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Traumatic Family Narratives in a Cosmopolitan World: Identity in American Third Generation Holocaust Survivors

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**TRAUMATIC FAMILY NARRATIVES IN A COSMOPOLITAN WORLD:
IDENTITY IN AMERICAN THIRD GENERATION HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS**

A Thesis
Presented to
The Academic Faculty

By

Karen L. Burton

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
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College of Humanities & Social Sciences
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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Literature Review	5
Memory	6
Constructing Identity from Trauma	10
Collective Memory	12
Jewish American Identity	14
From Community to Cosmopolitanism	19
The Second Generation	21
The Third Generation	23
3G Organizations	26
Personal Perspective	30
Positioning My Research	31
Research Methods	33
Interviews with 3Gs	38
Research Issues	43
The Interviews	48
Jenny	48
Elaine	54
Stephanie	63
Sara	70
David and Ziva	74
Conversations with Jewish Americans who are not 3Gs	87
Adelle	89

Jonathan	91
Claire	94
Kelly	96
Analysis	101
Conclusions	116
Bibliography	121

Introduction

In both scholarly and popular discourse, the Holocaust is a subject of fascination as perhaps the most blatant modern example of social, political, and moral failings. The Holocaust has undergone a series of understandings as a historical event since its occurrence. Social scientists and institutions of public history frequently engage in discussions of what the Holocaust means to present and future generations. There is perhaps a sense that it is too late to heal the wounds experienced by Holocaust victims so long ago. Instead, it is easier to promise to always remember and to honor that memory by attempting to draw lessons about intolerance and inaction. Yet what is so often missing in such discourse is what the Holocaust means to the descendents of its survivors. How do subsequent generations carry forward their family's traumatic memories as they engage an increasingly cosmopolitan world?

In this paper, I will examine the role the Holocaust plays in the identities of subsequent generations, specifically the present adult generation of American grandchildren of survivors. I begin with a consideration of the role sociologists and historians consider memory and trauma to play in identity formation. I offer a purview of the discourse regarding how the Holocaust and Jewish identity has come to be understood by Americans in recent decades. Original research in the form of interviews conducted with subsequent generations of survivors is considered. These interviews are supplemented by survey responses from adult (age eighteen to forty) Jewish Americans whose families were not directly impacted by the Holocaust. Through this research, I draw conclusions toward the impact of Holocaust memory as it informs the identity of third generation Jewish American survivors in an increasingly cosmopolitan society.

Literature review

In the decades immediately following World War II, the trauma experienced by Holocaust survivors was overshadowed by the social and political issues associated with rebuilding (at the individual, national, and global level). It was not until around the 1960s that historians, psychologists, and social scientists began to examine the effects of trauma from the Holocaust on survivors and their offspring. The majority of these studies have focused on the Jewish community in Israel and the United States as the two nations with the largest Jewish communities. Much of the research has focused on the relationship between survivors and their children, a group typically identified as the Second Generation (or, more according to popular vernacular, as 2Gs).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Holocaust memory more frequently entered scholarly discussions about identity as the epoch was popularly presented in America in the arts (especially in film and literature) and as a subject of historical inquiry (as evidenced by a proliferation of memorials and museums) in what has been criticized as the “Holocaust industry.” As the number of survivors has decreased and the population of 2Gs has aged, the focus of scholarly discourse has only narrowly begun to examine the effects of trauma on the third generation, or, as they are also popularly referred to and I will be referring to them, the 3Gs.

As to how the trauma of the Holocaust is learned and internalized by the third generation and to what extent such knowledge informs their social identities, little scholarship or consensus presently exists. To this end, I reviewed the literature that culminates in the present understanding of how trauma such as that experienced in the Holocaust shapes the identity of subsequent generations and informs the identity of contemporary Jewish Americans. In

reviewing the literature on memory and identity, a sense of how Holocaust memory is understood in a collective sense becomes evident. The discussion then considers how that memory informs the identity of Jewish Americans, 2Gs, and finally 3Gs. Following this recount is a conclusion of the ways in which 3Gs as a group understand the memory of the Holocaust as it develops their personal identities in a broader social context.

Memory

Loosely defined, memory can be explained as the way an individual or group of individuals connects to the past. Memory can be transmitted through traditions, rituals, and personal relationships and can belong to an individual, family, or larger cultural group. Both individual and group identity develops from a process that combines the past and present in an effort to establish some continuity. According to historian Kerwin Lee Klein, “Memory may also ‘characterize groups’ by revealing a ‘debt to the past’ and expressing ‘moral continuity’.”¹ It can be argued the memory of the Holocaust serves present generations of Jewish Americans as a connection to past generations that further establish a connection to other Jews around the world. The Holocaust has become a central event around which contemporary Jewish understanding provides a common social experience and sense of community that transcends political or national affiliation.

Theorists like Matt Matsuda have argued that the past is altered according to current needs. History and memory are the same according to Matsuda in that each generation passes on memory in the patterns and behaviors it spends a lifetime developing.² Subsequent generations pick up on these memories quicker than the previous and add on to its development in a process

¹ Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2902903> (accessed 25 August 2010), 130.

² Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.)

of “universal acceleration.” For Matsuda, history is a cyclical evolution. The present is ever changing and what was once new becomes a memory (history). To apply Matsuda’s ideas to generations of Holocaust survivors, it follows that 3Gs understand the historical event very differently from their parents and certainly cannot fathom how their grandparents actually experienced the event. Nevertheless, 3Gs do have their own understanding of the Holocaust that cannot be discounted. After all, their understanding of the Holocaust is learned in part from their parents and grandparents. It has simply been reformatted to be better understood and applied in a contemporary setting that further offers a lens through which to view the history. With the Holocaust, the present generation wants to be reminded of something they did not experience so that they can teach the next generation. Following Matsuda’s reasoning, 3Gs take the memory of the Holocaust and transform it into a narrative their own lives understand so that they may pass it on to the next generation.

In societies of diverse populations such as the United States, it is difficult to establish one dominating cultural pattern. Holocaust memory as it is presently understood in the US developed somewhere in the 1960s. Americans began to finally listen to and internalize the traumatic experience of survivors which was soon institutionalized as a narrative that participates in our shared national memory. Now, the Holocaust is remembered by specialized institutions whose missions are to research, educate, and commemorate that history. In short, they establish collective memory. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), for example, explains itself as “Located among our national monuments to freedom on the National Mall, the Museum provides a powerful lesson in the fragility of freedom, the myth of progress, the need for vigilance in preserving democratic values. With unique power and authenticity, the Museum teaches millions of people each year about the dangers of unchecked hatred and the need to

prevent genocide. And we encourage them to act, cultivating a sense of moral responsibility among our citizens so that they will respond to the monumental challenges that confront our world.”³ As a federally funded, national museum, the institution is positioned as an official arbiter of American Holocaust memory. It is important to consider such institutions because they help inform and define an American identity.

