile world."[493] They are determined to stand up to prejudice. Salamon believes her Holocaust legacy should be "a cry for justice." She wants to morally improve the world.[494] While being just and fair is important to the second generation, parallels to the Holocaust may strike a nerve. As one child of survivors remarks, "I do feel the Holocaust has made me sensitive to the whole question of responsibility and silent complicity. On the other hand, I find statements like, 'We can't be silent now because the Germans were silent during World War II' a simplistic connection - or maybe it's the connection in the first place that bothers me, saying that the situations are equal."

The situations are not equal. Yet, this does not mean that lessons cannot be learned from this legacy; some are of global magnitude and others are more personal. For example, "By writing the story of their parents' survival and its impact on their own lives, these second-generation witnesses hope to share the message of common human vulnerability, thereby helping to prevent Holocaust modes of thought from operating in the world."[495] In addition, when problems compound, some use their knowledge of the Holocaust to put their own life in perspective. "If I have a problem in life, I think about my parents' Holocaust experiences. That helps put my problems

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[493] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 116
[494] Berger, p. 96
[495] ibid., p. 127

in what I consider a better perspective - they simply don't seem as awful."[496] One also learns to take advantage of opportunities to celebrate. Life is very short.

When asked if they believed that there could be another attempted Jewish Holocaust, a majority of the second generation answered yes. Their reasons were varied. Here are two examples:

> I believe it could happen because I'm an educated person. History repeats itself. There are a lot of hate groups in the world and a lot of very educated, influential people in this world who don't like Jews. . . . I don't like the Jews doing bad things that can be publicized. It scares me. It just gives them another reason. I want to believe that it's over and will never happen again but I'm still frightened.[497]

> I have no faith in human kindness as a whole. Certainly, there could be another Jewish Holocaust. Or an Armenian one. Or a Japanese one. Or a nuclear one. I believe that history has made it obvious that hatred and persecution are a part of the human experience and that it would be naive to think otherwise. Israel has provided Jews with a new 'muscle' at this time, yet this muscle is not beyond damage or destruction.[498]

One child of survivors has even thought about what she would do if...

> I have a rock in my closet. I always think of what I would do if I needed to escape. Where are the exits? Who would I go to? Who would hide me and my family if I needed to be hid?[499]

All people feel pain at some point in their lives, but those who are second generation Holocaust survivors realize that their own pain is trivial by comparison to what their parents had lived through. They know that they have a much better fortune than their parents. Spiegelman explains that he

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[496] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 47 - 48
[497] ibid., p. 128
[498] ibid., p. 130
[499] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 305

feels pain realizing that he is not permitted to think his own problems matter.[500]

> I was four years old, or five, or six, or seven, eight, nine, ten, an adolescent, an adult. In some way, everything they told me annihilated the validity of my own experiences and feelings. What childish pain could compare with the pain of seeing one's loved ones murdered, of being hunted, of starving and freezing? I knew even when I was very young that nothing, not the children who made fun of my foreign English and foreign manners nor the bullies in the neighborhood compared with the pain my parents had endured.[501]

> Nothing that upset me - the fact that my boyfriend had asked another girl to a dance, or that something I had counted on didn't turn out right, or that I could not fathom some homework assignment from school - was important compared to the upsets my parents had known. 'Worse things have happened, you know,' they said, and I saw the war rise like a great tidal wave in the air, dwarfing my trouble, making it trivial.[502]

> He was guarded in what he said, and worried about appearing disloyal to his parents. Like all the children of survivors I spoke with, he did not believe that any pain he had felt as a child could compare with what his parents lived through. His problems had been inconsequential compared to theirs; he did not wish people to think that he thought himself of the same stature as his parents. 'I'm of no comparable stature,' he repeated. 'I didn't suffer.[503]

Some, however, tried to suffer, feeling they had to prove themselves. "...in Vietnam, I could prove that I, too, could be a survivor."[504]

> I broke several fingers when I was a kid playing football, ...I didn't go to a doctor. I enjoyed the fact that I could endure whatever happened to me. When I was nine, I was climbing a fence and got a huge splinter in my hand. Any kid would have been screaming. I went home, boiled some water, soaked my hand and pulled the skin away with a needle. At the dentist's, I never had Novocain. Like I was preparing myself for something. All the years I've been

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[500] Berger, p. 61
[501] Mostysser, p.6
[502] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 169
[503] ibid., p. 178
[504] ibid., p. 230

> preparing myself in case...I never finish the thought. In case of what? In case they come to get me.[505]
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> Somehow I've grown up with the world view that one is only allowed to exist if one has suffered; that is, I'm only allowed to live if I have suffered. Perhaps this comes from the example of my parents and my parents' friends. Certainly that is their life story. I have to 'suffer' by trying to alleviate suffering for others.[506]
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> Somewhere I got the idea that suffering was the noble thing. All our relatives who were brave and noble had suffered. I thought if I wanted to be a special, noble person, I had to suffer too.[507]

They could not validate their own pain, knowing what their parents had experienced during the war, but they felt others' pain strongly. As mentioned above, they wanted to alleviate suffering for others. This led many to enter the helping professions. This is evidenced by the large number of children of survivors who are teachers, doctors, psychologists, and social workers. The number of children of survivors who work in the "helping" professions is quite disproportionate to the number of those who comprise this population.[508] The overrepresentation of the second generation in the helping professions can itself be viewed as exemplifying an attempt to heal the world.[509] Or, for one person, their answer to the destruction of family members who perished in the Shoah was to enter the rabbinate. As he expresses it in his book, "Ordination, nonetheless, was for me a private and personal matter, not a public statement. It was my answer to the near-

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[505] ibid., p. 231
[506] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p. 12
[507] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 42
[508] Schloss, p.28
[509] Berger, p. 31

annihilation of our family; it was my 'Yes!' that the family that I had never met, the ghosts who lived with me and within me, had not died in vain; that their murderous deaths were not meaningless."[510]

Others have advanced in the corporate world, banking, politics, academia, and the arts. "Resilience was the most common psychological strength described by children of survivors. They had successfully transformed their inherited status as a victim to one of survivor, and they took pride in their resourcefulness and tenacity."[511] They also attribute their ability to survive and overcome to their parents' durability, resourcefulness, strong will, determination, ambition, and fight. Both the positive and the negative have been transmitted to the next generation. Some resonate more with the negative qualities mentioned earlier in this section and others gravitate toward the positive. Some are able to find a balance. They find inner strength to face problems when they realize what their parents had to face when they were their age.

Also inherited are values. Some adopted American cultural values, perhaps because they felt cut off from their own past.[512] Others blended the European and American values. Some worked toward the future and others worked to preserve the past. The effect of a sense of legacy could have

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[510] Jacobs, p. 4

[511] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 46

[512] Neil Henry, "The Children: Inheritors of a Painful Legacy" in *The Obligation to Remember: The American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Washington D.C. April 11 - 14: an Anthology*, ed. The Washington Post Staff (Washington D.C.: Washington Post, 1983), p. 36

many meanings. It could mean political involvement or documenting their parents' history. Others put their emphasis on education and learning. This was something that could never be taken away from an individual. "Education is closely related to the idea of being self-sufficient."[513] Being self-sufficient equates to a better chance at survival.

There are a number of variables used to evaluate the second generation. Researchers and psychologists try to understand children of survivors based on the following criteria: (1) the severity of their parents' Holocaust experience, including how many relatives and friends of the survivor perished in the Holocaust; (2) what their parents were like as immigrants (some researchers rank this as more significant than Holocaust experience); (3) the way in which they themselves view their parents' war experience (were they heroes or victims?); (4) what are the religious and cultural ties of the survivor parents; (5) are there one or two survivor parents in the household? (6) what is the birth order of the children of survivors? (7) did the children feel that they were replacements for mourned and idealized family members? (8) children of survivors' knowledge and curiosity about the Holocaust and their parents' experience; (9) the way in which the Holocaust was communicated by survivors to their children; and (10) where survivors and their children settled.[514] However, the process of evaluation is

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[513] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 27
[514] Schloss, p.15 - 16

much more complex. Children of survivors wish it was as easy as addressing the ten previous issues. Children of survivors often question the root of their problems; is it that they are members of a survivor household or is it simply that their parents were immigrants?[515]

> I identified myself so narrowly. I was a remnant of the Holocaust. And, in a perverse manner, I believe I somewhat enjoyed this distinction, this uniqueness. As an adult, I continue to feel different from my contemporaries. Perhaps some of these feelings are simply a result of my temperament, a genetic legacy. But much of it I attribute to being the child of Holocaust survivors.[516]

Some simply do not know where to draw the line. Should they attribute their values and tendencies to the Holocaust or not? "It can be a convenient rationale for our actions."[517] This is a unique group. Even when tested with word association they display different psychological markers than others their age who are not part of the second generation survivor group. For example, words such as tattoo, grandparents, and camp invoke imagery far different from associations made by second generation non-witnesses.[518]

Parents drew comparisons. Children knew they were different, even when silence enveloped their home. As explained, this group will often inhibit themselves from feeling entitled to their abundance, their insecurities, and even their safety.[519] Many dwell on the negative, but it is

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[515] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 33
[516] ibid., p. 2
[517] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p. 50
[518] Berger, p. 100
[519] Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust*, p. 29

important to remember the positive attributes of this group as well. They show a deep commitment to political and social action work, a passionate cultural affiliation, and a strong Jewish identity (this will be explored in the following section).[520] The issues are blended and tendencies blurred.

> His own political activities can be seen as related to images of his father's integrity and heroism. His own worst fear can be seen as related to his image of concentration camp inmates who compromised themselves. His own separation from his family can be seen as related to the image of his father insisting that life must go on, as he performed while his only link to the past died.[521]

This is their legacy, the positive and the negative. They do learn from their parents and are influenced by their past. Many feel that it is their "mission to witness to an event or culture they never really knew."[522] Maintaining ties to the Jewish community is the method most use to fulfill this mission.

Jewish Identity

Most who identify strongly with being Jewish, and most do, connect their sense of Jewish identity with the Holocaust. Some explain how this event, one they never experienced directly, is their strongest Jewish experience.[523] The core of their Jewish identity sprang from their relationship to the Holocaust, and not from their adherence to Jewish law or their knowledge, for example, of Jewish history or Jewish literature.[524]

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[520] Schloss, p.33
[521] Prince, p. 100
[522] Berger, p. 15
[523] Epstein, p. 195
[524] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 111

Most, when describing themselves to others include some dimension of Jewishness in their self-definition.[525] The experience of persecution is an integral component to Jewish identification. In addition the Yiddish language, which surrounded many of the second generation growing up, served as a primal progenitor of Jewish identity.[526] Some will claim that they are not religious but, nevertheless, do have a strong feeling of identity.[527] "There is an adherence to custom among the second generation, but a vacuum of fundamental belief in religious precepts."[528] The war provides a poor foundation for belief.[529]

Culturally they feel Jewish. They are sensitive to issues involving Jews. In fact many feel more comfortable being around Jews.[530]

> I do not have much in common with someone who is not Jewish, especially with regard to my parents. I just don't feel they would understand me and who I am. My parents' history is part of me and I think it takes an extraordinary person to understand - whether Jewish or Gentile - who does not come from a comparable place. But I believe a Jew would be more likely to understand.[531]

> My having more Jewish close friends is definitely related to the Holocaust. As soon as I know a person's religion, it immediately colors all aspects of my relationship with them. I've always felt more comfortable with those from a European background. I feel somewhat different and estranged from American Jews, who I perceive to be more assimilated.[532]

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[525] Prince, p. 49
[526] Hass, *The Aftermath: Living With the Holocaust*, p. 133
[527] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 126
[528] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 149
[529] Mostysser, p.19
[530] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 110
[531] ibid., p. 113
[532] ibid., p. 119

Most of the second generation, when asked how they feel about being Jewish, state they feel pride. The traditions, values, and resilience of this group are very important. One child of survivors expressed feeling a mission to keep Judaism alive saying that assimilated Jews were more troublesome to him than non-Jews.[533] The sense of community connected with being Jewish was also very important. This connectedness with the Jewish community provided a substitute for grandparents and gave them the extended family they lacked.

Others were not so positive about their Jewish heritage, especially when they were young. One person felt embarrassment and humiliation about his Jewishness. Another felt being Jewish in a non-Jewish world meant that he always had to prove he was not any of the stereotypes such as cheap and materialistic.[534] One daughter of survivors connected everything Jewish to the enormous burden of war, and she wanted to escape.[535] Many felt marginalized as Jews, but as adults commitment to Jewish identity is rejuvenated. Spiegelman is a great example, in his mid-teens he "often thought life would be a lot easier if [he] were not Jewish, but now he reports that the Holocaust is his own entry into both Jewish history and Jewish identity."[536] Peoplehood is important as is identifying with other Jews. Many can relate to Spiegelman and identify with Rubenstein's view that

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[533] ibid., p. 120
[534] ibid., p. 124
[535] Mostysser, p. 16
[536] Berger, p. 60

being Jewish is an existential and ethnic rather than a covenantal identity.[537] It is also very important to know who is Jewish and part of this people.

> We'll be sitting around talking with my parents or even with my friends, again who are children of survivors, and even if it's something like a baseball player, you say, 'you know what? He's Jewish. I didn't know that.' And that means he's one of us, whereas a non-survivor Jewish friend will say, 'Who cares if he's Jewish or not, big deal.' But we tend to count up who's on our side and who isn't. We tend to count senators and congressmen and governors who are Jewish.[538]

For some, the existence of God is constantly a dilemma. Others simplify matters and accuse humans. Belief in God is difficult for most, as one second generation survivor explains,

> So in some ways a belief in God seems absurd to me. At the same time, to account for all that happened in non-supernatural, historical terms seems even more absurd to me; the fact that this incredible suffering could not be given some kind of meaning seems absurd and terrible. So I guess I waver between those two kinds of absurdities and feel a constant dialectic between faith and non-faith, faith and very sharp breaches of doubt.[539]

Helen Epstein also comments on God, "I was sure that God was gone. He had brought his people out of Egypt three thousand years ago, and every year we commemorated it, as if we too had been slaves in the land of Pharaoh. But my parents had been slaves in Europe just fifteen years before. Where had he been?"[540]

Rabbi Jacobs boldly proclaims that there is no Commander and there are no commandments, and opines, "The reality of my world is that there is

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[537] ibid.
[538] Peck and Hirscher, p. 234
[539] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p.52
[540] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 156

no longer any authority structure, other than that to which I would willingly subject myself, that has any authority over me."[541] Some argue with God, expressing their rage. "The only way I relate to God is through anger. Sometimes I yell at God, scream at Him, complain to Him - why was He such a @#$%! to have made the world in such a way, to create human suffering. But I never think of Him in any other way but complaint, and His being guilty."[542] "I go to synagogue to accuse God. I used to go to ask forgiveness of my sins. Now I demand He ask forgiveness for His." "I go to synagogue to remind Him I owe Him nothing. He owes me."[543]

Others who may want to scream are rendered speechless. I'm out of words and arguments against God or His existence or at least his *Chesed*, loving kindness.[544] Children of survivors began to deal with their individual God concept at a very young age. This was a conversation present in many survivor homes. "I was dealing with these questions when I was 11 or 12 years old, much earlier than any of my peers. Being a child of survivors made that dialectic between faith and cultural attachment present in my home."[545]

Israel, which is very important to survivors, is also important to their children. They feel a strong connection with Israel. One person explains,

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[541] Jacobs, p. xv
[542] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p.42 - 43
[543] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 147
[544] "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p.42 - 43
[545] ibid., p. 43

just as the Holocaust is so much a part of who I am, so is Israel. Another states, "Israel is my home. For me, living in America is like living as a displaced person."[546] Though this is extreme, some do see Israel as a place to establish their own identity, away from their parents.

Dating Jewish and marrying Jewish are seen by some as a responsibility. This sense of obligation may have come from things parents have said such as, "To marry a non-Jew would make the suffering of the victims of the Holocaust in vain."[547] For children of survivors haunted by their parents' recollections of death and near-death, intermarriage consciously or unconsciously represents a threat to cultural survival. "Since they attribute apocalyptic meaning to intermarriage, survivor-children as a group respond to a perceived threat to culture with resolute determination to protect that culture."[548]

Those that would intermarry are also sensitive to the possibility of cultural extinction and tell themselves that Jewish tradition can and will be maintained in their new family, regardless of the religion of their spouse. Their preferring a non-Jew is an endeavor to escape what is perceived as an oppressive background, and/or an attempt to still fears of vulnerability to another genocidal assault.[549]

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[546] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 143
[547] ibid., p. 112
[548] Schloss, p. 27
[549] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 115

Organizations and Support Groups

The Holocaust has affected the second generation in a variety of ways. Some are still consumed by its legacy. Some think about their relationship with the Holocaust daily. It is prominent in their consciousness. Others must have reminders that trigger thoughts. Finally, there are children of survivors that rarely if ever think about the Holocaust.[550] There are even members of the second generation who have been silenced as much as their parents were when they first came to the United States. The silencing has been either a reaction to other's lack of concern or interest or their own sense of denial. Many have seen a therapist, but have never talked about the effects their parents' wartime experience might have have on them. One person remarked that if he did talk about it, he was told 'You're in America now,' and he would then drop the subject.[551]

The segment who denies their heritage feels that only negative things can come from dwelling on the Holocaust. Some children of survivors deny being affected by their parents' Holocaust experience and consequently have no desire to join second generation groups or explore issues related to the Holocaust.[552] They claim, "The Holocaust happened to my parents. It has nothing to do with me." Perhaps it is simply a topic too painful to think

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[550] Prince, p. 19
[551] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 204
[552] Schloss, p.35

about.[553] A heterogeneous group, yes; however, for most, there is a magnetism that draws the second generation together.

Luckily, today, there are many resources for the second generation. Since the 1970's children of survivors have become increasingly active in organizing groups, conferences, and services to meet their needs.[554] Some join second generation groups or combined generation groups and other Holocaust related organizations or centers in their communities. There are even e-mail lists for the second generation. This legacy is enough to bind one to another, even if they differ tremendously in other aspects of their lives. Sometimes it takes survivors' children a while to realize their connection to the Holocaust, until they began talking with others.

> I began to talk with friends whose parents had also been in the war. We had never discussed the subject before. I realized how significant the common background was in some of my friendships and how much our parents' war had entered into all of our sensibilities. I discovered that while my parents' war was not my life, it was my history, and as such it touched my life.[555]

It has touched many lives, there are even national and international organizations. In 1981, the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors formed. Today it has fifty affiliated second generation groups and thousands of children of survivor members from the United States, Israel, Canada, and Europe. It was formed as a response to what many of them perceive as a gross overemphasis on pathology. It is a

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[553] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 157
[554] Schloss, p.36
[555] Mostysser, p. 17

sociopolitical group which serves as the second generation's voice on political and social issues such as civil rights, Holocaust education in the schools, and the location and conviction of Nazi war criminals.[556] Many attend gatherings of this organization and others, such as the World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in 1981.

