Traumatic effects of the Holocaust and other persecutions

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Traumatic effects of the Holocaust and other persecutions

Theoretical interpretations and reflections in the arts

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Contents

Introduction

Miriam Rieck

At the last conference, held at Haifa University on May 6, 2007, we examined the problematic encounters of Holocaust survivors with their new country.[1] It was suggested that these encounters were not easy, and besides causing the survivors difficulties in integrating themselves into Israeli society, they made it harder to establish a common collective memory in the newly emerging state of Israel.

As an aid to generalizing on the subject, participants offered observations on work with other traumatized populations (see *Preitler's c*ontribution, referred to in footnote 1). We concluded that in general the later effects of severe distress were heavily affected by interpersonal relations, and not solely by intra-psychic processes such as guilt feelings, as is so often assumed.

Because the conventional understanding of life after severe traumata seemed to be limited to the dominant psychological (mainly psychoanalytic) and psychiatric theories, which were formulated in other times and under different circumstances, at the 2009 conference we expanded the analytical framework to include psychological-attachment theory, as well as sociological and anthropological theories. Furthermore, in the conference we included research on extreme traumatic situations in other societies and cultures that were not part of the Holocaust. We hoped to thereby contribute to achieving a more encompassing and perhaps better understanding of the studies presented by addressing other societies and expanding the scope of the conference to cover, besides studies of trauma-related effects, the insights of various different theories.

The arts have interpreted a wide range of Holocaust effects, going far beyond the individual survivors and their descendants. At the same time, the relationship between a society's acceptance of survivors and their representation in the arts is reciprocal, each influencing the other. The conference discussions focused on these relationships (see Frindte) with a study of the representations of the Holocaust in German and International films and their influence on public perceptions of the Holocaust and its perpetrators, bystanders and victims. In addition, the Holocaust's influence on music is shown by the compositions of Israeli composer *Arie Shapira*.

1 The conference papers were published: in Miriam Rieck (Ed.) (2009): *Social interactions after massive traumatization. Was the Holocaust survivors' encounter with the post-war society conductive for generating private and collective memory?* verlag irena regener, Berlin.

This volume presents the conference papers. In the *first chapter*, *Ety Berant* and *Hila Hever* discuss a study of third-generation female descendants of Holocaust survivors (HS). Along with other developmental tasks, they examined the effects of postwar visits to Auschwitz and other camps in Poland on a wide range of variables, including the subjects' emotional well-being and their relationships with their mothers (children of Holocaust survivors – HS) and grandmothers (Holocaust survivors – HS). The study touched upon some unexamined aspects of such trips. These trips are quite common for students in Israel and are usually understood as an educational means of teaching about the Holocaust and the victims' suffering. At the same time, they are intended to strengthen the participants' patriotic commitment to Israel. The present study is unique in emphasizing the effects of these visits on the psychological states of participants and on interactions within families.

In *chapter 2*, *Carol Kidron* shows how anthropology, cultural studies and sociology approach phenomena such as collective memory, hegemonic master narratives, constructions of history and national identity, and the question of trauma and its intergenerational effects. These disciplines do not study societal and cultural phenomena in the same way as psychology, taking the individual as the starting point, but rather start from the perspective of social institutions (that is "supra-individually"). These disciplines explore how institutions and culture brokers construct reality and how social actors perceive this reality, including its legitimation and contestation.

Kidron concludes her chapter by presenting data from an empirical study comparing the reactions of second-generation trauma survivors and shows that these reactions are not universal, but rather to a large extent culture-dependent. Thus, not all cultures encourage the remembrance of past catastrophes suffered by their members.

In *chapter 3*, *Barbara Preitler* discusses her work at Hemayat, an Austrian refugee-counseling organization. Perhaps the most valuable insight gained from this counseling activity is that often helpers must supplement psychotherapy by assisting refugees in their dealings with authorities, who are in a position to turn down their asylum applications and try to expel them from the country of refuge to countries where they may again be persecuted. The author concludes that these refugees are still in a state of trauma, not post-trauma, which can reduce the effectiveness of psychotherapy.

In *chapter 4*, *Wolfgang Frindte* describes the differing cinematic representations of the Holocaust over the decades since the war, both internationally and specifically in German films. These developments reflect changes in attitudes toward Holocaust survivors on the side of those interested in films and other cultural offerings. At the same time, these relations are reciprocal: Filmmakers are influenced by societal attitudes, but also help to shape them. The effects of films on their audiences may, as found by empirical research, be related to the viewers' overall worldviews.

In *chapter 5*, Israeli composer *Arie Shapira* concludes that the Holocaust ushered in a new era, necessitating the creation of a new aesthetics. He criticizes pre-war Jewish-German composers who felt completely integrated into German society and failed to foresee the approaching catastrophe. This criticism is expressed in his musical compositions, some of which can be heard on a CD accompanying this volume.

Finally, in "Reassessment and Further Research", *Gideon Greif* supplements his chapter in the preceding volume, in which he reported on his interviews with Sonderkommando survivors. While interviewing Holocaust survivors, he also met members of their families (including second- and third-generation descendants of these survivors), and he reports here on the family memories of children and grandchildren of Sonderkommando survivors.

Granddaughters of female Holocaust survivors on their maternal side:

A mission that *is* possible

Ety Berant & Hilla Hever[1]

Introduction

Over the course of four generations since the Holocaust, many empirical and clinical studies have been made of survivors and their families (e.g., Danieli, 1998; Rieck, 1994; Scharf, 2007; van IJzendoorne, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Sagi-Schwartz, 2003). These studies have followed parallel trajectories: In one line of inquiry, researchers have focused on clinical samples of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, including individual case studies of patients, while in another the focus has been on non-clinical samples of Holocaust survivors and their children. Three main groups have been studied, selected from among the Holocaust survivors and their descendants.

A first group consisted of Holocaust survivors themselves, whose personal suffering was documented along with the posttraumatic effects of the hardships they had endured (Ben-Zur & Zimmerman, 2005; Barocas, 1975). The researchers reported mixed results. Some found that Holocaust survivors suffered from chronic anxiety and depression (Niederland, 1964, 1968), low self-esteem (Kestenberg, 1982) and psychosomatic disorders (Gampel, 1988), while other researchers instead emphasized the survivors' resilience (Krell, 1993; Leon et al., 1981).

A second group consisted of the survivors' children, whose characteristics were studied in order to increase our understanding of the long-term effects of trauma, and more specifically of trauma that Holocaust survivors (parents) passed on to their children (Holocaust survivors' offspring). The studies of the clinical samples were guided by the insight that: "Massive trauma has an amorphous presence that shapes the internal representations of reality over several generations, becoming an unconscious organizing principle passed on by parents and internalized by their descendants" (Laub & Auerhahn, 1984, 1985). These clinically-oriented research-

1 We wish to thank Rony Levy and Shira Yefet for collecting some of the data reported in this article. Certain studies were funded by Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ety Berant, PhD, Department of Psychology, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel, Email: berante@mail.biu.ac.il, Fax: ++97235355448

ers concluded that overcoming traumatic memory requires a process of gradual change over the course of several generations. Under the "umbrella" of this theoretical conceptualization, researchers identified certain harmful parenting styles on the side of survivors, such as poorly supporting children's separation and individuation processes (Felsen, 1998), or overburdening children with unrealistic expectations (Shafat, 1984). Other researchers focused instead on non-clinical samples and pointed to the resilience of the Holocaust survivors' descendants (Solomon, 1988; Yuchtman-Yaar & Menachem, 1992). Such research highlighted the fact that many descendants work in healing professions or are active in social movements (Auerhahn & Laub, 1998; Felsen, 1998; Vardi, 1994). Moreover, Sagi-Schwartz et al. (2003) reported that Holocaust survivors' female offspring did not differ from a comparison group in their states of mind with regard to attachment, or in their maternal behavior toward their own infants.

A third group that has been studied consists of the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, and this research continues the line of studies of the possible long-term effects of trauma. As with the other groups, the studies were based on both clinical and non-clinical samples, yielding inconsistent results. The small number of available clinical studies point to cases of psychopathology and evidence of the transmission of depression, guilt, and shame across three generations (Felsen, 1998; Sigal et al., 1988; Rubinstein, Cutter, & Templer, 1990). However, in a series of studies by Sigal and Weinfeld (1989), parents who were the offspring of Holocaust survivors gave descriptions of their children that suggested they had greater self-esteem and displayed better coping behavior than children whose parents were not Holocaust survivors, and that they also displayed fewer behaviors indicative of psychopathology. In addition, a number of researchers have suggested that the transgenerational transmission of trauma ceases by the third generation (Bachar et al., 1994).

In order to help construct a more comprehensive picture of the Holocaust's long-term psychological effects, to determine the personality characteristics and psychodynamic profiles of the third generation, and also to assess their mental health, we examined three groups of young women who are the granddaughters of female Holocaust survivors on their maternal side. The roles of the granddaughters of Holocaust survivors living in Israel are complex. On the one hand, these young women cope much as do their counterparts, young women whose families do not include Holocaust victims. At the same time, however, they live in the shadow of terrible ordeals suffered by their grandmothers on their maternal side. We will first describe the constellation of issues and the psychological problems that troubled their maternal grandmothers after the war, which influenced the way these grandmothers raised their daughters, who in turn eventually contributed to the roles and internalizations of the third generation.

Survivors

When Holocaust survivors immigrated to Israel after the war, Israelis welcomed them with mixed emotions. On the one hand, the Israelis wished to help them, but on the other hand, they felt that the victims might have done more to defend themselves against the Nazis (Bar-On, 1995; Segev, 1993). At that time, the issue of the Holocaust was simply too painful, too oppressive, too politically charged (Segev, 1993). During the early years after the state of Israel was founded, many survivors felt uncomfortable in their identities as survivors and victims. The Israelis' reactions appear to have mirrored the survivors' guilt, together contributing to a "conspiracy of silence" (Danieli, 1994) (e.g., before the Jerusalem Eichmann trial there was no dialogue between Holocaust survivors and Israelis about victim experiences in the Holocaust). Many survivors did not tell their children about their ordeal, hoping thereby to "spare" them from imagining the victims' suffering. They also doubted that anyone who had not personally experienced the Holocaust could understand them. Many survivors had difficulties in recounting their traumatic memories and sharing their anguish, because they had lost faith in humanity. Israeli researchers, psychologists and laymen claimed that they did not want to hurt the Holocaust survivors again and for that reason did not inquire about their past lives or study them (Bar-On, 2008). The Israeli attitude appears to have aggravated the vicious circle of the "conspiracy of silence" and the survivors' feelings of isolation.

These interactions between survivors and those around them nay also have reflected the paradoxical inner conflicts of the Holocaust survivors themselves: On the one hand, they had a strong desire to forget their trauma and, on the other, an equally strong compulsion to remember it. We find an example of this conflict in the testimony of Eva Schloss, a Holocaust survivor from Amsterdam, whose mother remarried after the war. Her second husband was Otto Frank – Anne's father.

"For 40 years we hardly told anyone about our experiences in the Holocaust … In the beginning we all wanted to speak, we wanted people to empathize with us and help us. But no one wanted to listen, and I understood from this that we should give up our wish to share our stories and we should go on with our lives in silence. Ten to fifteen years later, when people were more willing to listen, these memories were already buried deep inside our hearts, repressed strongly, and we did not want to go back and talk about it" (Hadar, 2010).

Children of Holocaust survivors – the second generation

Holocaust survivors were ambivalent about whether to share their stories or simply go on with their lives in silence. This inner conflict played an important role in shaping how they raised their children and communicated with them about their trauma. It led to specific verbal and nonverbal ways of expressing and transmitting personal trauma. This dynamic is revealed in the self-descriptions of Holocaust survivors' children, who portray themselves as "memorial candles" for their parents'

trauma and suffering. Because survivors treated their children as "memorial candles", they were often unable to create a suitable space in which to share their traumatic past with them. Consequently, survivors could not help their children to satisfactorily "work through" their Holocaust experiences. Because the survivors were unable to create a suitable space for deliberately and systematically sharing their trauma, they communicated it in nonverbal ways. Thus the children of Holocaust survivors were cast adrift in a nebulous gray zone between "knowing and not knowing" (Wisemann & Barber, 2008). Non-verbally, the children sensed their parents' fears and pain, as well as their aspirations for the future. One obvious effect of this specific dynamic between Holocaust survivors and their children was that the survivors' emotional households influenced their children's views of life and the world.

Grandchildren of Holocaust survivors – the third generation

Only a few studies have examined the long-term effects of Holocaust-related trauma and the special dynamics of the third generation. The majority of these studies have focused on diagnosing the symptoms of the resultant pathology. These symptoms were in general unsystematically evaluated on the basis of the distribution of self-report measures of convenience samples, rather than through rigorous examination in the context of relevant theoretical frameworks (Shoshan, 1989; Wetter, 1999). In a complex, systematic study that did not rely on self-reports alone, Scharf (2007) distinguished between two groups of third-generation adolescent boys. In one group, both parents of each boy were children of Holocaust survivors; in the other group, only one parent (mother or father) was the child of Holocaust survivors. She examined a non-clinical sample and found that adolescent boys in families where both parents were the children of Holocaust survivors perceived their mothers and fathers lasess accepting and less encouraging of independence. They reported less positive self-perceptions than their counterparts and displayed higher levels of attachment ambivalence. In addition, based on a measure of their peers' perceptions, they made a poorer adjustment to military basic training than fellow recruits who had only one parent who was the offspring of Holocaust survivors. Adolescents who had only one parent who was the offspring of Holocaust survivors behaved similarly to adolescents with no family Holocaust background. While Scharf's (2007) research made an important contribution to the literature on the third generation, she did not study female members of the third generation. In our research, we intended to fill this theoretical and empirical gap concerning daughters whose parents are the children of Holocaust survivors.

Third generation young women

The paucity of research and the contradictory nature of findings about the mental health of the third generation contributed to our interest in combining measures

that focus on variables related to coping, adjustment, and personality characteristics such as mental health, cognitive appraisal and attachment orientations (which are based on self-report measures) with variables that shed light on internal psychodynamics, such as internal mental representations (which are derived from open questions and self-expressive instruments). Holocaust authors and researchers have noted that the widely differing experiences of the survivors during the Holocaust (for example, being deported to concentration camps or going into hiding) led to differences in survivors' later coping styles (Danieli, 1998). In addition, researchers conclude that men and women respond to trauma differently (Solomon et al., 2005). Given these two sets of findings, we chose to study a homogeneous population, that is, young women who are the granddaughters of Holocaust survivors on their maternal side. This sample of young women was not self-selected, and the contexts we employed were not related exclusively to post-trauma. Also, unlike most of the previous studies of the third generation, in which the focus was on children, we studied adolescents and young women. We focused on three different non-clinical samples of young women, each sample facing a different significant developmental task in their lives. These tasks present several challenges to the separation-individuation process, as well as to the transition to motherhood. The developmental tasks are: (a). Mandatory service in the *Israeli Defense Forces* (IDF) and the necessary separation from their families. (b) The transition to new motherhood. (c) Probably the most emotionally-charged task – a group excursion to visit former extermination and concentration camps in Poland, which is taken by most Israeli adolescents. The adolescent girls' mean ages ranged from 17 years (girls who participated in the trip to Poland) to 17.4 years (girls about to be drafted into the IDF). The mean age of the sample of young women making the transition to new motherhood was 29 years. We examined how the sensitivity of the third generation young women to their family's Holocaust heritage found expression in response to these three significant life events. No less important, we were also interested in the resources that enabled these young women and adolescent girls to cope successfully with these significant life events. Finally, we wanted to compare them to a control group of young women whose families were "not touched" by the Holocaust.

Our studies focused on the "feminine bond", because trauma researchers have found that women are more vulnerable and react more strongly to adversity than men (Solomon et al., 2005). When exposed to danger, women are usually more fearful, both for themselves and for people close to them. In addition, they display stronger signs of psychological vulnerability (Solomon, 1995). Women are also more likely to talk about their feelings, and in times of danger are more likely to check on the whereabouts of their friends and family (Solomon et al., 2005). Women tend to suffer from vicarious traumatization (Lerias & Byrne, 2003; Resick, 2001). Furthermore, women are thought to be more vulnerable to trauma transmission (Cox et al., 1985; Husain et al., 1998; Prager & Solomon, 1995).

Issues related to coping

In our view, the factors central to an understanding of how third generation members cope in various activities include their mental health, separation-individuation conflicts, and cognitive appraisals of the developmental tasks facing them. In a series of studies, we assessed these factors for third generation young women and compared them to a control group of young women whose families did not include Holocaust victims. We studied the third generation young women in three critical developmental situations that may cause distress, impair mental health, and increase anxiety.

Mental health and separation-individuation anxieties

With regard to the psychological distress of the adolescent girls contemplating a group excursion to Poland and that of the young women coping with motherhood for the first time, we found no significant differences in our comparison of the third-generation groups with counterparts whose families did not include Holocaust victims. That is, the third generation young women did not display more signs of psychological distress during these significant transitions in their lives.

In the case of young women about to be drafted into the IDF, we examined their attitudes toward the task of separation-individuation from their families and their attitudes toward their mothers as they faced their approaching military service. They filled out self-report questionnaires measuring separation issues: anxiety regarding abandonment and/or being engulfed by their mothers. Again, there were no significant differences between the third generation and the control group. These findings conflict with the conclusion of clinical reports (based on case studies) about the descendants of Holocaust survivors that the descendants have greater fears of abandonment and engulfment (Kogan, 2002; Vardi, 1992) as a by-product of the survivors' abrupt separation from close family members. In addition, survivors later maintained an intense level of involvement in their children's lives and cultivated high expectations for them to compensate for the lives and careers they themselves had missed because of the Holocaust (Berant, 2002; Felsen, 1998). Our study showed that young third generation women facing military service were, in fact, no more preoccupied with separation anxiety issues or engulfment fears than the control group. Contrary to clinical studies indicating that the trauma of the Holocaust had serious consequences for descendants, our findings are consistent with those of studies by Sagi-Schartz et al. (2003) and Bachar et al. (1994) that in many respects the transgenerational transmission of Holocaust trauma *ceases* by the third generation.

Cognitive appraisal

Individuals who make a positive cognitive appraisal of impending events in their lives tend to cope in a well-adjusted manner with future developmental tasks. We

wanted to examine whether third-generation young women have more negative expectations concerning the events they are coping with compared to the control group, because their grandmothers' lives were suddenly interrupted, they could not fulfill their dreams, and their life circumstances made it hard for them to hope for much in life. Hence, we examined the adolescent girls' cognitive appraisal of the IDF draft, as well as the young mothers' cognitive assessments of motherhood tasks, in comparison to those of the control group (see Figure 1).

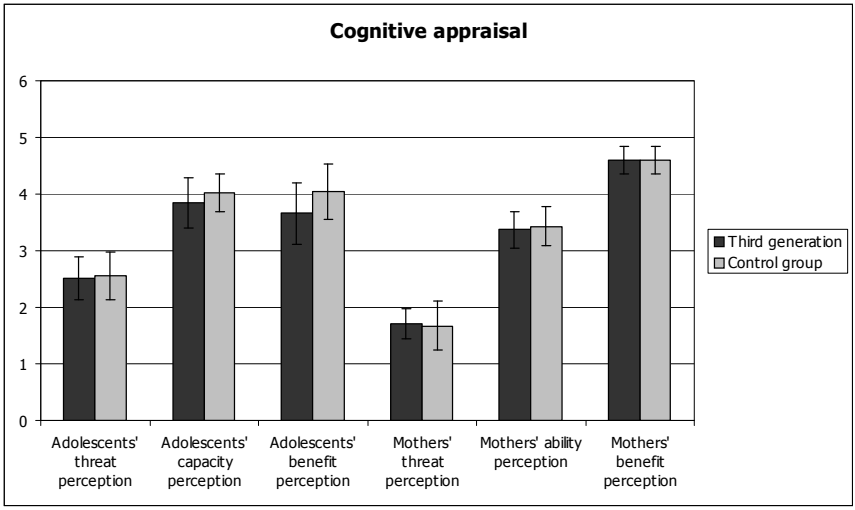


Figure 1: Cognitive appraisals by adolescent girls and young mothers

On most of the parameters in their cognitive appraisal of these developmental tasks, the third generation young mothers and adolescent girls did not differ from the control group. The young third generation mothers did not perceive maternal responsibilities as more threatening than did the control group. They likewise perceived themselves as having the same suitability for motherhood and as being just as able to benefit from it as the control group. The picture of the adolescent girls is similar, in that the third generation girls did not expect more difficulties in their military service than did the control group girls, and they did not feel less able than their counterparts to cope with military duties. However, the third generation girls reported lower expectations to benefit from their military service than did the control group. Perhaps the descendants of victims of aggression associate obligatory military service with such aggression and consequently tend to be more modest in their expectations for the benefits of military service.

Attachment orientation

In addition to examining the participants' mental health, we wanted to study their attachment orientation. We drew on Bowlby's (1969/1982) attachment theory, according to which interactions with significant others are internalized in the form of working models of the self and others. Individuals categorized as secure are three to four times more likely to have children who are securely attached to them (van IJzendoorn, 1995), and attachment relationships may play a key role in the transgenerational transmission of feelings of hardship and deprivation. From an attachment-theory perspective, parents who are overwhelmed by traumatic memories associated with past atrocities and abuse may display anxiety that could, in turn, be threatening and incomprehensible to their children, given the source of the anxiety in their parents' past experiences (Main & Hesse, 1990). Furthermore, parents' attempts to protect themselves against re-experiencing painful fear, helplessness, and rage related to earlier trauma might result in emotional and physical withdrawal from, or a hostile stance toward their children. Parents' frightened or frightening behavior, and the failure to maintain an adequate level of responsiveness to their children, may leave children feeling vulnerable and frightened (Lyons-Ruth & Block, 1996). Attachment insecurity in the third generation could be indicative of this chain of being frightened and becoming frightening. Consequently, we compared the attachment insecurity of the third generation girls to that of their counterparts from families that did not include Holocaust victims. We replicated previous studies of third generation attachment orientations in an effort to discover whether the echoes of their grandparents' traumatic past contributed to shaping their attachment orientation and were expressed by insecure attachment styles.