Just as these institutions inform social memory which influences social identity, it can be posited that a similar transference occurs between generations to inform personal and group identity. Sociologists Judith Gerson and Diane Wolf have posited “We remember and forget as members of particular groups in particular social locations, and through these processes, identities are formed and reformed.”⁴ It is generally accepted that the Holocaust plays a significant role in Jewish collective memory and therefore a formative role in Jewish identity. As scholars like Peter Novick have pointed out, the Holocaust is often the basis of contemporary Jewish identity.⁵

Gerson and Wolf refer to what we understand to be Holocaust memory as actually ‘post-memory,’ which differs from memory because of personal connection and distance. The memory of 3Gs is filtered through different modes of awareness than the way other Jewish Americans understand it. As Matsuda suggests, each generation sees the past differently because their lens is different. Yet, each generation is still informed by the past they see.

Post-memory is a concept developed by Marianne Hirsch in 1997, who asked “What are the implications of each narrative for the creation of Jewish collective memory and the

³ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “About the Museum,” (The United States Holocaust and Memorial Museum, n.d.) <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/about/> (accessed 9 April 2011).

⁴ Judith M. Gerson and Diane L Wolf, eds., *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 5.

⁵ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Services, 2000).

construction of a post-Holocaust Jewish identity?”⁶ Through her discussion of Holocaust survivors, she defines it as experienced by those with a generational and historical distance from the Holocaust. Post-memory is a very “powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. Post-memory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created.”⁷

In the case of 3Gs, the notion of post-memory is broadly applied to notions of the Holocaust that, according to Hirsh “are mediated through the memories of others and through the production of Jewish collective memory as encountered through grandparents, Sunday school, Jewish summer camps, and perhaps even a trip to Israel that created a sense of Jewish collective memory.”⁸ So, as 3Gs mature, they are learning about the Holocaust in intimate settings at home or at synagogue, but also in more public social settings like schools and at museums. For 3Gs, the Holocaust may help them define what American values are and their political inclinations. From this larger cultural group understanding, their personal relationships and the religious traditions and rituals they may have been exposed to further position the Holocaust as an event around which they understand their role in Jewish continuity. The Holocaust becomes a part of their social and historical memory which defines their group and individual identity.

⁶ Marianne Hirsh, “Holocaust Testimony: Producing Post-Memory, Producing Identities”, in Judith M. Gerson and Diane Wolf, eds., *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 169.

⁷ Ibid, 169-170.

⁸ Ibid.

Constructing Identity from Trauma

One way to understand or define trauma is as an event outside the range of human understanding. It is the breach between what the human mind is prepared to process and when something happens what the consciousness is unable to process. Memory is the resultant attempt to process the breach. Human consciousness was not prepared for the Holocaust. It was simply unfathomable. It certainly happened, but it exceeded human abilities to register and understand. Before an event, the present, can become the past, it must be able to be remembered. Trauma is when the present is too painful to be processed. As time passes, the trauma is worked through and the resultant comprehension develops into memory.

Psychiatrist Vamik Volkan described trauma as a “disaster in which an identifiable enemy group has intentionally inflicted pain, suffering, shame, humiliation and helplessness on its victims” and affects a group’s identity process.⁹ Psychologist Catarina Kinnvall sees nationalism and religion as identity signifiers and the “construction and reconstruction of historical symbols, myths, and chosen traumas supply alternative beliefs to everyday insecurities.”¹⁰ To synthesize these two statements, it can be asserted that, following a traumatic event, identity is often defined by national affiliation that serves to insulate and defend oneself from trauma. It is as simple as saying there is safety in numbers. By aligning one’s identity with a group whose commonality lies in political and geographical location rather than factors like ethnicity or religion, one finds a level of security. In the sense of the Holocaust or the Second World War, it would be, for example, easier to confront the enemy as an “American” than as a “Jew.” From this view, it can further be asserted that contemporary group identities are reactions

⁹ Vamik D. Volkan, *The Third Reich in the Unconscious* (New York: Brunner-Rutledge, 2002).

¹⁰ Catarina Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security,” *Political Psychology* 25, No. 5 (October 2004), 741-767, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792342> (accessed 12 August 2010), 763.

to a need to learn to cope with increasingly complex and globalized societies. So, for a contemporary Jewish American, it may be easier to say “I am an American whose family survived the Holocaust and I dislike intolerance” rather than to say “I am a Jew and Germans tortured and killed my family.”¹¹ While neither statement diminishes the facts, the identification that is chosen by the speaker likely alters the outcome of the interaction.

In the context of contemporary trends toward globalization and cosmopolitanism, such interactions and the identities that direct them become important social dramas. Political scientist Marc Ross has described psychocultural dramas or social dramas as “claims that engage the central elements of each group’s historical experience and identity” which are often “polarizing events about non-negotiable cultural claims, threats, and/or rights that become important because of their connections to group narratives and core metaphors central to a group’s identity.”¹² While such dramas can create competition between groups that seem irresolvable, Ross suggests conflict subsides when it is “redefined away from incompatible principles to the symbolic and ritual domain, where disputants can emphasize shared concerns and superordinate goals.”¹³

While Ross was considering the psychocultural drama as a means of understanding and resolving ethnic conflict such as the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, the same applies to understanding Jewish American identity as an established separate grouping within American culture. Where outright conflict may not exist between Jews and non-Jews in the United States, the Holocaust has come to define Jews as an *other* while also serving to inform Americans about their values. According to Ross, ethnic identity connects individuals “through

¹¹ Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism,” 763.

¹² Marc Howard Ross, “Psychocultural Interpretations and Dramas: Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict.” *Political Psychology* 22, No. 1 (March 2001), 157-178 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791910> (accessed 12 August 2010): 159.

¹³ *Ibid.*

perceived common past experiences and expectations of shared future ones.”¹⁴ It entails a perception of commonalities, as well as a common perspective of threats to the group as well as the group’s worth and recognition. According to Ross, psychocultural interpretations are how individuals make sense of experiences and formulate the roles individual members of a group will fulfill in learning about and acting upon their environment. While group membership is based on a shared worldview and is essentially an imagined community, this affiliation often directs developmental processes of individuals thereby more firmly linking personal and collective identities. Following Ross’ assertions, then, among American 3Gs, the Holocaust would serve as central point around which a sense of connection, community, and obligation develops.

Collective Memory

Maurice Halbwachs suggested memory is a socially constructed notion learned through family traditions. Historical memory is simulated in indirect ways such as reading, listening, and commemorating that is then stored and interpreted by social institutions. According to Halbwachs, the “present generation becomes conscious of itself in counterposing its present to its own constructed past.”¹⁵ As memory interacts with the present, identity is formed. So, as Matsuda also suggested, the current generation (in this case 3Gs) picks and choose which parts of the past it will bring forward into its present reality.

¹⁴ Ross, “Psychocultural Interpretations,” 160.

¹⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 211.

Holocaust historian Saul Friedlander has argued that somewhere in the 1960s the repressed trauma of Holocaust survivors surfaced.¹⁶ This surfacing of repressed memories transferred onto the rest of American culture even though the majority of Americans and even Jewish Americans are not survivors or descendents of survivors. Historian Dominick Le Capra similarly has observed that there is a transferential relationship between the witness and historian. While traumatic events most obviously affect the victims, it also affects everyone who comes in contact with the trauma.¹⁷ Thus, it can be asserted that contemporary Americans, or those belonging to the same generation as 3Gs, have grown up with the Holocaust as at least a peripheral factor in how they understand broader social values.