There are children who thrive on Holocaust education while others have "little interest in learning about the historical, political, and cultural factors that allowed the Nazis to come to power, flourish, and wreak havoc upon the Jewish people. Their 'emotional knowledge,' they believe, is sufficient."[557] Each group is shaped by the priorities of its participants. The big question now in Jewish communities is who should be responsible for organizing and implementing second generation and survivor activities? Is this the responsibility of the Jewish community at large or are they responsible for themselves? Who is going to continue this legacy? How will the survivors be remembered and honored when they are no longer living? These are questions that this generation must face.

Many Holocaust organizations and groups are looking to the future while still being bound to the past. A rabbi in Melbourne, himself a child of survivors, crafted an interesting midrash weaving together Moses and second generation witnesses. He emphasized how Moses himself carried

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[556] Goldwasser, p. 239
[557] Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 157

the bones of Joseph and his brothers on his shoulders during the generation of Jewish endurance in the desert. The presence of these bones enabled Moses to persevere, build an army, and prepare the people to enter the Promised Land. The rabbi then exclaimed that the bones on his back prompted Moses to cry, "*Kadimah*! Forward! Only Forward!" for behind him, if ever they were to turn back, were the bones of the dead. Fifty years after the event, second generation witnesses, many of whom are themselves parents, are attempting to move forward Jewishly while symbolically carrying the "memory bones" of the victims. In addition, while the Jewish community must go forward, it must simultaneously carry the bones of those who perished in the Holocaust.[558]

The Next Generation

Now in their 40's and 50's (many with children of their own, many with grown children who are having children of their own) does the second generation have an obligation to teach their children and retell their parents' tales of horror? Do the grandparents share more now than they did when their own children were small? Some children do not learn their story until they themselves are adults and even parents. One second generation person remarks that she was unsure if she should tell her children, but once she knew what really happened she felt a strong obligation to tell them.[559]

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[558] Berger, p. 183
[559] Henry, p. 36

Having children of their own is significant to many second generation survivors. "Somehow continuity becomes much more important for children of survivors, for the sake of *Veshinantam levanecha*, (You shall teach them to you children.)."[560] As another relates his feelings, "I really feel that my raising a family has cosmic significance. I feel I have a sacred duty to have children. I feel it's the only way to respond to the evil of the Holocaust and to assure that the death of my family and the Six Million was not in vain."[561] They want their children to have grandparents because they did not.

As one mother shares:

> I make sure my children and my parents spend a great deal of time together because I never had grandparents and I want my children to enjoy it. I don't want my children to know the pain of the Holocaust, but I don't want them to simply know about it as history. I want them to feel it, and for it to be a part of their life. . . . It affects a value system I want them to have, for example, being sensitive to the need of others. . . . I want them to be able to fight for themselves."[562]

It is important also that the children, the third generation, be instilled with a Jewish identity. Many feel, "It's really important for us to make Judaism a positive, happy experience for them,"[563] as opposed to one laced with suffering and despair.

When the second generation began having children, questions were brought to the forefront. Many were faced with the reality of their family

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560 "Five Children of Survivors: A Conversation", p. 52
561 Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, p. 23
562 Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, p. 160
563 ibid., p. 161

history and how it might transmit to the next generation. They asked themselves the following questions: (1) How steeped do I wish my son or daughter to be in the Holocaust? (2) How should the material be presented? (3) At what age should they be exposed to the Holocaust for the first time and to which details? (4) How central do I wish this epoch to be in his or her life? (5) Is this a frame of reference I wish to perpetuate or should I shield him or her from such knowledge? (6) How much of the Holocaust's delayed effect on me will I share with my child? Perhaps as parents the second generation has to assess or clarify the Holocaust's shadow on themselves before they can come to grips with decisions of whether or how to communicate Holocaust related events. "They had not considered the extent to which they wished their child to identify himself as a member of the third generation. Parents of older children grappled with their own conflict about imposing a Holocaust legacy."[564]

Once they are resolved to share, how will they do so? One author links biblical and Holocaust legacies and thus underscores the concern of second generation witness to seek appropriate ritual modes in order to transmit the tale of the Holocaust to the next generation.[565] Obviously this approach will not work for everyone. Each family will figure out their own method of communication and transmission of this personal legacy. The

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[564] ibid., p. 156 - 158
[565] Berger, p. 79

stumbling block for the second generation is the question, "Do I have the right to speak?" Whereas, the survivors questioned how to speak of the unimaginable.[566]

None the less, when a group of second generation parents was asked if they intended to tell their own children about their parents' experiences, all said yes. They gave three reasons why: 1) a desire to preserve the past in some way. Some subjects, for example, said that, by telling their own children about it, they would insure that the Holocaust was never forgotten. Other subjects emphasized that they wanted their children to have a sense of Jewish identity, and that they regarded the Holocaust as part of the history of the Jewish people; 2) a desire to use the example of the Holocaust to educate their children about the nature of the world; 3) a desire that their children know and understand them and their background.[567] The second generation is critical to Holocaust transmission. They bridge their parents' reality with their children's perception. The third generation then has the task of teaching when their grandparents are no longer living to tell what they witnessed and experienced first hand. The second generation is critical because they are able to control, for the most part, what information their children are privileged to know.

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[566] ibid., 97
[567] Prince, p. 88

A Legacy of Strength

About that I had relatives in it that died, sad.
That I had one survive, I am thankful.
- Aviva L., 9 years old

The third generation, the grandchildren of survivors, are proof to the Holocaust survivor that a natural progression of life is possible; they complete a generational cycle. Most survivors were not privileged to watch their own children interact with their grandparents. Their family tree was chopped down. The second generation grew up without extended family. Survivors lost their parents, brothers and sisters during the Holocaust; some even lost their spouse and children from a first marriage. Very few watched their parents and grandparents grow old and die from natural causes. When raising children they were left to their own devices and often had to answer questions regarding non-existent family. Children of survivors would wonder about their family tree and ask: "Why don't I have a grandma like my friend Susie?" "At school we spoke about aunts and uncles, where are mine?" "Who is this Yankel you are always talking about and why haven't I met him?"

Now, however, Holocaust survivor families are branching out, adding new leaves. Their roots were not destroyed completely and they have grown. Passed from survivor generation to second generation, the legacy does continue to the third generation. This chapter will explore how this

occurs. The above questions about family members are no longer asked by the third generation because most know what happened; some have even seen pictures of lost family members (My great-uncles sit on a shelf in my home; I cherish these old photographs). The grandchildren live in a time when the Holocaust is taught in public school as well as religious school. There are movies, books, television specials, and CD ROM computer programs about the Holocaust; general history and biography are prevalent and easy to access. Survivors are talking publicly, into tape and video recorders. Museums display the facts for all to explore. The silence experienced by many in the second generation has been broken. Grandchildren may not know exact dates and places of their grandparents' pre-war, war-time, or post-war lives, but they are very aware of their familial link.

In Israel and Germany there are a couple of books published which explore all three generations[568], but in the United States, the only published mention of the third generation is through the lens of their parents, the second generation. In this context, the parents express their fear of what they may transmit to their children. Most second generation members, when interviewed, had very young children or no children; their thoughts were simply speculations about what might be passed on to their children, for

[568] Dan Bar-On, *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995) & Gabriele Rosenthal, ed. *The Holocaust in Three Generations: Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime* (Washington D.C.: Cassell Academic Publications, 1997).

they were young themselves and their children could not yet express themselves. They had the foresight, however, to know that it was an issue they had to face.

My curiosity and wonder about what other grandchildren of Holocaust survivors are thinking and feeling led me to 24 people living in three geographic locations: Cincinnati, Ohio; Dallas, Texas; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. I spoke with each grandchild privately, without parents, grandparents, or siblings present. I wanted to know their thoughts and feelings, uninhibited and uncut. At the beginning of every interview I stressed that there were no right or wrong answers; it was alright to admit if he or she did not know something about their grandparent's history. The most important thing was that he or she talk honestly and from the heart. Our conversations were structured around a survey based on (1) adaptations of second generation surveys used by Aaron Hass and Robert M. Prince and (2) questions that might uncover things that I have experienced or thought about; topics that I feel are directly linked to my Holocaust legacy (See Survey Questions, Appendix A). I wanted to find out if there were others like me. The questions were mostly open ended and were not loaded questions looking only for one answer.

The 24 members of the third generation ranged in age from 13 to 27, 10 males and 14 females. We spoke on average for an hour and a half. As with all people, some were more talkative than others. This study is not

scientific; 24 participants and no control group do not allow for statistical analysis, but these interviews do provide a beginning, an opening for dialogue among the third generation and between the third generation, their parents and grandparents. This was my intention. Because of this age range there were certain generalizations I could not make. For example, I am unable to draw conclusions on career choice or even major in college. Some were interested in law, some business and finance, others social work, a few political science, and one, sports medicine. A couple were entering the family business started by their survivor grandparents and, of course, others were still focused on junior high and high school. Two were specifically interested in Jewish studies, but I think I will be the only rabbi in the bunch; although, time will tell.

Proximity to grandparents, for most, made a positive difference in their relationship with their grandparents, but not always. Thirteen have lived in the same city as their grandparents their entire life, five have never lived in the same city, and four have lived in the same city at some point in their life but not all their life. With this last group, all but one now live in the same city or near enough to visit on a regular basis. The one who lives at a distance is actively trying to convince his grandmother to move closer. They visit each other often, but they still live apart. For 19 of the grandchildren interviewed their mother is the child of survivors, for five, it is their father. The majority, 18, have two survivor grandparents; the

remainder, six, have one grandparent who is a survivor (in all six cases, the survivor is the grandfather). No one had survivor grandparents on both sides of the family, so no one had two parents who were second generation. This, too, dilutes the effects of trauma on the third generation.

Knowledge of the Holocaust & Grandparents' Experience

Their grandparents' war experience and the cities they came from were varied. All settled in the United States or Canada after 1945. One couple, who met in London but arrived there separately, lived out most of the war years there. They were able to escape sometime after Kristallnacht. Some knew details of their grandparents' lives, others did not, but all knew they were personally linked to the Holocaust. All knew they had lost family. When asked when they first learned about the Holocaust some would answer a particular grade in school; when probed further and asked, "After learning it in school did you come home and tell your parents about what you had studied and then told of your personal link?" To this, there was a unanimous claim that the personal link was always known:

> It was always there. I can't ever remember a time when it wasn't. I was never sat down and it was told to me, but it was always there. It's almost like I can't remember a time when I didn't know about it. [Jennifer S.]

> I don't really remember learning about it, it's just always been understood that it happened and my grandfather survived it....I guess it was when I stayed at my grandparents one night; the earliest I remember is one night asking about his number on his arm. [Brad C.]

> It was almost like I just knew, which couldn't be possible, but in my memory it was always something that was there, like, you know, your roots. You know where you came from. I am sure when I was little my parents said, 'Grandma and Grandpa had to be in a bad place and this is what happened...' I am sure they had told me. But for as long as I can remember it was just something I knew and it wasn't just about other people. I mean what I knew, I knew it was about my family. My family is small because of the Holocaust. My family is close knit because of the Holocaust. [Sally K.]

One grandchild remembers her grandmother using a side door when entering the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust Studies. The front "door" is a real box car used in the Holocaust. After the example she added "I always knew they were survivors. It was just a well known fact." [Tracy L.] To define an exact moment in time was difficult for most. "I don't know if there was ever a defined time or a moment that sticks out." [Michael S.] He continued to explain that over time the realization of his grandparents experience set in. It was a slow process. He knew there was something different about his family. In his early teens, parts of the story began to come together from his grandparents talking both to public groups and personally to him, by his asking questions, stories on the news and other television specials, and learning more in school. Michael did notice the number on his grandfather's arm and did ask questions when he was little. His grandfather would tell him that it was his phone number; he claimed to have a bad memory. One granddaughter said that when she asked her grandparents about their numbers they said it was a tattoo and left it at that, with no further explanation. She remembers the numbers being long, on the

inside of their arms and blue. A grandson, when inquiring about his grandfather's number was told that the number was from the camps. He recalls that his grandfather was very honest about this and that he never tries to hide the number. Another told me, "Supposedly, I don't remember drawing numbers on myself, but my mom said I did and that's when my grandfather first told me." [Rivka L.] Her grandfather reacted to her behavior. This was his signal that she needed to know. She thinks this may have been in kindergarten. If a grandparent has a number, the grandchildren notice; though, only one person actually knew her grandparent's number; it was Rivka - "49430B," she said without hesitancy. Another recalls that her grandfather does not have a number, but instead has the letters KL on his hand or arm, meaning *Konzentrations Lager*.

One of the youngest I interviewed claimed that it was not long ago when she first learned about the Holocaust. "When we learned about it in class, I remembered that my grandparents were in it." [Ettie S.] She quickly added that she did know about her personal connection before learning more in school. Finally, one grandchild mentioned that he first learned about the Holocaust from his mother who was very much involved in second generation groups. His five year old sister even knows about the Holocaust. She knows that it was a bad time, many Jews died and her grandma was there. I spoke to her briefly and she did know the words associated with a basic knowledge of the Holocaust and she did know her family was there.

Only one grandchild could pin point when and how he first learned about his personal connection to the Holocaust and where he was at the time. He was in a car with his grandfather. They were picking his grandmother up at work. All of a sudden his grandfather started to talk. He started to tell stories of his experiences in the camps, execution trucks and things like that. This is one of only a few conversations with his grandfather that are still vivid in his mind. He was only five or six years old. This was his first exposure to the Holocaust.

Knowing their connection, many grandchildren crave more information. They read books, see films, take classes on the Holocaust, and some even travel to Europe to see where their grandparents lived and where they were during the war years. Some do ask their grandparents direct questions, but others are afraid to pry and fear hurting their grandparents by causing them to recall such painful memories. They cherish the information the survivors choose to tell and are interested in videos about their lives, if available, but do not probe further. There is a balance between general knowledge and personal history, though to some the personal is enough.

> I know probably more about it than other people just from being raised in a family that has survivors. I don't feel that I have to go to Europe to see the camps; I don't feel that connected. I just think that I have knowledge. I have more knowledge of it. [Matt M.]

Another when asked whether he would consider reading books or taking a class on the Holocaust replied:

> Probably not because, I guess in my opinion, which is probably wrong, I don't know, I learn more than I could learn from a book or from what any professor would tell me from my own flesh and blood. [Todd S.]

He may have developed his feelings from his grandfather who is not interested in Holocaust history. His attitude is that he has lived it; why read it. Someone else expressed similar feelings when asked if he took any classes on the Holocaust while in college.

> I don't want to sound like the world renowned expert on the Holocaust, but there is nothing in a class that could teach me what I have seen or learned already, or experienced. I don't see much value in taking a class. [Lonny E.]

He did tell me, however, that he did attend programs in college that were Holocaust related. This did attract his attention.

As mentioned earlier, many grandparents live in the same city as their grandchildren. In this situation most are blessed to know each other well, though one grandson mentioned that he lives in the same city, 15 minutes from his grandparents and rarely sees them, maybe once or twice a year. Another also expresses discomfort with her grandfather; her grandmother died prior to her birth. Others see their grandparents weekly for Shabbat dinners, or Sunday brunch and still others see them "enough" but less frequently, special occasions (i.e. weddings, bar mitzvahs), and annual occasions (i.e. birthdays, anniversaries and holidays). The grandparents of most of the grandchildren I interviewed are still living; however, there were a few who had grandparents who had died. In these situations, usually one

of the couple, one survivor, was still alive. One grandchild was in *sheloshim* (the traditional 30 day period of mourning in Jewish law). Her grandfather died less than a month prior to our meeting. Memories from childhood, memories from visiting, memories from weekly interaction, stories from their parents' experience, these are what shape the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of the third generation.

I want to return to Rivka. She knows a lot. She is the oldest grandchild. Her grandfather talks publicly but she claims she has never heard him speak publicly or one-on-one, except when he explained his number to her. He will talk to the family and will answer their questions. She knows his story because of these encounters and she watched his Shoah Foundation video. Her grandfather has been speaking publicly since 1974 following the first time he went back to Poland. His grandchildren were not his original spark to talk. He was the first to begin talking in the Dallas area and is a very high profile survivor today. Another of his granddaughters points out that he talks to everyone: skin heads, university classes, Christian groups and always the second grade at her school. This is when she first learned his story on a very basic level. Now she is able to tell his story and answer questions. She likes that he talks and thinks that he will talk more to his family as he ages and when he is dying. She believes that it was the grandchildren that opened him up to the family because they signal that time is passing and that he has to start talking before it is too late. This is her

perception. She feels that it would have been more scary for her grandfather to talk to her mom because she was closer in time to the actual events.

He carries his hat from the war, a watch he made in the camps, a bar of soap, and a star with him when he talks to groups. Rivka finds it "eerie" to see these up close. She mentions how speaking wears out her grandfather, but he keeps at it. It is like his job. The Holocaust is always a part of her grandfather. "At dinner it comes up, like with the bombings at the synagogues lately, like he will say certain things, he will bring things up." She expresses how he always draws connections.

Another grandchild mentions how the Holocaust is constantly on the minds of her grandparents:

> A lot of times it is like we are talking about something else that really may not have that much to do with it and all of a sudden something will just break in, or I will say something and ... You'll say you're upset about something and they will be like when I was your age I was fighting... that kind of thing and that will lead into the whole... [Jacqueline W.]

When they do bring up the topic, she tries to get as much information as she can. She is not afraid to ask questions. This is her passion. She volunteers at the Holocaust Center in Dallas and has taken classes on the subject. Within the last year she participated in March of the Living, a program which takes teenagers to Europe and Israel; they spend the first week seeing the camps and what remains of European Jewry. Her grandmother spoke to her group prior to their departure. Her grandfather

would not speak. When she first told her grandparents she was going, they were not happy. They did not understand why she would want to go there. They were afraid that she would not come home, something would happen to her. She called home a lot during that trip.

Only two other interviewees had participated in March of the Living. For both, it was a life altering experience. One said that March of the Living made him into a stronger Jew. He went from being anti-Jewish to being more conservative in his Jewish thought. He said that only after he experienced Poland was he interested in going to Israel. Another said that this trip is what opened up her family. When she returned she was afraid to show the survivors in her family her pictures, but instead she is so glad that she did. They were able to identify the pictures faster than she could. They were able to tell their stories based on her pictures.

All three have taken what they experienced and have taught others. One has spoken of her experience from the *bima* on the High Holy Days and has expressed her feelings in writing. She hopes to start an alumni group at Indiana University where she is a freshman. The second has gone to schools, both secular and religious, sharing slides of what he saw and teaching the "lessons" of the Holocaust. The third volunteers and incorporates her experience and her grandparents' experience in the tours she gives at the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust Studies. Others I interviewed expressed an interest in March of the Living or a similar

program saying their grandparents have even offered to pay for the trip. Some said they were just not ready, but someday they would make the journey. Very few said they have no desire to see where their grandparents were before, during or after the war. A few mentioned they may even go with a grandparent.

