

Our Holocaust:  
Feminism, Therapeutic Culture, and the Identity Politics of the “Second Generation”

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Abstract

Dominant interpretations of the rise of Holocaust consciousness in America in the 1970s and 80s attribute it to the influence of non-survivor Jewish elites, focusing on the institutionalization of memorials and museums. Such interpretations understate the important roles played by children of survivors in bringing Holocaust stories into the public domain. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and personal experience, I document how children of survivors utilized feminist and therapeutic ideas to develop a collective identity as the “second generation.” This movement, as I show, made storytelling a vehicle for self-transformation, collective identification and social action. Like other identity-based collectivities, children of survivors were a diverse group of individuals who possessed a range of personalities, experiences and political sympathies. By fusing the personal and the political, the “second generation” movement tried to weld these differences into a coherent whole and represent the values and aspirations of those it sought to represent. It was very much a product of its time and place, and was criticized by those who saw it as overly psychological, and insufficiently political. Holocaust survivors, products of a very different moment, did not, on the whole, share this psychological orientation. And yet it was partly through their children’s efforts that survivors’ experiences eventually received greater public recognition.

Key words: Holocaust, children of survivors, identity politics, therapeutic culture

In the 1970s, as approximately 250,000 children of survivors in the US moved into young adulthood, they fused feminism, ethnic politics, and humanistic psychology to develop a collective identity as the “second generation.” It was a movement led primarily by psychologists who were themselves children of survivors, who urged their peers to “break the silence” about their familial legacy and make storytelling a vehicle for self-transformation, collective identification and social action. By most accounts, it began in

1974, when five children of survivors, three women and two men sat around a table and published their conversation in *Response*, a Jewish magazine with a circulation of 3,000. They were graduate students and social workers, and highly educated; several had been born in Europe during the war, or in displaced persons camps immediately afterwards.

They wrote the following:

Thirty years after World War II, the memory of the Holocaust lingers with us. For most survivors, it has a daily effect. It also influences the thinking of the children of Holocaust survivors. Five of us, all in our twenties, got together in January 1975, to discuss this part of our heritage. We wanted to examine the extent to which our “Weltanschauung” is determined by the World War II experiences of our parents and families. Much of this is guesswork. We found that perspectives we thought were unique were in fact common to the whole group. More significantly, in our minds these perspectives were a result of the direct role the Holocaust played in our childhoods.<sup>1</sup>

For families of Holocaust survivors living in the United States decades after the end of World War II the war was far from over. Indeed, as these children of survivors suggested, their parents’ wartime experiences continued to exert a formative influence upon their lives. It was the first time the “second generation” declared its existence in print.

In what is now perhaps the dominant account of the evolution of Holocaust consciousness in the postwar US, Peter Novick documents how American Jewish leaders, after paying little attention to Holocaust for three decades after end of World War II, became dedicated to the project of Holocaust memory, establishing museums and memorials, lobbying for the teaching of Holocaust history, and incorporating Holocaust memory into Jewish rituals. Novick is highly critical of this development. The push for Holocaust memorialization, he argues, became a way for Jewish leaders to discipline their own ranks, stave off assimilation and curry sympathy for the Zionist project, anchoring a collective Jewish identity “in the agony of European Jewry,” and benefiting

from the “moral privilege accompanying such certification.”<sup>2</sup> The end result, he says, is an “angry insistence on the uniqueness of the Holocaust,” its transformation into the “emblematic Jewish experience,” and a collective wallowing in tragedy which evades moral and historical responsibility for ongoing mass violence occurring across the globe.<sup>3</sup> The increasing visibility of the Holocaust in American life is, he argues, a fundamentally conservative development that does little more than further Jewish tribalism.<sup>4</sup>

Novick sees the rise of Holocaust consciousness in the US as “the result of a series of choices made by American Jewry about how to deal with that memory—in practice, usually choices made by Jewish leaders, tacitly ratified by their constituents.”<sup>5</sup> If survivors played roles, he says, they often came late, and their participation was little more than window dressing, designed to lend authenticity to these memorial projects. The strength of his argument is that he takes seriously the sociological insight that what is remembered at any given moment, and what stories are told about those memories, has a great deal to do with the moment in which they are remembered. Collective memory is always selective, shaped by the needs of the present as much as by the past.<sup>6</sup>

But there is much more to this story than Novick suggests. By viewing Holocaust consciousness as the triumph of a cynical, self-interested and rather conservative set of elites, Novick fails to see the grassroots nature of this movement.<sup>7</sup> An important impetus for Holocaust recognition, as I will show in the following, came from the descendants of survivors. This cohort had a tremendous personal stake in remembering the Holocaust, and played a central role in the rise of Holocaust memory, flying largely under the radar. They had come of age in the wake of the 1960s, and the movements of African Americans, women, and others. They were shaped by the currents of the time, and

particularly by feminism and therapeutic culture.

During the past four decades, therapeutic discourse has become a dominant cultural form, shaping and organizing experience.<sup>8</sup> The therapeutic paradigm demands “public revelation of one’s darkest (familial) secrets.” It suggests that “self examination can be freeing.” And it urges individuals to make their private emotions public.<sup>9</sup> In the 1970s and 80s, sociologist Eva Illouz suggests, a discursive alliance between therapeutic culture and feminism created such cultural milestones as “Oprah,” the diagnosis of “post-traumatic stress” and the “recovery movement.” As therapeutic discourse and specifically the expanding definition of “trauma” became an important cultural resource with which to narrate the self, feminism became preoccupied with psychological themes. Probing the past and revealing one’s personal injuries became central to understandings of the self. Across the nation, communities of alcoholics, teenage children of alcoholics, women who love too much, and victims of sexual abuse—formed collective identities based on common suffering and encouraged their participants to publicly acknowledge their injuries. These “therapeutic social movements,” operating on the border of the personal and the public spheres, made selfhood a narrative to be shared publicly. They subjected the nuclear family, once considered the preserve of “private” life, to newfound scrutiny. They encouraged self-examination and the expression of emotions in public and valorized storytelling as a route to personal and political transformation. In order to claim a sense of personhood and authenticity, they declared, one must acknowledge past injuries and reveal those injuries to others.

In relation to the quest for Holocaust recognition, children of survivors, particularly those who had been influenced by feminism, became the primary carriers of

this emergent therapeutic consciousness. Dedicated to “breaking the silence” about the Holocaust by speaking publicly about what it was like to grow up with survivor parents, they urged their parents to do likewise, helping to move the previously taboo topic of the Holocaust into the public domain. Without feminism and therapeutic culture, and the efforts of children of survivors, I will argue, Holocaust consciousness would look very different than it does today. Yet the Holocaust “second generation,” a highly literate cohort that has produced voluminous memoirs and literary texts, has not yet been studied as a sociological phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> In the following, I draw upon interviews with leaders of that movement and fieldwork among support groups, both face to face and electronic, to document and analyze its politics of identity, and what it tells us about the politics of Holocaust memory in the postwar United States.<sup>11</sup>

### Becoming the “Second Generation”

As the 1974 *Response* conversation suggested, World War II was often a taboo subject in the homes of children of survivors: their parents tended not to talk about it, and their children rarely if ever asked-- they didn’t want to cause them more pain. “When I was born,” said Dina Weinstein, “my parents decided never to mention the Holocaust . . . They were going to forget all the pain, the past, and start anew, have faith again, I guess.”<sup>12</sup> The participants in that early gathering spoke about their surprise when they realized that some children had grandparents, about the difficulty of having faith after the Holocaust, about their attitudes toward Zionism—some were fervent supporters of Israel and others less so—and about their ambivalence about the term “Holocaust” itself—the ways it seemed to transform the genocide into a definable, understandable “thing,” when it did not seem understandable at all. They discussed their involvement in campus

politics, whether they were responsible to make the world a better place, and they ways they were shaped by the student movements of the 1960s, even as they stood apart from them. “I have always been extremely uncomfortable in the whole political arena because of the huge mob, say in front of Low Library at Columbia in ’69,” said Anita Norich, “that always scared the hell out of me. When people would chant, ‘Stop the war now!’ I was never able to respond.”<sup>13</sup> Others agreed: they had a constitutional allergy to political rallies, which they likened to unruly, potentially fascist, mobs.