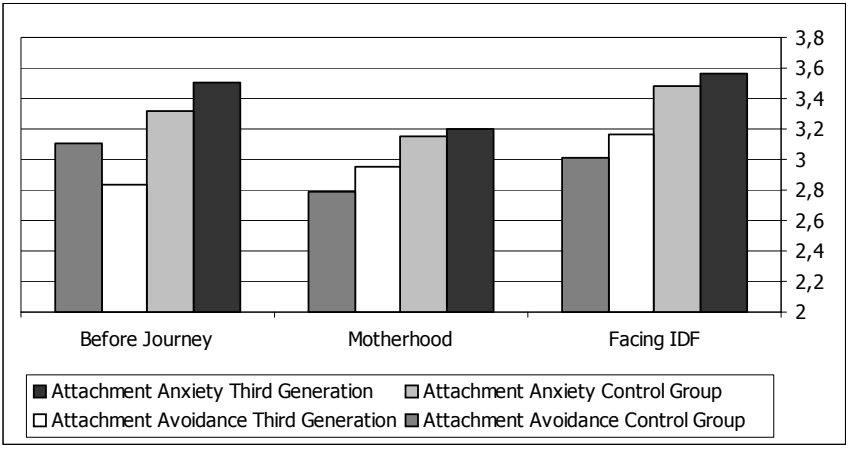


Figure 2: Attachment orientations of the three third generation samples

Having a secure attachment orientation (low attachment anxiety and low attachment avoidance) is essential for coping with life events and serves as a personality

resource for successfully fulfilling developmental tasks. Securely attached individuals believe that if they encounter an obstacle or other difficulties, they can approach someone for help, and that a helper will be available for them. They generally perceive themselves positively, which is essential when facing critical developmental stages.

In order to compare attachment orientations, all three samples of third generation women and their matched controls completed self-report questionnaires on their attachment orientation. The results of the analyses revealed no difference in attachment insecurity between the third generation groups and their counterparts (see Figure 2).

Transition to motherhood

For young women the transition to motherhood is a significant phase, during which young mothers reflect on their relationships with their own mothers (Winnicott, 1958). After giving birth, a new mother faces a double identification process: with her own mother and with her infant. Identification with an infant facilitates the establishment of maternal roles (Deutsch, 1954). Dahl (1995) concluded that from early childhood on the female child accumulates experiences with her own mother; these accumulated infantile experiences with her mother and the fantasies related to these experiences are reworked at every developmental stage in a woman's life, and especially during the transition to motherhood. This transition arouses pre-oedipal conflicts in the mother that are unique to her development as a mother (Kestenberg, 1977). Winnicott (1958, 1965) argues that a fetus in its mother's womb becomes associated with the maternal figure internalized in her. The result of this connection between the unborn child in the uterus and the internal maternal representation is the identification of the new mother with the newborn, an identification that eventually facilitates her emotional relationship with her child and her caring for it. Stern (1985) summarizes the discussion by stating that the internalized maternal figure is the most significant model for a woman in the process of becoming a mother. It is possible that for third generation mothers the issues of attachment to their infant and bonding with it may be more emotionally charged as a distant shadow of their grandmothers' painful separation from *their* mothers during the Holocaust. Hence, we wanted to examine the feelings of the third generation mothers toward their infants, in order to determine whether this developmental stage is in fact emotionally charged with echoes of the painful separations and losses of the past. Our study's findings agree with Sagi-Schwartz et al.'s (2003) research, which indicated that young third generation mothers did *not* express greater negative or positive feelings and needs for control toward their infants than did mothers with no family connection to the Holocaust (see Figure 3).

In summary, the above findings agree with previous studies that did not detect any differences between the third generation descendants of survivors and control groups in terms of mental health and attachment orientation (Sagi-Schwartz et

al., 2003; van IJendoorn, Bakerman-Kranenburg, & Sagi 2003). Nor did the two groups differ in their cognitive appraisal of the developmental task of serving in the IDF. Finally, the young mothers did not differ in their feelings toward their infants and in their cognitive appraisal of their motherhood.

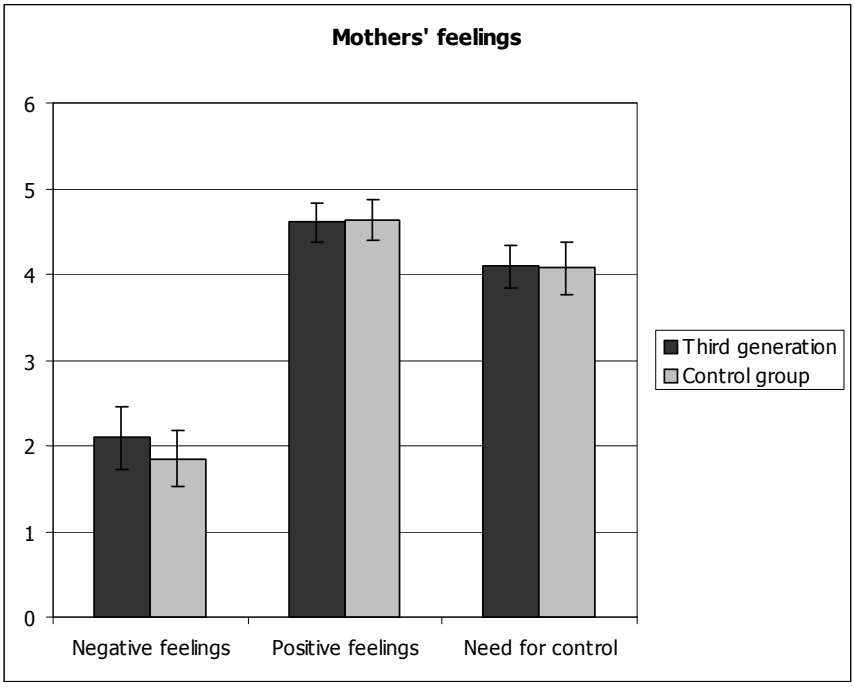


Figure 3: Mothers' feelings toward their infants

Internal representations

Several Holocaust researchers have recently concluded that it is not sufficient to rely on self-report instruments when evaluating the personality characteristics or mental health of Holocaust survivors' offspring. They suggest that research should also focus on more subtle issues, such as the internalized representation of significant figures in a person's life (Bar-On, 1995; Wiseman & Barber, 2008). Inner maternal representations are, in our opinion, an important resource for coping in general, and especially for coping with critical life events. Internal object representations are mental schemes that include cognitive, affective and experiential characteristics of the significant figures an individual encounters during his or her life (Blatt & Lerner, 1983). Positive, mature mental representations would be expected to help the individual to cope with events such as military conscription, new motherhood and excursions to former concentration camps in Poland. The findings

of the studies reported above (attachment orientation, mental health, and cognitive appraisal) are consistent with the conclusion of many Holocaust researchers that we can no longer speak of the transmission of psychopathology from one generation to the next (Bachar et al., 1994; Sagi-Schwartz, 2003). However, we wanted to make a more fine-grained examination of the inner maternal representations of the young third generation women. Since research on post-trauma has shown that traumatic memories persist for many years (Neria, Nandi, & Galea, 2007; see for review), we believe that the mental representations of individuals who have experienced trauma as extreme as that of the Holocaust will be permeated with frightened and frightening themes. For survivors, the internal representations of the parental *imago* would thus be less positive and more characterized by negative aspects than the average person's internal representations. Studies have shown that there is an intergenerational transmission of mental representations (Main & Hesse, 1990; van IJzendoorn, 1995), and since studies of post-trauma indicate that women are more prone to experience post-trauma and to transmit it to their daughters (Cox et al., 1985; Husain et al., 1998; Prager & Solomon, 1995), we hypothesized that the maternal representations of third generation adolescent girls and young mothers would include more negative features. The internal representations of mothers we studied were derived from Blatt, Chevron, Quinlan, Schaffer, & Wein's (1992) *Object Representation Inventory* (ORI). The participants were asked to briefly describe their mothers in writing. From these descriptions, we derived several dimensions, for example, the *benevolence* of the maternal figure, the *conceptual level* of the internalized maternal representation and *ambivalence* toward the mother. The third generation young women in all three of the developmental task groups had less positive maternal representations than did the control group. They perceived their mothers as less benevolent and less ambitious, and expressed more ambivalence toward their mothers. The difference between the third generation and the control group was smaller for the young mothers than for the other two groups. Perhaps after making the transition to motherhood and assuming maternal roles, the third generation young women identified with the maternal role and with their own mothers, and consequently they changed their maternal representation to a more positive one.

We also utilized an additional measure of object relations derived from the Rorschach inkblot test. This additional scale (*Mutuality of Autonomy* – MOA; Urist, 1977) measures the extent to which responses to Rorschach inkblots represent empathetic reciprocal relatedness, with one end of the scale indicating that the "other" is appreciated as a wholly unique and separate individual engaged in cooperative activity, while at the other end of the scale destructive envelopment and symbiotic fusion are represented.

Interestingly, we did not find differences between the third generation girls and the control group in the developmental maturity of object relations. This finding was surprising, since in the last decade researchers have concluded that to comprehend the nature and origin of the individual's internal representations, we must keep in mind that significant relationships have a strong tendency to persist across

generations (Wallin, 2007). For example, van IJzendoorn (1995) found that parents' attachment classifications predicted their children's attachment orientations. Main, Hesse, and Kaplan (2005) noted that parents who have experienced trauma that they have never consciously worked through tend to preserve these overwhelming experiences in a dissociated state, lying dormant, yet available to be activated by particular emotionally arousing contexts. Hence, being raised by parents who were frightened or who were trauma victims might lead to representations of interpersonal relations dominated by thoughts of a negative or destructive nature. It follows that one might expect the children of Holocaust survivor offspring to perceive interpersonal relationships as potentially threatening. However, the MOA scores describing the object relational developmental maturity of the adolescent girls one month before the trip to Poland were, surprisingly, not loaded with more negative and destructive themes compared to the control group scores. To summarize, when the girls were explicitly asked to describe their mothers in writing, their internal maternal representations were of mothers who were less benevolent than the mothers portrayed in the control group descriptions, were saturated with more ambivalence toward the maternal figure, and were conceived on a lower level than those of the control group. However, on the Rorschach inkblot test, their representations of the maturity of object relations were the same as those of the control group and did not reflect a perception of interpersonal relations as destructive or dangerous. We believe it would be worthwhile to further examine this inconsistency.

Testimony and memory: The third generation copes with an excursion to Poland

Contemporary Holocaust researchers underscore the necessity of studying the offspring of Holocaust survivors in an environment that is not necessarily trauma-related. Scharf (2007) and Wiseman and Barber (2008) addressed the importance of selecting samples of Holocaust survivors' descendants in contexts other than that of the Holocaust. However, we believe that there is also substantial value in examining the descendants of Holocaust survivors in a context directly related to the Holocaust, in the environment where the atrocities were committed and where some members of their family may have perished. We wanted to study how the third generation coped with an excursion to visit concentration camps in Poland, to discover whether their specific "Holocaust heritage" made them more susceptible to distress than the control group, and to determine what effects the KZ excursion had on their attitudes toward their mothers, as well as on their inner maternal representations.

Before reporting the findings of the trip to the concentration camps, we wish to address the important role of the third generation in bearing witness to their grandparents' Holocaust tragedy and in passing on "Holocaust knowledge" (Auerahan & Laub, 1984) to later generations. The third generation girls were curious about their grandparents' past and were both willing and able to discuss it with their

grandparents. Their interest included visiting the concentration camps, the sites of their grandparents' terrible past ordeals; thus the grandparents might feel reassured that their Holocaust suffering would not be forgotten. We believe that this role also contributes significantly to the granddaughters' own development, since they are mending the rupture in their family's painful history and integrating their grandparents' dissociated past. We know that the third generation displays a pattern of communicating with their grandparents about the Holocaust that differs from their parents' typical patterns (Hever, 2007; Wiseman & Barber, 2008). In contrast to members of the second generation, who found it hard to talk to their parents about their Holocaust experiences and traumatic past, the grandchildren, who were separated by a generation from the survivors, discovered new ways to reach out to their grandparents and facilitate their Holocaust testimony and remembrance (Hever, 2007; Wiseman & Barber, 2008). Hence, we conclude that one of the major roles played by the third generation is to facilitate communication with their grandparents about the Holocaust. Furthermore, the national program to bring Israeli adolescents to Poland enabled them to personally visit sites where atrocities were committed against their family members. Perhaps these visits by grandchildren encouraged survivors to hope that their testimony would be preserved and passed on to future generations.

Many clinicians, researchers and survivors (e.g., Laub, 2004) use a concept they link closely to trauma, the *testimony of trauma*. The testimony of trauma is thought to play an important role in the victims' recovery and resilience. It appears that through their visits to Poland and communicating with their grandparents about the Holocaust, the third generation has contributed to reconstructing their grandparents' fragmented narratives. Thus, they have assisted the generations to fill the gaps in their family history and mend the torn parts.

The importance of witnessing and testimony is perhaps best described by Primo Levi, beginning with his classic *If This Is a Man, or Survival in Auschwitz* (1947). Primo Levi, an Italian Jewish writer and Holocaust survivor, addresses this theme in his book *The Drowned and the Saved* (1988). He writes that while imprisoned in Auschwitz he overheard SS soldiers taunting prisoners that after the war there would be no one left to bear witness, and that even if anyone were to survive, no one would believe them, because the SS would have destroyed all the evidence. It seems likely that the third generation provided their grandparents with the assurance that their story would be told, thereby creating a channel for sharing and talking about their past. Perhaps the passing of the years and the growing readiness of the Israeli people to listen to trauma victims' stories created the right space in which grandparents could share the memories of their terrible ordeals. Communicating with their grandchildren may have restored the Holocaust survivors' faith that someone would be interested in hearing their story and that their Holocaust experiences would indeed be passed on to future generations.

We chose to expand our study of adolescent girls by adding a longitudinal aspect, thus enabling us to determine what impact visits to Polish KZs had on third gen-

eration girls and on their counterparts whose families did not include Holocaust victims.

As described above, one month before the visit to Poland the third generation adolescent girls did not differ from the control group in their attachment orientation and in their mental health. Besides measuring the girls one month before their trip to Poland, we also measured them one month after the trip and found that there was still no difference between the groups in their attachment orientations and mental health. However, the study's findings allow for an elaboration on the complex and conflicted positions of the third generation adolescent girls regarding their mothers and their development following the excursion.

Regarding the internal maternal representations derived from their brief descriptions of their mothers, a month before the trip (as reported earlier) the control group displayed significantly more sympathetic internal maternal representations compared to those of the third generation group, and this difference remained stable a month after the trip (see Figure 4).

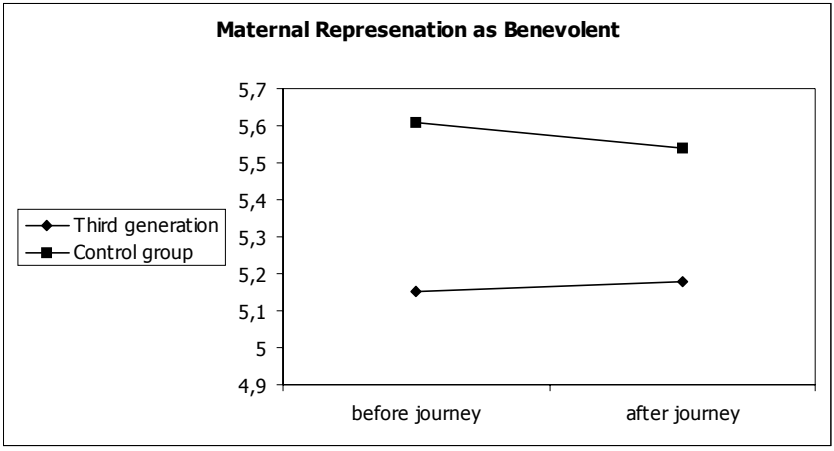
Interestingly, before the trip the degree of ambivalence expressed by the girls toward their mothers was similar in the two groups. After the trip, however, the third generation girls revealed a higher level of ambivalence toward their mothers, while the control group girls' ambivalence toward their mothers decreased (see Figure 4). It seems that for the third generation girls, the Polish excursion again highlighted their grandmothers' ordeals during the Holocaust, and they could not comprehend their mothers' inability to communicate with their own mothers (their grandmothers) about their Holocaust experiences. The girls' empathy with their grandmothers increased following the trip to Poland, causing them to see their own mothers in a more negative light. On the other hand, perhaps the trip and their heightened feelings during it enabled them to better understand the difficulties of communicating about these topics, thus causing them to change their prior beliefs about their mothers and increasing their ambivalence toward them. Further research is needed to clarify the factors that contributed to the increase in the ambivalence of the third generation adolescent girls during the trip. Perhaps the use of open exploratory questions about these issues would yield new insights.

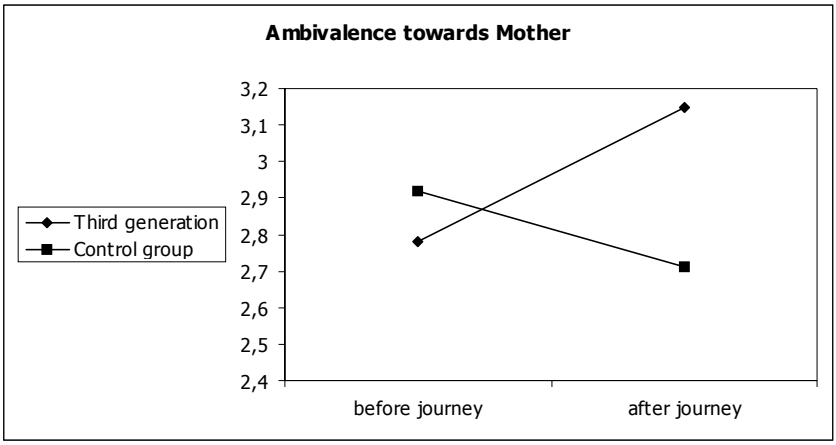
Whereas prior to the excursion the conceptual level of maternal representations was higher among the control group girls than among the third generation girls, it declined in the aftermath of the trip, matching the lower level maintained by the third-generation descendants of victims both before and after the trip (see Figure 4). This finding may suggest that when faced with new and challenging situations, one way of coping is to conceive of the significant figure in one's life (the mother) on a lower level of conceptualization. This coping mechanism is characteristic of people reacting to the pressure of high demand levels (Weiner, 1998).

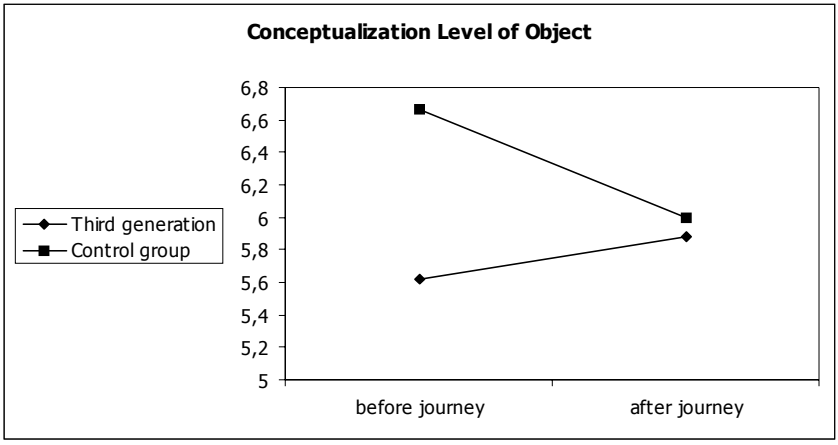
Before visiting Poland, the adolescent girls in the control group displayed higher levels of empathy for their mothers compared to the third generation group. Furthermore, we found that after visiting Poland, the control group girls' already high levels of empathy for their mothers increased, while the third generation group's

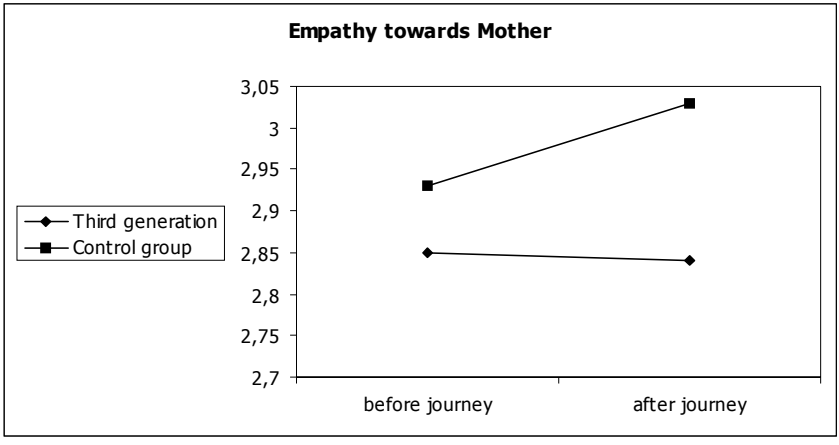
levels of empathetic feelings remained unchanged (see Figure 4). Before the visit, the third generation girls reported higher levels of empathy for their grandmothers than did the control group. Following the visit, the level of empathy for the grandmothers increased in both groups, but continued to be higher among the third generation girls. These self-report scales reveal the complex relationships of the third generation girls with their mothers. They reported a high level of empathy for their grandmothers, which increased following the trip and was consistently higher than the empathy of the control group girls for their grandmothers. Perhaps this empathy is related to the ability of the third generation to communicate with their grandmothers. At the same time, the excursion did not increase their sympathy for their mothers; instead, it increased their ambivalence toward them. Perhaps, as noted above, the increase in empathy for the grandmothers contributed to an increase in ambivalence regarding the mothers. We did not explicitly ask the girls to describe their feelings about their mothers' inability to discuss the Holocaust with their grandmothers. It is possible, however, that this issue made the girls less empathetic toward their mothers, especially following the visit to the concentration camps and their own subsequent need to share their thoughts about this excursion. Since adolescents need positive identification figures, perhaps their mothers' difficulties threatened and angered them, leading them to see their mothers in a negative light. Interviews with and semi-structured measures of the third generation girls during and following the visit to Poland might serve to clarify the picture of the third generation girls' feelings toward their mothers and grandmothers.