The grandparents of this group were of course heterogeneous. Some were talkers and others were still numb. Some grandparents have made a retirement career out of talking to groups. In the opinion of one grandchild, he believes his grandmother talks to groups for three reasons: (1) She wants to tell the real story so that it never happens again; (2) As she ages there is an importance to make a difference to society; (3) Having grandchildren brought it out of her. What is interesting, however, is that she is still protective of her own family as far as what she talks about. Sometimes when talk comes up, especially if her husband is talking, she will say in Polish or Yiddish, "You talk too much, be quiet." She does this to protect the good and bad sides of everybody in the family. Her granddaughter told me that she never has to ask questions because her grandparents speak so openly. Her father supports their talking and has grown to understand the importance in telling the story. Her grandmother speaks once or twice a week and has boxes of the letters sent to her by the people to whom she has spoken. Sometimes her granddaughter drives her to her speaking engagements and helps her with pictures and passing out information.

She never gets tired of listening to the stories, although it does wear on her. The topic is depressing, but the importance of what is being said counterbalances it. It shocks her how older audiences seem more surprised than younger groups when her grandmother speaks. Privately, she doesn't ask questions. She figures that there are things her grandmother has not revealed and that is her right. What is most important is that she tell what is her truth. She never probes or asks more questions because she feels that it is not her place to ask. She notes that her grandfather does not handle the public speaking as well, though he has done it. He will usually drive his wife to speak and stand outside the room.

Another grandchild mentioned that when his grandfather came and spoke to his eighth grade class he learned some things he had never heard before. His grandfather is open with him and will answer questions. If he plays golf with him and they play with one of his friends from before the war, the conversation will eventually turn to the Holocaust. His grandfather enjoys talking publicly and was sparked to do so after post-retirement boredom set in. His grandson also highlights that his grandfather likes the attention. His grandmother is the opposite, she doesn't talk very much at all. They were never as open when his father was growing up. His father knew about the Holocaust, but it was not spoken about openly. It was a thing of the past and they had to concentrate on daily life. In recent years, both of his grandparents have been interviewed for the Shoah Foundation videos,

but their grandson has not watched them yet. He has heard his grandfather speak and feels he knows a lot.

For some grandchildren, their only knowledge of the Holocaust comes form their grandparents. Usually, if both grandparents are survivors, one is more verbal than the other. One grandson stated that his grandmother does not like to talk about it or see films about it or even think about it. She is in denial and wants to block it out in his opinion. He respects her privacy but he would like to know more about her experience. His grandfather, on the other hand, loves to talk about the way it was when he was young...as his grandchildren reached his age during different periods of the war, he reminds them what he was doing at each age. He has talked to groups in the past, but this is not his general practice.

Other grandparents never talk to groups. They conceal their experience from their own children and rarely talk to their grandchildren unless asked direct questions. Some whom I interviewed revealed that they do not ask questions figuring that if their grandparents wanted to talk they would. Some are scared to ask. One assured me that if the questions were asked, their grandfather would answer, but he has not asked and at 13 he is not curious just yet. Another, also 13, doesn't ask and her grandparents don't talk. Her grandparents live far away and she doesn't want to spend her short visits with them on the topic of the Holocaust. Her grandfather has written his story and it is in the Holocaust museum (I am not sure if it is in Dallas

where she lives, Washington D.C., or Cleveland where he lives). She has not read it yet, but her mom will give it to her when she is ready. She simply has to ask for it.

One survivor halted questions when he told his grandson that he should not even be considered a survivor. He escaped and was in Russia. To add to this, his daughter never spoke to her sons about her father, their grandfather, being in the Holocaust. "We just talked about him sneaking out of Poland and stuff like that. He never brings it up." [Daniel K.] With his grandfather never talking he feels that he did learn about it first in Hebrew School; although, he did point out that his grandfather's famous quote is, "It was worse in Poland." Daniel noted that he uses this quote when things go wrong. As Daniel and I spoke, he realized he did know something before he learned it in Hebrew School, "Basically the only story he ever told was about sewages and stuff like that, just getting out, and finding a way to America. But he never talked about details." [Daniel K.] For Daniel, the details are not what matters. Asking questions is not that important to him. He finds satisfaction in knowing his grandfather for who he is now, not what he was then. He is sensitive to the fact that his grandfather should not have to re-live the past; his grandfather has brought it up once in 18 years, in his grandson's opinion, he obviously does not want to talk about it. His other grandson confirms that he never talks, but he has mentioned what it was like when he first came to Dallas. He spoke about his first job and that he earned

$50.00 a week at a department store. He also mentioned that he once overheard his grandfather talking to his mother. This helped him to piece together information. He, unlike his brother, will ask questions, though nothing "deep," and his grandfather does answer. I found that with siblings, perceptions of whether or not their grandparent talks can be very different. This often depends on the interest level of the grandchild and the comfort level of asking questions.

Many want to know and do ask questions. One granddaughter pointed out that all she has to do is ask one question and her grandfather will go on and on. He is definitely not shy; he will talk to groups and has come to her school. If their grandparents are more of the silent type, they learn what they can from asking their parents. As mentioned earlier, the Shoah Foundation videos not only serve a purpose of preserving memory, but they also teach grandchildren of their own personal legacy. Many have learned details from this medium or other personal videos, books, or journals. Sara S. mentioned that her grandfather talks more than her grandmother, but she learned the most from reading her grandfather's story which he has written down for his grandchildren. It was interesting to read and hard for her to picture her grandfather in the situations, although she knew the story was real.

Her grandfather was not always verbal; in fact, he never spoke to his own children. When asked what or who broke the silence she said her

father. He asked the questions. This is true for another grandchild as well. His mother is the child of survivors but his grandparents will talk to their son-in-law, his father. This is because his father asks the questions and has taken many notes over the years. Knowing that he can look to these if he wants more information, he doesn't "bother" his grandparents with questions. Others know who in their family is the historian and to whom the survivor will open up - an uncle or aunt, a sibling, a parent. One granddaughter asks her mother if she wants to know something. She doesn't want to make her grandparents uncomfortable, in case they do not want to answer. In another family it is the uncle who talks publicly retelling his mother's story, asking her the questions. His sister doesn't ask questions like he does, she is too afraid of hurting her mother. His nephew also holds on to his mother's fear, "I would like to know. I would like to know a lot about what really happened, but I don't want to ask her because it makes her, like, in pain and it hurts her." [Jeremy R.] This is what he knows to be fact; she has told him this. His solution is to ask his uncle, whom he has heard speak, and to read books. He reads a lot about the Holocaust. At times he prefers fiction based on fact because the stories aren't as harsh as reality. He regrets that his grandfather died before he knew how to ask questions.

Another interesting opening for dialogue - reparations. One granddaughter learned more about her grandfather from seeing his claim papers for reparations. The paperwork listed brothers and sisters (great-

aunts and great-uncles) she never knew about. She also learned her grandfather's real last name, *Sztein*. She was surprised at how many people died. She didn't realize all of this because he never talks about it and she doesn't ask. She has learned more about the Holocaust in school and by writing papers on the subject. She feels like a detective. She reads things and she sees things. She remembers once, in their bedroom, she saw a gold star. But she never asked about it either. She has seen names listed on a memorial wall at the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust Studies, but they never told her who died. This is not something she wants to ask. She feels it is a memory they probably wouldn't want to focus on. She does not ask because the topic makes her uncomfortable. Some grandchildren are presented with these openings and freeze, settling for the facts without the stories that bring them to life.

Finally, school projects can spark conversation. One who mentioned a fear of asking questions once interviewed her grandfather for a school paper on the Holocaust. Another grandchild made a cube of information as a school project. He talked to his grandmother to ask a few questions, but then turned to a family member for the majority of the information. Others have learned more about other peoples' experiences, not their own. Another granddaughter told me, "If I have to write a paper about a role model, I always write about him [her grandfather]. I think I have written about him

about every year in a paper." [Rivka L.] Her grandfather saves everything she writes as well as all of her sisters' papers in a big book at his home.

What I found interesting was how the third generation perceived what their parents lives were like growing up in a survivor household. Many made educated guesses because they did not know what it was like. They did not know if their parent asked questions or knew details about their parents' experience. One grandchild felt that her grandparents spoke more to their own children since they do not speak to her about their experience. This concept, however, was rare. Most felt that their grandparents are more open with them than they ever were with their parent. One grandchild said this was because time is passing and they know they have to start talking before it is too late.

Some know that this proximity to the war did affect the household, not only in telling family history but in the way their parents were raised. One grandson mentioned that his mother and his uncles practically raised themselves. Their grandparents were simply happy to be in America and nothing else mattered to them. His mother tells him what it was like growing up with immigrant parents. Another assumes that her grandparents were always as open as they are today, but she does not know what her father actually knew growing up. What she has been told is that life was not a picnic the way that her father was raised, but that the experience made him a stronger person. Another daughter, speaking about her father, says that

she does not know when he was told but that he knows everything and doesn't ask questions today. He does, however, encourage learning about the Holocaust. In general, if the grandparents don't hide information now, it is assumed by the grandchildren that they were always open. "I am sure they did [talk] because my mother was aware that when she was growing up they [the children] did things differently because her parents were in the Holocaust....Like maybe she wouldn't give them [her parents] such a hard time." [Jordan M.] But then he added that they may not have been told personal stories because his mom does not ask questions, even today. She rarely talks about growing up but he knows that she was raised with certain values that she imposes on her own family like dating only Jewish girls and emphasis on academics. He said that his grandparents instilled Judaism into their children so that it would not die out. This maintenance of a Jewish identity is for him a direct link to the Holocaust. This will be explored later in this chapter.

When parents did speak to their children about their childhood they emphasized how different they felt. One grandchild recalls her mother telling her that by having foreign parents they did not even know how to make her lunch for school. She had to teach them. She also taught them what high school life was all about. She added that today, her mom very much looks up to her grandparents. She knows the relationship between her mother and her grandparents has gotten better as her mother has grown.

Some parents mentioned the resentment they felt. Some acknowledged being difficult toward their parents. One told how his father was tough on his own parents and now that they are older he wants to do as much as he can for them. His father grew up learning that things are not fair. If someone tells him that things are not fair, he will reply that the only fair he knows about is the one in October [the Texas State Fair]. Some grandchildren spoke of the strict way their grandparents brought up their parents. One granddaughter said how her grandfather was even strict with her; he is always telling her to sit up or stand up straight.

It is interesting that some of the most verbal survivors, who speak publicly today, did not talk to their own children when they were young. That is because the subject was a touchy one in the household. You just didn't bring it up; everyone knew it happened, but no one asked the questions. The topic was avoided. Coming from this household, one mother does discuss with her daughters what it was like growing up with their grandfather. She mentioned that it was hard for her father to trust anyone. It was hard to learn how to say, "I love you" because it took him a long time to say it for fear that someone would be taken away. Finally, he was scared of different racial people. It was hard to trust them because you don't know what they are going to do to you. She grew up with this and some of his qualities she has maintained in her own household, especially his temper. Another mother told her daughter that it was hard for her to

grow up in a survivor household because it was a very unstable environment. "My mom used to say that they were like ghosts in the house because they weren't really there." [Sara S.] Her mother's parenting skills are affected by her upbringing. She is overprotective and she doesn't like to travel.

Another grandchild described two types of survivors, one who is vocal and open, capable of showing emotion and the other who is sheltered and closed, unable to show emotion and displaying love with material things. His grandparents fall into the second category. They are emotionless. They simply do not know how to show emotions. They lost everything during the war and became shut off. He knows that his mother lived with this and she also lived with them waking up in the middle of the night screaming from nightmares. There were lots of strict rules. It was not a good upbringing for his mother and there was not a strong relationship built between her and her parents. She tries not to repeat what she grew up with but at times is stuck in the same rotation. She is not outwardly affectionate and he too has problems expressing his emotions and grows self-conscious at times. He knows that his grandparents love him, but they just don't know how to show it or are afraid to show it. They have been hurt so much in the past it is hard to open up.

These qualities in parenting have stood out in the minds of the grandchildren. When asked if their parents ever parented their own parents,

some grandchildren did not understand the question; however, their parents would have no doubt about what was being asked. The parents who have one survivor parent were not affected by this challenge because the American born parent could take charge, but if both were survivors great role reversals occurred. One person that I interviewed immediately said that her mom took on a lot of responsibility at a very young age. This has made her an overly responsible and well organized person today. Her mother did not have a childhood and therefore made every effort to give her children the perfect childhood. It was difficult for her mother to appreciate her parents and just when she was able to appreciate her mother, she died. Many had a hard time and many lived in silence until they were older. With age came the ability for many children of survivors to ask questions and reconcile hurt feelings. Some still parent their parents even as adults with their own families. One grandchild remarked that his grandparents push his father back when he tries to parent them. They want to be independent. Especially his grandfather, he does not want to rely on anyone, even his own son. Many children of survivors, however, are overprotective toward their parents and toward their own children.

And finally, growing up, there was silence. As one granddaughter describes what she has learned from her mother:

> It was just not discussed. Society did not lend itself to talking. It was still too fresh. It was in the closet. My mom said that she really didn't know anything until I started getting interested in it." [Jacqueline W.]

Now she is more interested and starting to do more things related to her Holocaust background because of what her daughter does. The grandchildren have built bridges between the generations. They have built up relationships with their grandparents and have learned many lessons. Many parents are able to view their own parents differently when looking through the eyes of their children.

One granddaughter describes her relationship with her grandparents as a close one, very loving and affectionate. She followed her description by saying these emotions were brought out by the third generation. On Sunday mornings the entire family comes together for breakfast no matter what. She told me that the Holocaust has actually pulled her family closer together because they understand the importance of having grandchildren and family. She feels obligated to take care of her grandparents. She and her sister like to take them to the theater to see musicals. During the week they talk on the phone once or twice. It is a very special relationship. Some grandchildren described similar affection for their grandparents. One enjoys talking to his grandmother weekly and enjoys staying with her when he goes to visit. He likes to hang out with her and would love for her to move to Dallas. He never tires of her company, pretty amazing for a 15 year old boy.

Those who live in the same city are able to maintain closer contact. One granddaughter mentioned that she talks to her grandparents during the week and mostly sees them on weekends. She is in her senior year of high

school and already plans to call them often once she goes away to college. She wants to go to school far from home but does not fear growing apart from her family, especially her grandparents. She says that they have a strong relationship and that she has learned a lot from it. Her grandparents have taught her common sense things. They appreciate her and value what she does. She is able to tell them anything. She too enjoys her grandparents' company. Many expressed this type of closeness. Those who grew up with their grandparents but now live elsewhere say that they see each other often when in town and speak once per week when away. Both sides maintain contact, each initiating the phone call. One law student expressed that he likes to hang out with his grandparents and his friends don't understand why he likes to be with them so much. They are interested in his life, who he is dating, what his job is like, how he is doing in school...they ask a lot of questions. He asks them about their vacations and what they are up to. He hesitates to ask about their health because they don't like to share this with him. They tell his mother first. His sister who also goes to school in Austin told me:

> When I come back here [Plano, TX] they are on the top of my list to see. I enjoy going places with them. My grandma and I go shopping all the time, or I love to go out to dinner with them, or I love just going to their house and hanging out. And I don't do it out of obligation. I think it is sad when people don't take advantage of that. I enjoy visiting my grandparents, I really do. [Stacy S.]

She also talks to her grandparents at least once a week if not more. She loves to get together with them and just talk. Sometimes they will go to the country club for lunch or a Sunday brunch. Theirs is a very good relationship. Her grandmother has a way of making her feel better when she is in a bad mood. She helps her realize that the little things are not so important. For another person, breakfast on Sunday is something he looks forward to sharing with his grandparents. This family has carved out a time in their hectic lives, mid-morning to mid-day every Sunday is something they do religiously. If he is out of town they will call him and he will be able to talk to everyone. All the generations come together. He also sees them one other time during the week for lunch or dinner. They also talk on the phone. He knows that he can tell them anything. They talk about work, girls, and pressures between him and his dad. They can also ask him anything. The conversation is very open and what they say is important to him. They have a very close relationship.

Many admire their grandparents. "I look up to him because, you know, I usually always see him with a smile. I think of him as a happy person, usually." [Adam K.] He admires the success he made and respects him because of his Holocaust experience. He sees him less than others who live in the same city, maybe once a month or maybe they will go to breakfast or lunch, just the two of them. They talk on the phone, but not to have long conversations, more to ask specific questions. He likes the

relationship that they have and feels that the amount of communication is enough. Another explains that her family is very close, everyone always knows what is going on with everybody else. Living in the same city she gets together with her grandfather for special occasions, birthday dinners and such. She feels she has a good relationship with her grandfather and feels that he gives good advice. They speak on the phone once every couple of weeks. Two weeks go by very quickly and she feels that she sees him often enough. Her grandmother died when she was young, but she remembers visiting with her. Her grandmother used to dress her and her sister up and take them to nice places. She also remembers her cooking, especially her cookies. She used to like to visit her grandfather's pawn shop and watch her grandmother work from the back room. She would sit back there with her and eat cheese and *matzah* (they had it all year long). She wishes she had deeper memories, but values these vignettes. Her grandmother was always a take charge person and her grandfather was focused on making the money. He still enjoys watching the stock market channel.

One grandfather tries to get his grandson to appreciate the fact that he has grandparents. His grandson says that he is spoiled by them and then told by his grandfather that he missed out on that. Nine months of the year they have Shabbat dinner together. The other three his grandparents are in Florida where they meet friends they have known since before the war. He

only talks to them on the phone when they are away. He also sends e-mail via his grandparents' friend. He believes his grandparents are extra happy now and that they think that everything he does is wonderful. He has a good relationship with his grandparents. He is seen as the one to carry on the torch. As the only grandson he is the last link to the family name.

Time heals wounds. "I think the relationship is better with me and him [her grandfather] than maybe my mom and him just because there are more years spread out since things happened." [Rivka L.] Now that she drives she is growing even closer because she goes to grandparents everyday from work. She is working at the Jewish Community Center as a gymnastics instructor. She drops by for "food and stuff" but enjoys visiting with her grandfather. She also sees her grandparents every Friday for Shabbat dinner and they call all the time. She has a very trusting and close relationship with her grandfather. She describes him as playful and always playing jokes.

One granddaughter finds that the trend in her family is simply the importance of family. After the war family became more important than ever before. She has learned this and knows that she can turn to her family for anything. She explained, "In this family we don't have people not speaking to people. We don't have people not supporting this person for this or that. Nobody judges anybody else."