And finally, and most importantly, they discussed their relationships with their parents, which they described with a great deal of love (when their discussion was reprinted in a book it was dedicated: “To Our Parents—who did so much more than survive”) and resentment, too, for the expectation that they could or would redeem their parents’ losses. Foreshadowing what would become the movement’s trademark blend of psychological introspection and identity politics, Anita Norich spoke of the tension that she and other children of survivors felt between fulfilling their own needs and meeting their parents’ expectations, which she understood as a clash between American individualistic ideals and a more traditional conception of familial obligation.

Reconciling the tension between being independent and finding fulfillment and meeting parents’ expectations is something I haven’t been able to do. Trying to make certain breaks while maintaining ties to home has been an impossible thing to achieve. The reverse is also impossible. I still can’t figure out how we reconcile being children of survivors, and yet adults and professionals in America.<sup>14</sup>

As this early articulation of what would become known as the “second generation” suggested, children of survivors were caught between two worlds: the world of their parents, which demanded loyalty and placed expectations on their children to redeem their losses, and a dominant culture of self-reliance and generational politics in which

children were encouraged to break away from their parents. Their parents failed to understand the contradictory ways they were urging their children to remain tied to them, and yet expecting them to be successful and ambitious. In addition to feeling misunderstood by their parents, they also felt misunderstood by their peers and by non-survivor Jews. Their friends saw their loyalty to their parents as a failure to assert their independence, and like other non-survivor Jews had little understanding of the war, and its impact upon their families. Meyer Goldstein suggested that being a survivor's son had "made [him] very private in certain Jewish activities, and in terms of political demonstrations and other events." Somehow, he said, "I see it as having made me closed-up about certain aspects of my Jewishness."<sup>15</sup> The only ones who seemed to fully understand them, they declared, were other children of survivors. "The most support I've gotten on this question," said Dina Weinstein, "has been from children of other Holocaust survivors." During the previous two or three years, Meyer Goldstein revealed, the people he had become closest to were also children of survivors: "I think we instinctively know who we are; I can go into a room and immediately know who's one of us." And Lucy Steinitz agreed: "I have a sense based on our discussion tonight that there's a separate sub-community of Jews, and we're all a part of it."<sup>16</sup>

Two years later, journalist Helen Epstein also wrote publicly about growing up as a child of survivors, feeling marginal, harboring secrets, and having no one to discuss them with. Epstein had spent her early years in Israel, the child of survivors from Prague. Her mother had been in Bergen-Belsen; her father, once an Olympic swimmer, worked a dress cutter in New York's garment district. "My parents could not help me with this; they were part of it," she wrote. "Psychiatrists I distrusted," and names simply "disguised" her

experience. “There had to be,” she wrote, “an invisible, silent family scattered around the world, who shared her experiences.”<sup>17</sup> Her book, *Children of the Holocaust*, which interspersed her own story with the stories of other children of survivors, quickly became the bible of the “second generation” movement.

By telling personal stories about their lives and naming itself as the “second generation,” Epstein and others helped to transform their personal experiences into a collective identity, much as other groups in the 1960s and 70s had done before them. “We watched group after group—blacks, women, homosexuals, ethnics, single parents, students, even block associations, organize, brainstorm and air vital issues,” Epstein wrote. “Some of us joined other groups, but we did not form our own.”<sup>18</sup> Children of survivors comprised a “quiet, invisible community, a peer group without a sign.”<sup>19</sup> Shortly after these words were written, nearly two thousand children of survivors flocked to a conference in New York to share their experiences.

Like other postwar youth subcultures, children of survivors worked to “win cultural space” from the dominant culture, and the culture of their parents. But as the writer Melvin Bukiet suggested, a full-blown generational revolt was impossible; children of survivors’ rebellion therefore took less oppositional forms:

You were born in the 50s so you smoked dope and screwed around like everyone else. But your rebellion was pretty halfhearted, because how could you rebel against these people who endured such loss? Compared to them, what did you have to complain about?<sup>20</sup>

Recognizing the ambivalent position they were in, the “second generation” movement offered children of survivors the possibility of remaining linked to their families of origin, but in a fashion that would permit them to assert greater individual autonomy and

agency, fostering a “relational individualism” that situated them in relation to their parents—though without being merged with them.<sup>21</sup>

At the time, the oldest children of survivors were reaching their 30s, and the vast majority were in their 20s. They were beginning to create families and careers, and forge personal identities in the wake of an ethnic revival that made a preoccupation with roots central, and a women’s liberation movement that challenged norms of gender. The “second generation” was highly influenced by these two social movements, as well as by the growth of humanistic psychology. In the 1970s, the recognition of a group’s cultural distinctiveness, including the injuries it has sustained, emerged as a central demand of feminism, gay liberation and other “new” social movements.<sup>22</sup> This politics of recognition said to a public comprised largely of strangers: “attention must be paid to us.” “You must recognize and honor that which makes us different from you, and you must be acquainted with our culture and history.”<sup>23</sup> Influenced by these ideas, children of survivors believed that it was important to “break the silence” surrounding their parents’ losses, and by extension, their own.

During the previous decade, African American activists created a new language for identity that made difference a badge of pride. Black hair, black slave roots, black sensibilities were reclaimed as a source of distinction rather than something to be transcended in the interest of conforming to broader American norms. In the 1960s, after striving to conform to the Anglo-Saxon standard, descendents of earlier European immigrants followed suit, and as Matthew Frye Jacobson argues, they “quit the melting pot.”<sup>24</sup> Suddenly, having Italian, Jewish, Greek, or Irish lineage became something that was desirable. The ethnic revival spawned Greek dance groups, a resurgence of interest

in learning Polish and eating Polish food, the publications of such books as *The Joys of Yiddish*, and a growing interest in family genealogies. As ethnicity became an important part of the quest for identity among many descendants of European immigrants, many Jews who had enthusiastically embraced American identifications, aspiring to WASP status, began to proudly claim their Jewishness. As Jacobson tellingly observes, this shift in identifications “relocated normative whiteness” from Plymouth Rock to Ellis Island, creating a national myth of origins in which immigration was key. If earlier in the century, the “hyphenated American” was seen as un-American, in the 1960s, claiming immigrant status and ethnic lineage became key to national belonging.