The third generation group and the control group both coped well with the visit to Poland. They were not different at the start, nor did they display greater distress after the trip. However, it appears that the third generation group processed the excursion differently than did the control group. They began with a lower level of empathy for their mothers, which remained unchanged after the visit. At the same time, their level of empathy for their grandmothers was higher than that of the




Ambivalence towards Mother
Third generation
Control group
3,2
3,1
3
2,9
2,8
2,7
2,6
2,5
2,4
before journey
after journey


Conceptualization Level of Object
Third generation
Control group
6,8
6,6
6,4
6,2
6
5,8
5,6
5,4
5,2
5
before journey
after journey


Empathy towards Mother
Third generation
Control group
3,05
3
2,95
2,9
2,85
2,8
2,75
2,7
before journey
after journey

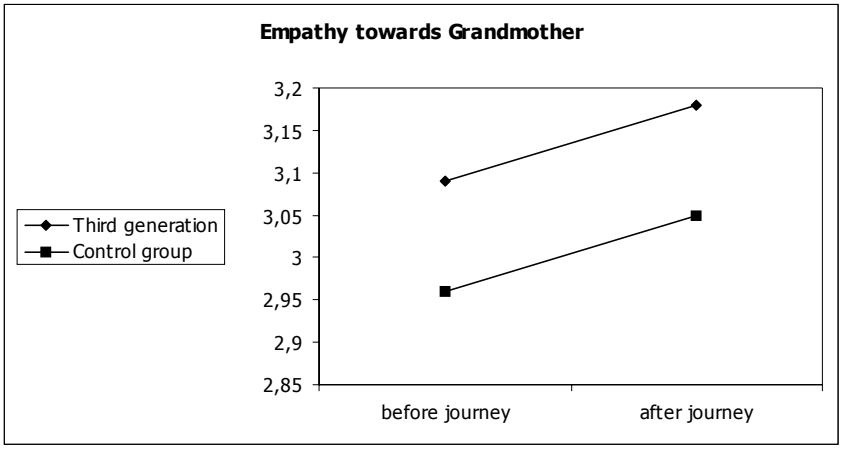


Figure 4: Changes in maternal representations and empathy for mothers and grandmothers before and after the excursion

control group and increased after the excursion. This finding is consistent with descriptions of special ties between grandparents and grandchildren, especially in cases where grandparents have been able to tell their grandchildren about experiences they felt unable to reveal to their own children (Hever, 2007). The ambivalence of the third generation girls toward their own mothers increased after the trip. It seems that the trip changed some of their former perceptions of their mothers.

The present study points to the psychological significance of the trip to Poland and reveals changes in the girls' attitudes and representations after the trip. Bearing witness is not a passive role, but rather necessitates mental processing, and that, it seems, is what these girls were doing.

In summary, we want to underscore a few points: Our research has shown that in many respects the Holocaust survivors' traumatic past did not affect the third generation descendants' coping abilities. The attachment security of the third generation is on the same level as that of their counterparts; they maintain a positive cognitive perspective and display good mental health.

However, on a more subtle level, we can trace the remote influences of their grandparents that have led to specific dynamics in the third generation and between mothers and daughters. Interestingly, the third generation girls perceived fewer benefits from serving in the IDF compared to the control group. Perhaps the descendants of those who once suffered and witnessed violent acts cannot wholeheartedly identify with the role of aggressor, even in the service of defending their own country. Another important issue is the ambivalence of the third generation girls toward their mothers in contrast to their warm relations with their grandmothers. It seems that the "walls of silence" or flooding in the communication of the survivors with their daughters had a long-term influence on the granddaughters,

who regarded this as a weakness of their mothers. More qualitative research is necessary in order to clarify this set of relationships.

We wish to end with the descriptions a third generation adolescent girl gave of her mother before and after the excursion to visit KZs in Poland.

Before:

"My mother is the best mother in the world. Unfortunately, we have many arguments. But we have a good relationship. I feel closer to my father, who does not have any relation to the Holocaust. I have never spoken with my mother about the Holocaust, because my grandmother never spoke with her about it. I am afraid to talk about it with my mother."

Following the excursion:

"My mother is amazing, the best mother. We have arguments because we both have a short fuse. When my mother does not speak kindly to my grandmother, it bothers me and I feel the need to protect her [i.e., her grandmother], even though I myself do not speak politely to my mother. Despite all these arguments we have a good relationship, and she takes good care of me."

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Collective memory, traumatic memory and genocide: Sociological and anthropological perspectives

Carol A. Kidron

Despite their differing methodologies, both sociology and anthropology explore the intricacies of human social and cultural behavior. Sociology and anthropology examine socio-cultural phenomena, institutions and practices in hopes of discovering their underlying premises, how they are constituted, and how they function in particular social contexts and historical periods. In this sense, these fields are critical disciplines, aiming in part to deconstruct the social and moral order – or what individuals and groups have come to view as their "taken-for-granted reality". In contrast to a more positivist reading of social life, for the critical sociologist or anthropologist, cultural processes are not read as expressing absolute truths, but rather as the ways in which nation states, institutions, and empowered culture brokers construct reality, and in turn the ways subjects perceive that reality and maintain what has become meaningful to them.

While neither challenging the truth-value of the collective, communal and personal memory of trauma and genocide, nor questioning the enormity of human suffering, the traces of difficult pasts and their representation in the present have likewise been deconstructed. Scholars of memory, unlike historians, do not document recollected events, but rather trace the discourses, practices and sites in and through which the past is made present and meaningful, and sometimes the way that past is selectively enlisted to serve political and ideological agendas. This chapter will provide an overview of the critical deconstructionist scholarship on collective memory, traumatic memory and Holocaust and Genocide studies and will conclude with the findings of an ethnographic study of trauma and the genocide-related remembering and forgetting of descendants.

Collective memory

The basic premise of the epistemological paradigm of collective memory is that memory extends beyond the realm of the individual mind and its private recollections of the past and may be understood as a constantly evolving collective social artifact. Individual memory and social or collective memory become intertwined, as Maurice Halbwachs explained: "…no memory is possible outside the framework used by people in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halb-

wachs, 1992, p. 43). Memory is culturally mediated and framed by social institutions and cultural artifacts. Cultural forms and institutions embed, frame, interpret and disseminate the memory of the past that is preserved in laws, national archives, commemorative sites and monuments (Schudson, 1997; Wagner et al., 1991). Culture-specific symbols, myths, commemorative rituals and grand narratives are also memory repositories, semiotically representing a socially constructed and engineered past (Schwartz 1996a; Zerubavel, 1995). Individual memory may then "piggyback" on the mnemonic resources of the above-named institutions and artifacts, without the individual needing to have personally "lived" and experienced past events. Even when stored in the individual mind in the form of autobiographical recollections, memory remains social and is often shared by occupational groups or generational cohorts. As collective "property," individual memory again undergoes a process of streamlining and is reconstructed to create a coherent "unity of outlook" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 182). Individual memory also remains social, since it operates through the cultural construction of language and is activated by social stimulation, rehearsal, and culturally structured patterns of recall (Schudson, 1997).

As an instrumental social mechanism, the collective memory of the past is, finally, employed in the service of present socio-cultural, political-semiotic and strategic needs. According to Schwartz, as a semiotic system, collective memory serves a social agenda as a 'model of' and a 'model for' society (Schwartz, 1996b, p. 910). As a model *of* society, the stories a society tells itself about its past reflect its cultural values, beliefs, needs and ideological and moral preoccupations. Thus collective memory anchors the individual and the collective within a coherent, continuously meaningful trajectory, serving as a symbolic glue conjoining culturally diverse populations, which may coalesce around a common stock of cultural memory (Hobsbawm, 1983). As a model *for* society, collective memory delineates a program defining not only experiences and values, but also present and future goals, providing the "cognitive, affective and moral orientation for realizing them" (Schwartz, 1996b, p. 910). Thus collective memory is not only capable of unifying individuals within a nation state, but is also strategically engineered to mobilize individuals and groups toward the establishment of newly constructed national identities and collective agendas (Swedenburg, 1991; Zerubavel, 1995).

Collective memory may thus be "put to work" in the service of the interests and goals of present hegemonic national ruling elites, suppressed marginal ethnic and sub-cultural groups and competing interest groups, transforming the past into a scarce and contested resource (Appadurai, in Schudson, 1992, p. 205). A national ruling elite anchors its ideology deep within a constructed official discourse and in grand narratives. In crises, regimes appeal to the past to mobilize their citizenry (Schwartz, 1996a). Aspiring subjugated national groups contest the official discourse, constructing counter-memories to rally and coalesce individuals into a national whole (Swedenburg, 1991). Minorities and marginalized Others utilize their own newly-created narratives to gain a voice within the dominant culture (Bratlinger, 1998). Finally, interest groups compete to establish the 'version' of the

past that best serves their interests, and thus official- and counter-memories will inevitably be contested. Individuals and popular cultures do not passively accept the loss of their living memory and commitment to a particular conception of the duty to remember past experiences (Schudson, 1992; Swedenburg, 1991; Wagner-Pacifici, 1991). Constructed narratives of the past are always just one possible sequence of events selected from a far richer storehouse of lived memory (Papadakis, 1993). This selectivity is compounded by the inherently linear structure of constructed narratives of the past, which leaves room for the construction of both alternative narratives and contesting counter-memories that capitalize on the 'gaps' in official memory (Zerubavel, 1995).

Contestation utilizes various narrative techniques to challenge existing discourses or simply to construct a new narrative of the past. Past events and figures may be idealized, distorted, or even erased. The linear sequence of the narrative may also be manipulated to provide novel plot structures that generate meanings, newly found legitimacy and programs for the future (Zerubavel, 1995). There are, however, also limits to the manipulation and social construction of the past. The linkages drawn between the present and the past must be both relevant and credible (Schudson, 1992). As Irwin-Zarecka points out, new meaning systems and commemorative practices must not conflict with existing core values and key scenarios, otherwise it would be impossible to create the "memory infrastructure" or the "sedimentation of meaning" necessary for the process of grafting a new discourse within a traditional cultural storehouse (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994, pp. 17, 90).

Collective memory, as a "cultural semiotic system" and contested strategic resource, has attracted the interest of a variety of epistemologies, including anthropology, cultural studies, sociology of knowledge and historiography. Each school of thought has utilized collective memory as a conceptual tool to articulate its own guiding precepts and agendas. As with all topologies, these epistemologies may be classified in various ways. For the purposes of this discussion, I categorize the different approaches as follows: The first school of thought includes theorists who define collective memory as a semiotic system observed to evolve diachronically in accordance with changing social contexts, contingent events and values. The second school of thought includes the "Politics of Memory" approach, which can be sub-classified into hegemony theories and overlapping theories of postmodernism and multiculturalism. The third and last category includes the theories of the 'new historiography', which also resonate with the themes of 'praxis theory' (Schwartz, 1996a; Olick and Robins, 1998). Each school of thought can be seen to offer an alternative viewpoint regarding the 'who, what, where and why' of contested memory. As will be shown below, collective memory, as a malleable tool of cultural construction, also acts as a "reflector," mirroring the key principles of the above discourses. Consistent with constructionism and frame analysis (Goffman, 1974), each epistemology essentially tells a story about a story, constructing and interpreting its version of collective memory through the frame of its own precepts and agenda. From their writings, we can learn as much about these schools of thought as about the actual history of collective memory, perhaps more.

Collective memory as a diachronically evolving semiotic system

As stated above, the first school of thought includes theorists who define collective memory as a semiotic system evolving diachronically in accordance with changing social contexts, contingent events and values. Barry Schwartz's study on the use of Abraham Lincoln and the American Civil War narrative during WWII provides our first example of this "school of thought" (Schwartz, 1996b).

Schwartz's seminal article proposes that collective memory should be understood and analyzed as a semiotic cultural system. He defines culture as "an organization of symbolic patterns on which people rely to make sense of experience" (Schwartz, 1996b, p. 910). Utilizing Geertz's definition of collective memory as a starting point for his analysis, he conceives collective memory as a "pattern of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicated, perpetuated and developed their knowledge about and attitude toward life" (Geertz, 1973b, p. 89 in Schwartz, 1996b, p. 910). As stated above, these patterns of inherited conceptions serve as models of culture and for society. As a model *of* culture, collective memory is an ordered semiotic code or language representing cultural values that gives experience meaning. As a model *for* society, collective memory orients action, providing a "map" to help navigate through contingent predicaments.

Collective memory is patterned in narrative form, encapsulating key values within cultural "grand narratives." Again following Goffman's lead, present events are "keyed" to events and iconic figures in the past that act as "primary frameworks," making sense of the present event and giving orientation for action. In this way, publicly accessible symbolic models of the past, such as historical, mythical or legendary narratives, songs, photographs or statues, serve as representations of condensed cultural meaning, "connecting otherwise separate realms of history." Consistent with social constructionism, the present social context will determine a discriminating choice from the wider stock of symbolic patterns and symbols with which to comprehend presently evolving events and identities; alter or reconstruct national identity; provide a new symbolic, ideological, national, collective and individual future; and finally, unify culturally diverse groups around consensual symbols, healing the ruptures of potentially divisive viewpoints. The keying or comparative process also provides the present with legitimacy, inspiration, and consolation. Thus consistent with the present approach to collective memory, the past instrumentally serves the present (Schwartz, 1996b, pp. 910-911).

However, Schwartz's (1996b) theory goes beyond a thick cultural description of society and its use of symbols, as it highlights a diachronic approach to the evolution of the instrumental use of the past. Changing social contexts and contingent events require the harnessing of different symbolic patterns. As the social context changes, new values, beliefs, identities and epistemologies evolve. A newly evolved cultural discourse selects its own primary interpretive frameworks, and as a counter-memory, it may contest older symbolic patterns. As in all semiotic sys-

tems, the process of representation develops reciprocally, as culture constructs memory and memory constructs culture.

Schwartz provides a case study of how Abraham Lincoln was harnessed as an iconic American symbol, and the Civil War grand narrative as a primary framework with which to explain and legitimate US involvement in WWII, inspiring and consoling Americans during that protracted struggle. As Schwartz notes, the utilization of the collective memory of the Civil War required a distortion of the facts, a rhetorical stylization of events and an idealization of Abraham Lincoln. Although Lincoln and the Civil War battles were already a part of American collective consciousness, the authenticity of the representations of the past could be questioned. More importantly perhaps, the symbolically evoked principles of sacrifice, justice, and the moral imperative of war could not be re-grafted in later periods of American history, such as the Vietnam War, after the cultural revolution of the 60s had drastically altered social values, robbing previous comparative narratives of their relevance (Schwartz, 1996b, p. 924). 'Present' events surrounding the contingent event of Vietnam and the resulting cultural deconstruction of traditional discourse caused a contestation of traditional American values. Thus, evolving cultural values and social contexts can bring about a contestation and metamorphosis of socially constructed and selective collective memory.

Our second example of collective memory as a semiotic system is Yael Zerubavel's study of the evolving construction, utilization and contestation of Jewish and Zionist grand commemorative narratives (Zerubavel, 1995). Interestingly, Zerubavel's diachronic study describes two stages of contested memory. The first stage marks Zionist national ideology's contestation of traditional Jewish master narratives, and the second stage, Israeli critical historiography's contestation of later traditional Zionist ideology.

Parallel to Schwartz's primary frameworks and grand narratives, Zerubavel begins by outlining the construction of the Zionist "master commemorative narrative", which took the form of counter-memory, contesting the traditional Jewish master narrative employed in the Diaspora. According to Zerubavel, Zionist ideology was faced with the challenge of reconstructing a Jewish national identity. Once again, collective memory was drawn on to create a semiotic framework for the new identity. In order to achieve a 'fit' among keyed events, a selection had to be made from among the fragmentary historical narratives and culturally embedded plot structures in the greater storehouse of Jewish historical knowledge and social artifacts. New commemorative narratives were constructed in accordance with their suitability to signify and orient Israelis to the construction of a 'new' strong and courageous Hebrew nation, struggling, sacrificing, and victoriously re-conquering the national homeland. Thus Zionist memory intermediaries and engineers (Irwin Zarecka, 1994) "periodized" the Jewish collective past, "imposing a certain order" on this past "from a current ideological stance" (Zerubavel, 1995, p. 8). By using discursive and narrative techniques for the selection, conflation and condensation of events, the narrative transforms historical time into commemorative time, symbolically compressing or expanding this time. Turning-points such as the battles

of Bar Kochba and Masada, previously omitted or alternatively framed by the traditional Jewish commemorative narrative, were selected, rhetorically stylized, and their outcomes were even distorted or omitted to assure the signification of the requisite meaning and mobilization for action. Perhaps most interesting is that the Zionist narrative construction highlighted Antiquity as the mythical founding period of Jewish national history, legitimating and framing the renewed presence of Jews in the land of Israel and evoking a sense of historical continuity. This historical 'detour' around hundreds of years of Jewish Diaspora history required the suppression of many aspects of that past and the distortion and omission of much Diaspora cultural diversity. Zionist ideology as counter-memory required the construction of a grand narrative that would be symbolically opposed to the traditional narrative (Zerubavel, 1995).

The second stage of Israeli contested memory marks the evolution of Israel's social context, and again there was a resulting "lack of fit" between past and present primary frameworks. As the 'new Hebrew' 'matures' and is transformed into the aggressor, victorious and ethically valorized battles become few and far between. Fragmentary narratives such as Trumpeldor's courageous sacrifice for the homeland could no longer remain grafted unchallenged and uncontested by critical deconstructivist epistemologies. They would become symbolic hallmarks of Israel's hegemonic ideology and praxis. Israel having become a more person-centered society and sensitized by the moral dilemmas of the Arab-Israeli struggle, it is no longer clear whether the 'new Hebrew' can be mobilized and consoled by plot structures such as the 'few against the many' (Zerubavel, 1995). Israel's evolving pluralistic society and new ideological trends toward multiculturalism would also reframe the Zionist master narrative as the hegemonic text of a dominant, marginalizing Ashkenazi and Jewish elite. Coming full circle, Israelis also contest the suppression of the Diaspora past, expressing renewed interest in Jewish identity. This change is discussed by Yael Feldman in her paper on diachronically evolving theatrical representations of the Holocaust. Reflecting the metamorphosis of constructions of collective memory, Feldman compares conventional portrayals of Diaspora Jews and Holocaust survivors that highlight the superiority of the Israelis with more recent portrayals that express greater empathy for the Holocaust survivors. Changing values and semiotic scenarios concerning sacrifice have made possible a rapprochement between Israelis and Holocaust survivors. The climax of this transformation is reflected in Sobol's juxtaposition of the Intifada in Lebanon with the Holocaust ghetto (Feldman, 1992). Ironically, the Diaspora narrative is being revised as a semiotic system to signify meaning and orientation for Israeli national identity and praxis.

As far as the who, what, where and why questions of contested memory are concerned, according to the semiotic approach, contested memory is considered to arise from the evolving social context, social constructions and the storehouse of values. Cultural change and contingent historical events combine to evoke counter-memory, challenging the instrumentally and symbolically ineffective, outmoded semiotic system. In order to contest traditional collective memory, this school

highlights the utilization of alternative and often opposing historical events and symbolic patterns. The engineers of counter-memory will be those who embody new cultural values, or the bearers of the evolving semiotic system.

Politics of memory: Hegemonic and multicultural approaches to collective memory

According to Barry Schwartz, the "Politics of Memory" school may be divided into two epistemological strands. The first strand "traces conceptions of the past to an alleged dominant ideology supported by the privileged to maintain their Hegemony". Contested memory marks the surfacing of previously repressed or silenced classes, or ethnic-national groups challenging hegemonic control over the past as a scarce resource, legitimizing their powerful monopoly of socio-political and economic resources. The second strand assumes that power is decentralized rather than concentrated and that collective memories emerge out of a context of cross-cutting coalitions, networks and enterprises (Schwartz, 1996b, 910). In this case, contested memory marks the surfacing of the marginalized other, for instance, women, minorities, culturally stigmatized and excluded interest groups or subjugated ethnic and national groups. The trend toward multiculturalism represents the re-appropriation of the past as a resource and the construction of pluralistic alternative narratives. Foucault's words may apply to both strands of the politics of memory. Official hegemonic histories "show not what people were but what they must remember having been" (Foucault in Swedenburg, 1991, p. 155). The past is nationalized, appropriating the memory of subordinate groups.