For others, this closeness is not found. One grandson described his relationship as shallow regarding knowledge of each other's lives, but the love is there. He talks to them on the phone, but not often. He recently spoke to them to say thank you for a birthday check they sent him. They tend to know the bigger things about one another, but not the little things. He has never lived in the same city and feels that this would make a difference in their relationship. He is very close with his grandparents that live in Cincinnati. He remembers that when he was little and used to visit his grandparents who are Holocaust survivors, they would always talk in different languages and he would always have to ask them to translate. Another grandchild describes her relationship with her grandfather as superficial. She does not feel close to him at all. She sees him once a month or once every other month. If he calls and she picks up the phone she will talk to him but she does not call him. She described a recent interaction, "I had picked up the phone and he said he was trying to fax. I said, 'Oh.' He said, 'How are you.' I said, 'Good, how are you?' 'Good, Is your mother home.'" [Laura H.] That was it. No warmth or connection, in fact, she calls her grandfather Paul and not grandpa. Her grandfather lives nearby now, but this has not always been the case. She has a close immediate family but, in her opinion, her grandfather does not fit in; she feels that he does not know how to relate to the family.

Grandchildren who have never lived near their grandparents at times feel alienated. "I'm not so close with them. If they were living in Dallas I would probably be closer, but they are long distance." [Ettie S.] She sees them once or twice a year. Her older sister described her relationship with her grandparents with a long pause and then said she would not want to change anything. She talks to them once a month. But in the same breath she said that she is envious of her cousins who live near her grandparents and wishes she had that. It is hard to feel closeness when one is separated by miles and time. Long distance relationships must be nurtured. If frequent visits are possible the relationships seemed stronger. One grandson describes his relationship as fine. He occasionally talks to his grandparents on the phone. They usually ask about school and if he is seeing anybody. When he was younger he used to take walks with his grandfather during their visits with one another. He told me that his grandparents are always checking to make sure that the family is alright. They are still overprotective. His sister likes that her grandparents follow her sports; they don't give advice but they like to know how she is doing. Her mother talks to them every Sunday, she does not. She enjoys seeing her grandparents on holidays, some weekends, and Labor Day. She too takes walks with her grandfather. She enjoys when they get ice cream together. She says that her grandmother is always asking her, "How much do you love me?" It is as if she has to confirm for herself their devotion by hearing the answer out loud.

When her granddaughter replies, "I love you grandma," this is all she needs to hear. She also gives her five dollars when she leaves to return home (just in case money). She doesn't want her granddaughter to be without. Also, many survivors express their love with money. This represents the success they made in America. The fact that they share something so precious shows, in their minds, how much they care.

Relationships run the gamut. Some third generation survivors are close to their grandparents, others are more distant both geographically and in time spent with one another. Nonetheless, they know their grandparents are survivors and feel they have always been aware of this identity. This connection was known by most at an early age regardless of how and when they learned of their family background. Although their parents linked the generations, they, the third generation, are often the bridge between the generations. They open lines of communication making healing a possibility. Many are the catalyst for asking questions and inspiring conversation. This interaction allows the survivor a safe place to speak and motivates the second generation to reevaluate their parents' experience and their relationship with their parents and their children. The third generation realizes that there is much to be learned from their grandparents; some learn by listening, others learn by asking questions. The information supports the notion that this is a diverse group of individuals bound by a common history.

Jewish Identity

The grandchildren that I interviewed come from families that affiliate with Reform, Conservative, and/or Orthodox synagogues. Most identify with one of the movements and many participated in youth group when in high school or participate currently in groups such as BBYO (B'nai B'rith Youth Organization), USY (United Synagogue Youth - Conservative), NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth - Reform) and NCSY (National Conference of Synagogue Youth - Orthodox). Those in college do not always associate with Hillel, but if they join a fraternity or sorority, it is usually Jewish. No matter their religious affiliation, repeatedly I heard pride in the answers to the question, "How do you feel about being Jewish?" One grandchild sums it up perfectly, "I feel great! I like being Jewish. I like Judaism. I like Jewish people." [Jordan M.] He has never felt threatened as a Jew even though he knows things do happen and Jews can be targets, but not here, maybe other places, he adds (I interviewed him days after the Los Angeles Jewish Community Center Shooting). Another person told me, "Look at what we, or Jews in general, have gone through and we are still alive; we are still here." [Sara S.] She is proud and happy to be Jewish. She never feels scared to identify as a Jew. Anther said, "I may not be the most religious person but I think that being Jewish is important." She maintains the holidays and does Shabbat if her brother-in-law is in town. He is going to be a rabbi. She never denies being Jewish.

Most grandchildren felt this pride and loyalty. In fact one grandchild told me that she wears her Israel t-shirts to the gym and she always wears a Jewish star. While she is not afraid to display her Jewish identity, her grandmother will tell her not to wear certain things to school. She is nervous when her granddaughter is so easily identified. Her school does not have many Jewish kids and she does stand out. She loves being Jewish but does not want to be labeled at school as "The Jew." She wants to go to a college with a large Jewish population so that she can simply be herself.

"It is fun to be Jewish," stated another grandchild, but he added that he would not advertise that he is Jewish but, if someone asked, he would not hide it. One grandchild told me that it is important to know the situations where one does not "advertise" Jewishness. He felt that one should not be flashy, but be smart. Life and safety are more important that displaying one's Judaism. I found no one who would openly deny their connection to Judaism, but I did find a couple who do not feel Jewish "religiously" only culturally or who no longer identify themselves as Jewish. One granddaughter who converted to Judaism officially when her mom converted, has always considered herself Jewish because she was raised that way. It was important to her father that his kids be Jewish. She expressed the following when asked how she feels about being Jewish:

> I am...and I am sure this won't please my grandparents or my father, I don't feel Jewish religiously. I feel Jewish respectfully for my family and for my grandparents. I do have a religious sense about my heritage and my past and

> what my family went through and that I have no family on this side because they were Jewish, just my grandparents...what they have gone through and lived through solely for the purpose...because they were Jewish, that is where my sense of being Jewish comes from. [Jennifer S.]

Another grandchild thinks that it is important to be Jewish because of the length of time we [Jews] have been here. He thinks of things in a historical, cultural, sense. Someone else told me that he was raised Jewish but does not consider himself Jewish because he does not believe in God. He also does not believe in any religious institutions. When asked what religion he is he will answer, "atheist." He is not scared to identify as being Jewish and in instances of racism or antisemitism he is the first to stand up, but from a humanist perspective. He identifies with knowledge and culture if and when he identifies himself as Jewish. Belief in God, which will be explored in detail further, put people on the line when asked about being Jewish. One granddaughter told me that she does not believe in God and so for her, Judaism takes on a different meaning. She likes being part of the Jewish community and the intellectual world. Religion for her is an ancient way to keep the community together. She uses services as a time to think, saying that it is hard for her to find that time otherwise.

Another person feels torn about being Jewish. When she was younger, she used to go to services a lot more. Now, she feels services are a pain. She wants to be Jewish without services. She feels she needs proof to believe in something. If she were not Jewish, she would be nothing. One

thing she does like about Judaism is that it gives her an instant connection with other people. She has noticed that the relationships with her Jewish friends are different from those with her non-Jewish friends.

Age 13 - 27 is a time of struggle and of figuring out Jewish identity. For the majority their sense of identity is connected in some way to their Holocaust legacy. The Holocaust does define who they are as Jews. One granddaughter told me that it is a "huge" part of her Jewish identity. She views having a Jewish household and telling her children one day of their Holocaust legacy as her obligation as a Jew, a grandchild of survivors. Another granddaughter says that she definitely identifies herself as third generation. The Holocaust is a part of who she is. For some the Holocaust was their entry way into learning more about Judaism:

> The Holocaust has really brought me into Judaism more than I think I would have. I feel a stronger connection. I have a lot of Jewish friends and I just don't see that in them. I don't see that tie and I don't ... A lot of my Jewish friends when I talk about the Holocaust they will kind of dismiss it because Jewish teenagers that don't have immediate family that was involved in the Holocaust it doesn't really mean anything to them and that really bothers me. [Jacqueline W.]

She feels that teaching about the Holocaust is her obligation as a Jew. She really feels that this is important and feels this anchors her to her Jewish beliefs. There is a sense of obligation felt among grandchildren to be Jewish because of the Holocaust. One said that not only does it define who he is as a Jew but it should define every Jew. We must preserve their memory. Being Jewish is being part of a family.

Others feel that if their grandparents could live through what they did and they stayed Jewish, how could their grandchildren not be Jewish. One grandson told me that some of his love for Judaism comes from knowing what his grandparents went through. They still maintain traditions like keeping kosher, observing all of the holidays and his grandmother is still *shomer shabbos*. This type of dedication makes an impression on the grandchildren.

> If I didn't have my grandparents like this then I think I would still be Jewish and it would still be important to me, but I feel like it is more important to me because they weren't allowed to do it and they weren't allowed, they weren't permitted to pray, they weren't permitted to go to synagogue and I think that makes me even appreciate more the fact that I am allowed and I can do those things and that is important. I think I would never ever marry someone that wasn't Jewish or that wouldn't convert because I can't imagine what they would feel. I mean that they came here for me to be...to have this life and to have this freedom. [Stacy S.]

> I think it almost defines me entirely as a Jew. In my opinion, for me, Judaism is tradition, heritage, and family, those three things together, and the Holocaust, the fact that we might not even be here, should not be here, could have been exterminated completely...I hold that very dearly that these people died, or parts of my family were killed because of Judaism. And so I need to keep it strong. [Todd S.]

> I think it does [define me as a Jew], I really think it does and I am grateful for it and grateful for them [her grandparents] because it really gives you a sense of strength and purpose from where you came from. [Jennifer S.]

And some know that it plays a role in their Jewish identity, but have a hard time putting their finger on what exact qualities from the Holocaust

shape them. It helps to define them because they have always grown up with it. "It is just a part of me." [Brad C.]

> I think it separates me kind of from other Jews who don't have any connection to it at all, because my grandparents influence me and my parents...so I guess some of the Jewish things I do are different from other people, I don't really know how? [Jordan M.]

A couple felt very little influence from the Holocaust on their Jewish identity. One granddaughter stated clearly that the negative is not what defines her as a Jew.

> The thing that define me as a Jew are generally not the horrible things that happen, but the good. The things that were upheld although the horrible things happened. Like there are still, I mean we still value study and morals, so I don't think it was the disasters. [Laura H.]

Most grandchildren go to services on the High Holy Days, the few exceptions were with some of the college students and one who is older who lives on his own. Many go out of respect for their grandparents. A couple of college students told me that they try to go home but, if they can't make it home, they definitely find somewhere to go. One told me she feels guilty sitting at home or in a class when she knows she should be at services. She goes to services for her grandparents and parents. She knows she should go for herself, but if this is what motivates her, then that is acceptable to her. Services in general were not high on the list for most grandchildren. Again I heard, "I do not like services but I go out of respect." [Todd S.] Others do enjoy services and try to go every week. One person finds herself becoming more observant. In fact she influences her family observance. A little over

half of the people I interviewed do go to some sort of Yom HaShoah observance. For a few it was like another High Holy Day in that they would never think of missing it and their entire family attends the service together, all three generations. One grandchild remarked that at the communal service in Dallas the survivors walk in carrying candles. It is moving, but sad because the group gets smaller every year.

A tradition for some is having Shabbat dinner as a family -- grandparents, parents and grandchildren. Two who do this are 15 and 16. They told me that it is not a conflict. One told me he is used to it and knows that he cannot go out. He doesn't even want to go out. The other told me that it is a family tradition and he looks forward to *challah* and noodle soup. He tries not to plan anything that would conflict because his grandmother's cooking is so good. The other holiday that is widely observed as a family is Passover. Almost every family comes together for seder. The theme of the holiday, slavery to freedom, lends itself as a natural tie-in for survivor families to retell their own exodus from enslavement to liberation. Some will incorporate the Holocaust, many do not. One who does not says that he himself thinks about the Holocaust privately when he joins his family for the Passover seder. Someone else said that her grandfather does not like to incorporate it with everyday things and they don't include anything in their seder so that he will not be uncomfortable. Another says that her family does incorporate a Holocaust theme in a general way, especially if her

grandparents are there. One family sings *God Bless America* at the end of their seder. The grandchildren can never remember a time when it wasn't done but are not sure how the tradition started. To the family this is symbolic. Their granddaughter plans to continue this tradition even when her grandparents are gone. She says that it represents how thankful they are to be in America and to be free. Another granddaughter told me that there is nothing particular at her family's seder, but she does remember one seder where her grandfather and one of his Holocaust friends were singing songs that they grew up singing. She added that this also happened at her bat mitzvah. Her grandfather still maintains contact with his friends from the concentration camps. Many survivors have other friends who are also survivors whom they met after the war, but her grandfather has a special situation. For her family, the Holocaust plays a big part in family gatherings and life cycle events. This is true of others I interviewed as well. "We always talk about the Holocaust anytime there is a holiday or we are together. There is always a reference to it...a meaningful reference." [Michael S.]

Despite level of observance and identification as a Jew, what is fascinating is the positive response received regarding marrying Jewish. Most grandchildren said that it was important to marry someone who is Jewish, whether they were born Jewish or converted to Judaism. Many will not even date someone who is not Jewish though this is a fuzzy issue for

most, especially those still in high school. Only one person that I interviewed is married and she only dated Jewish while she was single. The reasons given by the group for dating and marrying Jewish vary: It is important to raise a Jewish family; the grandparents love it when they are seeing someone Jewish; they want a Jewish home, no Christmas; their parents won't let them date non-Jews (One said her parents tell her she is going to marry Jewish for the sake of her grandfather and she agrees); their Holocaust legacy keeps them loyal; the population of the Jewish people is decreasing as it is; their grandparents won't allow intermarriage; they would not risk being disowned by their family; because of their background and personal belief system; why not continue the religion, there are already so many inter-marriages; to marry someone not Jewish would be an insult to the grandparents; and I'm Jewish. One even said that it would be nice to marry another grandchild with a shared history. Two said that they wanted to marry someone who knew as much or more about Judaism than they do. Knowledge is important in establishing a Jewish home and teaching the children about Judaism. For those who identify as more American than Jewish this is especially important. A strong Jewish identity is what counts.

Two sisters told me about how their mother was first engaged to a Southern Baptist and she was disowned. She broke off the engagement. Another was told by his grandparents that they would prefer that he marry someone Jewish, but if not, they will accept it, so long as the girl is not

German. He himself would prefer to marry Jewish but says that ultimately what is important is that his kids are Jewish even if his wife is not. Someone else told me that her grandparents would "flip" if she married a non-Jew and that while it is important to her, she will not date guys based on religion. She does, however, wish to raise her kids Jewish. Raising her kids Jewish is important to her because of her Holocaust background. Another had this same reaction, she wants to raise the kids Jewish even though earlier in the interview she told me that when she grows up she really does not want to be any religion. She does not believe in the Torah and does not believe in God that much. She thinks the Torah stories could have been made up. She wants proof. Ultimately, however, she will marry Jewish because it is too complicated otherwise. In her opinion, it is so hard for the kids when people intermarry.

One granddaughter was very vocal about her reasons for marrying Jewish, "With six million Jews dying, it is important to keep the religion alive because if everyone interfaith marries then you have a problem." [Tracy L.] She also added that to avoid confusion, it is important to raise the kids with one religion. Overwhelmingly the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors say that no matter what, their children will be Jewish. "There is too much family history and too much importance in being Jewish." [Sarah G.] Besides, she feels that she owes it to her grandfather after what he went through. This was also true for another person I spoke with. He was very

strong about his opinion saying that he will only date Jewish girls at this point in his life. He is 24 and says that his Jewish identity really grew at college and that now he is not interested in marrying anyone that is not Jewish.

> It would be an incredibly selfish act on my part. It would be very short sighted to believe that all those people had those beliefs and held so strong to those beliefs and died for them and came to America with no money in their pocket and fought for so long to keep that identity that I should neglect that and not carry it on. And I realize, who am I? I am this small nothing, but yet I could have this great legacy and marry someone Jewish and have Jewish children and instill in them Jewish values to carry on further. And how could I possibly dare not want to carry that on for my family, my heritage, my relatives, my ancestors that were dying and at some point saying we are dying because we want our future generations to... [Todd S.]

Finally, I was told, by someone that it is important to marry Jewish. He would like it to work out that way, but he does not think it is fair to restrict himself on who he dates. The most important thing to him is to be friends with the person he is seeing. Marriage is a life between two people. Going to religious school is not important in raising kids. What is important are heart and mind values. This is what he wants to pass on. "Because you know the basis of really any religion or any culture, before man tampers with it, is to have a good heart and to think through right and wrong." [Michael S.] Morality is what is important. Someone else said that they had not thought ahead to marriage and they date anyone. She was only one of two who said that it was not important to raise Jews as long as her children knew their family history, and were raised with good values. It is more

important to be happy and healthy. She has learned from her grandparents not to discriminate and this applies to dating in her mind. The second said that he will let his kids decide on their own religion. It does not matter who he marries and he does not feel guilty about his decision even though his grandmother wants him to marry a Jewish girl. It just doesn't matter. If he does marry a non-Jew it will be chance. He is not intentionally seeking a non-Jew, religion is just not an issue.

Exploring Jewish identity would not be complete without exploring one's God concept. With this group, most have wrestled with God. Some have struggled because of the Holocaust and others struggle in general. Some have discounted any belief in God and others question God's existence and God's involvement in the Holocaust or seemed lack of involvement. When asked, "How has the Holocaust affected your belief in God?" the grandchildren answered in many ways. One said, without hesitation, that God is not responsible. "He can't do everything. He could not have prevented it." [Tracy L.] Another person said that it never changed her belief in God but she questions, "Where was God?" Someone else asked, "If there was a God why did he let this happen?" [Sarah G.] She, too, believes in God and says that the Holocaust has not affected her belief in God. Some said that the idea of a God is difficult, especially when bad things happen. But, one individual said that she definitely believes in God based on the beautiful things she has seen and experienced; there has to be something

there. Someone else believes, but feels there is something missing when asking why in regard to the Holocaust. She believes, however that everything happens for a reason. We may not know the reason right away, but we might know someday. Another questions, but does not doubt God's existence in his life.

> It makes me wonder, like with all the bad stuff, like how could this God just stand there? But I still believe in God. It makes me question him but it doesn't make me think that there is no God at all. And I know that some survivors, like after the Holocaust, they totally lost faith in God, but I am not like that. [Do you think your grandparents believe in God?] I think they do because they are pretty Conservative. [Jordan M.]

One granddaughter felt she knew where God was during the Holocaust. "God was with my Grandparents at the time, he helped them through it." [Ettie S.] Another would question her confidence. "If God was really there he would have helped the Jews in some way and not let all those people die, but instead he just slacked off and never really thought about anyone else." [Daniel H.] His anger in God and his doubt were apparent in his tone. Someone else told me that she doubted God for a long time until she read *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. It brought up a good point that helped her in developing her personal God concept. What she learned from Rabbi Kushner is that what happened in the Holocaust was what humans did. She was able to separate God from the Holocaust. This helped her to doubt God less though she still struggles. She is still putting

together her concept of who or what God is. For many, belief in God was a completely separate issue.

> It is not God that makes things happen. It is just that we were born with choices. And everybody was born with choices and it is the choices that makes the world the way it is. Because Hitler had a choice if he wanted to start the war or not, if he did not want to start the war... [Sarah L.]