The ethnic revival, coupled with a resurgent Zionism forged in the aftermath of the Israeli-Egyptian Six Day War, created receptive audiences for Holocaust stories. As American Jews turned their sights back to the Old Country, they came to see the destruction of European Jewry as a central aspect of Jewish experience. This recognition was made possible by the growing conceptual separation of the genocide from World War II and the popularization of the notion of a “Holocaust,” defined as the genocide of European Jewry, which facilitated the development of an understanding of the specific impact of the war on Jews.<sup>25</sup> In the 1970s, the first courses on the Holocaust, inspired by feminism, ethnic studies, and a growing emphasis placed on speaking one’s oppression, began to appear on college campuses. The Holocaust also figured in a growing number of television programs and films.<sup>26</sup> Holocaust memorialization had become, in Jonathan Woocher’s terms, a central aspect of American Jewish “civil religion,” emphasizing the unity of the Jewish people, mutual responsibility among Jews, and the “imperative of Jewish survival in a threatening world.”<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, the notion that earlier traumatic experiences could have an ongoing impact upon one's psychological health was increasingly being recognized by the psychiatric profession, fueled by the experiences of Vietnam veterans. Some clinicians became convinced that a "survivor syndrome," which bore close relationship to what was becoming known as "post traumatic stress disorder," had created a host of pathological symptoms among survivors. "Survivor syndrome" entered the psychological lexicon, and the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, in 1980 under the PTSD diagnosis.<sup>28</sup> In *Children of the Holocaust*, Helen Epstein described her ambivalence toward the idea of "survivor syndrome." One problem with the concept, she suggested, was that it was too particular: it positioned the survivors and saw their experiences apart from a much larger population of those who had been traumatized by war, including non-Jewish prisoners who had survived Hitler's concentration camps, or Japanese internment, or Soviet labor camps, the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Roma, Armenians, as well as Asians and Africans who "had escaped wholesale slaughter, had been forced to emigrate, and who had rebuilt their lives elsewhere."

A second problem, Epstein said, was that the notion of a "survivor syndrome" pathologized the survivors and "ignored the strengths [we] had observed in our parents."<sup>29</sup> The sheer fact of having survived and created families suggested that the survivors possessed a great deal of resilience, she and other argued. Indeed, Terence Des Pres' book *The Survivor* emphasized the survivors' "faith in life."<sup>30</sup> Early second generation activists agreed:

Their faith is their strength—and our heritage. What greater expression of this exists than the desire by survivors to marry and have children, despite years of personal confrontation with death and destruction? Our birth was a miracle. Who in the death camps would have guessed it?"<sup>31</sup>

And as Epstein noted in an even more nuanced formulation: “We had all grown up in situations of great complexity, acutely aware of how our parents were driven by an impetus toward life as well as death.”<sup>32</sup>

This dovetailed with a growing appreciation of individual resilience in the face of trauma, and the belief that by talking about their experiences victims of trauma could work through the past and transform themselves into “survivors.” But many, if not most, Holocaust survivors refused to talk. Even many children of survivors who sought out mental health treatment rarely spoke about their parents’ experiences to their therapists and if they did, they were often met with the response that they that they should break away from their parents—something that few could or would do. But as Lucy Steinitz suggested, the further away from the terrible events, the more parents talked, and the more curious their children were becoming:

The silence of many of our parents has instilled a public sense of taboo about discussing the Holocaust from which we are only now beginning to emerge . . . We have only recently gained the emotional distance necessary to cope with many of the major influences the Holocaust has imprinted on our lives.”<sup>33</sup>

Still, most children of survivors had little capacity to prod their parents to share much about their wartime experiences, which operated as the proverbial “elephant in the room” in many families, often with detrimental effects.<sup>34</sup>

Eva Fogelman and Bella Savran, daughters of survivors and psychotherapists, became convinced that there was a need to address the psychological health of children of survivors. They came of age and received professional training at a time when psychology was becoming more sanguine about the possibility of individual change, and promoting a much more populist vision of the benefits that could accrue to those who

were open to psychological insight. Humanistic psychology, founded by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow in the 1940s, offered an optimistic version of existentialism that saw personhood as a process of ongoing renewal, and psychology as offering individuals insight with which to grow and realize their full human potential—Maslow’s “self actualized” individuals. In the 1960s, humanistic psychology provided an alternative to conventional psychotherapy, melding the countercultural belief in the importance of achieving a “new consciousness” with a focus on individual change.<sup>35</sup>

Early radical feminists had assimilated these views of the potential inherent in human selves to change, and the subjective grounding of political consciousness. They established consciousness-raising (CR) groups, encouraging introspection, emotional self-exposure, and the sharing of personal, experiential testimony. Fusing psychotherapy and politics, and viewing personal insight and public storytelling as vehicles for social transformation, these groups made the personal political.<sup>36</sup> Consciousness-raising considered personal experience and insight the purest form of truth; experience was seen as the origin of knowledge and the solution to social problems. By making experience visible—such as women’s silent complicity to male violence—one could build social movements to effect change.

Informed by these ideas, Fogelman and Savran believed that children of survivors could be guided to help themselves. Instead of encouraging them to make use of individual therapy with a non-survivor therapist positioned as experts but who shared little of their experiences, they decided to organize support groups for children of survivors, and placed a notice in a Boston alternative weekly inviting children of Holocaust survivors to participate. Within a year, nearly one hundred individuals in the

Boston area alone responded. They formed short-term groups of eight sessions in which children of survivors talked about being different, about what it was like to be Jewish, and what it was like to grow up in survivor families. Fogelman recalls that “they would share all kinds of examples of how their parents were affected by the Holocaust to see whether it was the same in other households, and felt relieved that their household was not as crazy as they might have thought it was when they heard others’ stories.”<sup>37</sup> In the mid-1970s, groups formed in New York and other cities as well.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that many children of survivors were attracted to such groups was itself a sign of a changed generational consciousness. Most survivors saw therapy as a mark of mental abnormality, and like many of their generation, as the prelude to psychiatric hospitalization. But by the 1970s, the psychological profession was changing, and with it its place in American life. Humanistic psychology was calling into question the medical model of psychology and encouraging many more people to consult psychologists in order to cope with a “normal” dose of emotional anguish.<sup>39</sup> Psychological consciousness was becoming seen as something as desirable, rather than something to be feared, as this child of survivors suggested:

Our parents’ generation survived by forgetting. Denial was a survival mechanism. The second generation “survives” by remembering. Our parents grew up in a generation and a culture where you didn't talk about 'unpleasant' things, you swept them under the carpet, you put on a brave face. And emotions were something negative that you tried not to reveal. Were you ever told, 'Don't be so emotional!' I think we, their children, have had a lot of unlearning to do, and to accept that our feelings, good and bad, are valid and don't need to be suppressed or denied. And we're together on the same journey!<sup>40</sup>

## Breaking the Silence

A 1984 documentary about the “second generation” was called, appropriately, “Breaking the Silence.” In the film, Eva Fogelman speaks of her experience as a feminist, and how she came to believe that she needed to make a contribution in her own community by bringing to light the problems facing children of survivors. The film features the stories of half a dozen individuals, interviewed when they were in their 20s and 30s, and their parents, and includes a variety of expert psychotherapists. It begins with a discussion of survivors’ descendants’ recollections of their childhood, and the unspoken ways their parents transmitted their legacy of trauma to their children. One man speaks about how he always felt that he had to compensate his parents for what had happened to them. A woman describes her father’s audible nightmares and their impact on her. Others describe parents who are unhappy people, and the ways they internalized their parents’ fears, and feelings of anger. A few tell of having rejected their parents, and their Jewish backgrounds. They describe their inability to trust others, their feelings of alienation and loneliness, about the corrosive effect of secrets, and the struggle to open lines of communication with their parents, who are often resistant.