Historian Peter Novick says that it is debatable whether the Holocaust is really a part of the American collective identity in any worthwhile sense as historical occurrence enters the collective only when it serves to remind people of “whom” they are.¹⁸ As subsequent generations come of age and Holocaust survivors reach the end of their life cycles, Novick questions whether or not the Holocaust even has relevance as a collective Jewish memory.¹⁹ Novick points out that Halbwachs understood collective memory to be more ahistorical as it is not just historical knowledge shared by a group but actually how a group uses history to define their identity in the present. According to Novick, it is all about choices, but it is just as important to consider who chooses as what is chosen and why. As he points out, Halbwachs believed memory is not inflicted on us, it is chosen. Novick asserts most people aren’t employing free choice, however, they are simply following the crowd and that this is what seems to comprise collective memory in America. The Holocaust fits into the symbiotic relationship

¹⁶ Saul Friedlander, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Dominick Le Capra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Services, 2000).

¹⁹ Ibid.

Novick sees between identity and memory (we choose to center certain memories in our identity because those memories reinforce our chosen identity). Novick further contends the Holocaust is “virtually the only common denominator of American Jewish identity in the late twentieth century.”²⁰ It provides distinctiveness to Jewish identity but also defines moral values perceived to be universal to an “American” identity, thus positioning the group within a group. Following Novick’s assertions, American 3Gs choose to allow the Holocaust to define their identities as Jewish Americans.

Jewish American Identity

Interest in the concept of identity has grown exponentially since the 1960s. Within the social sciences, there has been a trend towards a more post-modern understanding of identity as something fluid, contingent, and socially constructed. Identity has been discussed as it effects cultural expressions, bias, and conflict at the personal and group level. The problem with how we have come to think of social identity is that it assumes group identity is chosen for an individual based on factors such as ethnicity, nationality, or religion, which is in turn explained to an individual by their immediate environment. In a nation like the US, where multiculturalism is professed to be an American value, what is often overlooked is that individuals generally will choose their identity rather than have it chosen for them. Americans, of course, also have more liberty to choose what will define their identities. In contemporary American culture, group identity is more often acquired than assigned.

While there is debate as to the degree to which trauma is transmitted to subsequent generations, most social scientists generally agree that identity is constructed through

²⁰ Novick, *Holocaust and Collective Memory*, 7.

discoverable social processes and they will often agree that identity is synonymous with social roles. Identity, in other words, is a process. As sociologist Judith Gerson has explained, identities are “not merely properties of individuals nor of groups but are also structural features of social organization.”²¹

While now a decade old, one survey of American Jewish identity found a lack of homogeneity. In 2001, the Center for Jewish Studies at the City University of New York published a survey of American Jewish identity.²² The survey found that, of the 105 million residential households in America in 2001, only four percent, or 3.9 million, identified as Jewish. Of the 5.5 million American adults who identified themselves as Jewish, eighty-one percent were married or cohabitating with non-Jews. With the vast majority of that four percent in inter-faith relationships, it means Jewish Americans are likely to identify themselves as something other than Jewish. If the majority of Jewish Americans are in relationships that do not require homogenous religious views, one inference that can be made is that religion itself is not what makes someone “Jewish.” The question then becomes whether identity is based on something as general as nationality or as particular as an event like the Holocaust.

The first form of identity development is a search for origins and an oft cited means of identifying oneself is through a professed national loyalty. National identity in America has historically always been celebrated as a kind of earned privilege. Claiming one is American with pride often is interpreted as saying one is distinct and chose to be American. Beyond this prideful national identity that distances Americans from other nationalities, Americans often look

²¹ Judith Gerson, “National Identity Practices Among German Jewish Immigrants,” *Political Psychology* 22, No. 1 (March 2001), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791911> (accessed 12 August 2010), 182.

²² Egon Mayer, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar, *American Jewish Identity Survey 2001: An Exploration in the Demography and Outlook of a People*, (New York: Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, February 2002), 5-6.

for ways to set themselves apart from one another as well. To achieve a level of distinctness among the privileged is at the very core of what motivates the “American Dream.” For Jewish Americans, the question is what that particularism ought to be. After historically losing their nationality in the Diaspora, claiming any state as an identity signifier is problematic for Jews. Despite or even perhaps because of American ideals of tolerance, religious freedom, and inclusion, to rely on religion as what sets one apart is further problematic. Gerson says that identity can be a useful tool for understanding collective identity “because they open up questions of how people apprehend various aspects of their identity rather than treat those identities as reified, static entities, or impose definitions formulated externally or a priori to a group.”²³

The PBS miniseries “The Jewish Americans” suggests that contemporary Americans enjoy the freedom to reinterpret and assert their religious identity in a uniquely American way.²⁴ As one interviewee commented “I think the generations that I’m witnessing are generations that are seeking meaning on their own terms. Judaism is not one size fits all.”²⁵ Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz disagrees and has asserted that American culture largely overestimates the actual percentage of Jews in America. Dershowitz is convinced that increasing rates of intermarriage combined with lowered birthrates (he estimates only 1.1 babies born per Jewish mother) and progressive assimilation translates into a decline in the numbers of individuals who even identify as Jewish. Dershowitz laments “there is a serious problem concerning how young, secular Jews define their Jewish identity. Many have no idea what it

²³ Gerson, “National Identity Practices,” 192.

²⁴ *The Jewish Americans*, DVD, directed by David Grubins, 2008, A PBS Home Video Series.

²⁵ Amichai Lau-Lavie in *The Jewish Americans*, DVD, directed by David Grubins, 2008, A PBS Home Video Series.

means to be Jewish, except that it distinguishes them from Christians and other non-Jews.”²⁶

Historian Hasia Diner says American Jews have historically negotiated their identity by looking for ways to make traditional Judaism acceptable to American sensibilities. She agrees that Jewish identity is fluid and highly voluntary precisely because it has always been derivative, made up of immigrants. “Yet since the end of the war and the tectonic shifts in Jewish life that resulted from it, American Jewry has become paradigmatic of the Diaspora communities almost everywhere else.”²⁷

Like all historical events, the Holocaust is “not only itself a fact but also an interpretation of historical facts.”²⁸ As a culture, we use rhetorical code words to describe the Holocaust—words like martyr or victim—as a means of establishing myth, creating something untouchable behind which we can hide from the realities of our environments. As one family therapist observed in the early 1980s, families will often invoke the Holocaust as a way to camouflage or avoid examination of painful relationships within the family.²⁹ There is a sense of a moral superiority that emerges from identification as an innocent Jew in which the individual can be forgiven any incidence of poor behavior based on the trauma endured. Add to that identity the American values of freedom, tolerance, and prosperity and anything seems possible.

According to anthropologist Howard Stein, the Holocaust and survivorship of the Holocaust mimics a recurrent theme in Jewish history and is presently the charter for the

²⁶ Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1997), 44-45.

²⁷ Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States: 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2006), 7.

²⁸ Howard F. Stein, “The Holocaust, the Uncanny, and the Jewish Sense of History,” *Political Psychologist* 5, no. 1 (March 1984), 5-35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3790829> (accessed 12 August 2010), 6.