> Like I don't think, how could God let that happen? I know some people think that. I don't think that at all because I don't think God directly affects things, but... so it [the Holocaust] hasn't really affected it [his belief] specifically. [Brad C.]

He assumes that his grandparents do believe in God. After all, they did join an Orthodox shul when they first moved to Cincinnati although they are members at a Reform temple today. Other grandparents do not believe in God. One grandson expressed that he shared similar views of God with his grandfather and relates his feelings from a recent conversation.

> The way that I see it I did not believe that there was a God, because I did not believe that any God of mine would be able to kill six million people for no reason. And I had a problem with believing in any God like that and my grandfather believes that as well. And he's a pretty religious guy. I mean not religious. He goes to Sherith Israel [a Conservative Synagogue], and they observe every holiday. My grandma cooks the holiday meals. We have a very Jewish family but, he says, "The reason I am a Jewish man today is simply out of respect for my father." He said, "I was raised very Jewish. We had an Orthodox home growing up." He said, "I do not believe in God because I cannot believe in any God that would take my whole family away." ...Judaism is much more a culture and a way of life and the traditions and the things passed down from generation to generation than my oneness with God. I have problems with that, personal issues not just because of what happened. And, how lucky and fortunate we are to be here. I guess I could turn the other foot, the other side of the coin, and say that if there wasn't a God then we wouldn't all be here at all.
> [Todd S.]

For others the Holocaust does not affect their belief at all. One grandson said that he does not believe in the word "God". He does, however, believe in a higher power; more of a mystical sense or belief. There is an energy that makes all things work. This power does not react on impulse or make decisions. In his opinion, it is what makes things come alive. Another person never thought of the Holocaust and God together. She wasn't sure what she believed regarding God until recently. She explained to me that now she is more certain because of a conversation she had with her mother. She has had many operations in her life. She said that she was "not all together" when she was born. She asked her mom how she felt before and after each operation. Her mom said that she felt lucky and really believed in God that she was even able to survive. This got her thinking more about God and having more faith. The Holocaust is not a factor for her.

There were a couple who did not believe in God at all. For one, the Holocaust is not the cause, but it does support his belief. He claims to be a secular humanist. He recognizes that bad things happen to good people. In his opinion, the people who died in the Holocaust died for a culture but not a belief in God. Another believes that to make a community stay together there is need for a higher power for everyone to believe in. She believes that people did not realize that they were in charge of their own destiny. God has a way of controlling people. Man's way of controlling other men. These

ideas pre-date the Holocaust and that is why it is not a factor as to why she does not believe in God. Others ponder the issue but are confused and constantly struggle between belief and disbelief and have no answer.

The grandchildren know how to express their feelings about Judaism, many can talk about God, Jewish culture and peoplehood is significant, however, when it comes to the country of Israel the conversation was limited. In general, thoughts about Israel are favorable among the grandchildren of survivors. One granddaughter even identified herself as a Zionist. Those who had never been before would like to go. Many had been on youth group trips, others went with their family. Some have done both. A few have siblings living in Israel. Only one had a negative experience and says that she will not go back.

Sensitivities and Concerns

Broad sweeping generalizations about the psychological effects of the Holocaust on this generation are next to impossible. The dilution of their grandparents' legacy due to factors such as the passing of time, being raised by one parent who is second generation and one who is not, and the assimilation of American Jews contribute to this observation. As one grandchild said, "When I think of my life, if you ask me to define myself, first off I would probably think American, then I think Jewish and then probably a teenage boy, and then would come the third generation." [Brad C.] This statement came from a grandson who has heard his grandfather

speak; in fact, his grandfather is a well known survivor in Cincinnati. He sees his grandparents on a regular basis (his grandmother is also a survivor) and he has always lived near his grandparents. His grandfather has a number on his arm; Brad knows his roots, yet they do not dominate his life and monopolize his identity.

Yet, this group was able to pinpoint some areas in their lives where their Holocaust legacy heightens their awareness to issues of right and wrong. They know when it is time to remain silent and when to speak out. For example, antisemitism is something that the third generation notices. Most recognize that they are highly sensitive because of their grandparents' experience. Others claim that they are not aware of a direct connection to their Holocaust legacy, but they assume that it must be a part of their sub-conscious. As noted earlier, members of the third generation are not afraid to identify themselves as Jewish; some wear Jewish icons such as clothing with Jewish slogans (i.e. things they bought in Israel, youth group t-shirts, or items with sorority or fraternity letters) and identifiable jewelry (i.e. Jewish stars, *mezuzot*, their name in Hebrew). One person, protecting her sister, told her not to wear a Jewish star the first day at her new school. She wanted her to find out about the other kids first. Another person became nervous because her father wears a *kippah*. Now she is used to it, but the first two and a half years he wore it, it bothered her that he could be so easily identified as a Jew. This fear, she knows, is from her Holocaust

background. She used to never wear anything that would identify her but since she returned from her summer trip to Israel, she wears a *chamsah*. She remembers a time in drivers' education where she felt targeted because she was Jewish, this made her uneasy. She is proud to be Jewish, but doesn't want it to be too obvious.

> When I was in drivers ed there were racist people in the class and it was kind of more scary to think that I was the only Jewish person in the class. I answered a question once and they said, 'Of course she knows. She's Jewish.' I don't know how they knew I was Jewish. Maybe from my name or my dad wears a kippa and they saw him pick me up. [Rivka]

Antisemitism is a reality and it does not always come from the outside. Someone mentioned that she is especially sensitive to antisemitism if it is other Jews making the comments. For example, if her Jewish friends make Jewish jokes or employ certain stereotypes, thinking they are being funny, it makes her uncomfortable. Someone else told me that they don't like when people make racist jokes of any type or are hurtful to others. She hates when people put others into categories. Their family history has taught the third generation to stand-up against antisemitism, racism, and hatred One grandson got into a fight when he was called a dirty Jew. Any form of antisemitism is just not acceptable. Some felt that other Jewish kids might get upset, but would not react.

Very few had experienced acts of antisemitism personally. To one family the reality of antisemitism became very vivid. Their mother is a

Texas State Senator and when she was first running for the position her signs were defaced with antisemitic jargon. In response to the hatred, police were guarding their house 24 hours a day. The daughter expressed that this was one time when she was afraid to be Jewish but not ashamed to be Jewish. This incident made her think of what it must have been like for her grandparents. They were very upset by the graffiti and thought the world was past this. The Holocaust is always incorporated into articles about her mom. She is sure that the acts were intentional. Another person told me about something that had happened to her in the fifth grade. She was talking about Hanukkah and a boy sitting next to her leaned over and said, "When I grow up I want to be a Nazi so that I can kill all you Jews." She went home and told her parents. They immediately called his parents and it turned out that during the war his grandfather fought against the Nazis. Also, they had Jewish relatives. This taught her not to make assumptions about peoples' background and that antisemitisim usually comes from ignorance. Finally one person told me of a shocking experience that occurred when he was in Poland. He had just been inside a gas chamber and upon exiting was told by some stranger to go back in. Those who had been personally touched by acts of antisemitism were upset and disturbed by their experience but, after what their grandparents lived through, were not surprised. They know that these people still exist.

In fact, another issue that sparked conversation and a raised antennae among the third generation was Holocaust denial and revisionism. Regarding this subject the group was unified. No one had ever experienced someone saying directly to them that the Holocaust did not happen. Some were aware that denial exists from things they have seen on television, heard on the radio, or read in the newspaper. One person actually witnessed a protest while she was with her mom. They were seeing a movie at the same theater where *Schindler's List* was playing. When they left the theater there were neo-Nazi skinheads yelling things and holding signs saying the Holocaust did not happen. This really angered both her and her mom. Her mom (second generation) was yelling things back at the group from the car. When they got home she called the police but they said that they could not do anything because of the First Amendment. It shocked her that this could occur in Plano, TX. When she went to Poland she saw things written on walls, but was never verbally faced with denial. As a group, the third generation cannot understand deniers. Yet for many it is hard even for themselves to grasp what their grandparents really experienced.

> When I read about it I usually don't think about my grandparents being in it. That is probably out of a denial type thing. I think of it as not real. When I read a book it is like, o.k., this happened, but again it is a whole different time period. I mean it was the 1940's, but it seems like, to me, a whole different time, it could have been the 1800's. [Matt M.]

Matt followed his thought by saying, "The deniers really scare me." He understands the way in which scholars can twist reality and others will follow. He knows of his connection intellectually but does not feel it intimately. He knows his grandparents are survivors; they each have a visible reminder burned into their arm. Still his way of understanding the Holocaust is intellectual. If Matt is overwhelmed by the details, if he can place the Holocaust into the distant past, imagine what those not connected personally might feel.

Matt can separate the two, however, this is not true for most of the grandchildren interviewed. Blending intellect and intimacy serves as a basis for many third generation reactions. The majority feel very connected to their Holocaust legacy. They know the truth. They have heard the truth and see it when they look into their grandparents eyes, hear their stories, and sense their pain. Some have identifying marks that serve as reminders. This is a legacy they want to pass on so that the deniers don't influence more people. Someone who thinks about their connection daily told me that she tries to learn something new everyday about her grandparents' experience. She is extremely interested in their stories. "I never forget it. It is always there." [Leah K.] She was one who could identify many characteristics in her family. She feels a very personal link to the Holocaust. Knowing her family history is important to her. "Not a day goes by when I don't think about the Holocaust." [Jennifer S.] Anytime that something comes up that is

Holocaust related it catches her attention. She feels very connected to their Holocaust experience.

> I got more of the positive from it and not as much of the negative that they had to deal with. I get the positive effects without having to go through anything. [Jennifer S.]

By this she means that she has a sense of purpose and strength because of her Holocaust legacy whereas her grandparents embody the negative. They constantly feel the weight and pain of their memories. They are always there. Her father falls somewhere in the middle.

"My life usually has something to do with my grandfather surviving." [Brad C.] His grandfather is a very well known survivor in the Cincinnati area. He speaks at many schools and has spoken to his grandson's class. People know Brad in connection with his grandfather. He explained to me that his mind set is connected to his grandfather's experience, but he does not think day-to-day about it. Something has to trigger a thought. Most fit this category, they need a spark, they otherwise don't think about their connection. One person said that there are other third generation Holocaust survivors in her sorority. In the Fall there is always a week of remembrance and this always sparks conversation between her and the other girls. It is a strong bond that they share. They can identify with one another. At times, through the dilution and blending of family backgrounds their Holocaust legacy surfaces to give them strength and a connectedness to others.

Some think of their connection when they are at school, in Judaica class, or studying history. Reading certain books will also trigger thoughts. But, as one granddaughter told me, she usually isn't thinking about her connection when she is sitting at home. Another says that she does feel connected, but she always thinks of her grandparents as old so she doesn't think back to their past. She feels that the Holocaust was so long ago that it does not bring anything into her house. Some said that they feel connected to the Holocaust but not because of their grandparents.

> What's weird is if someone says anything about the Holocaust, I don't automatically think, my grandparents. I will just think the Holocaust, like of Hitler or something, but I really feel bad for my grandparents. [Amanda M.]

The more education she receives the more connected she feels with her grandparents' Holocaust experience.

> I feel very connected to the Holocaust, not necessarily their personal experiences. But it has shaped my life in some ways, especially my mother's. [Laura H.]

When she was a child she believed that everybody else's grandparents had gone through the same thing. She didn't believe that she was different or special in any way, but now she knows a different reality. When they learn about the Holocaust in school and people make the connection that her grandparents were there, they ask questions. Another example of how someone is affected by their grandparents' experience was made clear by something so innocent. On a school trip to New York, the eighth grade class took in a Broadway musical, *The Sound of Music*. Having only seen the

movie, one person was startled by the end of the production when banners bearing swastikas were unfurled throughout the theatre. She just wanted to run from there even though she knew it was only a show. She was with a group of Jewish kids, but it got to her more, she told me, because of her grandfather's experience. Another person told me that she feels "a little" connected to her grandparents' experience, but that her imagination can set images in her mind that may be more extreme than their reality. This is an important part of her life, but her life does not revolve around it. She doesn't like to focus on it a lot, but she does feel that it is an important part of our history and it brings us closer together as a religion.

There were a handful that felt very little if any connection to their Holocaust legacy. Some felt close, but not that close.

> I guess I really don't feel that connected, I don't really think about it that much at all. I mean when I see them I think about it, but it is not something that is constantly in my mind. [Jordan M.]

Another person told me frankly that it does not affect him personally at all. When asked how often he thinks about his connection to the Holocaust he told me that he thinks of it more as a Jewish thing than a personal family thing, though what follows seems more of a combination.

> I just think I am Jewish, you know it could have been me or I had a much bigger family. I know how relatives had died either trying to escape or maybe even some made it to America, but could not hang on....I could have had just a lot bigger family, so that is what I think of. [Daniel K.]

Someone else said that they need to know more to feel closer to their Holocaust experience. She only thinks of her connection on Yom HaShoah. Another person who does not think of his connection very often said that he doesn't feel the direct connection to his grandparents because he doesn't know that much about their experience or the Holocaust. Another told me that she felt knowledgeable but not necessarily connected because of how little her grandparents shared with her. She actually feels more connected to the six survivors who were on her March of the Living trip. They not only shared their stories but were able to show where they were while they told their stories. It was a very powerful experience for her.

No matter how connected they feel, whether it is personal or general, for most it does not seem to affect their attitude toward non-Jews or Germans, though some admit to never having met anyone German. One granddaughter admitted that she tends to be more stereotypical of people because of things she hears from her father and grandparents. She is very aware of differences in people. When she thinks of Germany, she thinks of Nazis. She reasons that Germans her age are probably grandchildren of Nazis. Regarding non-Jews she said that they do not understand her reaction to the Holocaust, but now many people are interested in her background. Another mentioned feeling left out when her friends would go to Fellowship of Christian Athletes' events and she could not go.

> That was what was hard about growing up was that I did not have a lot of Jewish friends.... and I never looked at them [her non-Jewish friends] and said you know you are wrong because you are not Jewish, but they looked at me and said why are you not like us? [Stacy S.]

Others feel that prejudice against Germans is something that is built in. One felt this so much so that she never wants to go to Germany. She would, however, drive a German car. Some say they do not discriminate against Germans, but sometimes they do feel uneasy.

> ...like when I hear a voice, a really strong German, it makes me think back. I know they did not do it personally but probably their grandparents did. Maybe I wouldn't be best friends with a German or anything like that, but, like I would buy a German car. My grandmother would not. [Jeremy R.]

One person told me, "When I was little I used to think that all German people were bad until I learned that my mom was born in Germany. Then I thought, oh..." [Sally K.] She realized that this issue is not quite as clear cut as she once thought.

In regard to products made in Germany, the vote was split. Some said they did not know what they would do when asked if they would drive a German made car. "You can't blame it on the kids." [Jacqueline W.] She realizes that it is not those people who were Nazis. But still, she does not know if she would own a German car. No matter how open minded she feels she is, it was still strange for her when she was in Poland, in the airport, and she saw lots of old faces. She couldn't help but wonder where they were during the war. She knew where her grandparents were. Another

person mentioned that his grandparents make this same comparison and will ask, "What did your grandparents do back then." He does not think that way and tries to not let his background affect his thinking regarding German people. But he does admit that there is some discomfort with Germans in the back of his mind. Regarding German cars, he is not allowed to drive them. In fact, he found out that one of his friends was also a grandchild of survivors when they were talking about cars they like. One car was a BMW and both said right away that they could never drive one of those - the reason, their family history. Another person told me about her mother's reaction when she expressed interest in a Volkswagen Bug, "Not in this family!" She knows there will be no German car in her future.

For one person it was not a car that was the issue, but she said that she would not own a German shepherd. She remembers her grandmother taking walks with a big stick because of her fear of dogs. Her grandmother was in Auschwitz. Others said their grandparents actually owned German shepherds. Nothing is conclusive with this group. Some were scared of Germans. One mentioned that her history teacher scared her because he was German. Another said that she had a bias against Germans but would drive a BMW. Where she has trouble is with Doc Martins. Her parents will not let her wear them because that is what the Nazis wore or they resemble what the Nazis wore. It is interesting where individuals set their boundaries.

Most do not think there could be another Jewish Holocaust. The chance is slim to none, commented one individual. She could not see it happening again. A couple of people thought that the reason it could not happen again is because of the existence of Israel. Someone else said that it was not possible because the common people today are "way more informed." Another answered that anything is possible, unfortunately. He feels, however, that if the United States government and others are able to see what is happening, as long as we are able to spot it, it could not occur right now, but one never knows for sure. Because most people are aware, it could not happen again was the thought of others. Not in my time thought another.

> If people don't learn about it. If people aren't careful then history could repeat itself, but I think it is possible; but, I don't think it would happen with this society. [Rivka L.]
>
> No, I don't think there will be another one, but I think that we still have to be aware of what's happening in the government.
> [Amanda M.]
>
> There are too many powerful people in the world that are Jews today that I don't think 50 years ago were as powerful as they are today. I mean I think Jews, especially in the United States hold so many powerful positions and have accumulated so much wealth that I don't think that could happen. [Todd S.]

One granddaughter is scared that everything may happen again. She thinks it is very possible. Someone else also fears that there could be another Jewish Holocaust, but this time she thinks it would be stopped a lot sooner, like Kosovo. Most grandchildren did not equate Kosovo to the

Holocaust, though some did. Some who did not, very strongly said that one cannot even draw comparisons. It is insane that these things are still going on, ... but nothing like that could happen here, in the United States, thought one individual. Someone else said that it could happen to any group of people that had some distinguishing characteristics.

Whether or not they fear another Jewish Holocaust, most grandchildren have thought about whether or not they would have survived or could have survived and how their grandparents did survive.

> Oh, I wonder if I would have like died the first day in the showers or been in that line, or if I would have kept a diary and become famous....would I have survived? [Amanda M.]

> Like Yom Kippur when you are hungry and stuff, I wonder how did he do that. Or if I complain I am so cold, like he did not have any clothes at all, how did he survive? [Rivka L.]

One person said that he thinks he could have survived, depending on the situation. He has the drive to do it, but the opportunities have to be there. He quickly followed, "But I shouldn't say yes I would, because I don't know." [Michael S.] He noted that his drive comes from his father and grandparents. Another has tried to think if she would have survived but can't imagine it. She has the biggest fear of being shot. She has a fear of dying. She doesn't think she would have survived. To survive one needs physical and emotional strength at a Superman level thought one granddaughter. For another person the amount she thought about survival was dependent on where she was; when she was in Israel she thought about

it all the time. She also wondered about her own survival when traveling in Europe and looking at synagogues. Some wonder what they would do in certain situations. Another puts himself into the books he reads about the Holocaust and does not know how he would have survived.

Survival is one issue grandchildren think about and what their grandparents had to do to survive. They reflect on life and even put their lives in perspective based on what occurred to their grandparents during the war. On this thought process, the group was split; some did use the Holocaust as a barometer and some did not. For one person it was a reality check.