Because children of survivors are frequently misunderstood, they must form groups to forge an understanding of who they are, the film suggests. “Auschwitz, Dachau: I had never before heard my peers speak these words,” one son of survivors declared. But being around other 2Gs, he says, helps him understand he is not alone. It opens up the possibility he might be able to reveal his secrets. “I felt that I was living in a little concentration camp of the mind,” one woman reveals. She wants to know about her mother’s wartime experiences and tells her parents: “I need you to respect my search. If

we don't know, what happens to the memory?" Her mother tells the camera: "I can't do it. I can't speak."

In the film, psychiatrist Robert Lifton, who organized the first "rap groups" for Vietnam Veterans, describes the Holocaust "second generation" as a social movement that is "insisting on feeling, upon being true to their own history, confronting their own history." Indeed, the film is designed to further that movement, to encourage other children of survivors to band together, and begin to talk to their parents about the past. The film is also designed to be shown to survivors, to get them to talk to their children. "When we break down the walls of silence," it declares, "we discover new strengths in ourselves and our families."<sup>41</sup>

To provide further evidence for the existence of a discursive alliance between therapeutic culture and feminism, another documentary film called "Breaking Silence" appeared a few years after this film, and had a similar structure --but this film dealt with the theme of child sexual abuse. It drew on personal stories told by incest survivors and their families. It told the story of a woman who as a girl who was repeatedly molested by her father, and the story of a man who as a young boy was molested by an older boy who was a close family friend. These incidents, the film suggests, create a web of silent pain as victims are told not to speak. By juxtaposing images of happy families gathered around the Christmas tree with the reality of the interviewees traumatic experiences, the film reveals the private sphere to be a realm of secrets, lies, and violence, and argues that incest destroys trust and diminishes the lives of its victims many years after the fact.

Utilizing interviews with expert psychologists and sociologists, the film speaks of the pervasiveness of sexual abuse and introduces the possibility that memories of past

abuse may be repressed, creating pathologies such as sexual impairment and overeating. It celebrates survivors who are finding the courage to "break silence" and take back their lives, arguing "You don't have to be a victim. You can break the power of the past by telling others." As one adult male victim tells the audience: "It's important to share these things, so people know that these things do happen." Only by breaking the silence can one create a new life and help other victims.<sup>42</sup>

Both films call upon individuals who are confronted with a traumatic event that is, in the clinical definition, "outside the range of usual human experience," to master that trauma by speaking about it with others. They grapple with the legacy of family memories and how they are passed down generationally and depict a struggle between parents and children, in which parents exert enormous power over their children. Both see the silencing of difficult family secrets as highly problematic and urge individuals to throw off those secrets, and assert clearer generational boundaries. And both films value the expression of emotions and see that expression as part of the recovery process, urging individuals to "get in touch with feelings" of shame and anger and express them openly.

In the sexual abuse movement, the process of breaking the silence is facilitated by a script, in which the suffering individual is guided in coming terms with a difficult past, and becomes a witness on his or her own behalf.<sup>43</sup> Ellen Bass and Laura Davis's bestselling book, *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, is the paradigmatic guide, taking readers through a series of stages, as illustrated by its chapter titles: "The Decision to Heal; The Emergency Stage; Remembering, Believing it Happened; Breaking Silence; Understanding that it Wasn't Your Fault; Making Contact with the Child Within; Trusting Yourself; Grieving and Mourning;

Anger—the Backbone of Healing; Disclosures and Confrontations; Forgiveness?” and finally, “Spirituality, Resolution and Moving On.”<sup>44</sup> The book intersperses self-help advice with the personal testimonials of survivors of sexual abuse, including one woman who describes her sister’s sexual abuse experiences as being comparable to survivors of Nazism.

The sexual abuse movement codified and circulated a “transformative traumatic memory script” designed to guide the individual through the process of recovery. First came the recognition that the past is a personal as well as a political problem; second is the injunction to overcome silence; and third comes the call for testimony—a public sharing of autobiographical information-- as a means of transforming silence into speech. Through this script individuals with disparate experiences could understand and narrate their experiences to others, overcoming their most injurious effects. Even those who had endured unimaginable horror could “heal” themselves through acts of storytelling.<sup>45</sup> Sociologist Ken Plummer, who studied the ways the women’s movement, the lesbian and gay movement, and the recovery movement encouraged certain types of sexual storytelling, found that a common cultural trope uniting these movements is the modernist logic of the triumphant individual—one who has “suffered, survived, and surpassed.”<sup>46</sup> One can certainly see this in both “breaking the silence” films.

A striking difference between these two films, and the movements they reflect, is the role played by the figure of the parent. In the sexual abuse movement, parents (and less frequently, older relatives or family friends) are implicated as perpetrators, and do not appear on screen --with the exception of one mother who speaks of becoming increasingly aware of the fact that her husband had abused their three daughters, and

joins with them in condemning him. Sexual abuse victims are, as a rule, depicted in opposition to their parents. As Janice Haaken describes the movement against sexual abuse: “it signified an awareness of ‘boundary violations,’ particularly in female development.” At the same time, it represented a “collective deidealization of fathers in patriarchal families and a search for a morally sanctioned bridge out of binding familial obligations.”<sup>47</sup>

For children of survivors, whose parents are the victims, things are somewhat more complicated. Their parents play a somewhat ambivalent role in the quest for transformation: they hold the status of “real” victims and are seen as deserving of empathy, and yet their silence, which was designed to protect themselves and their children, is declared to be the immediate problem that demands redress. Who does silence really protect, asks the film “Breaking the Silence?” The answer, the film suggests, is no one. For their parents’ generation, denial and silence may have been a route to normalization, but for their generation it blocks self-awareness and recovery. Consequently, the film is designed to get their parents to speak, for their sake as well as for their own, and to initiate familial dialogues about the legacy of Holocaust. Comparing these two films, we can clearly see how feminist and therapeutic ideas encouraged sexual abuse victims and children of Holocaust survivors to form distinctive subcultures in which individuals were encouraged to speak publicly about their families in order to exercise greater agency over their lives.

## “Coming Out” as a Child of Survivors

Pam Neuborne (a pseudonym) is a child of survivors who lives in Philadelphia. Her Polish-born mother survived Auschwitz and the death march at the war’s end, and was liberated by Russian troops, losing her entire family except for one brother. Pam’s father was from a small town in Czechoslovakia, and grew up in a highly religious family. When Germany declared war, he fled to Russia and went into hiding, and was captured and spent the war in different labor camps. Pam’s parents met in a displaced persons camp in Germany after the war. When her mother learned that she had an uncle in Philadelphia, he arranged for them to come to the US. They were in their twenties when they arrived.