²⁹ Edwin Friedman as paraphrased in Stein, “Jewish Sense of History,” 9.

persistence of Jewish identity.³⁰ Stein believes that “In order to know why people—any people—are entrapped by history, one must identify the sources that sustain that sense of history. As children of survivors began to accept the identifier 2G, they were linking personal remembrance with family and ethnic persistence. The Holocaust—past and present-- is not only the referent of Jewish survival but also the justification for the necessity of that survival.”³¹ In other words, by claiming the Holocaust as a unifying Jewish experience, American Jewish identity is a separate, but very special identity that American values require be revered.

Novick’s controversial *The Holocaust in American Life* traces a similar trajectory in American Jewish identity.³² He reviews changing American perceptions of the Holocaust from the end of World War II to the present that includes discussion of how Americans have reinterpreted the event to serve political identities. Novick attempts to look at the Holocaust in context of its occurrence. At the time of the Holocaust, Novick shows how Americans were far more interested in the global war which killed over fifty million people than the murder of six million Jews. During the Cold War, Novick shows how the Holocaust came to represent a loss of freedom resulting from the expansion of “evil” ideologies like Communism. Jewish Americans caught up in the optimism of the post-war era in America largely ignored the Holocaust as concerns were more social than political. It was not until the Civil Rights movement, the trial of Adolf Eichmann, and the Six Day War in Israel that the focus shifted. A new promotion of ethnicity and concern over the loss of a distinctive Jewish identity then began to draw on the Holocaust as a useful tool in positioning Jewish Americans as a separate group for who “Never again” became a useful slogan.

³⁰ Stein, “Jewish Sense of History,” 28-29.

³¹ Ibid, 31.

³² Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2000).

Novick contends that for most Americans “deploring the Holocaust is a rather ritualistic, albeit undoubtedly well-meant, gesture towards Jews who ask them to do so”³³ and the “evolution of Holocaust memory in the United States has been, in the main, the result of a series of choices made by American Jewry about how to deal with that memory.”³⁴ Novick criticizes the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum for perpetuating two of the many misnomers surrounding the Holocaust in contemporary life. First, it perpetuates the idea that Americans must redeem themselves for not having done more to end the Holocaust sooner. Such an idea, according to Novick, perpetuates a kind of survivor guilt that suggests the Holocaust directly affected Americans. He also points out the myth of the American liberator adds to the implication Americans should feel proud of their role as international arbiters of freedom. According to Novick, the Holocaust has come to be understood as a unique historical event invoked as a moral exemplar that serves to bolster inaccurate American and Jewish American identities. Novick’s controversial book is an important anchor in the debate over how Americans use Holocaust memory as it examines how history can be refigured to inform a desired identity.

From Community to Cosmopolitanism

As challenged as American Jewish history may be, it is but a proportionately short and simple story within the context of a broader global society. A decade into the twenty-first century, it is easy to assert that contemporary Americans live in an increasingly globalized, cosmopolitan world where interaction requires individuals to look beyond religion or ethnicity and even sometimes nationality. This said, it must be considered that the identities of 3Gs are simultaneously informed by globalization. How 3Gs present their family histories is no longer

³³Novick, *Holocaust in American Life*, 278.

³⁴Ibid, 279.

limited by their immediate environments. Where survivors and their children had to primarily concern their behavior with American social mores, 3Gs are in a unique position that almost demands their behavior be guided by more far reaching concerns. 3Gs are experiencing the transition from community to cosmopolitanism at the same time they are experiencing the passing of the survivor generation.

The process by which a group identity, or community, develops requires a shared experience or memory. The shared experience is communicated through unifying symbols and ideological statements by the individuals in the community. The Holocaust certainly fulfills the requirement of a shared experience or memory. Once the community develops, it must learn to cooperate and communicate with other groups in which a shared future is at stake. While the process of community can be as simple as group identification and as complex as national identity, it is a relationship that presupposes a shared morality and recognizes a need for mutual aid. In many ways, Western society is now a community of interdependent nations. While the relationships between this Western community of nations and other parts of the world are still learning to recognize their interdependence and develop methods of communication, the contemporary world is increasingly becoming what theorists have labeled a “globalized” society or a “cosmopolitan” one. Globalization refers to the intersection of local and global values, often realized through technological and economic interdependency. Cosmopolitanism is the idea that all social groups, despite their political or ethnic identities, belong to a single community based on a shared morality and mutual respect.

In an essay on what they term the “cosmopolitanization of Holocaust memory,” sociologists Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider see contemporary representations of the Holocaust as a means of defining new moral-political interdependencies in an increasingly globalized

society.³⁵ Levy and Sznajder suggest that Holocaust memorialization and historiography have exploded in the last two decades because it serves as a moral touchstone in the uncertain transition from the nation-centered memories of the Cold War era to cosmopolitan memory forms which reflect an increasingly globalized world. They assert “It has become a basis of transnational moral claims.”³⁶ In their research, they ask which group is best suited to be the carrier of cosmopolitan memories, stating “If cosmopolitanism is predicated on identification with the distant other, the significance of the Holocaust is that it allows different nations to have the same Other and the same identification.”³⁷ Levy and Sznajder observed an attraction to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust because the Jewish experience is historically that of the *other*.³⁸ The Holocaust has transformed into a moral agreement which delineates a line not to be crossed. Levy and Sznajder concluded the historical process in the United States during and since the Cold War has particularized the Holocaust for the past, noting it was a unique experience that happened to others elsewhere. The US was thus able to universalize the Holocaust for the future, noting that it is a clear moral certainty on which action can be based and one that stretches across national borders. In the uncertainty of the world after the Cold War, the Holocaust fulfills the need for a moral touchstone.

The Second Generation

For 2Gs, determining what weight to assign the Holocaust in their understanding of themselves is a complex debate. One 2G explains “the Holocaust wound defines every day a

³⁵ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, “The Cosmopolitanization of Holocaust Memory: From Jewish to Human Experience,” in *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memory and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*, Judith M. Gerson and Diane L. Wolf, eds. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 313-330.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 315.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 316.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

large part of who we are and how we see the world.”³⁹ Yet every wound at some point must heal. Another 2G, Eva Hoffman, says there is a point where the mourning must end. In its wake, there must be a consideration of the world around us. She says “A culture that does not give a place to suffering loses a part of wisdom about human experience.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, she says there is a point where we must all let go and suggests the role of atrocities like the Holocaust in collective memory should not be to inform individual or group identities but to establish normative principles and structures that confront how we deal with hatred and prejudice.

Belonging to the same generation as 2Gs, American scholar Laura Levitt questions how the Holocaust has overshadowed ordinary losses and Jewish identity among American Jews who have no familial ties to the Holocaust. She laments that there is a contradictory desire to make the Holocaust a part of their own story as Jews or to turn to traditions and more ordinary stories of Jewish life. The first she feels is a selfish appropriation and the latter feels like a betrayal of those who suffered and died. Levitt believes “if we take everyday stories of loss more seriously and if we pay attention to how they brush up against and interact with these larger Holocaust narratives, we might be better able to understand the past and imagine a different future.”⁴¹ For Levitt, contemporary Jewish American identity requires a reckoning with the Holocaust. It is at the heart of the contradiction of what identifying with other Jews means.

Psychologist Aaron Hass observed that 2Gs have no more factual knowledge of the Holocaust than their American Jewish peers from non-survivor homes. Yet, they often believe they know more about the Holocaust simply because they have observed its effects on their

³⁹ Joseph Berger, *Displaced Persons: Growing Up American After the Holocaust* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001), 347.