> I look back at high school and do the same thing where everything seemed so important at the time, but it is nothing when it comes down to it because look at what they went through ...even after hearing about it and being involved in it for such a long time it is not, it is hard for it to be, a reality to me still. For me to even begin to understand something like that... [Jennifer S.]

When asked if she thought this was a healthy way to think, she said that it is because it makes her realize how lucky she really is. For some it is especially easy to do this because they are the same age as their grandparents were when they were in the Holocaust. Another granddaughter would agree on the validity of the process. "It is not a bad thing. It definitely keeps me on track." [Stacy S.] She always realizes that things could be a lot worse.

> It is hard for me, as much as I work towards teaching people, you still can never place yourself in their position. It is so unfathomable, even though you know so much

> about it, you can't really understand it...only to a point. And I think that is the same with them, they were never really teenagers. They never had everything that is going on now [in my life], they never really had that...so I think it is kind of hard for them to see that with me." [Jacqueline W.]

With certain issues, however, she does put her life in perspective based on what they went through, especially with dating. For the stresses associated with applying to college, she does not. She will even mention her grandparents' experience to help friends put their lives in perspective.

Some don't evaluate their lives by such measures, but simply wonder what their grandparents were doing when they were their age. One person told me that she does not feel guilty about little things she worries about. Finally, someone revealed that he does put his life in perspective to an extent, but then realizes that where he is coming from cannot be compared to the Holocaust. It is like comparing apples and oranges. One grandson says he has a mental block when putting himself in their shoes. He can't fathom it.

> You can read all the books. You can watch all the movies. You can walk through the camps. But you will never, ever be in their shoes. That is really what it comes down to. I mean I can't imagine the horrors that they saw. Because the unexplainable, the thing that you would think would never happen, they saw on a daily basis. [Lonny E.]

Others use different methods for putting their lives in perspective. They do not go to such extremes and evaluate their lives based on what their grandparents went through. One person bases her perception on health issues. Others say they don't make comparisons or think along those lines,

but their grandparents do for them. One grandfather constantly tells his grandson, "When I was your age I was...training for Palestine."

When grandchildren think about their grandparents' past they often begin to think of the relatives they lost. One granddaughter wonders about her great aunts. What were they like? What did they feel? Her grandfather does not know anything about their camp experience. No one can fill in all the answers. A second granddaughter wishes she could go back and make things better. When she thinks about her relatives she wonders, who would they have married? Who would they have grown up to be? There are lots of questions. Someone else mentioned that she has a lot of questions but is afraid to ask, even about the photos hanging in her home. Someone told me that her father has pictures in his office. She does think about the people in the photographs and wishes that there were more relatives. Another comments on how hard it is for him to think about the relatives his grandparents lost. They do have pictures, but no names stand out in his mind. Someone else mentioned that he is actually more curious about relatives that are in America, others who survived, than the ones who died.

Of those who usually don't think of relatives who died, one said that he did do his bar mitzvah service in memory of his grandfather's brother. He also read from a Torah that came from Europe. This was special for his entire family, especially his grandfather. The fact that he read from a Holocaust Torah was a surprise for his grandfather. A number of people

told me that they never think of lost relatives. They look to the future and cherish their grandparents now.

A few are lucky enough to have family pictures from Europe. Some have seen pictures of their grandparents when they were young, alone, post-liberation, and with their families. Pictures of deceased family members and of the Holocaust in general, capture a grandchild's imagination. Some look closely at generic pictures, taken in areas their grandparents were known to be, thinking they might just see someone familiar.

> We look all the time and we have seen pictures of ghettos where my grandparents recognize the streets and they can tell us who lived here and who lived there, which is very, very scary. It is a reality check when you see things like that. When you see that they can point out places, it makes it so real. [Jennifer S.]

Some do this even though they have no idea what people looked like and even though they have never seen photographs of their grandparents pre-liberation. Some may not even know their grandparents' story; where they were and what they were doing.

> When you are looking at the crowd you know even to an extent, you kind of realize, that all in all in some way we all have a relation somehow and then as you are thinking that, then I think yeah...I think you kind of look through that picture and wonder hey... [Michael S.]

When one grandson looks at pictures he does not look with the idea that he might recognize someone, but he does wonder if his family might have been in the same situation. Another says he finds himself more interested in seeing pictures of the areas where his grandfather was.

Someone else told me that she hates looking at pictures of her grandfather's family. It gives her the "creeps"; no one is smiling. Others focus on names more so than photographs; they look for their last name or their grandparents names. Most grandchildren were not named for those who did not survive, but more than a handful were. Someone who attended March of the Living said that her family name was constantly with her when she saw lists of names or piles of suitcases. She was afraid of what she might see. One of her friends, who is also a grandchild of survivors, actually saw his name on one of the suitcases.

One person said that she looks at lists of names closely because she thinks it would be "neat" to find a person. She feels as if she is on a treasure hunt and that someone may turn up; she is always looking for familiar names. Another granddaughter loves hearing the story of how they found her aunt only months before she was born. She doesn't think about the relatives who died or look into pictures, but what makes her think is seeing the wall of remembrance at the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust Studies in Dallas. It is a room that has plaques lining the walls. Each plaque has the name of a family member who died in the Holocaust and also there are plaques for Holocaust survivors who have died since. Another mentioned how this room made her realize just how many people her family lost. One person revealed that they do not look at pictures, but they paid very close attention at the end of *Schindler's List.*

The above situations are psychological. They touch the grandchild at a very emotional point. Antisemitism, denial, connectedness to the Holocaust, feelings toward Germans, family memories, and photographs stir up images and inspire passion that affect the psyche, yet most said that they have experienced no psychological ramifications and have dealt with no psychological issues that they could even partially attribute to the Holocaust. "When I do normal, everyday things, I do not think of the Holocaust." [Jordan M.] It was a non-issue for many. They could more easily identify the effects of the Holocaust on their grandparents. For example, one person said that her grandfather has a temper. He has never hit anyone, but he gets loud. If he gets angry, she tries to stay away. One example she gave is that he always wants his dinner on time because in the Holocaust he did not get it. He wants to know now that he is going to get it when he wants it. The family is sensitive to this. They understand their grandfather wanting his food. Also, if they leave a light on, he gets loud. He is very brave and strong. He is also a good role model. He told her that he survived because he prayed to God. He believed that he could survive and he was not going to give up. She learns form this that she can do anything if she puts her mind to it. She has never seen him cry; although, she has seen him really sad. His eyes have never watered. It would shock her to see him cry.

They are careful of strangers, one granddaughter said. Their house is like a fortress. They have gates and everything is always locked. They are

very protective of where they live. They are also protective of her. She adds that her grandfather is also very giving. In fact, he is so nice to people that they occasionally take advantage of him, even family members. Her grandma is funny but set in her ways. She is very involved with the grandchildren.

Another describes her grandparents as hesitant of change, overfeeding them, and orderly. They were cautious when raising their kids. Where they lived was very important. Money and cleanliness are big issues for them. Her grandfather can be cold. He does not compliment; however, with some younger grandchildren in the family he has opened up more and will call and say I love you. He is more animated now than when she was little. Her little cousins keep him young. He even knows how to use the internet. She loves his spelling on the e-mail she receives. He was strict with her father who tries to be strict with her. She says that they are very similar and that all they ever talk about is money and business. Her father is also hesitant of change and is "anal clean". He is not a pack rat at all. If something is old, throw it out. We can always afford the new. Her grandmother spoils her and is very social. She is closer with her because her English is better. They have lots of friends who are survivors. All of her grandmother's friends say that she resembles her grandmother when she was younger.

Through the lens of the third generation, a few saw their grandparents as having an excitement for life and an excitement for knowledge. One grandson describes a recent family vacation to Alaska.

> One of the days we went on a boat, a small boat that holds about 100 people to go whale watching...you can just kind of tell that he still has that thirst, that excitement of knowledge, of seeing stuff, of exploring. You know, he has no boundaries, and you know he is old. He is about 82, something like that. Most of the people are sitting down using their binoculars while he was running up, if he sees a whale, he runs up to the top deck...He is still real active...He's enjoying himself and just having a good time. I like to see that. [Daniel K.]

A granddaughter spoke of how her grandfather always looks at the positive side of things. She says that he is a "pretty steady person." He maintains an even disposition. He doesn't ask much and simply goes about his day; he watches *Young and the Restless* and does his treadmill. He has many friends, most, if not all, are survivors. Her grandfather has an appreciation for the basic things - television, newspaper, radio. He likes to watch the news. He does not do extravagant things. Her grandmother is no longer living, but she remembers that she took her nice places and liked to show off her granddaughters. She used to run the household.

Some have not been exposed to day-to-day reactions or behaviors, but they do notice overarching themes. Their grandparents' view of life and religion have been affected. Carrying on Jewish culture is very important. One person told me that it is difficult for her grandfather to believe in God. She feels that he is not as religious as he would have been. It is hard for him

to believe in the miracle of God. At family events he notices who's missing. At her sister's wedding, in his speech, he basically said, "You are all wonderful but there are people that should be here but are not because they were killed." Some are great in business, despite little formal education. They simply wanted to succeed. Many know how hard their grandparents worked for success. "He wanted to come here and succeed so badly that he was willing to do anything even if it meant working from five in the morning to ten at night." [Daniel K.] His grandfather has a strong work ethic, but he is also close to his family. He tries to get everyone together at least monthly to have a cookout in his backyard or to take everyone out for dinner.

> I think he likes to see what he has now. He thinks of it as an accomplishment. He is sitting at the head of the table and he sees me, my brother, my cousin about 15-16. He sees two baby cousins, one eight and one three. [Daniel K.]

Issues of meals with the family or food came up with a handful of people. Someone told me that his grandmother will serve anyone who is hungry. He emphasized that his family opens their doors to everyone. Another says that his grandmother always wants him to keep eating. Nothing is too much or bad for you. His grandparents tried hard to do well for their children. They gave them lots of love because that was their only family. They realize how precious life is. Sometimes his grandmother seems afraid. She is very protective; if he sneezes she worries. Also, he has

noticed that she hates dogs. Someone else described her grandfather in a more negative light; he is overbearing, self-centered, an irresponsible parent, he stopped developing after the war and is still an adolescent.

Some grandparents are trying to hold on to their independence and dealing with issues of aging. One granddaughter explained how she is nervous when her grandfather drives, but he wants no help. Her father even offered to pay for a driver. Her grandparents like to cook for themselves as well. They want to feel independent. The Holocaust is a constant with them. It totally defines them. They have a purpose and have done lots of speaking. They want to maintain this involvement. She knows that her grandparents understand the importance of having grandchildren and family. She watches them a lot. Her grandmother reacts when people are killed on television; violence on television does trigger feelings. On the flip side, when she sees something beautiful she realizes how lucky she is now and how awful things were then. Finally, a few said that their grandparents love them so much because of the Holocaust. Some are very protective and like giving advice. They don't want to lose them.

In describing their grandparents the grandchildren realized that psychological issues could be strengths or weaknesses; some were then able to access strengths and even a few noted weaknesses. I heard the words "personal drive" many times. One person said that this definitely comes from his past, from his grandfather. Seeing how their grandparents made a

life for themselves from nothing gives them drive. Many look up to their grandparents and respect their determination for success. Only two people were able to go a step further . One told me that she is strong willed. She is a fighter. She wants her way; she likes to do things her way. Sometimes she gets emotional over little things. She has a sensitivity toward knowing about the Holocaust and feels a deep connection. She can communicate well. Her morals and values are very strong because of her background. She has not given in to peer pressure and she knows who she is and what she wants to be. The other touched on her weaknesses. "It has kept me a little more fearful in life, probably, and a little more protected from people." [Rivka L.] She says that she is not as afraid since she went to Yad Vashem this past summer. It made her more confident. This was the first Holocaust related thing she has been able to do in a long time. She cannot watch movies; she did not see *Schindler's List*. She told me of her class visit to Washington D.C.

> My grade went to the Holocaust Museum in eighth grade. I went up the elevator, took about ten steps and went back down. I was too scared. So going to Yad Vashem was a big deal for me. [Rivka L.]

Her fear is that she might see someone familiar in a picture. She is one who does look at photographs and video footage that way. At Solomon Schechter, the main focus of eighth grade Judaica is the Holocaust. And in every grade there is a focus on Yom HaShoah. Her teachers all knew about her because her grandfather has spoken many times at her school. If they

were watching a movie, she was allowed to leave the room. They were even understanding at the museum in Washington D.C. She is able to read books, but she only does so if they are required for school. Now that she is in a public school as opposed to a day school the topic does not come up that much. Finally, as one put it, it is "hard to distinguish which are traits from the Holocaust and which are just family traits. I guess I would have my grandfather's persistence and endurance but that could be just who he is." [Laura H.]

Some dealt with issues in their sub-conscious. A little less than half have had Holocaust related dreams. One said that she has had dreams after seeing Holocaust movies; however, she has never placed herself in any of her dreams. Another person told me of a dream she had when she was young. She remembers it vividly even today. She was at their temple with her sister and Nazis came in with machine guns and kept shooting people. She can't remember if the spark was that they were studying the Holocaust in religious school or if it was after a time when they were sent home from religious school because of a threat by skinheads that there was cyclone B in the vents. For another granddaughter dreams are sparked every time she hears her grandfather talk to a group. She remembers running and jumping fences. Usually it is her, Hitler, and other Nazis in her dream, not her grandfather. She is always trying to escape and just wants out. A fifteen year old said that she has not had dreams in a long time. Someone else may

have had one dream. One person who had gone on March of the Living said that she had nightmares when she first returned. She was in a concentration camp. She described it as "freaky". Her dreams were so vivid, it was as if she was living it. In her dreams she had gone through it. Sometimes, she still has dreams. Another dream she has had involved Holocaust themes, but took place in modern times, in her own house. Finally, someone told me that she wakes up from her dreams and can not fall back to sleep. She remembers the details in the morning. She remembers how she felt like she was in it and trying to run away. She has also had dreams where she is in hiding. She has been with other people, but not her grandfather in particular. She thought she would have more dreams following a recent visit to Yad Vashem, but she didn't. She is not sure exactly what triggers her dreams.

These are their memories and their honest feelings. The spectrum of cohesiveness is broad. One thing is certain: each grandchild respects their grandparent. One grandchild told me more than once that she likes to represent and honor her family. She felt that she was representing them specifically when she was on March of the Living. Some wish they were closer and others cannot get enough of their grandparents' time. Most like being Jewish and they value their Holocaust legacy.

Learning Lessons

The one point of unity, where this generation agrees strongly and comes together is that their own children will be taught about their Holocaust legacy as soon as they are old enough to understand. Even the one person who did not care if their children were raised Jewish said that her children would still know their heritage, meaning her grandparents' background and connection to the Holocaust. It may not be their first point of reference in terms of identification, but this legacy has played a defining role in their lives. They have learned lessons from their grandparents' lives that have shaped their own outlook on life. They want to preserve their grandparents' stories to the extent that they know them, and maintain the awareness of information in general about the Holocaust.

Grandchildren admire what their grandparents have accomplished as Holocaust survivors and then new immigrants. As one granddaughter explained, "I admire them on so many different levels and there are so many things that I get from them that I can't pinpoint one major lesson. A lot of who I am is because of them." [Stacy S.] How they live their lives is very admirable. They did not give up. If they did, the third generation would not exist because their grandparents would have never seen liberation. One grandchild learned the following:

> To never give up and that no matter what you do wrong or the mistakes you make, you can always not just learn from those mistakes, but to a certain extent, have a short memory. Don't let that mistake sit in your mind and keep you from

> whatever the next step is or the next thing you are going to do. Don't let it hamper that next leg in the race. [Michael S.]

Another was in agreement stating that one can only hold a grudge for so long. He felt that to hold a grudge brings down the world and continues the negative that has happened. Grandparents do impact the third generation, especially with such a vivid legacy to share. Most grandchildren can identify at least one lesson, if not more, that they have learned from their grandparents' experience. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, this generation receives much more of the positive outcome of such a traumatic experience. They learn understanding and tolerance from a very early age. They recognize the importance of a strong work ethic and a strong will to succeed. A few believe that a strong will is what helped their grandparents to survive. Some acquired this drive from watching their mother or father and knowing a little bit of how they were raised as second generation survivors. One knew that work was important to his grandfather. Having a job is important, so much so that his mother had to work in college for her spending money even though his grandfather, by that time, was making good money. He could have afforded to send more money but, instead, he only paid for her education and made her work for spending money. His mother will not make him do the same. At college she feels there are things she missed out on by having to work. He did, however, hold a job while in high school and knows that hard work pays off from watching

his grandfather. His grandfather has been retired for a few years, but he still goes to an office everyday. This is similar to those who speak and make it their job, their purpose post-retirement. One must keep busy and keep moving forward. The lessons learned from grandparents seem to fall into six categories: work, interpersonal interaction, visioning, safety, taking chances, and self perseverance/courage.

> WORK: Try to be hard working. Working is important. Stick to your job no matter what. Make good on your word; a handshake is as good as a contract.
>
> INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION: Be more tolerant of various people. Learn who people are. Don't tell everyone everything. Be careful who I tell what. See people for who they really are. And, always know what one human being can do to another (This is what her grandfather says at the end of every speech). Don't use violence to get something. If you make a promise, keep it.
>
> VISIONING: It is possible to overcome something like that [the Holocaust] and move forward. They have been through so much, yet they still want to give back.
>
> SAFETY: Be careful, be safe - driving, walking around, every little thing is a big safety issue. You never know what's going to come up.
>
> TAKING CHANCES: When things come up in life, if they are good, accept them. If you have a chance to do something, take it because you don't know if you will be able to go back and do it again and what is going to be. Just take one day at a time and don't wait for something. If you have a chance, do it.
>
> SELF PERSEVERANCE/COURAGE: Don't be afraid to be yourself, you have to be your own person. You have to be able to do things yourself because there is not always someone there to look after you. Independence is very important. Asking for help means failure. Be able to support yourself and do things (Grandfather has street smarts, no college education). There is an importance in making your own acceptance and your own luck. Do it yourself and do not count on anybody to get you there. Never give up. Be strong, fight for what you believe. Speak up.

Some of the categories seem to contradict one another. For example, safety and taking chances seem to be polar opposites. This could simply be the result of input from a variety of grandchidren from many different Holocaust families and backgrounds or it could speak to the personal domain (i.e. safety of self and the home) as opposed to the public domain (i.e.taking chances on real estate and commerce). These are the things that grandchildren think about. These are the lessons learned from listening to their grandparents' words and watching their actions and behaviors.

> Even if I don't agree, with times changing and different things these days, I still, I will always have a lot of respect for them and I admire them a lot. I think my grandma and grandpa are very brave. I definitely do not think I could have survived that. [Leah K.]

She does pay attention to her grandparents and she does make decisions based on what she knows from them. For example, she was thinking of getting a tattoo and decided not to do so because it would be disrespectful to her grandparents and to a legacy that she values.