As a child, Pam remembers feeling “different,” aware of not having grandparents when other children did, and of her father’s intense anger and emotional outbursts, and her mother’s sadness. Her father was mostly silent; her mother told her stories at various points about what she endured during the war, leaving out the most traumatic episodes, and these stories were always accompanied by tears. Her parents socialized little with others. Pam speaks of having “low self esteem,” of always “feeling like an outsider,” and being a “worrier.” She says did not consciously connect her familial dynamics—her father’s criticisms, her mother’s sadness, the silences and mystery surrounding her parents’ pasts-- with her family’s Holocaust legacy until she was in her late thirties.

Then, Pam says, “I got in touch with...the beginnings of...what it might have been like for my parents. Up to that point, I don't think I wanted to think about it. I don't think it was real. I think going to Dachau actually made it real. And . . . when I came back,

within a few months, I had fully identified myself with the children of survivors.” She bought a copy of Helen Epstein’s *Children of the Holocaust*, read it, and joined a support group for children of survivors that became, as she describes it, a surrogate family. She described meeting the group for the first time:

Within five minutes, we were all incredibly comfortable sharing our deep-most thoughts with one another, knowing that we would be really listened to and understood, because the feelings were shared by many of us. I would say that there was very, very little I didn't relate to that was shared that night. These are not friends. These are family of mine. And I think that's another thing that held us together too. We had no other family, and so this was an extended family for all of us. Absolutely it was.<sup>48</sup>

This feeling of mutual recognition was also evident in a similar group I attended in Berkeley, California, held at a Jewish community center near the university in the early 1980s. There were about eight of us, ranging in age from our early 20s to late 30s, and evenly divided among men and women. At our first meeting, we started by talking about where our parents came from, and went around the room sharing information. One man revealed:

Both my parents are from Poland. My mother, after spending time in numerous camps was liberated at the age of 13 from Auschwitz. My grandmother survived, as did an aunt who had been hidden by a Polish family. My father’s family were forced from their town in 1940 by the Germans and led to the Soviet Union. They were together until the war ended. In 1946 my grandparents were killed by Poles along with nine others trying to cross the border in Czechoslovakia ...

Many of us knew next to nothing about our parents’ wartime pasts, which had been off-limits for discussion, and simply gave the names of the countries where their parents were born. I knew a minimal amount about my father’s wartime experiences, and shared the following:

My father was from Warsaw and spent the war years in Russia in hiding, and in a Soviet labor camp. He returned to Poland after the war, and learned that his entire family had been killed. I don't know how or where. My mother was born in Poland but grew up in England. She was not a 'survivor' per se, though most of her extended family had been murdered as well.

I spoke haltingly, having never talked about my family in public, and rarely even with my closest friends. They never asked; there was never really a place for it.

There were vast differences among us. Some of us grew up with parents who talked incessantly of their wartime experiences and murdered relatives. Others were mainly silent. Some grew up in religious households, where one's commitment to Jewish identity was considered a pox on Hitler's plan; for others, the war created a breach with God. One woman in my group, whom I befriended for a while, discovered she was Jewish when she was nearly 30, and carried the scars of a youth strangely out of kilter, which included an obsessive relationship with food. Another man described an abusive father who took his unhappiness out on his son by regularly hitting him with shiny leather belt. He was one of a couple of people in the group who were clearly subject to abuse by their emotionally unstable parents.

We were misfits, tortured souls, overachievers, but what held us together as a group? If a generation is defined by historical experience and attitudes or beliefs that follow from it, then the "second generation" may be a very tenuous instance of it, Eva Hoffman suggests.<sup>49</sup> We often felt misunderstood by our parents as well as our peers, and seemed to share feelings of ambivalence toward our injured, overprotective parents. Even those of us who seemed to lead successful lives had difficulty separating from our parents, and claiming our own selfhood, and we were all conflicted enough by it all to know that we needed help.

During an early meeting of our group, one man described how each day, when he left home, he always had to call their parents to tell them they had arrived safely, and signal them by telephoning them, ringing twice. Someone chimed in immediately: me too. And then another and another said the same. Another said that his family's signal was three rings. A man added: "One ring was always a risk. Or at least that's what my mom concluded. It might not have been heard, and then she would have been in limbo." Another revealed a fact about himself. Each day, when he left home, he always had to call their parents to tell them they had arrived safely, and signal them by telephoning them, ringing twice.

It was a humorous give-and-take that mocked the free-floating anxiety that circulated within many survivor families, making parents cautious, fearful and over-protective of their children. Mothers, in particular, seemed visibly worried at the drop of a hat, believing that their loved ones will suddenly disappear at the drop of a hat, snatched by some shadowy stranger. It all seemed very familiar to me; my mother did the same. It seemed normal growing up, until I went out into the world and found out that most families don't do the same. Some of the talk reminded me of another support group I attended just a couple of years earlier: a "coming out" group for lesbians. When a group of lesbian strangers came together, the first thing they often did was tell each other their coming out stories—elaborate, often painstaking accounts of when they were first aware of their same sex attractions, their first sexual experiences, when they first named themselves, realizing that they were not the only one, that there was a name and an identity and a culture that could anchor their experiences. These stories were the currency of a subculture, binding it together, transforming alienation into solidarity.

Second generation groups shared with feminist conscious-raising groups, sexual abuse survivor support groups and lesbian/gay “coming out” groups the belief that speech is better than silence, that disclosure can combat stigma, and that healing is possible. Like coming out as a gay or lesbian, or as an incest survivor, coming out as a “child of survivors” was a process that followed, more or less, a definable trajectory: first came the recognition that the past is a personal as well as a political problem; second was the injunction to overcome silence; and third came the call for testimony as a way of transforming silence into speech. However, while gay/lesbian coming out groups had a clear goal of enabling individuals to do whatever was necessary to claim a homosexual identity, including separating from their families of origin if necessary, second generation groups encouraged their participants to stay connected to their parents, albeit in a less “merged” way.

As I have suggested, the second generation movement fused a number of different ideologies and discursive forms circulating in the mid-1970s, including the ethnic revival, identity politics, and the self-help movement. They shared the belief that the past plays a key role in shaping the present, that “identity” is the proper terrain of politics, that experience is a transparent form of truth, and that by speaking openly about personal pain healing is possible. The identity politics of the second generation anticipated the growing cultural salience of trauma and post-traumatic stress even if it rarely articulated itself in those terms. Like the movement against sexual abuse that emerged alongside it, its understanding of trauma collapsed the distinction between public and private, suggesting that public traumas, such as war and genocide, are lived within the supposedly “private” sphere of the family. For survivors of the Holocaust and their descendents, as for

survivors of sexual abuse, they suggested, trauma was not exceptional or catastrophic: It was part of everyday life. Like other post-sixties social movements that shared an emphasis upon identity, the second generation saw itself as engaged in a struggle for recognition of that which had been individualized and hidden—in this case, the Holocaust and its ongoing effects—and it saw that struggle as a political one.