The past in the service of the hegemonic elite

Hobsbawm's groundbreaking work introduced the "de-sacralization" of tradition (Olick and Robbins, 1998), in which historically and culturally grounded traditions are deconstructed and contested as merely "invented" or constructed traditions. These traditions were utilized as a mode of social control during Europe's democratic revolutions (Hobsbawm, 1983). Collective unity and cultural continuity were constructed and evoked using the above-discussed invented national symbols and rituals, formalized and grafted on culture by repetition. According to Hobsbawm, there are three types of invented tradition. Firstly, there is the establishment and symbolization of the social cohesion of membership in real or artificial communities under the controlling hand of the hegemonic ruling elite. Secondly, there is the establishment and legitimization of institutions, states, or relations of hegemonic authority. Thirdly, there is "the socialization and inculcation of beliefs, values and conventions of behavior" (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 263). Recalling the semiotic school, semiotic construction is the means, though here hegemony is the end pursued. Change occurs when a rapid transformation of society "weakens or destroys social patterns." New patterns are produced, although "institutional carriers no longer prove sufficiently flexible" to articulate these new cultural patterns (Hobsbawm,

1983, p. 8). Memories thus become contested when evolving social contexts and values encourage previously subjugated classes or groups to challenge the hegemonic monopoly over memory and tradition as a resource for amassing political power. As seen in the case of rising labor and union movements and middle-class involvement in sports as leisure activities, a counter-tradition was constructed when the political and social institutions controlled by the ruling elite failed to respond to changing social needs and to construct transformed traditions that could articulate new middle and lower class values and praxis.

Swedenburg's study of Palestinian collective memory provides a second example of the construction of narratives in the service of hegemonic ideology, as well as of counter-memories contesting the official discourse (Swedenburg, 1991). The main thrust of the analysis focuses on the construction of a Palestinian counter-memory that could contest the Israeli Zionist monopoly of the past. In order to ground Israel culturally and physically in Palestinian territory, Zionists are said to have constructed an official discourse that would allow them to nationalize and suppress Palestinian national identity and memory. Palestinians are thus forced to re-deploy narratives for the construction of a Palestinian past that would restore their rightful continuous historical link to Palestine. In order to reconstitute Palestinian identity and historical continuity, the PLO's official narrative must be framed by principles of national identity while contesting the Israeli narrative. The narrative thus articulates the historical presence of Palestinians in Palestine and highlights the unity of diverse and opposing groups and classes rallying around their historical national identity (Swedenburg, 1991, p. 163).

It is interesting to note that Swedenburg describes what he calls "double jeopardy," pointing to the double hegemonic constructions of the Palestinian past. On the one hand, there is the Zionist narrative of distortion and erasure and, on the other, the Palestinian leadership's tailor-made reconstruction of that past. Offering a fascinating discussion of "subaltern memory," Swedenburg shows that Palestinians must replace one hegemonic reconstruction with another. The PLO is described as having sifted through popular memory, selectively choosing memories that evoke a unified struggle, while omitting memories of class conflict between the falaheen and effendi classes, and Palestinian betrayal of their cause through cooperation with the Zionists. Recalling Hobsbawm's invented tradition, the falaheen are romanticized and the Kafia transformed into a symbol of unity, while the one represents an idealization and the other masks a divisive reality. Nonetheless, Palestinian control over the newly constructed "seamless past" is labeled "anti-imperialist nostalgia, considered a far lesser threat than Zionist erasure of memory" (Swedenburg, 1991, p. 177). Swedenburg's analysis of popular memory notes that subaltern narratives survive through informal channels of home-based anecdotes and songs. His reading of popular memory hints at the possibility that evolving future social contexts may generate a popular counter-memory, allowing for a more pluralistic or multicultural expression of Palestinian voices.[1]

Providing an example of the second strand of the Politics of Memory, Wagner, Pacifici and Schwartz outline the process of creating the "dissensual" Vietnam War Me-

morial. Although official American discourse and early historiography hegemonically erased the war and marginalized its veterans, the monument's design and construction process saw a diffusion of power and the emergence of pluralistic collective memories out of a context of cross-cutting coalitions (Wagner, Pacifici and Schwartz, 1991). As stated above, commemorative monuments and rituals are repositories of collective memory, symbolically encapsulating the cultural meanings attributed to events, while attempting to evoke a consensual remembering and reenactment of the past (Handelman, 2004; Handelman and Shamgar Handelman, 1997; Young, 1988). However, in the case of the Vietnam War Memorial, the construction process revealed competing and conflicting versions of the past. Right- and left-wing politicians, veterans and artists articulated their contesting perspectives on the memorial's design, so that it soon represented multi-vocal, ambivalent and conflicting versions of various past and present attitudes toward the war. As a symbolic repository, it was in fact a 'model' of the moral dilemmas and diverse opinions present in American society. Consequently, the final design focused on the individual soldier, downplaying references to the ambivalent and conflict-ridden cause, and the traditional themes of heroism and sacrifice, essentially failing to valorize the soldiers' deaths as a collective sacrifice. Nevertheless, as the authors note, this dissensual monument did in fact fulfill its semiotic function through objectification, allowing the American people "to come to terms with the past, integrating into the collective memory political division and military defeat" (Wagner, Pacifici and Schwartz, 1991, p. 408). After its construction, various interest groups continued to contest the symbolic message of the monument. Most interesting, however, were the responses of soldiers' families, who attached commemorative mementos to the Wall of the Fallen, pointedly asserting principles of patriotism and sacrifice for one's country, thereby "moving the monument toward the traditional genre that opponents and supporters alike believed it deviated from" (Wagner, Pacifici, and Schwartz, 1991, p. 405). This case of 'praxis' marks the continued pluralistic negotiation of the past, attempting to restore continuity and coherence

1 Bratlinger presents the case of the erasure of Native American collective memory. Examining American literary and film portrayals of the American Indian past, he asserts that the official hegemonic ideology and discourse utilized "sentimental racism" and "trivialization" to deny and essentially erase the Native American genocide (Bratlinger, 1998:25). Bratlinger discusses changing attitudes in American discourse by comparing the 'classic' American novel *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) by James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) to a recent film version. Although he shows the film to correct earlier racism, no longer portraying the Indian as a "noble savage," both may be seen to rob the Indians of their past. The erasure of the Native American past can be understood as essential to the construction of the hegemonic Grand American Narrative. The official American mythical scenario recounts the tale of the immigrant arriving in the virginal frontier in search of freedom and liberty. Transformed into a "lone ranger", he wanders across the vast open spaces of an untamed and empty landscape. This narrative construction leaves no room for a Native American presence, culture or, more importantly, physical and cultural genocide at the hands of the mythic American hero. Once again, culture cannot easily tolerate the coexistence of conflicting narratives (Irwin Zarecka, 1994). Bratlinger's analysis points to the emerging Native American voice, contesting the hegemonic ideology of official US discourse. It also highlights changes in cultural discourse, namely recent postmodern epistemological trends toward the deconstruction of previously held "truths", mythic narratives and official historiography. Multicultural discourse has also encouraged the rediscovery of Native American culture and the recovery of their past, helping the Other to re-appropriate its past and tell its own story.

to the American historical narrative and as such contest the ruptured past expressed by official discourse.

According to "Politics of Memory" theorists, ruling classes or institutions do not articulate competing and previously marginalized or erased versions of the past. Contested memories emerge when changes occur in the social context and counter-epistemological ideologies evolve, allowing for the resurgence of those voices. Counter-narratives and symbolic repositories must be constructed, framed by the principle of opposition to the official narrative, and must highlight a unique, coherent and unified past. In the case of diffused power and pluralistic negotiations on the past, contested memory engages in a struggle for equal expression and the presentation of previously silenced or stigmatized narratives. Recalling the themes of conflict theory, as well as of praxis theory, 'Politics of Memory' theorists see the past as a battlefield on which various groups contend for power over political and symbolic resources in hopes of constructing a revised authentic collective memory.

Historization of memory

Collective memory and history have long since become antagonistic bedfellows. Collective memory theorists have challenged history, asserting that it is the ultimate social construction, supplanting the more authentic voice of collective memory (Nora, 1989; Yerushalmi, 1982; Toews, 1998). This approach is a major reversal of the traditional dichotomy between history as an empirical, documented fact and memory as an experiential, selective and distorted social artifact. According to Halbwachs, history is dead memory, the remembered past to which we no longer have an organic experiential relationship (Halbwachs, 1980). Continuing in this tradition, Nora asserts that history is an artificial reconstruction and representation of the past, whereas collective memory is a "perpetually actualized bond" tying us to the past. "Sites of memory" mark the "historization of memory," artificially attempting to salvage a receding collective memory that is transformed into history. Memory, on the other hand, is an experience that is internalized and psychologized individually rather than collectively (Nora, 1989, p. 14).

Yerushalmi continues the above trend, warning of the disappearance of traditional Jewish memory. Thus, secularization put an end to ritual and liturgical religious praxis, which preserved key historical sequences and the meanings and values they signified and evoked. Having lost its traditional semiotic frames of memory, Jewish Historiography is left to record a "sterile" series of events devoid of traditional meaning (Yerushalmi, 1982).

One may note that the above theorists are ironically contesting historical memory, since contestation and deconstruction are the battle-cries of a struggle between epistemological camps, rather than between social actors within a social context. Interestingly, all three types of theorist underscore the importance of praxis in the

production, dissemination and transmission of collective memory. One may thus consider the historization of memory approach to overlap with praxis theory.

In response to the above critique and epistemological trends, the "New Historicism" has arisen, deconstructing its own position as the guardian of an authentic empirical past. Consistent with postmodern theories, historians now attempt to uncover the more subjective and authentic past, setting out on a quest in search of the "Other" silenced by official hegemonic historiography. Broadening the focus "from the official to the social and cultural, memory has become central evidence" (Olick and Robbins, 1998, p. 5). Toews presents a fascinating analysis of the New Historicism, warning of the consequences of its nihilistic journey into the past (Toews, 1998). Utilizing the anthropologist as metaphor, Toews asserts that the New Historian travels through time rather than space in search of the exotic other, in hopes of removing previously constructed social and ideological frames. The author warns that even if the historian succeeds in nihilistically deconstructing the other, its world becomes essentially inaccessible to historians. However, what Toews terms "historiographical exorcism" will never heal the other. One might succeed only via "the ventriloquist's art of surrendering the roles in their own narratives to the parts they were required to play in narratives of their shamanistic summoners" (Toews, 1998, p. 549). As long the historian essentially attempts to make sense of the present through the voices of the past, one will only hear the "ventriloquist's" voice. The alternative is once again a deconstruction to bare cultural components that also blocks access to the experiential world of the past.

Universalizing memory

Despite the inherent particularity and even locality of personal, communal and collective memory, recent globalizing trends have stimulated interest in 'cosmopolitan memory'. Levy and Sznaider's (2002) seminal work charts the way in which global media representations have forged an extra-territorial common European cultural memory. Through this memory, they think, the Holocaust as a pivotal trans-European event may promote universal humanist sensibilities about good and evil. In the same vein, Rothberg (2006) posits the emergence of what he calls a "multidirectional" memory, in which "groups do not own memories nor are they owned by memories". Beyond the above discussed cosmopolitan trends, however, perhaps the most influential 'universalizing' mechanism affecting global experience has been the widespread experience of trauma and mass violence and the subsequent response of a therapeutic discourse and practice seeking to heal human suffering and distress.

Traumatic memory

Traumatic memory appears to have taken center stage, as victims of violence, therapists and social scientists alike attempt to access and interpret fragments of

painful pasts. Going beyond earlier work on shell shock and the survivor syndrome, the diagnostic category of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Young, 1995; Solomon, 1995) is being applied to an increasing number of social ills, labeling previously unclassified suffering as trauma-related. As in the case of other idioms of illness, the experience of trauma and the resultant disorder entail culturally constituted meaning systems framing how one interprets and practices the suffering self (Hacking, 1995; Lambek and Antze, 1996). These complex meaning systems are shaped by psychological explanatory models and therapeutic discourses of treatment and recovery (Herman, 1992).

Despite the abundance of studies of the haunting presence of the past in the lives of trauma victims and the therapeutic benefits of narrating their story (Langer, 1991), traumatic suffering has been found to resist articulation (Caruth, 1995). When attempting to elicit these accounts, researchers have noted that the great majority of trauma survivors have kept the details of their pasts a painful secret. Fearful of hurting their parents, and themselves coming to terms with parental suffering, the children of survivors are said to have responded with avoidance, contributing to what has been called a "conspiracy of silence" (Bar On, 1992; Danieli, 1998). After decades of silence and apparent 'forgetting', everywhere in the world the adult descendants of trauma survivors now appear to be facing the arduous task of recovering the past, trying to learn about their troubled familial and/or ethnic legacy, and are exploring the long-term effects of trauma on their own lives.

Although less concerned with individual working through than with the macro-processes of the politics of silenced or curtailed collective memory, Cultural Studies (Alexander, 2004), Collective Memory Studies (Levy and Sznaider, 2002) and human rights discourse (Munyas, 2008) also call for voicing previously silenced individual narratives of victimization and subjugation. From this perspective, the narrativization of survivor and descendant legacies facilitates the civic and moral act of giving public testimony (McKinney, 2000). As genocide historians have asserted (Chalk, 1989; Kiernan, 1996), pathos-filled and cathartic testimonies offered at 'truth tribunals' not only document the violent past and contribute to the collective stock of memory, but ideally also facilitate restitution, reconciliation and coexistence.

Anthropologies of genocide and memory

The holistic and emic perspectives of anthropology could potentially pave the way for a better grounded exploration of silent memory work and deconstruct the paradigms framing our understanding of the presence of the past in everyday life. Challenging the above reductionist readings of the survivor and descendant profile as silent/silenced, emotionally wounded and collectivized, anthropological research methods would allow survivor and descendant subjects to articulate the experience of silence and the everyday practices of silent forms of interaction. There have, however, been surprisingly few attempts to apply the above approach to

genocide related phenomena, with the great majority of anthropological studies focusing only on the methodological, ethical and political implications of giving a voice to silenced genocide victims (Scheper-Hughes, 2002) and on monumental/ hegemonic institutional commemorative practices (Feldman, 2008; Handelman, 1990). The newly emergent sub-field of anthropology of genocide (Hinton, 2002) has in fact presented a culture-sensitive portrayal of the impact of trauma and alternative forms of representation and commemoration (Dwyer. 2004). However, once again, the activity of ethnography and the documentation of the voices of traumatized respondents have taken the form of a moral and political mission, as the anthropologist-turned-activist endeavors to liberate trauma victims from the "shadows of silence" (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer, 2006). With silence as the 'battleground' of this academic crusade, the failure to verbalize painful pasts becomes highly charged and is a contested object of research. By conceiving of survivor silence solely as politically and ideologically loaded absence, ethnography fails to develop phenomenological accounts of the silent presence of the past.

In the recently emerging field of the anthropology of memory (Werbner, 1998), scholars have in fact called for a shift of emphasis away from theoretical accounts of the discourses of memory to more grounded research on the actual practices of non-monumental memory. Pioneering works by White (2000), Cole (2001), Cattell and Climo (2002), Berliner (2005) and Argenti (2007) have in the meantime developed ethnographies of embodied memory. Yet in keeping with the (macro-) tradition of social memory studies (Olick and Levy, 1997; Di Paolantonio, 2000), they continue to highlight the dialectical points of nexus between macro-processes of hegemonic and/or colonial and post-colonial violence and their subjects' embodied pasts. Thus, those who have embodied the past are once again read as performing grassroots practices of hegemonic memory or resistant/counter-memory. It might be asserted that the lived experience of embodying or interacting with traces of the past may not always be politically motivated, performed as acts of resistance, or as a capitulation to hegemonic indoctrination or appropriation. Thus despite the great salience of the above macro-micro nexus, it can be asserted that scholarly interest in the political instrumentalization of memory and/or the political semiotics of memory work (the way memory has been put to work to represent politically meaningful/forgotten pasts) has elided a closer examination of the mechanics of the micro-pole of the axis in its own right – namely the ways in which everyday taken-for-granted mnemonic practices are constituted, sustained, and intergenerationally transmitted to create the silent, yet no less living presence of the past.

In order to explore the 'everyday lived presence' of the Holocaust past, I made an ethnographic study of Holocaust descendants in Israel, involving 75 interviews with second- and third-generation descendants and participant observation at multiple meso-public sites of memory (Kidron, 2005; 2009a). Contrary to the literature (and vocal descendants in Israeli literary circles and popular culture), the majority rejected or criticized the pathologizing construct of PTSD, and while concerned with the fate of Holocaust memory, expressed little or no desire to participate in

collective monumental commemoration as bearers of Holocaust memory. Instead, they presented accounts of (a) the silent, non-pathological presence of the past in embodied person-person and person-object interaction in the everyday life of the family (Kidron, 2009a) and fragmentary tales of survival that transmitted an enriching genocide-related meaning world, and (b) they also depicted survivor-specific non-monumental communal practices of Holocaust memory in voluntary meso-public organizations that simulated intimate silent family memory.

In light of the above Israeli rejection of the PTSD construct, the silent lived experience of the past and the avoidance of enlistment, I examined other global responses to trauma. In a second ethnographic study, I compared Cambodian-Canadian descendants of genocide victims and Israeli Holocaust descendants. My findings again challenged the literature. Cambodian-Canadian youth totally rejected the pathological profile of transmitted PTSD, showed little interest in historizing their familial past and avoided public forms of commemoration. In contrast to the Holocaust descendants, Cambodian-Canadian descendants told of an almost total absence of the non-verbal presence of the genocidal past in their homes and only infrequent verbal references to the past. Again challenging the literature, references to 'Asian Silence' and not PTSD-related avoidance were offered to account for this silence. Nevertheless, Cambodian descendants assert that the genocide tacitly constituted empowering 'modes of being' that morally frame a forward-looking sense of descendant selfhood. Cambodians also reject the centrality of genocide commemoration, going so far as to claim that the event was only one among many aspects of their Khmer heritage and need not take center stage (Kidron, 2009b). In contrast to the avowed centrality of Jewish memory work in the Israeli sample, Buddhist-Cambodian attitudes regarding Karmic accountability and the illusion of time and selfhood (Smith-Hefner, 1994) were proposed to account for the marginality of memory work in everyday life and for the avoidance of what they fear could become a heritage of violence. In addition, divergent political and historical contexts must be explored to account for such divergent Israeli and Cambodian legacies. Overall, this study problematizes therapeutic intervention within culturally diverse populations, and the enlistment of survivors/descendants in public commemorative projects that appear contrary to culture-specific worldviews (Kidron, 2009b).

Returning full circle to the critical agenda of sociological and anthropological perspectives on collective memory, traumatic memory and genocide memory outlined at the outset of this chapter, the above-described comparative study of the traumatic Holocaust legacies of Israeli descendants and Cambodian-Canadian descendant legacies of genocide highlights the complexity and potential volatility of personal and collective memory. Comparison allows us to disentangle and examine the multiple cultural processes, political, ideological, and religious discourses and lived personal and familial emotional experiences that come together to constitute memory and forgetting. These processes may be enlisted and selectively 'put to work' by hegemonic states, mental health professionals and human rights workers and/or jealously maintained and protected in the private sphere, in order to be

intimately transmitted to future bearers of memory. They may, however, instead be 'forgotten' to make possible what at least the Cambodian youth seem to consider a more resilient and tranquil future.

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Psychotherapeutic support for traumatized refugees in Austria

Barbara Preitler

Introduction

Work with traumatized refugees in a Western European country such as Austria necessitates an understanding of the personal impact of multiple traumatic events. All the persons we work with in our counseling organization have been exposed to devastating experiences in their home country, including war, ethnic violence, torture, and death threats. Many have had to leave their country without a chance to bid farewell to their family and friends, and without being able to make plans for their future in their new country of exile. Moreover, arriving in a European Union country doesn't necessarily mean they have found a permanent "safe haven." It can take years to be recognized as an asylum seeker and then granted the status of a political refugee. During this period, there is the ever-present chance of being denied asylum and sent to another country, which perpetuates a sense of insecurity. Many must live in refugee shelters with no possibility to work or obtain higher education, and their living conditions may be unsatisfactory. From a psychological viewpoint, we thus cannot speak of a post-traumatic situation. To the contrary, authorities keep asylum seekers in a permanent state of traumatization.

The following case illustrates the situation of many asylum seekers:

Mrs. V. had just finished a psychotherapeutic session and left the rooms of our organization, Hemayat.[1] Ten minutes later, she returned in tears. She had just received a phone call from her husband, who said that Austrian police had come to take him to a police station for questioning. The family knows that since the authorities have not approved their request for asylum in Austria, they are in danger of expulsion. A police visit could mean that the V. family would soon be sent to a "safe" country in Eastern Europe. Moreover, they fear that this country could then return them to their country of origin, where they have suffered so much, and where they would face renewed traumatic situations.

Mrs. V. is confused and distraught. I bring her back to the therapy-room and try to determine what information she has received from her husband, in order to try

1 "Hemayat" is Arabic for protection and support. "Hemayat" is a politically independent non-profit organization that provides interpreter-mediated psychotherapy, psychological consulting and medical support for survivors of war and torture. About 700 refugees and asylum seekers from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa receive assistance there every year.

to find a solution for her problems. This puts me under pressure for two reasons: In the first place, I must reassure the despairing client and her nearly panicky husband. The couple has two small children, and this increases the need to calm at least one parent, so that he or she can care for the children and allay their fears. Secondly, the procedures for implementing asylum law in Austria have shaken my faith in my own Austrian identity. I feel helpless and outraged that a threat like the one to the V. family is possible in my democratic country, which officially proclaims the enlightened values of humanism and human rights. In addition, official actions affecting the family interfere with my psychotherapeutic work. It had taken a long time and much energy to enable Mrs. V. to feel safe in the therapeutic relationship. She was tortured before she could leave her country, and here she was nearly incapable of speaking about her experiences. Little by little, she became able to talk about the traumatic events in her past and to understand their impact on her present life. Now, all at once months of therapeutic progress have been undone. My client feels just as insecure and apprehensive as she did half a year before.

I must find out what I can do for the family. This necessitates seeking legal support and social assistance, not just psychotherapeutic treatment. It is impossible to heal peoples' inner fears as long as the outside world seems chaotic and completely intimidating.