⁴⁰ Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 266.

⁴¹ Laura Levitt, *American Jewish Loss After the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), xxviii.

parents.⁴² Social scientist Hannah Starman claims we live in a society of victims that uses this status as a weapon of social advantage.⁴³ She says it is simply inadequate to determine 2Gs to have absorbed their parents' trauma, especially as the 2Gs have produced a third generation to whom they will indirectly transmit the same trauma that is unhealed and unresolved. Starman believes American culture perpetuates a cycle of victimhood. Being a victim is perceived to be a social asset, therefore recognizing trauma is transmitted transgenerationally becomes a means with which victimhood is passed down. For Starman, this fails to provide an analytical understanding of how to work through the trauma, thus perpetuating the cycle.

The Third Generation

After World War II, survivors of the Holocaust were left seeking a place to belong. The social communities- from family, neighborhood, and school to religious, professional, and political- that had once defined their identities and sense of belonging had been destroyed. As Novick and countless other scholars have pointed out, being a survivor after the Holocaust came to mean the process of reforming new families, social networks, and religious, professional, or political affiliations. Their struggle to recreate or assimilate into new communities directly impacted their children's social and psychological behavior. As one 2G has written "Here in the USA it is easy to say I am a Jew- but it is not so easy to say my parents survived; it's not easy to quickly see where it is I belong, to what group?"⁴⁴ As the same 2G further lamented "...it is clear that we, the descendants of survivors, need to find a way to belong, to help our children [3Gs]

⁴² Aaron Hass, *The Aftermath: Living with the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 146.

⁴³ Hannah Starman, "Generations of Trauma: Victimhood and the Perpetuation of Abuse in Holocaust Survivors," *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (December 2006), 327-338 <http://www.jstor.com/stable/7000781> (accessed 12 August 2010).

⁴⁴ Michael Zolno and Darlene Basch, "Where Do We Belong? Feeling a Part of or Apart from Our Communities," *If Not Now e-Journal* 1 (Fall 2000) http://www.baycrest.org/If_Not_Now/Volume_1_Fall_2000/default_7380.asp#. (accessed 2 February 2011).

find their place in the larger Jewish community and the world. In struggling with fitting in and feeling a sense of belonging, we have much to share with the larger Jewish Community and other ethnic groups.”⁴⁵ For 2Gs who are willing to broach the subject of their family legacies as it impacts their own children, there remains an uncertainty. As the same 2G noted “...the Third generation, the grandchildren of survivors, have taken various roads to finding their own identity... The grandparent survivors were more easily able to speak as the years passed and their generation was more easily able to ask questions. Many also travelled out of the countries of their birth, seeking a place to belong, often encouraged by their parents to go to Israel, England, and the United States.”⁴⁶

Israeli psychologist Dan Bar-On is one of the few scholars to have specifically focused a study on 3Gs.⁴⁷ Bar-On and his students interviewed three generations of twelve families of Holocaust survivors between 1989 and 1990. They used questionnaires where participants were asked to rank feelings about the past’s relevance, their connection to the Holocaust, and how much knowledge they had about the Holocaust. From the surveys, it appeared 3Gs did not always have or feel a clear connection to the Holocaust. Bar-On concluded that a family’s relationship to the Holocaust varies according to their sense of legitimacy in what was experienced, who was there, when, and where. In-person interviews were then conducted. Bar-On and his students considered how the stories were constructed by each storyteller as well as the story told. One of the questions asked in Bar-On’s research was whether there is a clear association between the life history and the life story or if they are independent of each other.

⁴⁵ Zolno and Basch, “Where Do We Belong?”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Dan Bar-On, *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).

According to Bar-On “The connection between the life stories of the first and third generations should not be viewed as circular, but rather as spiral.”⁴⁸

From the interviews, Bar-On observed that there are differences among 3Gs. Where some were able to examine the past and develop a psychological security beyond the physical security the older generations had achieved, others expressed a fear and insecurity that suggests the traumatic past continues to control the future. Bar-On acknowledged that there were problems in his study, notably that the interviews conducted in 1989 and 1990 were with younger members of the third generation. As all of his participants were teenagers or young adults, their identities were still developing. He also concedes that contemporary social scientists are the first generation to realize the extent of traumatic aftereffects and examine its intergenerational reverberations. While his goal, thus, was to simply evaluate the spontaneous processes of transmission, the question he was ultimately seeking to answer was whether survivor families transmitted a need to preserve or forget the past. While Bar-On was interviewing Israelis and the immediate political and cultural environment of his participants must be considered to influence identity differently than an American environment, his study is nonetheless useful as one of the few that has been done specifically on 3Gs and as an insightful look at how identity develops in 3Gs.

According to Bar-On, intergeneration transmission occurs in the telling itself of the story, as one generation acts in a particular way and the younger generation attempts to either rebel against or imitate these actions. He determines that it is the gap between the verbal and non-verbal, the untold story, which most strongly influences the next generation because it bypasses what they choose to remember and take with them into the present. According to Bar-On “The

⁴⁸ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, 139.

biological process of transmission from generation to generation entails similar possibilities: the threatening power of the past may weaken from one generation to the another as new occasions for examining the relationship between past and present realities arise.”⁴⁹ However, he notes “These processes may also bring about the opposite result: a reality saturated with hardship and loss can aggravate unresolved tensions. Biological and psychological processes may pass on unresolved conflicts from earlier generations.”⁵⁰

Psychologist Flora Hogman is one of the few other scholars who has also conducted a study of 3Gs.⁵¹ She similarly examined the relationships between three generations of Holocaust survivors in the mid-1990s. She concluded that while memories are our way of connecting, they also compel the recognition of loss. In the case of the Holocaust, this loss is associated with humiliation, suffering, and victimization. Hogman considers whether it is possible that 3Gs might want to forget about the Holocaust. She also examined the evolution of identity through generations of trauma. She concluded the Holocaust “continues to be an organizing vehicle for identity... The unwillingness to take on the pain of the ancestors and the victimology of Judaism clashes with a fear of betraying one’s heritage.”⁵² Hogman says American values provide a perfect opportunity to disguise one’s origins. Nevertheless, the memory of the Holocaust lives on as an integral factor in each new generation’s identity.

3G Organizations

The process of exploring and understanding the meaning of a commonly shared traumatic event in one’s own life is multi-faceted. In any individual identification with a larger group, the

⁴⁹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, 349.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Flora Hogman, “Memory of the Holocaust,” *Echoes of the Holocaust*, no. 4 (June 1995) <http://www.holocaustechoes.com/4hogman/html> (accessed 26 October 2010).

⁵² Ibid.

ability to openly express commonalities can be an enriching emotional experience in the reassurance and self-awareness it provides. As one group of observers has contended “The sense of support children of survivors experience with each other enhances personal strength and facilitates a deeper exploration of ‘who I am’ and ‘why’.”⁵³ To this end, it is important to consider the existence of formally organized groups of 3Gs. Such groups provide insight into how individuals are willing to be socially recognized and speaks to what role the Holocaust plays in their identities, at least on a social level.