### Boundaries and the Quest for Relational Individualism

As the 1974 conversation published in *Response* suggested, many children of encountered difficulties managing the psychological boundaries between themselves and their parents. Their parents, for their part, were overprotective, expecting their children to redeem their losses and become, as Dina Weinstein had put it, “nachas machines,” invoking the Yiddish word for pride gained from one’s children or grandchildren. They complained that their parents were unable to see them as separate individuals, and often lived through them, and that they wished to separate but they felt protective of their parents, and guilty if they asserted their own needs. This led to resentment. And indeed, this became a primary theme of the support groups, as children of survivors came to ask: who are we in relation to our parents? What do we owe them? Who are we to whine when our parents suffered so much? How can separate from them without hurting them?

Psychoanalysts suggest that in the ideal developmental scenario early attachments resolve themselves through a gradual distancing from the parents, and a more considered balance between criticism and sympathy, attachment and autonomy. But for many members of the second generation, the urge to protect their parents clashed head-on with

the need to protect themselves, and conflicts often became acute. Children of survivors often felt overwhelmed by the weight of their responsibility, subjugating their own needs to their parents. Others, in an attempt to avoid excessive empathy, chose anger or cold detachment. “I suspect,” writes Eva Hoffman, “that, in our progress to adulthood, most children of survivors were caught on their private see-saws, oscillating between the demands of autonomy and attachment, self-sacrifice and self-interest.”<sup>50</sup> These conflicts were clearly evident in support groups I attended.

Nearly fifteen years after my initial participation in a second-generation support group in Berkeley, California, I joined a “virtual” support group, an Internet listserv for children of survivors. Many of the conflicts I observed in my first support group were still evident, though in somewhat altered form. By this time, the second generation was solidly in middle age, and many of our parents were now dead, or at the end of our lives, and yet the conflicts that I observed earlier were clearly evident. One man talked about the fact that as a child he “just wanted to be like all the other kids.” He declared that he didn’t want to deal with:

all the incomprehensible misery that was just below the surface in my parents. Of course I realize that ‘my plight’ as a child of survivors pales in the extreme compared to their experiences. Nevertheless, I now accept these feelings of resentment as being inevitable and unhealthy to deny.<sup>51</sup>

Many others described similar conflicting feelings toward their parents, and a number of individuals spoke of over-identifying with their parents, and their traumatic pasts, fantasizing about their prewar and wartime experiences, and reading obsessively about the Holocaust. One woman described a friend who imagined that she had been Auschwitz, like her mother. For eight years she obsessively read books on the Holocaust and couldn’t stop. “Every time she thinks she’s had enough and can’t bear to read one

more word on the subject she finds another book and starts reading again. It sounds to me like she's got a problem."<sup>52</sup> And a son of survivors acknowledged similar problems:

Somehow I've taken on a survivor's identity, and feel so much like it all happened to me, that I must feel the sorrow, take it away from my parents. I feel that my life is an assignment, a mission to make up for my parents' losses and give meaning to their survival. This motivates my extensive community work. It is also a burden. I have so strongly identified with this that I've taken on much of my father's identity, his mannerisms, his humor, his sorry and depression, his emotional inaccessibility.<sup>53</sup>

Evidencing a similar sense of blurred self-other boundaries, a daughter of survivors shared the fact that she had seen the movie *Fiddler on the Roof* four times, often crying uncontrollably. At one point she learned that her parents had lived lives similar to Tevye and his family, in a shtetl in Eastern Europe. Yet the movie, she admitted, "upset me even before I knew I was a peasant."<sup>54</sup> This American-born child of survivors was clearly never a peasant, yet she had internalized her parent's stories, and their experiences, so completely. Often these identifications were carried in bodies and unconscious thoughts. A number of individuals revealed that they carried their parents' distress on their bodies, in the form of rashes or nervous tics, and many had recurrent dreams about the Holocaust. For most of their families, emotional intensity was the general rule, pulling family members ever inward, and they resented their parents' accents, their difference. As children they wanted to be like other kids.

Over time, the emotional demands placed on them led many children of survivors to distance themselves from their parents in order to claim a separate sense of self—a task that seemed particularly pressing as they moved into teenagehood, but which continued in middle age, as one woman explained:

I definitely do need to put distance between my parents and myself, not so much because I hate them (I've moved well beyond that point, though it was the context in which I defined my relationship with them for much of my early life) but because I still have a hard time knowing how and where to establish the appropriate boundaries that keep me from feeling like I'm being swallowed up by their incredible emotional neediness."<sup>55</sup>

Another used the psychological language of boundaries to explain how she and her sister put as many miles between themselves and their parents as possible.

I wanted to stake a boundary line with people who had no concept of boundaries—for my father, we were property, for my mother, salvation, guardians... I felt totally negated and impotent, as if my hands were being chained, my voice muzzled. Whatever my experience—not the physical and emotional violence I experienced in my home, the paranoia, the overprotection, the irrational rage—it could never measure up to their survival, so the basic message went, it had no validity and deserved no sympathy.<sup>56</sup>

It had never occurred to her and many other children of survivors that there could be two different perspectives—their parents and theirs—coexisting in the world and that theirs might be perfectly legitimate, as this memoirist suggested:

I had no inkling of the possibility of, let alone, necessity for psychological boundaries, places beyond which others couldn't enter without invitation, and so naturally it had never dawned on me that I might be entitled to them. To me, private had always been equivalent to secret: my parents were coterminous with me—we were unicellular, an atom. Now fission was being proposed.<sup>57</sup>

As adults, some came to rebel against being “nachas machines,” recognizing that no matter how well they did, and how much they wished to make their parents proud of them, it was never enough, and they could never redeem their parents' pain. Some tried to separate from their parents by refusing to listen to their stories—or by refusing to listen to them sympathetically; others made physical breaks to construct their own lives. They faced difficulties in expressing anger toward parents, seeing them as vulnerable and feeling responsible for them. Even those who seemed relatively unscathed by the severest

of separation-attachment “issues” experienced their relationship with their parents as a difficult balancing act: “We have to balance our mental health—which has an impact on our spouses and children—and our need to nurture ourselves, against the need to support the parents who mental (and physical) health is poor,” wrote Irene. “We cannot sacrifice this generation and the next on the altar of being good to the survivor generation.”<sup>58</sup> And yet most admitted that they were not willing to give up on their parents:

I don’t resent [my parents] for who they are. Maybe when I was younger a little bit. I understand that they went through hell, and I’m just going to have to be accepting. I’m not going to be able to change them. So you even respect them or you distance yourself, or you don’t have anything to do with them. When you don’t have a family, it’s not an option. They’re the only family I have.<sup>59</sup>

For most children of survivors, leaving one’s family was not an option. Accordingly, second generation groups attempted to help individuals find a balance between separation and attachment, encouraging children of survivors to partially separate from their parents, and to see themselves in relation to them but in a less “merged” fashion. This entailed coming to a deeper understanding of their parents’ wartime experiences.