I start by making telephone calls, trying to reach the family's lawyer. I also call an NGO (non-governmental organization) to obtain more background information about the family's social situation. Finally, I explain to Mrs. V. that she and her husband must first talk to their lawyer – and explain the importance of doing this. Creating a perspective and a chance to feel less helpless in this situation provides some free space for Mrs. V., enabling her to relax and regain her composure. We also call her husband, and finally he manages to calm down. For the moment, he feels at least secure enough to resume his daily activities.

Situations like this are increasingly frequent in our psychotherapeutic work with Survivors of Torture and War. Most of our clients are asylum seekers. As long as they have not received asylum or at least a permit to stay in Austria, their daily life is stressful and insecure. Due to the ever-present threat of expulsion, our clients lack a secure basis for daily living.

Working with traumatized refugees at Hemayat in Austria

In 1994 we started psychotherapeutic and medical work with traumatized refugees at Hemayat in Vienna. Although we were the first organization of this sort in Austria, we were able to learn from the experiences of our colleagues in other Western European countries. Organizations like RCT (Rehabilitation and Research Center for Torture Victims) in Denmark and the Medical Foundation for the Care of the Victims of Torture in England were already established in those countries. In the

early 90s, other similar organizations were founded in France, Sweden and Germany.

After the Second World War, Austria had a welcoming policy for refugees (as was the case during the Hungarian Crisis in 1956 and Prague Spring in 1968). This was especially the case with refugees from Eastern Europe. Whereas the refugees were welcomed warmly and with solidarity, the traumatic impact of their previous experiences was neglected.

Why did it take so long to recognize this problem? It may have been because of the silence of the second generation, which was unable to come to terms with the past. Having encountered immigrants from different regions of the world with varying historical experiences, we, the third generation, have finally become able to begin working in this field. This activity began in the 90s of the last century.

Theoretical concepts for the diagnosis and treatment of traumatized patients were first developed chiefly in America. Due to their post-Vietnam experience, American psychologists focused on the long-term effects of traumata and developed the concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Holocaust studies are another source of concepts for understanding persistent trauma effects. Personal narrative reports, research work, and theoretical and philosophical reflection on the Shoah have given us a chance to achieve a new perspective on the long-term impacts of persecution, torture and extreme war experiences (e.g., Ameery 1988, Eissler 1963, Keilson 1979, Eitinger, 1990).

Ideas from these sources, together with our own counseling experience, guide us in our work, from both practical and theoretical perspectives.

Fifteen years have passed since we began our counseling work. In Austria alone there are currently ten organizations providing psychotherapeutic aid to refugees. We can only understand this form of therapy within a political context, whereby the therapist needs an unequivocal position: political refugees need special care and protection. A positive, safe reception in the country where the refugee seeks asylum is a precondition for every physical, psychological and social healing process.

Traumatized refugees and psychological diagnosis

In the 1952 first edition of its diagnostic manual (DSM), the American Psychiatric Association (APA) specified the general diagnosis of "Gross Stress Reaction". This was one of the first steps toward a better understanding of the long-lasting effects of traumatic events.

Gradually new insights inspired further research and contributed to a better understanding of trauma. The 1980 third edition of the APA diagnostic manual introduced the term "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder", which has been in use ever since (DSM III-R, 1980). The psychological symptoms of war veterans did not corre-

spond to any previous conventional diagnoses, and the new diagnostic category of PTSD corrected this deficiency. ICD 10, the diagnostic manual of the World Health Organization (WHO), used mainly in Europe, followed this trend and in 1994 added the diagnosis of PTSD. The concept was invented to meet contemporary counseling needs.

"PTSD is often presented as though it was something 'discovered' by psychiatrists, something which since being discovered throws light on other unexplained areas of psychological functioning. In fact, PTSD is something created by psychiatry at a particular historical and cultural moment" (Bracken, 1998, p. 39).

Precise diagnostic criteria for PTSD are helpful in personal encounters with victims. When they start receiving psychotherapy, many anxious patients ask, "Am I crazy?" An explanation of PTSD, its common symptoms, and how it relates to personal suffering can help a patient to better understand his feelings, thoughts and behavior. The first step toward relief and understanding consists in connecting the experience of inhumane, and according to this concept, "abnormal" treatment with an awareness that a patient's present psychological (and physical) state is due to past abusive treatment. It is reassuring for a patient to know that his psychological suffering is linked to his past life history and can be labeled. After trauma is diagnosed, suitable treatment is also available, and – together with psychiatric support – the patient's distress can be alleviated. The patient will then no longer feel as helpless as before.

Defining the criteria of PTSD simplified its diagnosis. This simplification does, however, have shortcomings. The diagnosis used today is too imprecise to fully identify and understand the psychodynamic impact of different forms of traumatization.

We need to understand the differential effects of single versus multiple traumatizations. We should also consider the reasons for traumatization: It makes a great difference whether catastrophes result from human or natural causes.

We should never consider the psychological and medical consequences of terror and torture as solely clinical problems. The social and political dimensions are important for both the victims themselves and for society as well. These dimensions should be included in every type of diagnosis and treatment (Becker, 2006).

Refugees seeking asylum in Europe arrive after experiences of torture, persecution and war. During their flight, they have often experienced threatening and demeaning treatment. Often they could not bid farewell to the family members and friends they were leaving behind. In many cases they do not even have a possibility to get in touch with them later, and the fear is ever present that political unrest and violence in their homeland could harm their loved ones.

Most refugees have been very courageous – resolute and unflinching in the face of torture. They also showed courage by embarking on a completely uncertain future and coming to a country where they hoped to find safety.

Now, however, a few weeks or months after their arrival, they break down. They suffer from insomnia, are nervous, anxious and distracted. Due to a stress-caused inability to concentrate, it is almost impossible for them to learn German. They begin to weep uncontrollably over minor matters and cannot stop. Sometimes they wake up at night and do not immediately realize that they are no longer imprisoned in a cold bunker, that they are in exile in Austria, hundreds or thousands of miles away from home (Preitler, 2004).

Traumatized refugees and psychological diagnoses

As explained above, traumatized persons coming to Europe as refugees have previously experienced torture, persecution and war. The traumatized refugees we encounter have experienced situations of complete vulnerability and helplessness: They have suffered despicable treatment at the hands of other human beings.

Torture undermines a person's physical and mental integrity. It aims at destroying the victim – without necessarily causing physical death. Torture is the most demeaning form of human manipulation: the torturer exercises total control over another person and uses this power to commit acts of unspeakable cruelty. For those who physically survive torture, release from a prison or concentration camp doesn't necessarily mean the end of suffering – more often than not they have been severely demoralized. The most frequent diagnosis is still Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This syndrome has three elements:

1. Re-experiencing: The traumatic event(s) are ever-present, and recollections of them are extremely painful. Remembering terror becomes a part of daily life and haunts victims at night – especially in nightmares. Children may reveal their suffering in repetitious games, and obsessively repeated physical actions may be symptoms of traumatization.
Sights, sounds, smells or situations that recall the traumatic past may trigger the re-experiencing of this past. Flashbacks carry trauma victims back to painful experiences and may cause great insecurity. Thus, fear again becomes overwhelming. Remembering traumatic experiences is extremely stressful and may trigger various forms of physical stress reaction.

2. Avoidance: Victims often try to avoid thoughts, memories and situations linked to a traumatic experience because they elicit feelings of pain and helplessness. Consequently, some patients endeavor to talk only about a perfect, idealized past and deny any form of traumata they have undergone.
Patients also avoid contacts with anyone who arouses painful memories. This avoidance may reach different degrees of generality. Thus, for example, one of our clients' main problems is their avoidance of uniformed persons. We also encounter patients who fear any contacts with people from the "enemy" society or from their own country of origin. In extreme cases, patients obsessively avoid all other people and seek to live in total isolation.
Fearful of nightmares, trauma victims often suffer from sleep disturbances.

Traumatized persons feel emotionally empty and numb, which in severe cases leads to dissociation. Jean Amery, a Holocaust survivor who wrote perceptively about his own experiences of torture, concluded that anyone who has ever been tortured will never again feel at home anywhere in the world.[2]

3. Hyper-arousal: Normal everyday experiences can be a source of great stress for patients. Physically and psychologically, the victim is continuously aroused, anxious to protect his own life and the lives of family members. Panic is a common result of this tension.
Many clients become hypersensitive to noise. We encounter fathers and mothers who are unable to cope with the typical sounds small children make when crying, asking questions, or playing.

Also, memory and attention deficit disorders may be part of PTSD. Students suffer from an inability to pay attention to lectures and find it hard to prepare for exams.

Advantages and disadvantages of the diagnosis of "post-traumatic stress disorder"

The diagnosis of PTSD is useful in many ways:

- Psychologists and therapists now have available a clear description of the syndrome, a common denominator for a broad and complex phenomenon. To some extent, helpers who deal with refugees have become sensitive to the problem. This is not only true of psychiatrists and psychologists, but as well of those who work in courts or in asylum proceedings.
- People afflicted by PTSD now have a name for their mental anguish. They can grasp that their pain was not simply an additional blow of fate or a health problem, but rather a normal response to abnormal traumatic events.
- This clear diagnosis helps in planning suitable interventions and in predicting the effects of therapy.
  However, although it has many advantages, the diagnostic category of PTSD also has shortcomings:
- To label the effects of trauma a "disorder" is to confine the suffering to a personal level. The political and social roots of traumatization become invisible, and we treat the entire complex problem as the victim's personal "disorder."
- The prefix "post-", meaning "after", indicates that the diagnosis of stress must be made after trauma has occurred. In many cases of "man-made disasters", however, victims continue to be afflicted by repeated traumatic episodes; even after the original trauma ends, the threat is by no means past. We should therefore speak instead of an "ongoing traumatic situation" as long as refugees do

2 "Wer der Folter erlag, kann nicht mehr heimisch werden in dieser Welt" (Amery, 1988, p. 58).

not receive asylum.

- Differences in the sources of traumatic situations are not considered – man-made traumas are treated as though they were no different from ones caused by natural catastrophes.
- The social and political dimensions of traumatic situations and their consequences are entirely ignored.
- By reducing mental anguish to the experience of an individual person, this diagnosis leaves out a consideration of familial dynamics. As a result, the consequences of trauma for the children of victims are not considered.
- Somatoform disorders and culture-specific modes of expressing trauma are not considered in the diagnosis.

Other stress-related phenomena not included in PTSD

In addition to the above-described symptoms of PTSD, we often observe the following phenomena:

Orientational disorders (spatio-temporal), severe eating disorders, pain (mainly head, back and chest pain) and gynecological problems in female patients.

In addition to the symptoms of PTSD and the concurrent phenomena mentioned above, there are personality changes (F 62.0 of ICD 10), severe depressions, dissociative disorders and – in extreme cases – reactive psychoses (Haenel, 2002).

The debate on whether immediate reactions to extreme traumatic situations should always be considered pathological or instead as normal reactions (e.g., mourning) has been going on for half a century and should be continued, especially in assessment processes (Brune, 1999).

Sequential traumatization

In his groundbreaking work on sequential traumatization (in child survivors of the Holocaust), Hans Keilson (1979) has clearly shown that to understand and treat the effects of traumatization, the phase before the actual trauma (pre-traumatic phase), as well as the phase after the trauma (post-traumatic phase), should also be considered.

In a unique longitudinal follow-up study, Keilson studied the emotional states of Jewish children who had survived the Holocaust and explored the later effects of their severe traumatic experiences. Besides his many specific findings, he reached a very important conclusion of practical relevance for everyone who works with extremely traumatized persons. The mental health of persons (in this case children) exposed to severe traumatic situations who immediately afterwards were

assured of safety and security improved significantly more than that of persons who suffered less severe traumatization but immediately afterwards faced a very insecure period.

When we begin psychotherapy with refugees, the traumatic and pre-traumatic phases (as observed by Keilson) already belong to the past. We cannot change what has happened to them, and we cannot erase the traumatic experience from their life history. Persecution, torture, massacres and the deaths of relatives will always be part of their biography. We can, however, affect their lives after this phase of chaos, uprooting and dehumanization and thus influence – as observed by Keilson – the severity of the traumatic after-effects.

The phase AFTER the actual traumatization is crucial for their psychological recovery.

When safety and stability are secured for victims soon after traumatization, when there is space for mourning, telling their story and calming down, when essential facts can be ascertained and feelings of helplessness overcome, positive changes can be brought about. And of course, medical, psychiatric and psychotherapeutic help should be provided as needed.

If memories of persecution and feelings of insecurity persist, and victims are constantly reminded of the violence inflicted on them, or if their stories of suffering are not believed or are even doubted, victims may be afflicted by life-long chronic pain.

The life-conditions of the post-traumatization period, i.e., the conditions that may lead either to chronic repetition of past traumatic experiences or to cathartic mourning and rehabilitation, are in the hands of the receiving society (Preitler, 2004b).

Loss always means bereavement

Everyone who must leave his or her home country suffers bereavement. They must leave behind them familiar surroundings, friends and co-workers, family members, cherished possessions and pets. This is difficult even in the case of a well-planned move with sufficient time for leave-taking, and it is even harder when separation is sudden, involuntary, and there is no chance to say goodbye.

Refugees seldom have the time and opportunity to take leave of their relatives. Often they have precipitately fled from dangerous situations, not knowing what would happen to their living and deceased relatives. Many reach a country of exile uncertain of whether their next of kin are still alive. Others have had to leave behind deceased relatives with no proper funeral and without performing any humanly necessary ceremonies, so great was the threat to their own safety.

H. is haunted by chronic nightmares: again and again he imagines his best friend S. drowning in the sea just in front of him. Sometimes in his nightmares, he imag-

ines himself sucked down into the depths by some unseen force. Although his friend's death occurred six years previously, it haunts him almost nightly. To escape his terrifying nightmares, H. rarely sleeps. Only in the early morning hours does he sometimes fall into a fitful doze.

As his psychotherapist, I asked H. to name his friend and encouraged him to tell me about him: what he liked about him, how they got to know each other, what common experiences they had shared. H., who wept in the beginning and was very nervous, gradually calmed down while talking about his friend. A picture emerged of a very dear person with whom he had shared many special experiences. When he finished his story, I asked whether anyone had performed mourning rites for S., and he confessed that there had been none. I encouraged H. to perform such a ritual. Both men belonged to the same religion, and H. participates in a community of his faith in Austria. He agreed to ask the religious leaders there about holding such a ceremony. Already at the next session, H. reported feeling much better and suffering less from nightmares.

Mourning takes time, especially when a loss is sudden, unexpected and violent. Furthermore, mourning for a younger person requires more time and space than for older persons.

When we started our psychotherapeutic work with refugees in Austria, we focused on the then familiar trauma concepts, but did not consider mourning. This phenomenon, however, was omnipresent in all our therapy, and the longer I work in this area, the more important I consider it to be. In psychotherapeutic relationships, mourning is always an essential concern.

The V. family (discussed above) is still hoping for a positive answer to its renewed application for asylum. They have lived through periods of fear and anxiety. For quite a while they were so fearful that they didn't even switch on electric lights in the evening. In this way they behaved – in the middle of Austria, where people have not known war since 1945 – as though they were living in a war zone. The way the family's application for asylum has been treated gives them a feeling of still being in a war zone – and so war was brought into the peaceful (or not?) heart of Europe at the beginning of the 21st century.

Given all these problems, we continue to hold psychotherapeutic sessions. We have even expanded our sessions to include the entire family. At first, only the mother and one of the children received regular therapy, but now we have also arranged sessions for the father and special medical treatment for the older child. We all – therapists, doctors and school teachers – hope, together with the family, for a "safe answer" to their application. Only then can they begin the slow process of moving toward a "post-traumatic phase".

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The Holocaust in German and international films: Changes over the decades – Psychological reflections

Wolfgang Frindte

Preface

"Half a century has passed since the victory of the Allied troops put an abrupt end to Hitler's 'final solution' of the 'Jewish question', but the memory of the Holocaust goes on polluting the world of the living, …we are all to some degree possessed by that memory, though the Jews among us, the prime target of the Holocaust, are perhaps more than most" (Zygmunt Bauman, 2000, p. 7).

More than sixty years after the Shoah, we are losing the eyewitnesses, and with them their personal memories. At the same time, the collective memory of the Shoah also seems to be fading. A change may be taking place from individual and collective memory to cultural remembrance of the Shoah. What does this change signify? Both in Israel and in Germany – the country of the victims and that of the perpetrators – the Shoah is today seldom a topic of everyday discourse. Shoah remembrance appears to be increasingly localized in certain media genres, especially in films and TV programs or documentaries.

Medial framing or the medial reconstruction of the Shoah

Films and television broadcasts (as well as literary texts and works of art) are important media for remembering the history of World War II in general and the Shoah in particular. In this sense, we may consider them as communicative presentations for remembrance (Assmann & Assmann, 1994, p. 140): both serve as media to store and transmit memory. They stimulate discourse about the past, present and future and serve as mediators between communicative and cultural memory. Golo Mann once wrote:

"Each generation must create its own conception of the past. None of them is content with what others have accomplished before them, even if they were proficient. History always has two components: that of what happened, and that of the one who wants to understand it from his place and time … The past is alive: it vacillates in view of new experiences and formulations of questions." (G. Mann, 1986, p. 13, [my translation, W.F.]).

Thus, it should come as no surprise that movies and television programs about the Shoah do not limit their presentations to its terrifying events. In addition, they always reflect their creators' contemporary viewpoint (see also Portuges, 2007). To understand this, we need only compare different cinematic perspectives on the Shoah, for example, Claude Lanzmann's 1985 *Shoah* with Steven Spielberg's 1993 *Schindler's List* or Roberto Benigni's 1997 *Life is Beautiful*.

We also find differing perspectives on the Shoah in memorial institutions such as Yad Vashem, the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum or the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, in plays (e.g., *Ghetto* by Joshua Sobol, 1984) or in books, stories, poems or diaries (e.g., *If This Is a Man?* by Primo Levi, 1947, or Imre Kertesz's autobiographical *Fateless,* 1975).

Every presentation of the Shoah, whether in movies and television programs or in literature, provides a framework for the social and individual construction of the Shoah. We may also call these representations *frames of reference*. Perhaps the best known definition of a frame of reference is Robert M. Entman's (1993):

"To frame is to select aspects of the perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations" (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

With these concepts in mind, one can say that through frames: *a*. Certain points of view or definitions are brought to the fore, *b*. Evaluations of the presented reality are proposed, *c*. Explanations of the causes of the evaluated reality are appropriated, and *d*. Possibilities for coping with this reality are suggested. Thus there are individual and/or social frames of interpretation and frames of reference for the (re)construction of past reality. With regard to the *media construction* of reality (including its interpretation), one can speak of *medial frames*. We may thus differentiate between formal-stylistic elements and content, or substantive elements (Frindte & Haussecker, 2010; Matthes, 2007; Scheufele, 2003, among others). Whereas the formal-stylistic elements of the frame (structural and visual elements) represent the *how* of the message, the substance in the frames (content) represents the *what*.

Representations of the Shoah may provide means for explaining, interpreting or morally evaluating the event. They also offer possibilities for coping with its later effects. Moreover, the explanations, interpretations and evaluations provided by medial representations are strongly influenced by the collective, social, cultural and political context.

Historical changes in the medial framing of the Shoah

Quite obviously, the various framings of the Shoah and National Socialism have undergone change over time. To start with, I would like to reflect on the German situation, on the past in which the nation of poets and thinkers (Dichter und Denker) changed and produced Nazi judges and hangmen.

In the 1946-1960 period, West and East German films dealing with National Socialism were characterized by the following trends (Thiele, 2001; Schulz, 2007): German characters with whom the German public could identify were always decent and humane, never reprehensible perpetrators or callous bystanders. Although there were allusions to the atrocities against the Jews, sometimes committed by Germans, sometimes merely acquiesced to by them, they were never explicitly presented or explained. When they dealt with persecution or killing, the films called for reconciliation and understanding, and rejected accusations of German collective guilt. In some films, the Nazi dictatorship, the war and the Holocaust were represented as a catastrophe that befell mankind as a whole, thus blurring the differences among persecutors, bystanders and victims. What mattered most in the East-German films was not the persecution and destruction of the Jews, but rather the struggle of socialists and communists against Nazism.

German films about National Socialism produced between 1945 and 1960 reflected and as well contributed to the contemporary culture of remembrance. In their official self-representations, Western Germans, and later the Federal Republic of Germany, divorced Germany from National Socialism and at the same time, through intentional forgetting, promoted the integration of former persecutors and Nazi party members into post-war German society (Frei, 2005). Most West Germans regarded themselves as victims of the NS elite. In Eastern Germany, and later the German Democratic Republic (GDR), "prescribed antifascism" was the rule. The official historiography declared East Germans to be active antifascists. Both perspectives – victimhood in West Germany and antifascism in East Germany – were emphasized in post-war German films about National Socialism.

Only at the beginning of the 1960s, and mainly in West Germany, did a critical and even self-critical analysis of the German past arise. This occurred mainly in response to the Eichmann and Frankfurt Auschwitz trials – held in Israel (1961) and in Germany (1963-65) respectively – which helped spread an awareness of German responsibility. Through press coverage of these trials, Germans learned about the enormity of the crimes, as well as the criminal involvement of both German elites and large numbers of ordinary Germans.

However, it took another 15 years before the German public adopted Auschwitz as a symbol of mass annihilation. This change began with the American series *Holocaust* (USA, 1978, directed by Marvin Chomsky; see Table 1). This was the first TV series about the destruction of the Jews to be shown in Germany and contributed greatly to bringing about a change in attitude.