In a phone call to the organizer of a social networking group for 3Gs, I sought answers to what might bind 3Gs as a community. In 2006, a 3G named Aaron created a Facebook group called “Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors” which currently has over eighteen hundred members.⁵⁴ Aaron says he started the group because he lives in an area that does not have a large Jewish community and “thought it would be great to connect a global network” of 3Gs. Aaron says “For many years, 2Gs have been connected to each other at community levels.” He would like to see more 3Gs have the same sense of empowerment and connection. He hopes his group can help to empower others in their desire to connect. The group exists only online and does not organize activities or hold meetings. Instead, Aaron says it is meant to serve “more as a resource for anyone in the world interested in Holocaust education, history, preserving the past, or who has a family member or is a 3G themselves.” For Aaron, connecting to other 3Gs is a global pursuit and the internet is an ideal method of establishing a community of 3Gs.

⁵³ Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szonyi, *Living After the Holocaust: Reflections by Children of Survivors in America* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1975), 161.

⁵⁴ “Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors,” Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2214798694&v=wall> (accessed 27 September 2010).

I heard a similar theme of connection in a conversation with Stacy, the president and co-founder of Boston 3G, an active social group in the Boston, Massachusetts area.⁵⁵ Stacy believes “the main reason members join our group is based on the connection they feel to their families, those who didn't survive and those who survived and have shared their personal stories with us.” After asking if she thinks members might be looking for a way to assert their identity, she responded “one [reason] is certainly to express their identity and that comes out through dialogue at different events. About once a year we have a ‘discussion’ based event giving members a chance to express their identity, etc. However, the rest of our events give members an informal opportunity to express themselves whether during a dinner, socializing together before an art exhibit tour, etc.”

Stacy sees many commonalities among group members. One commonality she repeats twice is that most 3Gs have grown up in very close-knit families. Interestingly, she does not differentiate generational chronology when she refers to who might make up members of a 3G's family. She says “so many of our cousins, aunts and uncles were killed.” It is as if she is speaking from the second generation, although she is in her early twenties. Stacy is comfortable speaking on behalf of the entire group but inserts herself when she says “We realize how lucky we are to be alive and the tragic past our grandparents survived. It is a special community; a way to remember those lost and honor those still alive. We can look around and be privileged to be able to celebrate Jewish holidays together and to share our family stories. Based on the trauma our grandparents experienced, many of our members share idiosyncrasies such as a hyper sensitivity to Germany, anti-Semitism, the need for a Jewish homeland, safety and security, privacy, etc.”

⁵⁵ “Boston 3G,” <http://www.boston3g.org> (accessed 27 September 2010).

Searching online for more communities of 3Gs, I found numerous groups within the US.⁵⁶ Over and over again, they all seemed to state the same mission-- empower and educate. Over and over again, the intent of the groups is stated as being a way for 3Gs to connect to each other and to the world. Typical activities for the more organized local groups involve meeting for Yom Hashoah (Holocaust remembrance) ceremonies, Shabbat dinners, to watch films, to engage in dialogues with German groups, or to discuss Israeli issues. The groups I looked at likewise all posted drives for charitable donations to victims of natural disasters or attempts to bring attention to other contemporary examples of genocide. As an example of the typical statements found on the websites of different 3G groups, Allgenerations presents itself as “a unique worldwide e-mail network for Holocaust Survivors and their children (2g’s or the “second generation”) and grandchildren (3g’s or the “third generation”), and other concerned and interested individuals and organizations alike.”⁵⁷ The group’s mission is stated as being “to further enhance and increase our understanding and knowledge of Holocaust education as we continuously develop new projects and initiatives on a global capacity. Allgenerations was designed as an educational and informative resource for disseminating and sharing information about the Holocaust and for keeping our unique community informed and connected.” The group further says its intention is “to increase tolerance and understanding of all people through education and awareness on an international level.”

⁵⁶ For examples of 3G sites, visit “3G New York,” <http://3gnewyork.org/wordpress/> (accessed 27 September 2010) or “Boston 3G,” <http://www.boston3g.org/> (accessed 27 September 2010) or “3G New York,” <http://www.3gnewyork.org/about.html> (accessed 27 September 2010).

⁵⁷ “Allgenerations,” <http://www.allgenerations.org/> (accessed 3 February 2011).

Personal Perspective

When I was maybe eight years old, I overheard something that changed my life, yet I have no idea anymore exactly what it was I heard. Those words and whatever questions I had around them were overshadowed instead by what I learned. What I do remember very vividly is my mother sitting at the edge of my bed telling me how my father's father died. His death in World War II was no great secret. Rather it was almost taken for granted as common knowledge, so much so that no one had ever thought to actually tell me, the youngest child, the story until then. I remember my mother seemed to approach the tale with a gentle matter-of-factness that stunned me. Suddenly it made sense why my father called my Grandfather by his first name and I was crushed to realize the quiet, gentle, and indulgent giant I merrily called "Grandpa" was really just the man my grandmother had eventually remarried. No one else seemed to find it upsetting my father had never known his father or that my grandmother had raised a premature baby into a well adjusted, successful family man all by herself. Perhaps it was his role as one of the "greatest generation" that lessened the loss for others in my family. Yet, to me, the loss changed everything.

If I were to recount the story of my own life thus far, it would be apparent how much this one conversation, or rather the loss realized, has affected my identity. I am almost haunted by Bill, a man I never met. Bill was there when I won the district history fair as a fifth grader with a project telling his story. Bill was the reason my grandmother cried when I asked her about life on the home front during WWII. Bill was there when I chose history as my college major. Somewhere, it is also because Bill was raised a devout Quaker, I feel a great tolerance for religious freedom. And I am certain it is also the loss of Bill guiding me as I encourage my own children to spend as much time as possible with their father, grandfathers, and uncles. To be

specific, however, it is not, of course, Bill himself who has impacted me so deeply. Rather, it is the traumatic realization of the loss of Bill and the role my family has allowed his story to play in our collective narrative. Because of this personal experience, I have imagined the third generation of Holocaust survivors must feel an even greater sense of loss which must surely alter their identities and world views.

Positioning My Research

For collective and personal reasons, it is important to confront the past, whether it is a known past or a learned past. In so doing, we believe we can then learn to cope with it. The idea of moving or working through memory is not a new topic in sociological discourse. While I have read much of the literature about the issues of memory and identity, I certainly do not claim to have mastered these disciplines nor do I intend to make any sweeping psychoanalytical conclusions regarding the process of “working through.” What I am curious about is, as sociologist Judith Gerson put it, “How do survivors of genocide experience their collective identities in the aftermath of trauma, and how does that vary among generations?”⁵⁸ Very specifically, I am interested in exploring whether Jewish American identity has moved past the Holocaust enough to have developed its own independent identity. If so, I am curious how that identity confronts the past while interacting with and understanding the contemporary world.

Dori Laub observed that “Trauma- and its impact on the hearer- leaves, indeed, no hiding place. As one comes to know the survivors, one really comes to know oneself, and that is not a simple task.”⁵⁹ To bear witness is to add to historical knowledge; it is an intimate animation of the traumatic process. In listening to a survivor’s recount, the listener is becoming an affective

⁵⁸ Gerson, *Sociology Confronts*, 6.

⁵⁹ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening,” *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 72.

community and the narrative becomes their own memory that must then be processed. The question I am concerned with at such a point is what are the consequences of survivor testimonies being transmitted to subsequent generations and how do subsequent generations reclaim traumatic experiences? In this paper, I rely on interviews in attempting to illuminate the transmission of trauma on subsequent generations.