But parents typically needed coaxing in order to share their traumatic experiences with their children. Eva Fogelman recalled that in the early groups:

We had an initial interview where we would ask them a lot of questions so that by the time they got to the group they would already realize what gaps they had in terms of knowing what happened to their parents. Between the first and second group they would communicate with their parents, either in person or over the phone in order to get more information about what had happened to them. They reported back about the dialogue they had with their parents, what it was like to talk with their parents.<sup>60</sup>

But coaxing one’s parents out of their silence was rarely an easy task. “I want to know very badly,” said Lucy Steinitz, “yet I dread the moment of having to raise the issue”.<sup>61</sup>

Dina Weinstein recalled that “The older my mother gets, the more she recollects, not because we sit and talk about it (we never sit and talk about it because I don’t want to hear it from her) but because almost everything will spark off a memory of the way it used to be.”<sup>62</sup> She and others were afraid to communicate with their parents, fearing that they would go crazy, or cry uncontrollably, or have nightmares that night, if they dredged up the past. Yet many found that it was not as difficult as they had anticipated; often their parents were touched by their interest, and over time, many came to talk more and more.

When they first arrived in the United States, survivors were counseled by family and acquaintances, as well as by social workers and therapists, not to dwell on their wartime experiences.<sup>63</sup> Lacking a clearly defined role as authority on the Holocaust and fearing public exposure, they tended to downplay their wartime experiences in public. But that began to change in the early 1980s, due in part to the second generation’s efforts to make the personal political and “break the silence.” Video archives began to collect survivor testimonies, and the first International Gathering of Survivors took place in Jerusalem. The following decade, Steven Spielberg’s “Schindler’s List” and the Washington D.C. Holocaust Memorial Museum thrust the survivor into center stage as the authentic voice of Holocaust memory, and survivors became prized speakers in high school classrooms, sharing their stories with schoolchildren as part of Holocaust-focused curricula or more general lessons in “tolerance.”

## Too Much Memory?

The politicization of feelings and experiences that had been confined to the “private” realm of the family was not universally welcomed, however. Of the increasing visibility of Holocaust survivors in the 1980s and 90s, Peter Novick lamented that:

the cultural icon of the strong, silent hero is replaced by the vulnerable and verbose antihero. Stoicism is replaced as a prime value by sensitivity. Instead of enduring in silence, one lets it all hang out. The voicing of pain and outrage is alleged to be “empowering” as well as therapeutic.<sup>64</sup>

He was not alone. Jewish studies scholar Alvin Rosenfeld, in an influential essay in *Commentary*, similarly condemned the “cult of victimhood” which encouraged Holocaust commemoration to focus on “the self and its needs, the self and its pains.”<sup>65</sup> And Annette Wieviorka chastised fellow historians for relegating “reflection on [the Holocaust] to ... to the various “psys”—psychiatrists, psychologists, psychoanalysts”, lamenting that the authority of professional historians was being challenged by the growing influence of nonprofessional “witnesses”—namely Holocaust survivors and their descendants. The outpouring of survivor testimonies had become a kind of “social therapy” in which emotions are put on public display.<sup>66</sup>

British sociologist Frank Furedi, who identified himself as a child of survivors, lamented the fact that survivors were now speaking about publicly at all. “As I know from my own childhood,” he wrote:

many of the direct survivors of the death camps talked very little in public about their terrible experience. Their dignified, self-contained response stands in sharp contrast to the behaviour of their children and grandchildren today: the so-called second- and third-generation survivors. In recent years, some of the promoters of

second-generation survivor groups have even criticised their parents for bottling up their emotions and refusing to embrace a victim identity.<sup>67</sup>

Displaying emotions in public, he suggests, is tantamount to embracing a permanent victim identity.

Some second-generation activists were themselves wary of what they saw as the overly psychological emphasis of their movement. When Jeannette Friedman, the daughter of survivors who were highly religious, attended the first gathering for children of survivors, held in New York in 1969, she found it too psychologically oriented. It focused on the most disturbed children of survivors and lacked an activist slant, which she defined in relation to public, institutional change rather than individual, personal change in the therapeutic mode. Friedman was incensed by the fact that that there was little popular consciousness about the Holocaust either among American Jews—who “knew nothing about the Holocaust,” she said, or among non-Jews, such as those she met in Brooklyn College, where she was a student. Amid Black-Jewish riots at Brooklyn College in 1969, Friedman recalled that one woman told her “she had the right to bomb student center bathrooms because my father enslaved her grandfather down South.” Friedman retorted that her father was not a slaveholder—he was himself enslaved by Nazis—to which the other woman replied, incredulously: “Your father was a what?” At this point, Friedman “began to understand that nobody knew about the Holocaust.” Even her survivor parents, she said, were guilty of erasing its memory, refusing to speak of the Holocaust, and preferring to “emphasize the observance of Judaism in the good old fashioned European orthodox style.”

When she heard about an anti-Semitic incident in Fort Lee, New Jersey and the emergence of Holocaust deniers, it motivated Friedman to act. “For the first time in my

life,” she said, “I was seeing swastikas.” While she shared a desire for greater public recognition of the Holocaust, Friedman was not particularly sympathetic to the psychological emphasis of the existing “second generation” movement, however. “I wasn’t interested in what she called “psycho-social bullshit. I was interested in social action.”<sup>68</sup> She formed a second generation group that was more activist in emphasis, which called itself a “project for Holocaust education.” It convinced local synagogues in New Jersey, who were at first resistant, to integrate Holocaust commemoration into their annual activities, and responded to acts of anti-Semitism and racism when they occurred in the area. “We didn’t just sit around talking about ourselves,” she recalls.

Friedman echoed leftists’ critiques of identity politics: that it made a politics of “melancholy” and furthered a “political sentimentality” in which brooding over one’s losses prevents one from seizing possibilities for radical change in the present.<sup>69</sup>

Melancholy, which Freud defined as endless mourning, leads to an unhealthy fixation on lost objects or ideals, they believed. As a popular left political button proclaimed: “Don’t Mourn—Organize!” Some critics went even further, suggesting that a “Holocaust industry” instrumentalized melancholy, exploiting past Jewish suffering and evading moral and historical responsibility for ongoing mass violence occurring across the globe.<sup>70</sup>

Others were critical of the second generation’s fusion of psychology and politics on somewhat different grounds. In the interest of developing a collective identity founded upon victimhood, it erased individual differences, they believed. While sharing the experience of tremendous loss, survivors coped with that loss in different ways; some exhibited extreme “post-traumatic stress”; others showed extraordinary resilience. Even

within families, there were often striking differences among parents. “My father was never a victim,” recalled Anita Norich, over thirty years after that initial *Response* discussion. “There was more to survivors than surviving.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, she suggested, there was more to children of survivors than being children of survivors. Though Norich was born in a displaced persons camp, and came to think of herself as having many things in common with other children of survivors by virtue of their parents’ experiences, she never saw herself as having ongoing psychological problems rooted in the Holocaust legacy, and refused the “victim” label, choosing to “work through” the past by becoming involved in Jewish communal projects such as studying and teaching Yiddish.

Like other identity-based collectivities, children of survivors were a diverse group of individuals who possessed a range of personalities, experiences and political sympathies. By fusing the personal and the political, the “second generation” movement tried to weld these differences into a coherent whole and represent the values and aspirations of children of survivors. This identity formation was very much a product of its time and place: 1970s America, with its emphasis on psychological introspection, group storytelling, and identity politics. Holocaust survivors, products of a very different moment, did not, on the whole, share the psychological orientations of their children. Yet by the following decade survivors gained the moral authority to bear witness, commanding an increasingly important presence in Jewish communities and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, eds. 1979. *Living After the Holocaust:*

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*Reflections by Children of Survivors in America*, rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Block Publishing Company, 1979), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*. Cornell University Press, 2006), 143.