The series was shown on American TV in April 1978 and viewed by ca. 120 million persons (Thiele 2001, p. 298). In seven hours, it told the exemplary story of a Jewish family and the exclusion and persecution of Jews in Germany between 1935 and 1945. Purchased for broadcast in more than 30 countries, it was already shown in Britain, Israel and Belgium in the autumn of 1978. Worldwide a total of ca. 500 million people viewed it. In Britain and Israel, professional critics and many persons

in the viewing public considered it a failure, but because of its relevance, the majority nevertheless responded positively (Reichel, 2004, p. 254).

Professional critics based their criticism mainly on the trivialization, dramatization and personalization of the historical events entailed by presenting them in the form of a family saga. Some critics considered it a typically American series. Eli Wiesel, who has written much about his own experiences as a Holocaust victim, responded negatively. In his critique, he called it "untrue, offensive, [and] cheap," deploring its lack of historical accuracy, lack of faithfulness to those involved, and futile attempt to portray the un-portrayable (Wiesel, 1978, p. 75; cit. by Dreisbach, 2009, p. 82).

The series was broadcast in Germany at the beginning of 1979, although not on the main channel. There as well it became a major event and stimulated widespread discussion in the general public, and also in the political and social-scientific communities. I will come back to the reception of this TV series by the German public.

Let me begin with an overview of s*elected* International and German films dealing with National Socialism and the Shoah. In the 21st century, almost 40 years after the series *Holocaust*, it seems that Germans have returned to their earlier views on the Shoah and National Socialism.

Typical of this change is a German film called *Toyland* (*Spielzeugland*): In 2009 the 14 minute video by filmmaker Jochen Alexander Freydank received an Academy Award for the Best Live Action Short Film. Set in Germany in 1942, *Toyland* tells the story of two befriended families, a non-Jewish family, the Meissners, and the Jewish Silbersteins, who live in the same apartment building. The two sons of these families, Heinrich Meissner and David Silberstein, secretly take piano lessons together. The Silbersteins are facing deportation, and when Heinrich asks why they are leaving, his mother hides the truth and invents a story about their moving to a different community, called Toyland. Frau Meissner is terrified when Heinrich tells her that not wishing to be separated from his friend David, he wants to accompany the Jewish family on their journey.

One morning after the Silbersteins disappear, Heinrich is missing. When his mother searches for him and explains the situation to SS officers, they ridicule her, convinced that she is herself Jewish. After she presents documents proving her 'Aryan' blood, they agree to help her. They find the Silbersteins about to be deported, but Heinrich is not with them. Frau Meissner sees David Silberstein and to save him claims he is her missing son Heinrich. The Nazis let her take him home with her. Thus at the very last moment the search ends happily for David and Heinrich, and both boys survive the Holocaust.

Toyland represents a focal point of the medial construction or framing of the Shoah in contemporary German films. On the personal level, there are friendships between Germans and Jews. There are both good and bad Germans, and the former suffer as much as the Jews under National-Socialist tyranny. The death camps are

not mentioned. The "good" Germans believe they have to deceive themselves into believing that the deportations are to a children's paradise, but when they can, the "good" Germans do save at least some Jews.

Admittedly, my view concerning "our" German Oscar winner is a critical one. A related question concerns the points-of-view or frames of reference that these films mediate, and how viewers receive them. Furthermore, films touching on the Shoah and National Socialism play a special, yet controversial role. The next section describes several Holocaust-related films, starting with the 1940s and continuing up until recent films.

Different medial frames of the Shoah in international and German films

The Seventh Cross, a 1944 movie starring Spencer Tracy, was directed by Fred Zinnemann. The film was based on the Jewish socialist writer Anna Segher's popular anti-fascist novel *Das siebte Kreuz.* The story is quite simple: Seven men, imprisoned in the Westhofen camp, try to escape. The main character, George Heisler, is a communist, and the film shows his flight across the countryside, seeking aid from the few sympathetic persons who are prepared to risk opposing the Gestapo. While the other six fugitives are one by one caught and hung on crosses, various strangers aid Heisler, including a Jewish doctor who treats his hand, injured during his escape. He finally manages to reach safety in Holland, his faith in humanity restored.

The Murderers Are Among Us (*Die Mörder sind unter uns,* 1946), starring Hildegard Knef and Ernst Wilhelm Borchert, directed by Wolfgang Staudte, was the first film about the Nazi crimes made in postwar Germany. The action takes place in Berlin shortly after the war in 1945. Dr. Hans Mertens, an ex-military surgeon, returns from the war and finds his home destroyed. Haunted by terrible war memories, he begins drinking in excess. Susanne Wallner, a photographer and concentration camp survivor, comes home to find him using her apartment. They become friends and agree to share the apartment. One day Dr. Mertens meets Ferdinand Brückner, his former captain, responsible for the massacre of 36 men, 54 women and 31 children in a Polish village near the Eastern front on Christmas Eve of 1942. Brückner is now a successful businessman, manufacturing pots from old military helmets. Dr. Mertens wants to kill him, but at the last moment Susanne dissuades him from this. She convinces him that Brückner should be put on trial, and the two start a new life together.

Nuit et Brouillard (*Night and Fog*) is a 1955 French documentary film by Alain Resnais. The title comes from a Nazi persecution campaign of the same name, in which people suspected of resistance disappeared without a trace and were sent to concentration camps. Using still pictures, Resnais evokes the grim silence of Auschwitz in 1955 and contrasts this with documentary pictures of the Shoah's horrifying crimes. The documentary materials, culled from French, Dutch and Polish archives, show deportations, death camps and crematoria. The author intention-

ally views them from a contemporary perspective. Jean Cayrol's commentary, translated into German by Paul Celan, and Hanns Eisler's music underline the enormity of the crimes (Thiele 2001, p. 140). From the start, the film provoked controversy, as politicians and journalists feared it would encourage anti-German propaganda. There were defensive arguments, e.g., that not all Germans had been Nazis; indeed most had known nothing about the camps; the SS executioners were psychopaths; "decent Germans" had not participated in the abhorrent crimes.

Naked Among Wolves (*Nackt unter Wölfen* (GDR), 1963), directed by Frank Beyer, tells the story of prisoners in Buchenwald KZ who risk their lives to save a three-year-old Jewish boy smuggled in from a Polish ghetto. Learning about the child, the camp commander intensifies the already cruel treatment of prisoners to force them to surrender the child. They hide him in different places to prevent his discovery, keeping just one step ahead of the guards. Eventually the boy is discovered, which means certain death for him and his protectors. The prisoners stage a revolt against the KZ guards, the camp is liberated, and the boy is saved.

This film is in some regards communist East Germany's answer to the Israeli Eichmann trial, held in 1961. While the Holocaust provides the background of the story, the persecution and destruction of the Jews are not the central theme. Instead, the film celebrates and idealizes the antifascist struggle of socialists and communists against Nazism.

Shoah (France, 1985), directed by Claude Lanzmann, is a nine-hour film about the victims of the Holocaust. Though usually understood as a documentary film, Lanzmann regards it as transcending this genre, because unlike conventional documentary films, it does not feature reenactments or historical documentation such as film clips and contemporary photographs. It consists of interviews with Holocaust survivors, often at the places where they suffered persecution.

Schindler's List (USA, 1993), a Steven Spielberg film, tells the story of Oskar Schindler (1908-1974), an ethnic German war profiteer who went broke saving more than a thousand Polish Jews by employing them as factory workers making crockery for the Wehrmacht in Cracow. The film is based on Thomas Keneally's 1982 historical novel *Schindler's Ark.* It stars Liam Neeson as Schindler, Ralph Fiennes as an odious SS commandant and Ben Kingsley as Schindler's Jewish accountant and conscience. The film was a financial success and received seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Original Score. In 2007 the American Film Institute ranked it in 8th place among the hundred best American films of all time.

La Vita è Bella – Life is Beautiful (Italian, 1997, directed and co-written by Roberto Benigni, who also plays the main role). Guido Orefice, an Italian Jew, uses his fertile imagination to help his son survive in a Nazi KZ. The first half of the movie is whimsical, romantic and often even broadly comedic. Guido is both funny and charismatic, especially in the first part, where he courts Dora (a non-Jewish Italian girl, played by Benigni's wife), whom he wins away from an engagement to a rude, boorish fiancé. Several years later, Guido and Dora have a son, Giosue. In the sec-

ond part, the three are deported to a KZ on Giosue's birthday. To reassure Giosue and raise his spirits, Guido convinces his son that the camp is just part of a big game in which the first to score 1000 points will win a tank as a prize. Furthermore, the guards are only cruel because they want the tank for themselves, and all the other children are hiding in order to win the game. Despite the ever-present threat of death and the many severely afflicted inmates, Giosue does not doubt the story, because of both his father's convincing performance and his own naiveté. The game continues until the end, when Guido tells his son to hide in a sweatbox until everyone has left the camp, this being the final test before the tank is his. Trying to find Dora, Guido is caught and shot by a Nazi guard. But in this last scene he cheers his son up by pretending that both of them are simply on the move. Giosue survives, and when an American tank arrives to liberate the camp, he is reunited with his mother and believes he has won the game.

Train de vie – Train of Life, (French/Belgian/Dutch 1998, directed by Radu Mihaileanu). This tragicomedy is presented with Jewish humor, and many characters are stereotypes reminiscent of Jewish comedy figures. The story is set in 1941 in an Eastern European Jewish village (shtetl) whose inhabitants are threatened by the Nazis. At the start, we see a Jew, Schlomo, plunging madly through the forest, his voice heard in the background shouting that he has witnessed Nazi atrocities in a nearby town and is coming to warn the villagers. Reaching the village, he tells the rabbi what he has seen. They summon the residents, but initially they doubt the story and criticize Schlomo, considered the village fool. The rabbi believes him, however, and together they work out a plan. Schlomo proposes fleeing to Palestine on a train. They pool their money to buy old boxcars and a decrepit locomotive and set out in the "train of life." Some pretend to be Nazis deporting the other villagers to a KZ. The film ends ambiguously, showing the smiling Schlomo in a KZ.

Train of Life alludes to Purim, a holiday which celebrates the deliverance of the Persian Jews from a massacre planned by Haman, a 5th Century BC Persian minister. The film includes preparations for Purim: Asked what they are baking, village women answer: "Hamantaschen of course, it is Purim now." (Hamantaschen are pastries baked chiefly for Purim, symbolizing Haman's ears.) Some figures in the film have names from the *Megillat Esther*, read in synagogues on Purim: A woodworker named for Mordechai (Esther's cousin) plays the fake Nazi commandant of the deportation, etc.

Before showing the differences among and analyzing the frames presented by Shoah films, we must address an important question: Can these or other films really describe the Shoah. – The answer is: No, they cannot. – Auschwitz caused an historical rupture that defies representation. The "banality of evil" (Hannah Arendt) and the inhumane "consequences of modernity" (Bauman, 1991) cannot be translated into any readable form. There can be no medial representation of the unrepresentable.

This suggests another question: Can these films at least illustrate the horrors of the Shoah? Again, the answer is negative, since there is no point of reference

against which we could measure the reality. There are only a few surviving photographs of the atrocities committed in the Shoah, because the Nazis destroyed most of the documentary material, anxious to leave no records of their crimes. Filmmakers must struggle to fill this void. They can either draw on the limited surviving documentary material or use fictional substitutes. Furthermore, in creating images of the Nazi regime and the Shoah, filmmakers have always reflected the contemporary social and political Zeitgeist.

Filmmakers face a serious moral dilemma when trying to do justice to victims and survivors. How can they communicate something that stubbornly resists visual representation? This question has two opposing answers: One side calls for an absolute ban on pictorial representation, because with the Shoah we have reached the limits of expression and comprehension. Claude Lanzmann, for example, maintains that only the stories of contemporary witnesses are an acceptable form of representation, since any other approach inevitably trivializes and falsifies the actual occurrences, thus encouraging skepticism about the Shoah's reality. This may in turn cast doubt on its singularity. On the opposing side, those who reject a ban on pictorial representation hold that pictures (including films) are credible for viewers and therefore useful in conveying a sense of the historical events (Thiele, 2001; Schulz, 2007).

The question now arises: What means are used in these films to interpret or frame the Shoah? Only a few studies have systematically investigated the reception of movies about the Shoah and National Socialism (Dohle, Wirth, & Vorderer, 2003; Homuth and Stephan, 1981; Weichert, 1980).

Lanzmann's *Shoah*, on one hand, and films and series like *Holocaust*, *Schindler's List, Life is Beautiful* and *Train of Life*, on the other, apply entirely different formal stylistic frames. Lanzmann's *Shoah* consists of many hours of interviews with Holocaust survivors. His style of interviewing and selecting footage contrasts with the other films. This disparity underlines the controversy over the role of films in the medial representation of the Shoah. Thus, in *Schindler's List*, *Life is Beautiful* and the TV series *Holocaust,* which describe German Jewish families and their fates during the Holocaust, the drama is accentuated by emotionalization, personalization and creating an illusion of authenticity, all common techniques of narratives and storytelling.

The films by Spielberg, Benigni and Mihaileanu also pose the question of whether the Shoah can be presented as a fairytale, comedy or fantasy, alternating between horror and humor. Is it at all possible or meaningful to represent an irrational act of genocide like the Shoah using cinematic techniques?

Rather than offering dramatic images of the Holocaust, in his nine-hour documentary film *Shoah,* Lanzmann presented an unprecedented "cinematic history of the Shoah." By contrast, Spielberg makes an emotional, heart-rending statement garnished with black-and-white photography, somber music, a leisurely pace, creative set designs and other techniques of "artistic" cinema. In representing the Shoah, *Life is Beautiful* and *Train of Life* employ the basic premises and techniques of Jew-

ish humor. They establish ironic distance from personal fate, on one hand, and the striving for freedom, on the other.

These films offer contrasting viewpoints: One is exemplified by Lanzmann's call for a ban on any pictorial representation of the Shoah. The other, expressed for example in *Schindler's List, Train of Life* and *Life is Beautiful*, has been summarized by the German publicist Henryk M. Broder (1994, p. 240): "No film can keep up with the reality it presents. One can, however, assume that he who saw 'Schindler's List' takes home an idea of what it was. That is not much, but much more than the helpless explainers have managed to make clear."

Effects of films about the Shoah – Some empirical illustrations

The question concerning the effects of movies about the Shoah provokes heated debates on the cognitive, emotional and behavioral influences these movies exert on viewers (e.g. Kepplinger 2010; Perse, 2007). However, only a few studies have systematically examined the reception of theater films about the Shoah and National Socialism (Dohle, Wirth, & Vorderer, 2003; Hormuth & Stephan, 1981; Weichert, 1980).

Based on the above-presented background insights on framing approaches, we can assume that movies about the Shoah have either stressed or ignored some "aspects of perceived reality" (Entman, 1993). According to Scheufele (2003), different types of framing effects can be distinguished, as follows: In the first place, cinematic frames, contents and formal representations of the Shoah may activate and reinforce existing attitudes. Secondly, individual attitudes may change in response to a film's frames of reference. Thirdly, these frames may give rise to new attitudes.

In the following I discuss, drawing on two empirical studies, how a dialectic may develop between media frames (the presentation of the Shoah) and the attitudes of individual viewers.

Example 1:

As stated above, the series *Holocaust* was broadcast on West German television at the beginning of 1979 and became a major event. For the first time, Hollywood cinematically portrayed the persecution and destruction of the Jews on TV. Before and after the broadcast, media researchers made longitudinal opinion surveys in Germany and used them to evaluate the effects of viewing the series.

To show the noteworthy effects of viewing *Holocaust* on German audiences (Weichert, 1980), I summarize some of the longitudinal study results here. A first assessment was made two weeks prior to the broadcast, which took place from January 21 until January 26, 1979. A second assessment was made immediately

after the week of its broadcast. A third followed 14 weeks after the broadcast, and a fourth 17 months later.

The series attracted a high percentage of Germany viewers, ca. 43%-48%. This amounts to about 20 million viewers, meaning that every second German adult watched it. The audience included in particular younger males with higher educational levels and politically-engaged persons. The viewer percentages rose with each episode, from 31% (first episode) to over 35% (second episode), to 37% (third episode), and finally 40% (fourth episode).

The TV station received nearly half a million letters requesting background information. The writers praised the informative power of the series and the personalization that facilitated viewer identification: 73% evaluated the series positively, 7% negatively and 20% had no opinion. More than half were profoundly shocked, ashamed or even moved to tears. Nine percent, however, were indignant at the portrayal of 'bad' Germans.

Significant changes were found in the evaluations of National Socialism and its crimes. The percentage that believed in the complicity of all Germans in the Shoah rose from 16% in the pre-test to 22% after the series. Furthermore, approval of paying reparations and outrage at the willingness to let the statute of limitations on NS crimes expire rose over the period in which the series was shown. Overall, the last assessment shows that viewers gained knowledge about the destruction of the Jews by watching the series (Ernst, 1980). In addition, at least for a short time opinions about and attitudes toward Jews changed for the better. However, no consensus was reached as to whether these were long-lasting effects (e.g., Bergmann 1997, p. 373).

Hormuth and Stephan (1981), e.g., came to very sobering conclusions in an experimental study of 145 Germans and 179 Americans (residents of medium-sized university towns). They compared an experimental group that had watched *Holocaust* with another group that had not. The data revealed that series viewers who identified with the Nazis assigned the Jews themselves a greater share of blame for the Shoah than did viewers who identified with the Jews. These counterproductive results of efforts to inform viewers on the Third Reich's destruction of the Jews may be explained by *social-identity theory* (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). According to this theory, a person has not just one, but rather several "personal selves," which correspond to his or her various group memberships. Different social contexts, such as personal, familial or national ones, may be associated with different thoughts, feelings and tendencies to act. An individual thus has multiple "social identities." Social identity is the individual's self-concept, derived from his perceived membership in different social groups. SIT suggests that a person's differentiation between in- and out-group members helps him to assign value to his own group. This enables group members to preserve a positive sense of self-esteem as members of their group. Doosje and Branscombe (2003) have shown that the more strongly people identify with their national group, the more likely they are to justify their group's past bad treatment of another group

as a reaction to external *situational* factors, and the more likely they are to believe that internal *dispositional* factors explain similar negative actions when they are committed by out-group members.

Applying these empirical findings to our subject suggests that the way cinematic representations of the Shoah affect viewers depends to a great extent on their identification with either the perpetrators or the victims and the implications of these identifications for their self-esteem. Belonging to a group (of victims or perpetrators) entails an inclination to achieve positive self-esteem through group identity and to differentiate the in-group from the out-group in terms more favorable to the in-group.

Example 2:

In 2007 Dani Levy filmed a tragicomedy called *Mein Führer – Die wirklich wahrste Wahrheit über Adolf Hitler* (My Führer – The Truly Truest Truth about Adolf Hitler – Germany), starring Helge Schneider and Ulrich Mühe. The story and frame of the film are as follows: It is December 1944, and the "total war" is as good as totally lost. Goebbels, however, is not willing to simply admit defeat. On New Year's Day, Hitler is scheduled to hold a saber-rattling speech to boost the German public's morale. The problem is, however, that the Fuehrer is unable to give the speech. Ailing and depressive, he is avoiding the public. The one person who can help is his former drama teacher, Adolf Grünbaum – a Jew. Goebbels hauls him and his family out of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and brings them to the Reich Chancellery. Grünbaum is ordered to prepare Hitler for the speech within five days. During this period, Grünbaum repeatedly tries to assassinate Hitler, but is, however, held back by compassion. Just before the New Year's Day speech, Hitler loses his voice, and Grünbaum is forced to read the speech while Hitler gesticulates. Because he does not stick to the original text, the Nazis kill him.

Baumert, Hofmann and Blum (2008) studied the effects of this film on viewers with regard to: *a*. attitudes toward Hitler, *b*. the perceived role of the German population in Nazi Germany, *c*. opinions concerning the present danger of National-Socialist tendencies, and *d*. the subjective need for continued preoccupation with German history. A total of 110 Germans were invited to participate and were randomly assigned to either the control group – which filled out a questionnaire *before* viewing the film, or the experimental group – which filled out the questionnaire *after* watching the film. The experimental group reported fewer negative attitudes toward Hitler than the control group and saw the German population less as victims. The results also showed that viewers of *Mein Führer* with positive attitudes toward right-wing parties pay attention selectively to and respond to aspects of the movie that present Hitler in a positive light. Consequently, *Mein Führer* reduces negative attitudes toward Hitler more strongly among persons with positive rather than negative attitudes toward right-wing parties. One question suggested by these results is about the possible effects on viewers of a humorous treatment of one of the most abhorrent crimes in world history – the Shoah.

Radu Mihaileanu (2001) has said that with his film *Train of Life* he wanted to present the tragedy of the Holocaust in the language of comedy in order to intensify the perception of the tragedy. Seen in this way, mirth may be simply another way to weep. This might be the case for viewers who identify with the victims of the Shoah, or even for the victims themselves (see also Ginsparg, 2003). For those who identify positively with the Nazi judges and hangmen, however, it certainly is not.

Provisional conclusions

The Shoah has become part of the world's cultural heritage and has been imprinted on the collective memory of several generations. Films, TV series and electronic media in general play an important role in anchoring the Shoah in mankind's cultural memory. Films with fictional elements can thus influence the culture of remembrance. Through personalization, emotionalization and dramatization, they touch cultural memory and address individual personal memories. Film images are imprinted on individual memory (without our knowing how long the effects will last). They are important for historical remembrance insofar as they preserve the memory of the Shoah in our cultural memory. We should use them to tell about the Shoah and help to keep its memory alive.

The above-discussed findings demonstrate, however, that at least in Germany fictional representations in general and humorous portrayals of the Shoah, in particular, may sometimes have unintended negative effects. Therefore, not all storytelling about the Shoah, whether fictional in films or factual in documentaries or interviews, is significant for remembering the past and for constructing a peaceful and humane present. Thus for future generations: What is needed is above all tolerance and mutual respect among all peoples, making possible an empathetic and humane dialogue between survivors and their interpreters, both scientific and non-scientific.