In looking for additional sources of research on 3Gs, it is hard to ignore a prevalence of literature written by 3Gs. Fictional works by American 3Gs like Jonathan Safran Foer, Nathan Englander, and Nicole Krauss have spent weeks on the New York Times Bestseller list. Nevertheless, for the purpose of my research, I chose to consider such literary examples only peripherally. While the literature is important and interesting, to examine the role such fictional works play in the process of dealing with the transmission of trauma would require a separate paper researching the specific narratives of each author. For this paper, I am interested in the specific narratives of individuals who deal with the trauma in less publically displayed formats.

The study of Holocaust survivors has gone through several cycles. 3G research represents the newest cycle, which I believe merits further study if we are to continue positioning the Holocaust as a moral touchstone and really say “never again.” 3Gs represent a unique population in the sense that, while far enough removed from the trauma for it to be considered the past, they are simultaneously representing the future and represent the last living link to survivors. As we become an increasingly “globalized” society, learning how to deal with trauma is ever more important. Thanks to factors like technology and opportunities for travel, American 3Gs are increasingly in contact with other cultures and societies. Understanding how they deal with their past and present it to others is important in understanding how traumatic events are understood by later generations.

Research Methods

The original projection for my research was to compare the narratives of adult (aged eighteen to forty) grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. I planned to conduct in-person interviews with individuals who had grandparents who did not speak openly about their experiences and conduct in-person interviews with individuals whose grandparents were active in speaking about their experiences either to civic or religious groups. Having obtained approval from Kennesaw State University's Institutional Review Board to interview adult 3Gs about what could be deemed a sensitive subject, I hoped to interview five or six participants from each of the two sample populations. My intention was to then do a comparative analysis of the interviews in order to determine how the actual telling of the narratives impacted their individual identities and understanding of self. My definition of Holocaust survivors was to be limited to Jewish survivors who had immigrated to the United States.

I prefer the term *survivor* because there is a danger in referring to any individual or group as a *victim* for the implication of such a term is that the individual has suffered harm. Referring to someone as a survivor implies that the individual came away from the inflicted harm and emerged stronger or better. For my purposes, I have used the term survivor more because that is how the groups I am researching identify themselves. In simpler delineating terms, 3Gs are third generation Holocaust survivors, not third generation victims. Such labeling and distinction becomes important in assessing identity but for the purposes of defining my research population, I must first explain how I define a Holocaust survivor.

In my research, my definition of a survivor is narrowly focused on those individuals who are (or were under the definitions of National Socialism) identified as belonging to any religious

group, although specifically Judaism, that was considered undesirable or problematic and was from any of the European territories occupied by the National Socialist regime. For my purposes, I broadly allow this group to include those who fled National Socialism prior to persecution, managed to hide from persecution, or managed to survive persecution (such as experienced in concentration camps). I allow such a broad inclusion for two reasons. First, logistically it was difficult to locate descendents of survivors from any group and a narrowing to the last group mentioned would have proved far too limiting. Second, I believe even those who fled prior to persecution are still victims in the sense that they experienced great losses and an uprooting from their families, friends, homes, and native culture. It does not seem appropriate to me to differentiate levels of trauma based on comparisons of physical or psychological hardships experienced. For my research, the Holocaust is to be seen as an all-inclusive trauma.

The research method I relied on for locating participants was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a commonly used methodology in sociological research. It begins by identifying someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in a study and then asks them to recruit other subjects from among their acquaintances. The method is metaphorically titled because the sample group continues to grow like a rolling snowball until eventually enough data is gathered so as to be useful. Snowball sampling is especially useful when trying to reach populations that are difficult to find. In the case of 3Gs, locating any groups proved especially challenging. Thus it seemed locating one or two 3Gs would be the best way to locate more.

My research methods and intentions were altered by a number of factors. The most challenging factor was location. The metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia area, like most cities, has its pockets of homogenous cultural groups. However, there is not a specifically “Jewish” area. There is one Jewish museum located downtown. Synagogues or Jewish community centers

mimic the metro area's pattern of urban sprawl and are sparsely scattered across the area. I initially had hoped to contact interview participants through the Jewish museum and through one of the area's larger synagogues. I thus began by contacting a rabbi involved with young adults and the educational coordinator for survivor speakers at the museum.

The response I received from the museum was one of sincere interest and encouragement, but also very cautious. The museum first required that I allow them to contact the survivors they were engaged with on my behalf. It would then be up to the survivors to decide if they were interested in speaking to me before putting me in contact with their grandchildren. From my conversations with the museum, I learned of a local university professor who had been working on a similar project with survivors and their grandchildren. I contacted the professor and asked about his experience contacting participants via the museum. He explained that it had been a year long process that required multiple meetings with the survivors and often their children before he was ever introduced to their grandchildren. He also mentioned that being able to make a donation to the museum on their behalf ultimately had been the best catalyst for developing a relationship. In the interest of wishing to remain more objectively separated from participants and faced with a lack of such resources as funding and time, I did not pursue a relationship with the museum. The local rabbi I contacted was similarly excited and interested in my research. However, she informed me that she was not aware of any survivors in the synagogue and, having only recently moved to the area, did not know of anyone to put me in contact with.

Realizing that the museum and synagogue may not provide the best snowball effects, I next attempted social network snowballing by simply asking on Facebook for contacts. I was immediately put in contact with multiple individuals, three of whom introduced me to additional contacts. Through university colleagues, I was additionally introduced to three more individuals.

In total, I contacted thirteen individuals. Everyone I spoke to via email or phone expressed interest in the research and a curiosity about how many others I had spoken with. Of these thirteen contacts, six lived in the Atlanta area and I was able to conduct four face-to-face interviews. One refused to be interviewed for what she termed “personal reasons” stating “It’s a very complicated issue.” Nevertheless, she was interested in discussing the research because she noted how little existed about the 3Gs. I found her response to be typical. Every individual I contacted was interested in and encouraging of the research. Yet, I heard over and over again that they did not have time to talk to me.

My original research plan was limited by seeking out a select sample group. Additionally, it must be conceded that social network snowballing methods can be flawed for it requires referees to be socially involved in a specific, chosen format and it runs the risk of inflated effect sizes because anyone who is referred is either involved in a 3G organization or is vocal enough and recognizes the significance of their family history to have shared it with whomever is referring them.

With a limited population of participants, I further altered my research methods. I determined that face-to-face interviews would be impossible to conduct in all cases and decided not to attempt narrative analysis as such. For individuals who were not local to the Atlanta area, I reformatted the interview questions into a short answer survey that could be completed via email. As I was still asking the same series of questions, simply in a different format, I did not revise my Institutional Review Board approval. Three contacts ultimately backed out, stating a busy schedule. However, I received two of the completed surveys back. Another agreed to speak with me over the phone after we had emailed back and forth and she had considered the emailed survey.

Over the course of a six month period in late 2010 to early 2011, I thus interviewed a total of six individuals. It is estimated there are 250,000 children of survivors in America.⁶⁰ If it is assumed each of these 2Gs had at least one child, a conservative estimate would be that there are at least 250,000 3Gs in America. While the population of participants in my research does not provide a large enough basis for quantitative data given such estimates, I do feel they represent a diverse and broad enough group to allow for reasonable qualitative analysis.