<sup>5</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 280.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980 [1950]).

<sup>7</sup> For a similar argument from a sociological perspective, see Jeffrey Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in J. Alexander, et al, eds. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)

<sup>9</sup> Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul*, 117.

<sup>10</sup> An exception is Kidron's (2004) ethnographic account of a support group of descendants of Holocaust survivors. See Carol A. Kidron, "Surviving a Distant Past: A Case Study of the Cultural Construction of Trauma Descendant Identity," *Ethos* 31(4):513-544. Alan L. Berger's *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997) is more literary in emphasis.

<sup>11</sup> In 1984-85 I attended at support group for children of survivors in Berkeley, California, held at a Jewish community center. For nine months during 1997-98 and six months during 2004, I was a participant observer in an electronic mailing list, or listserv, for children of survivors ("2G"). To delve more deeply into this subject, I analyzed 25 interviews with children of survivors, randomly selected from the larger sample of over 100 "second generation" interviews conducted by the "Transcending Trauma" project, a group of Philadelphia psychologists and other volunteers in the 1990s. The individuals in this study, gathered through a snowball sample, had at least one parent who survived the Holocaust and were at the time of interview in their 30s and 40s. I conducted an additional series of open-ended interviews with 12 children of survivors living in the New York area, half of whom were publicly active in the "second generation" movement. I would not claim that my sample is representative of the larger population of children of Holocaust survivors. Indeed, one could make the argument that it is biased in favor of descendants of survivors for whom such identifications are highly salient.

<sup>12</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 21.

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- <sup>13</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 46.
- <sup>14</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 49.
- <sup>15</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 50.
- <sup>16</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 51.
- <sup>17</sup> Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*. (New York: Putnam, 1979),5.
- <sup>18</sup> Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, 26
- <sup>19</sup> Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Melvin Bukiet, Introduction, *Nothing Makes You Free: Writings by Descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors* (New York: WW Norton, 2002), 14. On postwar youth subcultures generally, see Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1988).
- <sup>21</sup> On relational individualism, see Nancy Julia Chodorow, "Toward a Relational Individualism," in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David Wellberry. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); Carol Gilligan, "Mapping the Moral Domain: New Images of Self in Relationship," in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David Wellberry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).
- <sup>22</sup> Nancy Fraser and A. Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso, 1998). Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- <sup>23</sup> Arlene Stein, "Trauma Stories, Identity Work, and the Politics of Recognition," in J. Gerson and D. Wolf, eds. *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust* (Duke University Press, 2007).
- <sup>24</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 9-10.
- <sup>26</sup> Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford 1999).
- <sup>27</sup> Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 200

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Lifton, *Home from the War: Learning from Vietnam Veterans* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*. (New York: Putnam, 1979), 88.

<sup>30</sup> Terence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York: Pocket Books, 1977).

<sup>31</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, ii.

<sup>32</sup> Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, 178.

<sup>33</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> On silence as a form of communication within survivor families, see Ruth Waynryb, *The Silence: How Tragedy Shapes Talk* (Sidney: Allen & Unwin, 2001). For a more general argument about the effects of silence in everyday life, see Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989). For a critical view, see Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Summer 1991), 773-797.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with author, May 14, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Yael Danieli, "The Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and the Children," Appendix A, "Therapists' Difficulties in Treating Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust and their Children," PhD dissertation (New York University, 1981). There is an extensive psychological literature on children of survivors. See, for example, Judith Kestenberg, "Psychoanalytic Contributions to the Problems of Children of Survivors from Nazi Persecution," *Israel Annals Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, (10), (1972), 311-325; Aaron Haas, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1990); Yael Danieli, ed. *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, Y. Danieli, ed. (New York: Plenum Press, 1998); Dori Laub, "The Empty Circle: Children of Survivors and the Limits of Reconstruction," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 46(2) 1998, 507-29; Marinus H Van Ijzendoorn, M. Bakermans-Kranenburg, and A. Sagi-Schwartz, "Are Children of Holocaust Survivors Less Well Adapted?" *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol. 16, No. 5, (October 2003), 459-469.

<sup>39</sup> Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*.

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<sup>40</sup> 2G listserv, date to come.

<sup>41</sup> “Breaking the Silence: The Generation After the Holocaust,” Edward Mason, director, 59 minutes, Public Broadcasting System.

<sup>42</sup> “Breaking Silence,” directed by Theresa Tollini, 58 minutes, New Day Films.

<sup>43</sup> Janice Haaken, *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988).

<sup>44</sup> Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 58-59

<sup>45</sup> The term “transformative remembering” is from Janice Haaken, *Pillar of Salt*, 14-15.

<sup>46</sup> Ken Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories* (London: Routledge, 1995), 76.

<sup>47</sup> Janice Haaken, *Pillar of Salt*, 272-273.

<sup>48</sup> Interview conducted by the Transcending Trauma project, Philadelphia, November 21, 1994.

<sup>49</sup> Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 27-28.

<sup>50</sup> Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, 27-28.

<sup>51</sup> 2G listserv, April 5, 1997.

<sup>52</sup> 2G listserv, April 6, 1997.

<sup>53</sup> 2G listserv. April 6, 1997.

<sup>54</sup> 2G listserv, April 10, 1997.

<sup>55</sup> 2G listserv, December 31, 1997.

<sup>56</sup> 2G listserv, February 2, 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Anne Karpf, *The War After* (London: Minerva), 286.

<sup>58</sup> 2G listserv, December 31, 1997.

<sup>59</sup> Post-war Oral history collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

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- <sup>60</sup> Interview with author, May 14, 2004.
- <sup>61</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 38.
- <sup>62</sup> Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust*, 40.
- <sup>63</sup> Beth Cohen, *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Arlene Stein, “‘As Far as They Knew I Came from France’: Stigma, Passing, and Not Speaking of the Holocaust,” *Symbolic Interaction*, 2009.
- <sup>64</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 8.
- <sup>65</sup> Alvin H. Rosenfeld, “The Americanization of the Holocaust.” *Commentary*. No. 6 (June 1995), 37
- <sup>66</sup> Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, xiv.
- <sup>67</sup> Frank Furedi, “The ‘second generation’ of Holocaust survivors,” *Spiked*, <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000000545B.htm>
- <sup>68</sup> Interview with author, September 2, 2004. This split in the movement was evident early on. In 1976, the same year Fogelman and Savran formed the first 2g groups in Boston, in New York, fifteen sons and daughters of Warsaw ghetto survivors founded Second Generation, “a living testimonial to Jewish resistance during WWII.” See Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, 298.
- <sup>69</sup> Wendy Brown, “Resisting Left Melancholy,” *boundary 2*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Autumn), 19-27; Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). For a more sympathetic portrait of the growing cultural emphasis upon trauma and mourning, see Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); David Eng and Shinhee Han, “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia,” in David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Marianne Hirsch, “Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission,” in *Extremities*, ed. Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougas (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).
- <sup>70</sup> Norman Finklestein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000).
- <sup>71</sup> Interview with author, December 21, 2008.