Title	Country	Year	Director/Producer
The Seventh Cross	USA	1944	Fred Zinnemann
Die Mörder sind unter uns/ The Murderers Are Among Us	Germany	1946	Wolfgang Staudte
Die letzte Etappe/ Ostatni etap/The last stage	Poland	1947	Wanda Jakubowska
Morituri	Germany	1948	Artur Brauner
Nacht und Nebel/ Nuit et Brouillard/ Night and Fog	France	1955	Alain Resnais
Ein Tagebuch für Anne Frank/ A Diary for Anne Frank	East Germany (GDR)	1958	Joachim Hellwig & Günter Deicke
The Diary of Anne Frank	USA	1959	George Stevens

Title	Country	Year	Director/Producer
Judgment at Nuremberg	USA	1961	Stanley Kramer
Nackt unter Wölfen/ Naked Among Wolves	East Germany (GDR)	1963	Frank Beyer
Sighet, Sighet	USA	1964	Harold Becker
Ordinary Fascism/ Obyknowenny Faschism/ Обыкновенный фашизм/ Der gewöhnliche Faschismus/	Soviet Union	1965	Michail Romm
Jakob der Lügner/ Jakob the Liar	East Germany (GDR)	1974	Frank Beyer
Cabaret	USA	1975	Bob Fosse
The Serpent's Egg/ Das Schlangenei	USA/West Germany (FRG)	1977	Ingmar Bergmann
Holocaust	USA	1978	Marvin Chomsky
Die letzte Metro/Le Dernier Métro/The last subway	France	1980	François Truffaut
Shoah	France	1985	Claude Lanzmann
Hitlerjunge Salomon/ Hitler Youth Salomon	Germany/France/Poland		Agnieszka Holland
Schindler's List	USA	1993	Steven Spielberg
Das Leben ist schön/La Vita è Bella/Life is Beautiful	Italy	1997	Roberto Benigni
Zug des Lebens/Train de Vie/ Train of Life	France	1998	Radu Mihaileanu
Jakob the Liar (remake)	France/USA/Hungary	1999	Peter Kassovitz
Klemperer: Ein Leben in Deutschland /Klemperer: A Life in Germany	Germany	1999	Kai Wessel & Andreas Kleinert
Ein Lied von Liebe und Tod/ Gloomy Sunday	Germany	1999	Rolf Schübel
The Pianist	France/Poland/Great Britain/Germany	2002	Roman Polański
Rosenstraße/ The Women of Rosenstrasse	Germany/Netherlands	2003	Margarethe von Trotta
Die Fälscher/ The Counterfeiters	Austria/Germany	2007	Stefan Ruzowitzky
Mein Führer – Die wirklich wahrste Wahrheit über Adolf Hitler /My Führer – The Truly Truest Truth about Adolf Hitler	Germany	2007	Dani Levy

Title	Country	Year	Director/Producer
Spielzeugland/Toyland	Germany	2007	Alexander Freydank
Unbeugsam/Defiance	USA	2009	Edward Zwick
Der Junge im gestreiften Pyjama/ The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas	USA	2009	Mark Herman

Table 1: An incomplete list of major influential films about the Nazi Era and the Shoah

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Aesthetics and the Holocaust

Arie Shapira

Can there be poetry after Auschwitz?
Theodor Adorno

The day after May 8, 1945 saw the advent of a new era in European history. Europe, the vain old lady, vanished, buried under a mountain of ashes. However, the ashes could not mask the unbearable stench of countless corpses.

In my opinion, each and every person in the arts must regard this day, when Nazi Germany was finally vanquished, as the beginning of a new era. From this point on, artistic composition should be guided by criticism, skepticism and the negation of many aesthetic principles that were widely accepted before the dawn of this new era.

Every artistic work, in particular every work dealing with the Holocaust, must provide an emphatic answer to Adorno's question: Yes, there is poetry after Auschwitz, but it is a new poetry – skeptical, critical, devoid of the values of the past, one that offers an alternative to the aesthetics of the past.

The enormity of the Holocaust – the cataclysm of hatred, the compulsion to kill, the obsession with violence – leaves sane persons speechless. The post-war German clichés: "Hitler seduced Germany" or "The Nazi Party forced it on Germany" are deceptive and false, futile attempts to exonerate Germany of its responsibility. No political party, even one as criminal as the Nazi party, and no political leader, even one as sadistic and murderous as Hitler, can alone impose barbarism on an unwilling nation. Anti-Semitism and the lust to exterminate the Jewish people are deeply rooted in German history. The Nazi party and its criminal leaders were simply so ruthless and obsessed that they turned these widespread urges into monstrous realities.

Aesthetically understood, the Holocaust is German. All my Holocaust compositions are oriented to German art and culture. All my Holocaust compositions *are* German.

Hebrew cannot contain the Holocaust. Hebrew was born in the desert. Hebrew is a concise language, wasting no words, precise and clear, casting no shadow under

the blazing sun. The conspiracy to exterminate the Jewish people arose under the dark clouds hanging above the Black Forest.

All my Holocaust compositions use German and sometimes Yiddish texts. The Holocaust was conceived, planned and executed in German. The cries of pain were Yiddish. The German language is harsh and menacing, the Yiddish – soft, shy, modest, humane, suffused with irony and humor. The proximity of the two languages only magnifies the horror of the catastrophe.

The musical material I use in my Holocaust compositions comes solely from German music. I use musical quotations from Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner, Bruckner, Brahms and Orff and distort, ridicule and in some cases precisely reproduce these quotations.

1. Gideon Kleins Marterstrasse (Gideon Klein's Martyrs Road, 1977)

The text is brief, beginning in Yiddish and concluding in German: "Gideon Klein spielt zech off ein piano, far Gideon Klein diese Marterstrasse." The music is nothing other than a direct rendition of a Bach chorale – *O Grosse Lieb (Oh Great Love)*, a chorale in the *Saint John Passion*, mourning the death of the crucified Savior.

Gideon Klein, a pianist and composer born in Přerov, Moravia in 1919, was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto in 1941. In Theresienstadt, he played on an old piano found in an attic (see the book *Ein Parparim Kan* – There Are No Butterflies Here –, compiled by Abba Kovner in 1969). Gideon Klein played "German music" – Bach, Beethoven, Schumann. He succumbed to brutal treatment in 1945, forced to set out on foot along with other prisoners in the cold and snow on a "Death March" to Auschwitz. The chorale is accompanied by two trumpets that tear at and hack apart the chorale – permeated with saccharine Christian sentimentality. Between the segments of the chorale, a piano interjects a precise rendition of the arietta from Beethoven's last piano sonata. This is the melody that Thomas Mann discusses in his novel *Dr. Faustus* (part eight). The ease with which the lofty encounters the banal is expressed as the violin, viola and clarinet blur and hack at the melody until it finally becomes unrecognizable.

2. Letzte Briefe aus Stalingrad (Last Letters from Stalingrad, 1984-1995)

Composing my second work dealing with the Holocaust, *Letzte Briefe aus Stalingrad (Last letters from Stalingrad)*, was an exhausting task. I began working on it in 1984 and only finished it in 1995, shortly before its debut in Berlin on December 31 of the same year. I wrote for a baritone accompanied by a piano, harpsichord and three instruments from the world of rock and light music – a Hammond organ, a Fender Rhodes electric piano and a sampler player.

The work is rooted in the German language. The text is taken from an anthology of the same name published in Germany in 1951, consisting of 100 letters written by German soldiers who served at Stalingrad. The last plane to take off from Stalingrad in February 1943 carried close to a quarter of a million letters. When it landed in Berlin, the Gestapo impounded the letters for examination and censorship, and at the conclusion of the inspection, the Nazis prohibited their delivery and had them entombed in an old salt mine somewhere in Germany. The letters were not "becoming" to the Nazi regime and lacked the right proportion of the heroic sentiments expected of the "new *Siegfrieds*". Quite to the contrary: The soldiers expressed doubts as to their generals' competence: a veiled criticism of the demented military adventure that was soon to end.

In 1950, the letters were rediscovered, and a selection was published with great fanfare. The letters were a true find – not one closed with "Heil Hitler." For me they proved to be a treasure-trove. They are so insane, so very German despite the absence of outward manifestations of Nazism. I divided the text into five movements. Before each movement, a small orchestra performs a rondo based on motifs from Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Wagner – totally distorted. The various movements, except for the last one, center on groups of quotes taken from some of the letters.

The first movement deals with "nature":

"Monica, what are our lives compared to millions of years of heavens seeded with stars on this lovely night. Andromeda and Pegasus are above me … Four days ago I was stuck in a hole, and all day long I stared at the soil – excellent for growing wheat …"

In the second movement, there is a group of statements referring to God:

"… one who presents the question of God's existence in Stalingrad is akin to a heretic. I must say this to father, and I am doubly sorry for this. You raised me and always put God before my eyes and my soul … No, father, there is no God. I write this again and I know it is a terrible thing that I will never atone for! And if nevertheless there is a God, he exists only with you, in the books of hymns and prayers, in the sermons of priests and religious shepherds, in the chimes of the bells and in the aroma of the incense, but not here in Stalingrad …"

The third movement deals with the "father":

"You were always the pious man, and as such you will always remain. This was known to mother and to me. But it was impossible to imagine that you would be willing to sacrifice your son on behalf of piety …"

The fourth movement presents various clichés:

"… You are the wife of a German officer … You know my feelings toward you, Augusta … Therefore it is important that you hear the truth. The truth is to set forth an objective fact … I can't deny my part in the blame, but this is one part in seventy million. The ratio is small, but it exists …"

The fifth movement presents an entire letter:

"And in closing, several personal matters. You can count on it that everything will end decently. It's a bit early at age thirty. I know. Without sentiments. A handshake to Lydia and Helena. A kiss to mother (elderly, caution, consider her weak heart), and a kiss to Gerta. Regards to all the others, a hand to my helmet, father, First Lieutenant … is honored to announce his departure."

In this work, I separated the musical language of the melody from that of the accompaniment. The melody sung by the baritone was composed in a European style of the early 20th century, deliberately skewed, as I describe below. The accompaniment, performed on keyboard instruments, belongs to the close of the last century: estranged, disjointed, disarrayed and with rapidly changing colors. Only the new technologies of a sampler player can achieve the desired effect.

Each part is sung in one breath without a pause, as is becoming for a German sentence. The baritone, Elmar Andre, strained his vocal cords and lungs to the limit. I wrote a melody that does not end, and in the end "abuses" the German language. The manager of the Cologne radio station, who was present at one of the rehearsals, turned to me and rebuked me that this was not the way one composes in German. I replied: "Do you expect me to compose like Schubert or Karl Orff?!"

I must add a personal comment here: When news of the German defeat at Stalingrad reached Eretz Israel, my parents decided that the time was right to bring a child into the world, which now appeared a bit safer. And so on the 29th of November, 1943, I first saw the light of day.

3. Gustl in Theresienstadt (1999, electro-acoustic)

Gustl is Gustav Mahler (1860–1911). His family affectionately called him Gustl. The Mahler family, which lived in Kalischt (Kaliste in Bohemia), spoke Yiddish, and Gustl even had a bar mitzvah. Later Gustav Mahler abandoned Yiddish for German, and Judaism for Catholicism. He wanted to totally submerge himself in German culture, but failed: His Jewish roots are revealed by the strains of Hassidic motifs that hide as an inner voice within his great symphonies, and by Mahler's solitude and estrangement from the German musical world (Beethoven, Wagner and Bruckner), to which he so desperately wanted to belong. – A conscious assimilator, but an unconscious Jew …

In his ardor to blend into German culture, Gustl sought German texts to set to music. He found a popular anthology of folk poems and songs published by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano between 1805 and 1808 – *Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Youth's Magic Horn,* referring to a sort of cornucopia*)* – a typical romantic-nationalistic German anthology: poems of nature, religious hymns and of course soldiers' songs. He was particularly taken by the soldiers' songs and set several to music in a well-known work that he gave the name of the collection – *Des Knaben Wunderhorn.*

Mahler was only 50 when he died. His ailing and tormented heart had taken its toll. An early death was a merciful release. Had Mahler lived to be a victim of the Nazi deportations, he might have died in the Theresienstadt ghetto – humiliated, trampled upon, beaten, a Beretta pistol pointed at his head. Lying on a wooden bunk, half-frozen beside Viktor Ullmann, Pavel Haas, Martin Shulhoff, and perhaps even Gideon Klein, he might well have heard drunken guards and hangmen boisterously belting out soldiers' songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

Gustl in Theresienstadt is a short electronic composition (eight minutes). The first movement, six minutes in duration, is composed of 1,200 fragments, each from half a second to two seconds in duration. The musical material is based on a Yiddish lullaby, parts of Gustl's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, a well-known Nazi marching song, the *Horst Wessel Lied*, and excerpts from Hitler's speeches. The material is arranged utilizing various and varied electronic techniques. In the last two minutes of the piece, I quote Yiddish lullabies, arranged on the level of single syllables, and even fragments of syllables.

The listener will realize within seconds that the work could only be realized in an electronic sound laboratory using digital techniques.

4. Achtung Rapunzel (Attention! Rapunzel, 2007)

I wrote *Achtung Rapunzel* for *Meitar* Ensambel (mezzo-soprano, piano, violin, cello, clarinet and bassoon). The text stems from the Brothers Grimm's fairytale collections: I chose children's rhymes such as "Rucke di guck, rucke di guck. Kein Blut ist im Schuck. Der Schuck ist nicht zu klein. Die rechte Braut, die führt er heim" (lines cried by two white doves in *Cinderella*: "Turn and peep, turn and peep. No blood is in the shoe. The shoe is not too small. The right bride, he leads her home"). Conspicuous in the Brothers Grimm's fairytales are the many utterly bizarre, inhumane, cruel and ruthless elements.

The musical material stems from Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Wagner. The quotations are abused, distorted and ridiculed. The melody sung by the mezzo-soprano is childlike.

5. Schneewittchen und die vier Bären (Snow White and the Four Bears, 2007, electro-acoustic)

The four bears are Wagner, Bruckner, Brahms and Orff.

I synthesized eight motifs from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. After distorting and ridiculing them, I isolated one motif and manipulated it. I chose a three-minute excerpt from Bruckner's *Fourth Symphony*. Using various electronic techniques, I manipulated the long crescendo, and employed the same approach to Brahms' *German Requiem* and Karl Orff's abhorrent *Carmina Burana*.

There is nothing left for me to do, but to mock German romantic music, the inner core of German culture.

6. Todesfuge (Death Fugue, 2008)

My musical version of Paul Celan's disturbing, awe-inspiring poem is composed to be sung a capella by a choir (sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, two altos, two tenors, a baritone and a bass). The syllables are stammered. Several German words, such as Deutschland, Margarite, Tanz, Geige and Schlangen (Germany, Margaret, dance, violin and snakes), are sung in unison. The choir members should sound like hunted animals.

The Antschel family (Paul Celan's original family name) lived in Czernowitz, Bukovina (now Chernivtsi, a cultural center in western Ukraine). That region was under the Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph's rule until 1919. Like many other Jewish families in Czernowitz, they were deeply rooted in German culture. Paul Celan's first language was German. In 1941, the Antschel family became entangled in Nazi Germany's deadly net. Miraculously, Paul survived, but he lost both parents. His sense of injustice was so great that it inspired him to write the classic Holocaust poem, *Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland (Death is a Master from Germany)*, dating from the 1940s.

Achtung Rapunzel, *Gideon Kleins Marterstraße* and *Todesfuge* were performed on January 20, 2009 in Villa Wannsee – the lowest point on earth. (This is a lakeside villa at 56/58 Am Grossen Wannsee in a popular suburb of Berlin. The "Wannsee Conference" was held there on January 20, 1942. At the meeting German administrative leaders were informed about plans for the Holocaust).

Reassessment and further research:

Generations after the inferno: Conversations with descendants of Sonderkommando prisoners in Auschwitz-Birkenau

Gideon Greif

"At home, he was always a father, not an Auschwitz survivor."[1] This quotation could serve as the epigraph for this chapter, which sheds light on several aspects of postwar history. Using a balanced, multi-faceted approach, I have tried to discover and understand the effects of traumatic experiences of the Holocaust in the postwar period that have been hidden or neglected for many years. My sources are numerous conversations with the daughters, sons, wives and grandchildren of Sonderkommando survivors. The latter were Auschwitz prisoners who were forced to work in the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau in a crew unofficially called the "Sonderkommando" (Special Unit).[2] Its members had to participate in the gassing and cremation of other Jews in the industrialized murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They were thus slave laborers in the world's biggest death factory.[3] For the first time in history, vast numbers of people were killed as on an assembly line in an industrial production process, and Sonderkommando prisoners were the workforce in that industrial process. Surrounded for days on end by corpses, ashes and death, they were automatically condemned to death the moment they started to work there. Most were indeed murdered after a certain period of time, but a small group of at most 100 miraculously survived the Sonderkommando. After liberation, they began new chapters in life, founded families and now have descendants.

The cluster of symptoms known as the "Second Generation Syndrome"[4] is a phenomenon that, although only about thirty years old, has nevertheless been intensively studied and described in the psychological and historical literature. However, because the Sonderkommando prisoners experienced a unique chapter in the Holocaust, and perhaps in the history of mankind, their descendants surely deserve

1 Zippy Strum-Pliszko, Ramat Gan Israel, 14.06.2009

2 The literature on the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz-Birkenau is extensive. See one of the most recent English publications: John K. Roth & Jonathan Petropoulos (Editors). Grey Zones. Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and its Aftermath, Claremont, 2005.

3 Auschwitz. Central Issues in the History of the Camp. Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Oswiecim 2000 (5 Volumes), Czech, Danuta: Auschwitz Chronicle 1940-1945, London 1990.

4 Dab Baron: Fear and Hope. Three Generations of the Holocaust, Harvard 1998.

a special study. The pre-assumption of this research was that the Sonderkommando prisoners must have passed on to their children part of the heavy burden they had borne ever since the time when they were slave laborers in the world's largest Death Factory. According to this pre-assumption, the daily realities of being surrounded week after week, around the clock by poison gas, death, burning corpses, and ashes and must have overwhelmed these men with desperate feelings of depression and grief, loss of joy in life and repression of the joyous, happy sides of life. I expected that phenomena characteristic of "typical" Holocaust survivors would be even more pronounced and extreme in the case of the Sonderkommando's Second Generation. In interviews, I presented this hypothesis to the subjects, and the overall responses were both surprising and unexpected. The main questions I asked the children and other close relatives were:

- When did you first discover what your father did as a prisoner in Auschwitz-Birkenau?
- How would you describe your father's everyday behavior?
- How many details did your father tell you about his work as a Sonderkommando prisoner?
- How did you feel toward your father when you first learned about his work in the Sonderkommando?
- How much did you understand about the Sonderkommando and its tasks?

My personal pre-assumption was that whereas the fathers managed to suppress the nightmares of the past – the children would have to cope with their terrifying memories and would pay a heavy psychological price for the crimes Germans had committed against their fathers.

The children who took part in this research were:

Peninah Zakkar, daughter of Josef Zakkar, born in 1924 in Arta, Greece. He worked in the Sonderkommando from April 1944 until January 18, 1945, mainly in the undressing hall of Crematorium Building II.

Zehava Etzbeoni, daughter of Shaul Chasan, born in Thessaloniki, Greece in 1924, who belonged to the Sonderkommando from April 1944 to January 1945. He worked in Crematorium Building II, mainly as a "Heizer" (stoker) for the furnaces.

Malka Dragon, daughter of Abraham Dragon from Jerominy in Northern Poland (originally in East Prussia). Abraham, born in 1919, arrived in Auschwitz on December 1942 and worked mainly as a "Stubendienst" (cleaner) in Bunker II and later in Crematorium Building IV until January 1945.

Zippy Strum-Pliszko, daughter of Lemke Pliszko, born in 1920 in Wyssoky-Mazowiecki, who was deported to Auschwitz in 1943 and worked mainly as a "Vorarbeiter" (foreman) and Kapo in Crematorium Building II until January 1945.

Zvia Blumenfeld-Pliszko, daughter of Lemke Pliszko

Nathan Pliszko, son of Lemke Pliszko

Amos Pliszko, grandson of Lemke Pliszko

Rosa Brammy-Gabbai, daughter of Jacob Gabbai, born in 1912 in Athens, Greece, who was deported to Auschwitz in April 1944 and worked mainly as a "Heizer" (stoker) in Crematorium Building II until January 1945.

Prior to the start of this research, I asked myself, among other questions, whether the second and third generations of the most traumatized survivors in world history in general – and the Holocaust period in particular – differ from other descendants of Holocaust survivors, and especially – from other descendants of Auschwitz survivors.

I know some of the children – who are now between 50 and 60 – from numerous visits to their homes during my years of research on the Sonderkommando. A few were even present with their parents at the interviews and documentation sessions that we held at the Auschwitz Memorial in Poland. However, I had never spoken to them as intensively and had never presented them with such a great variety of questions as I did for this research, whose findings I present in this chapter.

The descendants I interviewed in this study are the children of the Israeli Holocaust survivors whose experiences form the basis of my first book on the subject, *We Wept Without Tears*.[5] In the future, I also intend to interview the descendants of non-Israeli survivors who live with their families on several continents and in countries other than Israel.

I asked all the interviewees the same questions about the atmosphere in their homes, their parents' patterns of behavior – and especially about the fathers who had survived work in the Auschwitz Sonderkommando. I emphasized their relations with their sisters and brothers, the persistence of habits typical of Holocaust survivors and their children even after 40 or 50 years, and the characteristics of their typical reminiscences of childhood and youth.