Not only has this generation learned lessons they have also developed an outlook on life which often incorporates their Holocaust legacy. One grandchild, in discussing her family dynamic, remarked how certain members in every generation could be closer to one another than they are. She said that her outlook regarding family is that it is ridiculous, after surviving something so terrible, not to get along. A 20 year-old explains that one of the reasons she has not left home yet is because she loves being

involved in her family. She is very protective of her little sister and the family is protective of each other. Her parents are divorced, which she knows is a factor, but she also believes that the Holocaust has pulled her family together. Another describes her family as a blessing. She also feels that she appreciates the elderly a lot more because of her intimate relationship with her grandparents and how they experience life today.

Others take their outlook a step further. They look at society as a whole and what this legacy has taught them. They look at what they [the survivors] have gone through and look at where we [as a society, as Jews, and as survivor families] stand now. They look at the entire picture and then zoom into the present.

> With them going through something like that it really makes you look at the people around you today and where we live today and how I think we are much smarter than we realize as a whole, not just me, but everyone that lives around me. [We] know not to do those things but I think we are also becoming more fragile, people as a whole, because...everybody wants to divide ourselves up more and more. And we need to make sure that along with having those divides between us that we know to respect each person's divide and that everyone does have a view point. [Michael S.]

One grandchild who teaches children about the Holocaust emphasizes to them her outlook on life. She tells them to think independently and know right from wrong. She tells them to form their own opinions and not to be followers just because everyone else is doing something or just to be liked.

She hopes that they hear the lessons she is teaching based on her personal history.

Others think more globally. Because of the Holocaust, one grandchild feels he has the ability to look around the world and understand when other countries are facing similar situations and know that it cannot be allowed to escalate. Acceptance and tolerance of other people's traits have come from his legacy. Someone else mentioned that they are happy to be living in America because there are not war reminders like there would be in Germany. He also knows that nothing is a sure deal. One never knows from day to day what could happen.

Finally, the grandchildren look inside themselves. One granddaughter realizes just how emotionally strong she is and that she is able to deal with lots of things. She is able to stand up for what she believes in and feels that this is her right and her obligation. Others feel more protective and fearful.

> It kind of makes me want to protect myself some more just because I am very into what people think of me. I always want to know what people think of me. [Rivka L.]

This, to her, is related to her background and connection with the Holocaust. Her sister, on the other hand, uses her background to overcome her fears. If her grandfather could live through all that he did, she should not be scared of anything. She should just go for it. She explained why she feels this way: "I shouldn't really be scared of anything because anything

could happen and if you spend all your time being scared, you are not going to be very prepared." [Sarah L.]

The way another views life is simply believing the following: "To be thankful for what you have and not to complain because it could be a lot worse." [Amanda M.] Some try to not let trivial things get them down. The little things are not so important. One person said that she appreciates life a lot. She feels she looks at things differently than most people her age. She tries to take each day as it is. She knows that as she goes through life and bigger things happen, she can rely on the things she has been taught.

Her grandparents' history, her history, is not a weight on her shoulders. Many would agree that they have gained much and not lost little.

> I do not like to feel that something has been taken away from me because of the Holocaust. I don't say to people, 'you don't know what my people have been through' or stuff like that. I would never say anything like that. [Adam K.]

Very few, if any, feel this legacy to be a burden or an albatross hanging around their necks. Most are proud of their heritage and proud of their grandparents. Life is precious. They use this experience they never lived to guide their actions. On the other hand, one said that it makes him think about some things but it does not come into play too much in his life. Again, the grandchildren run the gamut. The effect on their lives is like a river. It is always flowing, but some run broad and deep and others run shallow, some are just a trickle and a few are dried up. As the grandchildren

age the impact changes. A few commented on having increased interest or asking more questions, more frequently, now that they are older. How will this help preserve the legacy?

In the Future...

Most grandchildren agree that the Holocaust must be taught. It is important that others know what happened. However, when asked if they themselves would teach or retell their grandparents' story the response was mixed. Some said they would speak up if they were confronted with revisionism or denial or if faced with a need to clear up any misconceptions One has already corrected her teacher. A few said that they would not speak but support others who will, and the rest said they would talk to groups. Of those that would teach, some would have to be asked directly, meaning they would not seek out speaking opportunities or volunteer blindly. Others felt they would be more comfortable addressing a group of children rather than adults. Some have already spoken, whether as a docent at the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust Studies or as a student talking to a group of their peers in school or before touring a museum. Most have volunteered the information that their grandparents are survivors when they have studied the Holocaust in secular or religious school. The one who leads tours always incorporates her grandparents' stories. She has led tours for adults, innercity school children, church groups, and Jewish groups.

Some feel that it is their duty to teach other people. Others must know what happened. Someone told me that she wants to tell every Jewish person she meets about her grandfather's story. This past summer she told her camp counselor who was surprised to meet someone who has a survivor grandparent. This was at a Jewish summer camp. One granddaughter felt, "We have more of a responsibility than our parents do." [Rivka L.] Her belief is that it is up to the third generation to continue the awareness of the Holocaust, especially because of revisionists and deniers. Another feels an obligation to his grandparents because of what they went through and for coming out of it alive. They struggled so that he could be here today.

> I think it should be required of every human being to learn the story of the Holocaust. Absolutely make sure that everyone knows this did happen. Every kid in America should see Schindler's List. [Todd S.]

> Yeah, I feel a definite responsibility to make sure that people know about the Holocaust and that is why I feel that if I was asked to speak, then I would speak and speak out against who ever is denying and what not. [Matt M.]

Others told me that their obligation is rooted not in their personal history, the fact that they are third generation, but rather because they are Jews in general. One person said, "Responsibility as a grandchild - no, but as a Jew - yes." [Adam K.] Another agreed with this but did add that his responsibility is heightened because of his legacy. Finally someone said, "It is everybody's job." [Jordan M.] I believe he means every Jew's responsibility because the statement followed a comment where he said that

just because he is a Jew in general he feels responsible, but "everybody" could mean society in general.

For many the decision to teach or not was based on their comfort level with the topic and their knowledge base of both the Holocaust in general and their own history in specific. One even fell into a bit of survivor hierarchy. She told me that her grandfather's account affected her when she read his book, but she thinks there are other accounts people should read first. Another said, "I don't think that just because my grandfather survived that entitles me to teach it. It didn't happen to me." [Brad C.] Being part of the third generation gives him no special ability to teach. He still feels that it should be taught but that he still has more to learn. He feels that being twice removed has less of an impact on an audience or class. Others would agree that one can not teach the Holocaust unless they are really knowledgeable on the subject, but one person added, "a personal link surpasses that." Having knowledge about one's grandparents, knowing their stories, provides an unsurpassable primary source. Someone else made a distinction between non-Jews who teach and Jews (third generation, second generation, or otherwise) who teach the Holocaust. She felt that non-Jews can not teach as effectively because they do not feel about the Holocaust as personally as Jews do. When a Jew teaches about the Holocaust, in her opinion, it makes the subject more passionate and personal and less academic. Anyone can

open a book. It takes someone with deep empathy and understanding to bring a topic like the Holocaust to life.

The amount of background knowledge ranged from knowing only bits of their grandparents' story to feeling comfortable with the amount they know about their grandparents' story and a little bit of general background to those who know historical background and personal information well. This last group of people feel very comfortable and have usually taken classes on the subject or are avid readers of Holocaust literature. Some would supplement what they could say to a group with the video tapes of their grandparents and other survivor testimony. One grandchild mentioned that she helps her grandmother now with her talks and she could do a similar type of presentation with her grandmother's video. She feels that the personal stories are the important links to the past. Her family has documented all that they can in video and in writing. She also has all the letters that have been written to her grandmother over the years from the groups to whom she has spoken. A few grandchildren said that they would need more information before they could teach. But again, they do want to pass on their grandparents' direct story. Some do not have this ability. One granddaughter mentioned that she knows more about other people's experience than her own family history. She has read a lot of books on the Holocaust and has seen many movies. Some who need more logistics and facts such as dates and geography feel that their current knowledge, based

on family history, is more heartfelt. Something they could not learn from a book. The academics simply serve as a supplement to what they know of their grandparents' lives.

Regarding Holocaust education, what is currently being offered in schools varies. Some have read some books in school like *Night* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a few have seen films, but in general very little time is spent on the topic, especially in history. This is true for both secular and religious schools. Religious schools tend to devote time to the Holocaust each year on Yom HaShoah, but then the topic falls by the wayside. The only people who learned more were those in Jewish Day Schools where they have a Judaica class as part of the curriculum. One year, eighth grade, is devoted to learning about the Holocaust. One grandchild felt strongly that there should be more opportunities to learn, not just one day or one week. This is an important subject for everyone. Another grandchild had an interesting point of view regarding Holocaust education; it grew from his experience when he signed up for a Holocaust class at his congregation. His classmates knew so little about the Holocaust that he could not stand being in the class anymore. His teacher seemed to know very little as well so he switched to another class. What frustrated him is that these were Jewish kids. Some ninth and tenth graders did not even know the number six million in connection to the Holocaust. His conclusion from this experience is interesting.

> I think we concentrate more on teaching in public schools than we do just Jewish kids because we assume that Jewish kids all know about it, but they don't ever have a great interest to go research it. [Brad C.]

Sadly, this is often true unless there is a personal connection and even then interest varies. Some watch films; others are scared to watch films. Some seek out books to read; others read only what is assigned in school. Some ask questions; others wait for their grandparents to speak first. Some have been to Europe and to the camps; others are not ready to face their past that closely. Grandchildren have gained their knowledge in so many places. One told me that she has never taken a formal class, but she has written papers and read books. When she was living in Spain she had the opportunity to tour Europe. She went to Anne Frank's hiding place in Amsterdam and to Dachau in Germany. When she went to Germany she went only for the day because she did not want to spend any more time in that country. When she told her mom what she was doing, she was told not to tell her grandparents where she was going. She was very nervous and did not want to go, but knew she had to go. The inside of the camp looked like a museum. She was actually very calm, though she thought she would be very emotional. At the end of the day she called her grandparents. She told them that she was in Germany and needed their help with the language. They asked her if she went to Dachau so she told them the truth. They became worried, but she told them that she was fine. She went nowhere else

in Germany. Another grandchild told me about the summer he worked in Washington D.C. As an intern, one of the perks was going on planned trips. Of course the Holocaust museum was on the list. He decided to skip that day deciding he would rather see it for the first time by himself. That way he could take all the time he wanted and see how he would react on his own. He told me that the first thing that he did afterward was call his grandparents and tell them how amazing he thought they were, how much he loved them, and how appreciative he was of them. As grandchildren learn more, this is generally their reaction. There are so many ways to learn about the Holocaust.

Many grandchildren mentioned that their grandparents have made Shoah Foundation videos. They believe that Steven Spielberg had great foresight. Now the stories are documented. One person told me that they are looking forward to showing their children the video their grandparents made one day when she has children. She wants her children to know of their connection and that the Holocaust is so much more than just what is in a book. They feel their own connection but do wonder if their own children's children will feel connected. They worry about the future. Another felt that his grandchild would believe him, but he is not sure if he could convince others that far down the line. One grandson agreed, he was afraid that people won't care with the same passion as the second and third generation. He felt video tape documentaries were more therapeutic for the

survivors, today, and would be catalogued as history, tomorrow. His fear is that the Holocaust in general and video footage of survivors in particular would be like the Torah - questioned and even doubted. Someone else hoped that people would still believe in and want to learn about it when the survivors are gone. She hopes that people will not think less of the Holocaust because there is no first hand experience being told from a living, breathing person. Most realize the importance of talking and the effect it has on people who know what happened. One granddaughter fears that people would not believe her if she stood up and told a story and then said that the person she was talking about was her grandfather.

I asked every grandchild, "What do you feel when you hear this statement, 'In the next ten or twenty years there will be no one left to tell someone, look at my arm, listen to my experience, I was there.'" The reactions varied. Many said simply, "Sad." One was shocked by the reality. Others were more expressive. A few were scared. One feared that denial will be worse when the survivors are no longer alive but said that she would stand up and talk against them because her grandparents were in it.

> Scary because people won't believe things as much unless they hear it from someone who has been through it with anything. And, even sitting and watching a video is not the same as actually sitting next to the person...I don't think it will disappear because there are way too many things like museums, and people who know about it. [Leah K.]

> It will be a big problem because the first hand experience is real important even though I know a lot and I will have everything down. But even if you have a million books on your family, a million tapes, a million video tapes there is

> only so much you can get from all that, from the media. [Jacqueline W.]

Others are not quite as fearful.

> I think it's sad that there will be no living survivors left, but we have enough documentation, I mean peoples' stories, a lot of peoples' stories have been written out and published, videos have been made, and so I think there is enough actual documentation directly from them. It's still kind of sad that there is not going to be anybody left. [Jordan M.]

> The grandkids and the kids of the survivors will tell the stories and hopefully there will be enough books and pictures, real pictures, not like something that somebody could have drawn because there are a lot of painted pictures of slavery and that just gives you more and more reason not to believe it, so like real photographs that happened. [Sarah L.]

For many, this statement creates a sense of urgency to ask questions of their grandparents. One told me that she has noticed that as her grandmother ages a lot is coming back to her. She said that her grandmother says that she dreams every night about her family. Someone else told me that now that he is older himself, he brings up the topic a lot more and is more comfortable asking his grandparents questions. Another person figures that his parents know everything about his grandparents, especially his mother who is second generation. He has no urgency to know his personal family history because he assumes he can ask his parents one day.

Community Involvement

Few professed to be currently involved in social justice. I inquired about this because it seems that the second generation was very involved in such issues specifically because of the lessons they learned from their

parents' Holocaust experience. Most grandchildren who were interviewed are too young to draw conclusions or do not see any direct correlation with doing for others and their heritage as grandchildren of survivors. One acknowledged that being Jewish got him involved in issues of social justice initially and that his interests in civil rights and human rights may be indirectly linked to his Holocaust background. He did point out that there are other factors present as well, such as the fact that he is very liberal in his politics and he enjoys following politics. Another who feels strongly about social justice and oppression made some parallels but said nothing definitive. Many stressed that not every aspect of their being is affected by the Holocaust, including what they do for others. Only one person said that everybody should have some food and a place to live and she feels this belief definitely because of her background, her link to the Holocaust. However, she did not say how she works toward that belief.

This group did seem involved at school and in sports. Many were in youth group in high school, but then the Jewish involvement ceased, except for possible involvement in a Jewish fraternity or sorority. Not one grandchild was a member of a Holocaust organization. Two paid dues to the Dallas Memorial Center for Holocaust studies and one of the two volunteers there. One person said that she would be very interested to know if there was some group she could join. Another said that she did not know of any that she could be a part of but that her father is very involved in The

Combined Generations for the Holocaust of Greater Cincinnati. She thinks there should be a youth club or a youth division for grandchildren. Someone else, as mentioned earlier, is trying to start an alumni group of March of the Living on her college campus. She specifically wants to meet other grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. When she wanted to join the group that her mother was involved in she was told that she was too young and that it was not for her. Another said that he will follow his dad and get involved in Holocaust organizations when he is older. He wants to see it taught and will support organizations that do so.

Recognizing The Needs of the Third Generation

This is a group that, for the most part, is dedicated to their grandparents, and if not to teaching their own personal legacy, they are committed to Holocaust education in general. Involvement is important while the grandparents are still alive and can share with their grandchildren their time, stories and many more lessons. One person told me that he felt honored and special to have a survivor grandfather. Another likes to represent her family and honor them. This sentiment was echoed in the words of the many young men and women with whom I spoke. Many were thrilled that they were being addressed and asked to speak. One pointed out that it is important to study the Holocaust and how it affects other people besides just the survivors. She supports maintaining second generation research, and applauds third generation research because the Holocaust has

impacted her life even though she was born 40 years later. Someone else commented that no one ever asks the grandchildren and she does think that they are affected by the Holocaust and their grandparents' experience during that time.

The interview was important to many. Many said that it made them think. Some said that they wanted to find out more about their grandparents as a result of this interview. This interview sparked questions in the minds of the grandchildren. Some said they might ask more specific, directed questions now. Someone even told me that they have been waiting to do something about grandchildren of Holocaust survivors for a while. Another person began to think about future generations as a result of this interview. For most, if not all, the interview was a great experience.

> It's been interesting because it makes me think about things that maybe I do want to know about my grandparents and think about things related to myself. Where I stand and how the Holocaust... It makes me think about the Holocaust more. I think it's good because it just triggers things you don't normally think about. [Matt M.]

One grandson was amazed by the things he did not even know he had on his mind. Someone else told me, "It made me think about things that I normally don't, like some of my duties as a Jew." [Jordan M.] Another said that it gave her a lot to think about like writing something and or translating family letters. She realized gaps in her knowledge. For example, she has no idea what it was like for her grandparents when they first came to the United States.

> These children, grandchildren of the survivors, the Third Generation, are the first for whom the Shoah is but a distant vision, a periodic reminder of a past perhaps left well enough alone as they themselves struggle anew to confront their own world and their own realities. They are, also, the first generation for whom the Shoah may very well recede into the dimmer recesses of consciousness, all but forgotten other than on suitable and proper occasions. Yet they, too, must be taught along with their neighbors and friends, the awful and horrific details of this terrible tragedy if they are to participate in ensuring its nonrepetition.[569]

They have been taught. They do know, some more than others, and they will teach their children. Most understand its importance in their lives and the necessity that it be taught to future generations. In fact, one granddaughter told me that the third generation knows so much more about their own family and the Holocaust in general than the generation that came right after the Holocaust. She meant that the grandchildren were not as intimidated to ask the questions and some even sparked an interest in their parents. Though many are scared to ask or feel intimidated by what they might find out, they know that this is a history too important to silence. When the survivors are gone, it will be up to this generation to carry on their stories and lessons. One grandson is convinced that their stories will live long after they have died. He gave me two interesting analogies.

> [It] starts to turn into something like the Ten Commandments. You can't see them anymore but they are there and the story is huge. The same will happen [regarding the Holocaust]. Just because the actual artifact is not there, it is still there. [Michael S.]

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[569] Steven L. Jacobs, *Rethinking Jewish Faith: The Child of a Survivor Responds* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 11.

The second analogy was to dinosaurs. He told me that it is hard to believe that dinosaurs actually roamed the earth until you see their bones. He continued that the grandchildren are very important because we are the ones who put the bones together regarding the Holocaust. We are the ones who will "carry" the "bones" of our ancestors. It is interesting that he thought of this. In chapter two, the second generation is described as carrying the "memory bones". These "memory bones" are being passed to their own children, the third generation, and they, in turn, will pass them on to their children. These bones will be preserved and cared for, and "put on display" when necessary. This generation is proud and has eliminated shame from their legacy.

CONCLUSION

Try to imagine what it meant to people who, until then, had considered themselves to be accepted and equal, to become ostracized, degraded, humiliated, pauperized, terrorized, uprooted. The constant anticipation of the next hammer-blow was enough to unsettle stable minds. Do we have the right to assume that traumas like these have healed without leaving scars?