The most important questions concerned the extent to which the burden of Auschwitz and of a father working near the gas chambers and crematoria later affected the lives of the second and third generations, what effects this heritage had on their daily activities and the later repercussions, including those for the present-day lives of descendants. Since I am neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist, my conclusions and findings are of a general, historically oriented nature. It would naturally be desirable to have a parallel study informed by psychological patterns, principles and criteria. In the past, I strongly recommended doing psychological studies with the survivors of the Sonderkommando themselves. Unfortunately, no psychologist or psychiatrist undertook to do such research while more of the sur-

5 Greif, Gideon: "We wept without Tears." Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando, 1940-1945, New Haven, 2005.

vivors were still alive. Now it is very late, possibly too late, because most of the Sonderkommando survivors have already passed away.[6]

The fathers of the children who are the subject of this chapter, the Sonderkommando prisoners, left their home countries a few years after their liberation from Auschwitz and moved to Israel in the fifties. Although they tried to leave behind their memories of the past in order to start a normal life, they could never entirely forget the months when they worked in the "Special Unit" at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They had been in a place where 1,300,000 Jews were gassed and cremated, witnesses to and unwilling participants in the most abhorrent and reprehensible genocide in history.[7] Their tasks as slaves in the Factory of Death were unprecedented in human history. There can be no more traumatic human experience than that of the Sonderkommando prisoners, and my pre-assumption was that these uniquely horrible experiences would have a severe impact on the daily lives of the descendants of Sonderkommando survivors.[8] Instead, at least regarding the Israeli descendants, my research shows that this pre-assumption was largely mistaken.

The unexpected results of the following study are quite surprising. They contradict my pre-assumptions and expectations and reveal unexpected patterns of parental behavior that are atypical of the patterns found with other Holocaust survivors. Most of the characteristics usually associated with Holocaust survivors are not found in the Sonderkommando descendants. I will start with some unique, noteworthy aspects. The overall image of the Sonderkommando survivors derived from my interviews differs significantly from the typical portrayal of the survivors. When the war ended, they decided they were still human beings and not broken men, and they did not feel defeated. They did not want to live in the past – but rather to live in the present and for the future. They decided that using all their means they would begin a new chapter in life and give their children a happier life than their own had been. They tried to be energetic, productive, creative, to free their lives from the burden of Auschwitz memories, and even to be happy.

"My father was never embittered, never depressed, never in a bad mood, he was always optimistic, busy, caring and attentive to us children. He was a happy man in spite of Auschwitz," remembered Peninah Zakkar, Josef's daughter.[9]

With great effort the Sonderkommando prisoners managed to suppress their terrifying recollections, and in doing so, avoided burdening their children. Repression and suppression were the Sonderkommando prisoners' most effective weapons in their struggle for survival and to preserve their human dignity, already in the cre-

6 Almost all the Sonderkommando survivors in Israel who were interviewed since 1986 as part of my research have since died. Only two, Josef Zakkar and Eliezer Eisenschmidt, are at this writing still alive.

7 Franciszek Piper: Die Zahl der Opfer von Auschwitz: Aufgrund der Quellen und der Erträge der Forschung 1945-1990, Oswiecim 1993.

8 See, for example, on the traumata of Holocaust Survivors: Die Auschwitz Hefte, (Przeglad Lekarski), Hamburg 1993.

9 Peninah Zakkar, Holon, Israel, 12.06.2009.

matoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau, but also later after they had been liberated and started new lives. Suppression played a major role in helping them to begin a new life in their new homeland and aided them to avoid imposing unnecessary psychological burdens on their children. Many interviewees emphasized that their fathers always refrained from speaking to them of the Holocaust.[10] They believe that this was intentional, an effort to shield their children from feelings of grief and humiliation.

"My father did everything to create a normal atmosphere at home. The camp experience was only brought up when he discussed it with his brother Schlomo, who lived with us in the same flat," remembered Malka Dragon,[11] the daughter of Abraham Dragon, who was deported to Auschwitz from Jerominy in Poland.

Zvia Pliszko stated that her home was not a "Shoah-orientated home."[12] This was the feeling of all but one of the descendants I interviewed.

Memories of the Shoah were seldom described in detail or were never mentioned at all, and even when they were discussed, the Shoah was not a prominent issue in the survivor's daily life.[13] The Sonderkommando survivors went to great lengths to behave normally, normatively, and did everything to achieve this goal.[14] It is obvious that the Sonderkommando survivors tried to open up new horizons for their children, different from what they had previously known. In their daily routines, Sonderkommando fathers behaved conventionally and betrayed no unusual tensions or depression.

"My father was a hundred percent normal and functioned perfectly in all spheres of daily life. In comparison to the fathers of my school friends, I am sure that he even functioned better. He was strong at heart, resolute and a loving person. The way he treated my mother, Bella, was endearing. He treated her like a Queen. I wish all couples had such splendid relations and mutual affection and respect," affirmed Peninah Zakkar.[15]

Deep spells of depression and sorrow occurred only when survivors' wives or siblings passed away.[16] When loved ones died, Sonderkommando survivors lost their inner strength and emotional stability and, at least for a while, became despondent, losing their joy in life.

"When father came back from the hospital where mother died, he was a broken man, he scarcely spoke and stopped laughing," recalled Zvia Pliszko of her father, Lemke, who until then had a "sense of humor and was always in a good mood."[17]

10 Rosa Brammy-Gabbai, Neve Yamin Israel, 14.06.2009, Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan, Ramat Gan Israel, 09.06.2009.
11 Malka Dragon, Ramat Gan Israel, 16.06.2009.
12 Zvia Blumenfeld-Pliszko, Givat Ha-shlosha, Israel, 15.06.2009.
13 Amos Pliszko, Mikve Israel, Israel, 08.06.2009.
14 Zippy Strum-Pliszko
15 Peninah Zakkar
16 Malka Dragon, Rosa Brammy-Gabbai, Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan.
17 Peninah Zakkar

Rosa Brammy, the daughter of Jacob Gabbai, told me that her father became "a different person after his wife's death: quieter, more sensitive, a totally different person in comparison to the past."[18]

Most Sonderkommando prisoners did not tell family members the truth about their tasks in Auschwitz. They thought it would be better to conceal their horrible past from their loved ones:

"My grandfather did not tell us about the Sonderkommado," recounted Amos Pliszko. "He was so active and cheerful in his daily work in the Kibbutz that the idea that he had witnessed the worst events on earth never emerged in our wildest dreams. He was the antithesis of the alleged passivity, weakness, cowardice and helplessness of the Jews, being a physically strong, firm, dynamic person."[19]

Even after hearing the truth about the Sonderkommado, the descendants did not feel that their new knowledge caused them to change in any way their image of their father or their attitude toward him. To the contrary: they felt admiration and even pride that after surviving such an ordeal a man could function so well and build up a totally new life on the ruins of the old one. From then on, "He was considered a Hero," reported Nathan Pliszko.[20]

However, several years were to pass before the children grasped the horrifying reality of the surroundings where their father had once been a prisoner. "Only after accompanying my father to Auschwitz-Birkenau, seeing the place where he was imprisoned for almost two years, did I begin to understand what he went through," related Peninah Zakkar.[21]

Usually, the former Sonderkommando members were model fathers and good-natured persons who laughed a lot, men with a positive frame of mind, who drank alcoholic beverages only in moderation, liked good company and social life and enjoyed entertaining family members and neighbors. The mood in most families was not one of a "Holocaust-orientated atmosphere," the children remember.[22] Survivors made great efforts to banish the Shoah from their hearths, to expel it, to bar the Shoah from their lives and to signal "business as usual."[23]

A major difference, in comparison to other Holocaust survivors' families, is that most of the children described their childhood as happy, with no depressing stories or continuing, pervasive sorrow.[24] They describe an open atmosphere, strong emotions of love and affection, and tell of receiving whatever they needed from their parents:

18 Rosa Brammy-Gabbai
19 Amos Pliszko
20 Nathan Pliszko, Mikve Israel, Israel, 08.06.2010.
21 Peninah Zakkar
22 Zippy Strum-Pliszko, Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan, Peninah Zakkar, Malka Dragon.
23 Peninah Zakkar
24 Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan, Amos Pliszko, Nathan Pliszko.

"I had a happy childhood," declared Zehava Etzbeoni – Shaul Chasan's daughter. "My father was sensitive and open-minded toward us children. He encouraged us in anything we wanted, and did not set unnecessary limits. My brother and I had a lot of freedom. We did not feel the Holocaust in the air, and stories about the camps were told only when Greek friends came to visit our father. I remember that even those meetings were happy – a lot of drinking, singing, laughing, really a wonderful atmosphere, although the name Auschwitz was often mentioned in the conversations. They mentioned the gas chambers and the crematoria, but a moment later they were eating and drinking as if they were talking about something ordinary," confided Zehava.[25]

Rosa Brammy told how her father gave her a wonderful childhood, liberal, free of stress, pleasant and harmonious. "There was scarcely any sign of Auschwitz in my childhood," remembered Rosa.[26]

The interviews offer a picture of men who despite their deeply traumatic experiences in Auschwitz were determined to recover, start a new life and become creative, productive and valuable citizens and caring parents. The children portrayed their fathers as strong, physically and mentally, bodily and psychologically.[27] They attached great importance to their children's education and training, because they wanted to give them the best possible future. Unlike other survivors, most never suffered from nightmares or spells of depression, and they functioned perfectly well in the everyday professional and private spheres of life.[28] This contradicts the commonplace image of broken, weak, sickly survivors, pale shadows of their former selves, overly sensitive, vulnerable men.[29]

Amos Pliszko, the grandson of Lemke Pliszko, a Sonderkommando survivor from the town of Wysokky Mazowieckie in Poland, affirmed:

"My grandfather always worked hard. He was used to hard work since his childhood and youth in Poland. The family lived in a rural area, and physical labor was part of the routine of daily life. In his Kibbutz, Givat Hashlosha, he did the hardest physical labor. I think that this was his way of escaping from past memories. He was very popular among his comrades in the Kibbutz, preparing pancakes and 'latkes' and bringing bottles of excellent wine to his friends, comrades and neighbors. His delicious 'pancakes' were famous everywhere in the Kibbutz, and members approached him continually to get some."[30]

Amos Pliszko added:

25 Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan
26 Rosa Brammy-Gabbai
27 Amos Pliszko, Nathan Pliszko, numerous interviews with Lemke Pliszko in Givat Ha-shlosha by Gideon Greif.
28 Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan, Peninah Zakkar, Amos Pliszko, Nathan Pliszko, numerous interviews with Lemke Pliszko in Givat Ha-shlosha by Gideon Greif.
29 Hannah Yablonka, Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel after the War, New York, 1999.
30 Amos Pliszko, Nathan Pliszko, numerous interviews with Lemke Pliszko in Givat Ha-shlosha by Gideon Greif.

"Grandpa was a sportsman. He rode a bicycle, played soccer, and sport was one of his greatest hobbies. He was a member of the sports club of the Kibbutz and played not only soccer, but also basketball, volleyball, etc. Until his last month he was a strong man."[31]

Another characteristic of many survivors was their generosity: they were anything but egocentric. All the Sonderkommando survivors were alike in this. They invested all they had in their children's welfare, especially in the field of education, university study, etc., as Zehava and Zvia reported.[32] They wanted to make possible for their children what they themselves had never been able to achieve, to give them the opportunity to do things they had been unable to do.

Peninah Zakkar recalled: "When I went for a walk with my father, we might stop at a toy shop, and I only had to say: 'Oh, what a beautiful doll', and a few minutes later the doll was mine. Father neglected himself in order to give my brother and me a decent education."[33]

The "overprotective attitude" that characterizes so many Holocaust survivors was also part of the familial world of the Sonderkommando prisoners. They made every effort to avoid telling the real story of their Auschwitz experiences to their children, or even to their wives. This was a common defense mechanism used by survivors to avoid imposing a burden on their children. Keeping silent was the customary practice of Holocaust survivors, nearly always practiced by Sonderkommando survivors as well, indeed quite consistently.[34] They told their wives and children only that they had been prisoners in Auschwitz, but never said exactly what their tasks had been. Because of the prison number tattooed on their arm, they could not deny having been prisoners in Auschwitz, however. Even this tattooed number could cause trouble, as Peninah Zakkar admitted:

"One day I decided that I also wanted to have a tattooed number. I took a pen and drew a number on my arm. When my father discovered it, he became furious and ordered my mother to remove it immediately, using some kind of liquid. My father even slapped me on the face, so great was his anger. It was the first and last time in my whole life that my father ever struck me."[35]

In comparison to other Auschwitz survivors, the Sonderkommando prisoners adopted a "Live and let live" attitude, giving their children unrestricted freedom, including permission to go on school excursions, participate in the Youth Movement, go to the beach, etc. As a result, the descendants feel independent, free, and self-confident. Relations between the children and their fathers were warm, almost completely free of the typical complications, and characterized by mutual empathy, sensitivity and sincere concern. The image of the father who survived the

31 Amos Pliszko, Nathan Pliszko, numerous interviews with Lemke Pliszko in Givat Ha-shlosha by Gideon Greif.
32 Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan, Zvia Blumenfeld-Pliszko.
33 Peninah Zakkar
34 See: below.
35 Peninah Zakkar

Sonderkommando is very positive in the eyes of his children: He is loved and honored. No ambivalence, no distance, no curtain. Instead – feelings of admiration, sympathy and affection.

Another unique aspect was the compensatory role of wives and mothers, usually not themselves Holocaust survivors, who provided a stabilizing counterbalance to their husbands' traumas.[36]

Rita Dragon, who was born in Israel, was married for over 50 years to Abraham Dragon, who had been a Sonderkommando prisoner together with his brother Schlomo. She revealed:

"I never asked my husband what he did in the camp. I only knew that he was an Auschwitz prisoner and that was all. The details were unknown to me. Abraham never told me that he was in the Sonderkommando, and I discovered it only after many years."[37] Rita Dragon was born in Turkey, and her own family had been spared the horrors of the Holocaust.

"My mother was very practical and resourceful," described Zippy Pliszko. "She balanced my father's behavior, which was sometimes conspicuous, and as long as she lived he felt secure and protected by her. When she died, the whole picture changed. He was in a way lost."[38]

Attaching great importance to food and even over-nourishing family members are characteristic of survivors and their offspring. Regarding this typical phenomenon, there is a great similarity between the behavior of Auschwitz and other Holocaust survivors, on the one hand, and the survivors of the Sonderkommando, on the other. Food occupied a very central place in the Holocaust survivors' world, and Sonderkommando survivors were no exception. The children and grandchildren speak of the enormous importance of food in their family's daily life and consciousness:

"My grandfather was famous in his Kibbutz for the pancakes he was constantly preparing in his modest kitchen. He liked to prepare pancakes for everybody and was rather obsessive in distributing and offering his pancakes to everybody. If someone started to eat, my grandfather watched to make sure that his guest ate everything and left nothing on the plate. Feeding people was like a ceremony, like a ritual."[39]

The cellar in Leah and Leon Welbel's house in Skokie, Illinois (near Chicago) exemplified the importance of food in the lives of Auschwitz survivors. Stocked like a mid-sized supermarket, it held enough food to feed a small army. Leah was an Auschwitz survivor, her husband a Sonderkommando survivor.[40] Their attitude to

36 Zehava Etzbeoni-Chassan, Peninah Zakkar.
37 Malka and Rita Dragon.
38 Zippy Strum-Pliszko
39 Amos Pliszko, Nathan Pliszko, numerous interviews with Lemke Pkiszko in Givat Ha-shlosha by Gideon Greif.
40 Leah Werlbel-Mordecovitch was married to Leon Welbel, an Auschwitz survivor who was a Sonderkommando prisoner in Crematorium Building IV.

food and its availability at home is very significant. The refrigerator must be full; there must always be enough bread. For KZ prisoners, bread was life, and a single slice of bread was a matter of life or death. A small additional allowance of food ("Zulage" in KZ terminology) was a dream come true. In survivors' kitchens an inviolable rule prevailed, according to which one must never discard food. Food is sacred. These aspects are characteristic of almost all Holocaust survivors, including as well Sonderkommando survivors, as their children have told me:

"Our refrigerator was always full and overfilled. When our father noticed that some food had run out, he replenished it immediately. There always had to be bread in the kitchen, because it was of enormous importance to father," recounted Zvia Pliszko.[41]

"Father was always worried that we did not eat enough and supplied us with sandwiches and fruit whenever we went on trips. The importance he attached to nourishment was boundless. He was constantly preoccupied with food and eating. He was a talented cook, and the Kibbutz members appreciated his skills. When guests came, they first had to eat and drink properly. To leave food on a plate was a serious offense. When father was on duty in the children's home, the children all waited impatiently for his cakes and cookies. I have never seen a person whose life was so obsessively bound up with food."[42]

Another value shared by the Sonderkommando survivors is the ideal of the family as a supremely positive and essential value. For Sonderkommando survivors this was one of the most precious values in life. It was their main concern, an ideal they did everything to uphold.[43] The family was a symbol of life, stability, continuity, strength, the duration of the Jewish People's physical existence, and also a sign of victory over the Germans and their plans to exterminate the Jewish People and make the world "Judenrein" (purified or cleansed of Jews). The importance attached by survivors to the family found expression in many ways, especially during holidays and family celebrations. The new family was a memorial to the original one, belonging to the Diaspora and destroyed by Germany; it was a reminder of the family that had vanished, with no gravestone, no place of burial left behind. Each new child or grandchild was a cause for great happiness and joy, interpreted as "one more victory over Hitler and the Germans' conspiracy to eradicate the Jews from this planet."[44]

In comparison to other Auschwitz survivors, the Sonderkommando survivors were significantly more aware of the historical importance of their testimonies. They were fully aware that their testimony was unique and essential for understanding the "Final Solution". Although most were simple men, they were able to describe the entire complex background of their personal story in Auschwitz.[45]

41 Zvia Blumenfeld Pliszko
42 Zvia Blumenfeld-Pliszko, Zippy Strum-Pliszko.
43 Peninah Zakkar, Zehava Tezbeoni-Chassan.
44 Amos Pliszko
45 Gideon Greif (2005). We Wept without Tears, Historical Introduction.

Summing up

The Sonderkommando survivors tried hard not to bequeath terrifying memories and traumas to their descendants, not wanting to transmit an endless "vicious circle" of horrors from generation to generation. Using the techniques of repression and suppression, they managed to avoid passing on the burdens of their haunted memories and instead provided a tranquil, relaxed and pleasant home atmosphere for their children. My interviews with the children of the second and third generations showed the reality of a sheltered and peaceful childhood. The skill and effectiveness of the Sonderkommando survivors' suppression is impressive: most fathers are remembered as strong, not despondent, not moody, but rather positively-thinking and optimistic despite everything they had suffered in Auschwitz. They were still able to look to the future and free themselves from their traumatic past. Peninah Zakkar, daughter of Josef, remembered:

"Although my father lost most of his family in Auschwitz, although he had to spend many months in the undressing room in Birkenau with thousands of Jews standing there naked minutes before being gassed, he was determined not to let the past dominate his present life. He was always looking forward, never backward. The smile on his face never disappeared. He was practical, sensible, caring, generous. Auschwitz was not in the air in our home. Never! My father did not forget Auschwitz, of course, but he was able to suppress it completely. For this I am very thankful to him."[46]

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46 Peninah Zakkar

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Arie Shapira was born in Kibbutz Affikim, located in the Jordan Valley, in November 29th. 1943. In 1947 his family moved to Petach-Tiqva. His father Dr. Joseph Shapira was appointed Head of Internal Department in a newly founded hospital. Arie Shapira studied philosophy in Tel-Aviv University (1962-19645) and in the Music Academy in Tel-Aviv (1963-1968). Arie Shapira studied under Oeden Partos. Mordechai Seter, Abel Ehrlich and Gary Bertini. Arie Shapira was awarded Prime-Minister Prize for Composition in 1986. In 1994 Arie Shapira was awarded Israel-Prize for Composition and Teaching. Professor Shapira has been teaching in Music Department in Haifa University since 1995.

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Miriam Rieck (ed.)

Social interactions after massive traumatization

Was the Holocaust survivors' encounter with the post-war society conductive for generating private and collective memories?

(Friedens- und Demokratiepsychologie, Bd. 8). 2009. 108 S., brosch., 1 Abb., € 12,90,
ISBN 978-3-936014-19-8.

The book examines the problematic encounter between Holocaust survivors and the absorbing society, a conflictual situation that caused the survivors secondary traumatization and brought about in the absorbing society false interpretations concerning the Holocaust sequels, as well as mistaken conceptions as to life during traumatization. The absorbing society, rather than learning from the survivors' own words, relied on obsolete and irrelevant psychological and psychiatric theories, thus creating a rift between both groups.
A theoretical contribution (Wolfgang Frindte) describes memory as a social phenomenon, materializing in social settings and not in the individual as isolated from society.
Relying on interviews and documents from real time, life during persecution (Gideon Greif) is exemplified through the Sonderkommando men's unique and not so well known experience.
Barbara Preitler described her work in another trauma-ridden society – Sri Lanka – living for decades under war and murder, and additionally haunted by the tsunami.
Miriam Rieck compared the survivors' words to beliefs of the general population and professionals' diagnoses, thus demonstrating that the guilt feelings and conspiracy of silence, so often attributed to survivors are at best an exaggerated generalization.
Hadas Wiseman presents through relational interviews the long-term intergenerational effects of the Holocaust on survivors' offspring.
Henry Greenspan, based on years of experience, demonstrates how such survivors' accounts can evolve over multiple retellings and in different settings.
This broad and encompassing presentation may shed new light on the old problem of mistaken understandings and generalizations concerning life during persecution and unwarranted generalizations about later effects of the Holocaust on its survivors.

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