- Werner Weinberg[570]

This is a special group of people. A group that has transformed suffering and great misfortune into times of healing, happiness and shared lessons. Each generation, as evidenced by this thesis, possesses its own unique characteristics. Each generation has been affected by the Holocaust and each still feels the aftershock of such a traumatic event. Indeed, there are scars, some visible and others hidden. The way in which people carry their circumstances vary even within the same family unit, but the bond among this heterogeneous body is strong, perhaps weakening slightly with each subsequent generation. Whether the first identifying factor or the last, the Holocaust is always present.

This project confirms my impression, (which supports the beliefs of many who have studied Holocaust families), that the Holocaust touches many lives - not only those who witnessed the horror directly. As one grandchild mentioned, the farther the generation from the event the more positive a legacy it becomes. It becomes a legacy that teaches tolerance and acceptance, and mutes hatred and racism. Grandchildren are far enough

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[570] Weinberg, p. 155

from their grandparents that they are usually able to highlight their strengths over their weaknesses, their hopes, faith, and care over their horrific past. The second generation, the children of survivors, having grown up in survivor households, are of course more affected emotionally and can more vividly describe their parents' flaws and weaknesses. Though many give their parents a "blank check", excusing certain behaviors because of their Holocaust experience, they still feel the brunt of pain. Now they are the balance between their children and their parents, weighing issues such as: What should the next generation know? How much should they know? Who will tell them? Many of the same questions their own parents pondered for them when they were growing up.

The answers to the above questions are important, but inconsequential in the long run. Research has proven that information regarding Holocaust memory penetrates generational boundaries whether or not the survivors speak about their experiences to their children and grandchildren. "One of the most difficult issues for the survivors was that of discussing the Holocaust with their sons and daughters. The majority dealt with it at some point in their children's lives, but usually only after many years had elapsed. Some, however, were unable to broach the topic at all."[571] For many it took a new generation, the grandchildren, to open them up. Their grandchildren's

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[571] William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 133

innocent questions, and their own children's encouragement and listening, gives them permission to speak. The second generation is finally ready to hear their words, as is society in general. They are now being heard and even asked to tell their stories. For others, old age, retirement or an illness inspired conversation and gave them a voice. Memories become more vivid when survivors are not preoccupied by work and when time seems limited. In fact, some of the most verbal survivors today were not able to talk to their own children when they were young. The subject was too sensitive; everyone in the family knew what happened, but no one asked questions. You just didn't bring it up. The topic was avoided and the household was silent.

Outsiders also discouraged talk about the Holocaust. Survivors were told to forget their past and that no one would believe their stories anyway. This created a sense of isolation. While some were happy to distance themselves from the horror, for others this was no easy task. Many friendships between survivors developed and are maintained to this day. Only one who experienced the war could really understand, many believe. They married one another, socialize together, pray together, and even work together. They have an unwritten hierarchy among each other as to who "suffered" more or who is more deserving to talk about what they experienced and witnessed during the Holocaust.

Survivors were forward-thinking following the war and did not dwell on the past; they had other things to occupy their time like making a living. This effort they could justify. This gave them something to think about besides their past. They quickly learned to get by in a new country, with new friends and family. Having children was important though they did not always know how to take care of and raise their children. Marriage and parenthood filled a void created by the reality of post-war life. There was a strong desire to feel whole once more and so the silence lasted and life continued.

It would take close to 30 years for outsiders to feel comfortable asking questions and knowing eyewitness reports of the Holocaust. The silence affected family relationships, mental health, and at times community involvement, not only for the survivors but for their children as well. The survivors and their children are a well documented group, from issues of Jewish identity and affiliation with the Jewish community to psychological diagnosis and family dynamics; there are films, books, articles, memoirs, even comic books. The world knows about this group. Young people today know more about the Holocaust than young people in any prior decade.

Now, add the grandchildren; this thesis only offers a slice-of-life perspective on this group. It illustrates how the legacy is transmitted and manifests itself in the identity of the third generation. It shows how some grandchildren ask questions and some do not. Some feel a strong

connection to their grandparents' experience and others rarely think about it. Some said they were motivated to speak more with their grandparents because of their participation in this thesis. The more interviews I conducted the more I realized how important these interactions are. The interviews are encouraging dialogue between all of the generations by placing questions in the minds of the grandchildren. They also gave me hope because I found out how much this generation cares about their grandparents, their Holocaust legacy, and even their being Jewish and raising the next generation as Jews.

Because I am not a psychologist or sociologist and because the sample size was so small I was unable to draw conclusions and analyze the information I received from the grandchildren I interviewed in relation to the survivors' pre-war, wartime, and immediate post-war experience. The value of asking questions about their grandparents' history is that the questions and subsequent conversation generated curiosity; the grandchildren wanted to fill in the gaps in their knowledge of their grandparents' experience. Now they had the words for the questions they never thought to ask or did not know how to ask. Many realized how much they did not know about their grandparents and how much there is to learn before it is too late.

The grandchildren are proud of their grandparents, what they have overcome and what they have accomplished. They are eager to tell their

own children about their family history and their Holocaust connection. They are less conflicted than their parents who realized that they must remember but who are so eager to forget their pain and the humiliation and dehumanization of their parents. The second generation wanted to fit in with their peers. Today differentiation is more acceptable. Some grandchildren even welcome the fact that they are "different." They want to share their story and are not shy to stand up to deniers or in situations where their perspective can make a difference. In return, their grandparents feel blessed interacting with and enjoying being with the next generation. Some show it and say it more directly than others, but it is recognized that this completion of a cycle has helped continue to fill the void and return a sense of wholeness to the survivors. They know that their grandchildren will remember their stories. Their Holocaust legacy is not a source of shame the way it might have been for their grandparents and even their parents (especially as young children). They are in awe of their legacy and respect their grandparents' ability to survive, come to a foreign land, and flourish.

EPILOGUE

This is important. I don't like it, but it makes you different than the average Jewish grandchild. I have something real to tell people because of what they have been through. It's not an everyday thing.

- Leah K., 15 years old

On *Tisha B'Av*, my first year of rabbinical school while living in Jerusalem, I went to the *Kotel*. There the women were wailing, reciting psalms, and lamenting over an event that happened thousands of years ago. They seemed to feel the pain as if the event happened within their lifetime. Will this be the reaction to the Holocaust one day? When will the Holocaust become ancient history, archived and distant, remembered once a year with tears, but thought about and studied far less frequently? Some already follow this routine, shedding tears on Yom HaShoah and perhaps on the anniversary of the November Pogrom of 1938. Based on my interviews, the chain of memory should not break with the third generation, but only time will tell when it will shatter. I feel confident that our children will know, but will theirs? Our children will learn their family legacy and its lessons, but will other children, Jewish and non-Jewish? Will they believe what they are told when the survivors are no longer here?

Being the grandchild of survivors myself, the passing of this legacy, this family history/personal story and its consequence on to subsequent generations, intrigues me. What is our obligation to our grandparents and to the future generations, our own children and humanity in general? What is

our connection with our grandparents? How often do we think about the Holocaust? What is the impact on our Jewish identity? What is the impact on our psyche? Many of us are at the age our grandparents were sometime during the war, when it began or at liberation; does this parallel affect the way we think about our life currently? There are many questions and few who are asking. There has been little research conducted on this group of people, but as I discovered through my interviews with the grandchildren, the issues do exist and are thought about even if not expressed out loud. The third generation, like the two on whose shoulders they stand, is a heterogeneous group; many who identify with this group possess insight and sensitivity to their grandparents' peril during the war and their ability to succeed and raise a family afterward.

We are the last generation who will know a survivor up close and personal. We cannot let their stories die with them and their video tapes be archived like ancient history. Their experience cannot become a paragraph in a history book, but rather, we as the grandchildren can stand witness to the legacy left to us by our grandparents. We can tell their stories and share their pictures and videos. We can say what became of them after liberation. We are not too young to make a difference in Holocaust education and preservation of memory.

Today, the grandchildren can make a difference. In ten to twenty years, it will be too late to talk directly to the survivors. I know what

waiting or not knowing how to ask questions does to a family. My grandmother died two weeks before my sixteenth birthday. I was living in Okinawa, Japan when she was diagnosed with breast cancer and in Champaign, IL when she died. I never asked about her life in Poland or about when she first came to Dallas; I don't even remember asking about the number on her arm. I do remember that my grandparents came to my class once, in public school. I remember them showing a yellow star, but have not seen it since. I vaguely remember walking home with it. I live with the fear that they gave it to me and I lost it. I also am afraid to ask about it.

Without asking I know an outline of my grandmother's experience. I am blessed to have a letter she wrote in her own handwriting. I cherish this letter and have used it for personal growth and have shared it in sermons. I believe my mother requested information from her when I was doing a school project. This letter is priceless to me today. It sits in our safe-deposit box. When I have time one day, I would like to research the dates and places she mentioned in the letter.

I learned from not asking just how important it is to ask questions. I never hesitate to talk with my grandfather about his experience. It has taken him a while. The first time I remember hearing detailed stories was when I was visiting him in the hospital. He told me about how he used to make pickles in the ghetto. Up to that experience he did not feel privileged to talk in comparison to what my grandmother had experienced and some of his

friends. Now, he will answer my questions and will sometimes even slip into Holocaust stories when he is around me. He knows he can talk to me and I have convinced him that his is a story worth sharing. My uncle gets upset with me for asking too many questions; he is still fearful of raising painful memories. The memories, however, are always present in a survivor's mind whether or not the children or grandchildren ask. As they age the thoughts of the past resurface. We should give them a venue for sharing as much as they feel comfortable to share. We should have the patience to sit and listen even when the stories make us uncomfortable.

I am 30 years old. My oldest interviewee is 27 and the youngest, 13. I know some grandchildren who are married and have babies of their own and many will fall into this category in the next 10 years. We are old enough to be included in Holocaust organizations and in efforts to teach the Holocaust. Yet, when I asked grandchildren if they were involved in any Holocaust organizations, they replied with phrases like "I am told by my mother that I am too young..., when I am older..., there should be a youth division..., there is nothing here for someone my age..."; however, existing Holocaust organizations are for the grandchildren. I sit on the board of the Combined Generations of the Holocaust and I know grandchildren can participate. Of course not every city has an option, but many large communities have survivor organizations or Holocaust museums. If structured appropriately, grandchildren can be integral to the development of

such groups. It is time now to get grandchildren involved. Though our grandparents may still see us as the toddlers who ran around their house and parents may also view us as adolescents, ten of the 24 people that I interviewed are 18 or older. The one who already volunteers at a Holocaust museum was 17 at the time of the interview, a senior in high school. A couple of the grandchildren who expressed interest in participating in Holocaust related organizations are 15 and 16. Why wait to inspire involvement and commitment?

My hope is that this thesis will inspire conversations between grandparent and grandchild and motivate the second generation to include their children in Holocaust organizations. This research is baby steps compared to the potential there is for intergenerational learning among Holocaust survivor families including the third generation. Through continued communication the grandchildren will realize the value and necessity of teaching and supporting organizations that teach the Holocaust. I want the next 10 to 20 years, while the survivors are still alive, to be filled with a balance of caring for the survivors and their needs, learning from them, and appreciating them and teaching the "lessons" and the history of the Holocaust to the next generation. One goal should never be forfeited for the other. The survivors have needs and are, thank God, still living among us. They are cognizant of their past and we must support them. Too many organizations bring them out to speak and leave it at that. They are still very

much alive and deserving of our utmost respect. They are breathing history books, and it is our obligation, our responsibility as grandchildren, to learn from them and to teach others. Yes, we are different and this is our legacy.

Appendix A

Background Information

Name:

Age:

Gender:

How do you feel about participating in this interview?

Where do you live?

Where were you born?

Where did you grow up?

Do you live in the same city as your grandparents who are survivors? If no, did you ever live in the same city? How old were you then?

How many brothers or sisters do you have?

What is your position relative to your siblings (oldest, youngest, middle)?

What is your relationship like with your siblings?

Career Choice:

If you are a student, where? What grade/year?

If in college or beyond, what is your major?

Are one or both of your parents children of survivors?
- If only one, which one?

Do they have brothers or sisters? How many?

What is their position relative to their siblings (oldest, youngest, middle)?

What is their relationship like with their siblings?

How many of your grandparents are Holocaust Survivors?
- Which ones?
- Are they still living? If no, how old were you when they died?

Knowledge of the Holocaust & Grandparents' Experience

When do you remember first learning about the Holocaust in general, and specifically your personal legacy?

- How did you find out?
- Who told you?

How much do you know of your grandparents experiences before the war?

- Where are they from?
- How many brothers or sisters did they have?
- What was their position relative to their siblings (oldest, youngest, middle)?
- Did they come from a religious family?
- What did their father do for a living?
- What was their economic status?
- Were they married (to each other or someone else) before the war?
- Did they have children before the war?

How much do you know about your grandparents experiences during the war?

- Where were they during the war?
- Were they alone?
- Do they have any artifacts from that time period?
- Do you remember a number on their arm?
- If yes, do you know the number?

How much do you know about your grandparents experiences following liberation and in coming to America?

- Where were they when liberated?
- Were they in a DP camp?
- How old were they?
- Did any other relatives survive?
- Who sponsored them to come to the United States?
- How were they received when they arrived?
- Where did they settle?
- How old were they when they came to America?
- How did they earn a living?
- Where and when were your parents born?

When and how did your grandparents meet?

Do your grandparents talk of their experience to you personally?

Do they talk because you ask questions?

Do your grandparents talk of their experience to public groups? When did they start to do this? What inspired them to do so?

Did they tell their children of their experience when they were children?

Did your parents ask questions growing up?

Were they interested in knowing what their parents experienced?

Did they ever silence their parents or walk away when they would begin to tell of their experience?

Have your parents ever discussed what it was like growing up in a survivor household?

Did your parents try to "protect" you from the past?

How were/are your grandparents portrayed to you by your parents?

If you have aunts or uncles? Do they talk to you about their experience growing up?

How do you believe your grandparents experience during the Holocaust affected the way they raised your parents?

Did your parents ever have to act as parents to your grandparents, perhaps because they did not have an accent or were perceived as more "American" or educated? Please explain?

Does this relationship still carry-on today?

Do you believe the way your parents were parented has affected the way you were raised? If yes, explain.

Where you pressured to achieve success academically or in extra-curricular activities?

How do you define your family?

Have you ever made a family tree, written a biography, or taped an oral history of your grandparents?

How often do you see your grandparents?

How often do you phone them?

Do you feel you see them enough?

How would you describe your relationship with your grandparents?

Describe a recent interaction.

What stands out most in your mind about what they have told you or taught you?

How connected do you feel to their Holocaust experience?

Do you ever put yourself in their position and wonder if you would have survived?

Do you ever compare yourself to your grandparents "when they were your age"?

Do you ever put your life in perspective based on your grandparents' Holocaust experience? For example, do you ever feel guilty for issues you may be concerned about because of what your grandparents experienced during the Holocaust?

Jewish Identity

How do you feel about being Jewish?

Do you maintain Jewish traditions in your household? Please explain.

Does your family have any traditions that have been passed from generation to generation? Do you know where or how they began?

Do they have objects that have been passed from generation to generation? Do you know its history?

Is this generational history important to you?

Do you try to begin traditions or heirlooms if there are none?

Do you belong to a congregation?

Did you go to synagogue last Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

Do you plan to go this year?

Did you attend a Passover seder? Where?

With the theme of slavery to freedom, do you ever incorporate the Holocaust into your seder?

What are family gatherings like?

How are holidays celebrated?

In which Jewish organizations are you involved?

Are you involved in any Holocaust organizations?

Do you attend Yom HaShoah commemoration services?

Have you ever studied the Holocaust?

How often do you think of your connection to the Holocaust?

How often do you read a Holocaust related book or see a Holocaust related film?

How much does this legacy define you as a Jew?

How does it affect your outlook on life?

Do you feel more sensitive about antisemitism because of your Holocaust legacy?

Have you ever experienced antisemitism directly? How did you react?

Have you ever experienced denial directly? How did you react?

How has the Holocaust affected your belief in God?

How has your family's Holocaust background affected your attitude toward non-Jews? Germans?

Would you drive a German made car or own German made products?

Do you have more Jewish close friends or non-Jewish close friends? Is this at all related to the Holocaust?

Do your find your friends who are not grandchildren of survivors understand you?

If married, did you marry someone Jewish?

If not married, is it important for you to marry someone Jewish one day? Why?

If you would marry a non-Jew, why? If you are married, would you have considered marrying a non-Jew while you were single? Please explain.

Has there ever been an intermarriage in your family? What was your grandparents reaction? Your parents' reaction?

If you are married to someone who is not Jewish or not a grandchild of survivors, do you think they understand you?

Have you ever been to Israel? If so, how many times? What do your feel your connection to Israel is?

Have you ever been to Europe? In what capacity? To what countries? With whom did you travel?

Psychohistorical Themes

Do you have any particular psychological strengths or weaknesses which you would at least partially attribute to your family's Holocaust legacy? Please explain.

Are there any emotions or behaviors that you have experienced that you may feel is directly related to your Holocaust legacy? Please explain.

Do you ever have dreams that are Holocaust related? If so, please describe if you are able.

Do you fear there could be another Jewish Holocaust? Please explain.

In what ways do you perceive your grandparents to be affected as a result of their Holocaust experience?

Do you believe your grandparents related to you any differently than non-survivor Jewish grandparents relate to their grandchildren? Please explain.

Do you ever think about the relatives your grandparents lost?

Have you ever seen photographs?

When you see generic pictures of the Holocaust do you ever wonder if your family is in the picture?

Are you named after anyone who died? Are your parents?

Community Involvement

Are you involved in Social Justice issues? Do your feel this is related to your Holocaust legacy?

What issues concern you most?

Are you politically involved?

Do you participate more in Jewish causes and organizations or secular? Does it matter?

What causes do you support either with time or financially?

How did the events in Kosovo affect you?

In the Future...

Do you feel the need to teach others about the Holocaust? Or to support organizations who teach the Holocaust?

Do you feel you have enough knowledge to teach about the Holocaust?

Do you feel the need to pass on the lessons learned from your grandparents' experience?

Have you ever spoken to a school group? Do you speak up about your grandparents when the Holocaust or W.W.II is studied in school - religious or secular?

What do you feel when you hear this statement, "In the next ten to twenty years there will be no one left to tell someone, look at my arm, listen to my experience, I was there."

Do you feel a sense of urgency to ask questions or regret that you never did?

With the increase in interest in the Holocaust and with the increase of denial do you feel any sense of obligation or responsibility as a grandchild of survivors?

Will you talk to your children, even if they only know your grandparents from pictures?

Is there anything I didn't ask that you would like to share with me about what it was like growing up as a grandchild of Holocaust survivors?

What has this interview been like for you?

Can I contact you for follow up?
Phone #:
E-mail:

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