Over the course of my interviews, I additionally realized I had to adjust my definition of 3Gs. For the purposes of my research, I originally chose to limit myself to any Jewish individual who had survived the Holocaust in Europe and then came to the United States. Thus, I assumed their grandchildren would be Jewish. As I began to meet 3Gs, however, I realized this was not necessarily the case. One woman I interviewed did not know what religion her grandparents had been while in Europe at the time of the Holocaust. . She only knew they had been devout Seventh Day Adventists in America. Another woman I interviewed was indeed the granddaughter of a Jewish survivor. Nevertheless, her father had converted to Catholicism when he had married her mother and she knew very little about the Jewish faith.

Interviews with 3Gs

⁶⁰ Korn, *Children of Holocaust Survivors*, (2006) in "The Emotional Domino Effect of The Holocaust: Are The Relationships Between Holocaust Survivors And Their Adult Grandchildren Distinct From 'Normal' Grandparent Adult Grandchildren?" Elise Kayfetz, *If Not Now e-Journal* 7 (Winter 2007) http://www.baycrest.org/If_Not_Now/Volume7/default_11223.asp# (accessed 13 January 2011).

Ultimately, adult third generation Holocaust survivors of all faiths and backgrounds were interviewed about their perceptions of identity simply as contemporary American citizens. Participants were asked about their experiences as the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and how their family histories affect their understanding of contemporary issues and their role in the community. Participants were also asked how they learned about the Holocaust and their family histories. They were asked about their family relationships. Each was asked to describe where they grew up along with their educational and religious upbringings. Participants were asked to describe their opinions of how the Holocaust is discussed and presented today. They were also asked about contemporary events such as 9/11 and Israeli politics.

In the interviews, I observed that every individual had travelled enough, whether to different regions of the US or to different countries on distant continents, to realize they were part of a larger community. Ziva and David were perhaps the most well-travelled and shared interesting observations about regional discrepancies in the US, but their resistance to apply any national label to themselves (telling me they were neither Israeli nor American) indicates a recognition of the world as a larger community comprised of different cultures. Even Stephanie, who was probably the least informed about the Holocaust of the 3Gs I spoke to, touched on this sense of a larger community. When she imagined the Holocaust happening today, she immediately positioned herself in a larger social group. She said she could not imagine anyone would allow the prejudice that precipitated the Holocaust to occur today and identified herself as someone who would not stand for it. She did not personally identify herself with Holocaust survivors and their descendents as if her lack of knowledge separated her from them. Nevertheless, she saw herself as part of the group that would participate in resisting oppression and intolerance.

Another informative observation I gleaned from the interviews was the desire amongst participants to educate others about their heritage. Although Stephanie does not speak to her family about her past or theirs, she now owns a salon, the type of customer-service centered business that depends on establishing familiar relationships with people. Almost all of the interview participants are similarly engaged in some kind of volunteer or professional work that encourages them to interact with others on a very social level.

In drawing conclusions about the participants I spoke to as a group, it is important to recognize their differences. None of the participants identified themselves as 3Gs or survivors. Their relationship to the Holocaust was always described as belonging to their grandparents. Their own identity was described in terms of nationality, religious beliefs, or the cities in which they lived. Not all of the participants were of the same religious background. While primarily from Jewish families, some were not Jewish at all. Of the Jewish participants, some grew up in very religious neighborhoods and families, while others did not. Some attended religious schools while others attended more secular, public institutions. Only one was from the southern United States, while one was from the West coast, and the rest were from the northeast. Although willing to include participants as young as eighteen and as old as forty, all six participants fell between mid-twenties to mid-thirties. All but one were female. Factors such as age, gender, religion, and location absolutely are integral in identity development. For the purposes of my research here, however, these factors serve as secondary influences. The primary factor I am concerned with is their perception of the Holocaust in their identities.

In noting their differences, which can be assumed to influence perspective and experience, there were also some observable commonalities in their shared experiences as grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. Levels of awareness varied among participants. Some of

this can be accredited to the varied educational systems they were brought up in. Yet, each individual learned of their family's narrative directly from verbal communication by their grandparents. Some participate more actively than others in roles that identify them as 3Gs, but none admitted to having individually sought out more information about the historical context of their grandparent's experience. Despite any assertions of silence and repression between survivors and their children, 3Gs seem to have enjoyed a more open dialogue. For the 3Gs I interviewed, the Holocaust is a subject that very much informs their family discourse. It is also a subject that I believe informs their identity although not all of them would necessarily define it that way themselves. It is interesting to consider Ziva's narrative. She is very close to her family and the Holocaust has openly permeated her family's discourse for as long as she can remember. She knows a great deal about her grandfather's experiences. Yet, she has never gone to actually listen to him tell his story. Her knowledge is not drawn from a specific incident or recounting. She is confident she knows enough to not have to go listen to her grandfather tell his story.

Other similarities between the participants include a pride and a sadness in direct conflict with each other. This juxtaposition is apparent with David and Ziva. They are both proud of all her grandfather has accomplished, but sad his motivation was the loss of his family and home. Elaine also displays pride in her grandparents' status as survivors. Yet there is a hint of sadness in her description of her grandparents' parenting skills. There is a sense of guilt (about not knowing more) and a curiosity. Stephanie perhaps displayed the most guilt about not knowing more about her grandparents' experience. Jenny's attempts to collect family documents (photos and a family tree) display curiosity as well as a little bit of embarrassment she does not know the specifics better. Perhaps the greatest similarity between the participants then is their continuation of working through the trauma that informs who they are.

Returning to Bar-On's study of Israeli 3Gs in the 1990's, I agree with his conclusion that "The connection between the life stories of the first and third generations should not be viewed as circular, but rather as spiral."⁶¹ In exploring whether Jewish American identity has moved past the Holocaust enough to have developed its own identity, I believe it has. I believe the participants I interviewed illustrate a transition from an identity that is potentially handicapped by being a "survivor" to one that seeks to understand a larger community. In the first generation, the survivors may have wondered "Why did this happen?" and struggled with a sense of not belonging. The second generation may have wondered "What do I do with this?" and struggled to determine where they belonged. By the third generation, 3Gs seem challenged not to belong but to choose where and how they want to belong. 3Gs seem ready to say "Here's what happened and here's how I'll deal with it." I saw this in the innocuous anecdote David tells about his grandfather. David relays how his grandfather worked to keep the boilers running in Auschwitz. His grandfather is angry he has never been paid for the work. David finds this both astounding and hilarious. He cannot understand how his grandfather has overlooked what seems a very obvious fact to David—he was a slave laborer and the Holocaust was never fair. I found this story fascinating for it showed how the grandchild is able to understand and contextualize the facts of the trauma his grandfather endured. The grandfather cannot separate himself enough from the event to do so.

In simple anecdotes such as David's, I see evidence of a working through by 3Gs. I also see an inclination to separate themselves from the past and regard the event through a more objective lens that is less begrudging and able to shrug, smile, and say "That's just how it happened." In this way, David seems to me to exemplify a more cosmopolitan perspective. The

⁶¹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, 139.

Holocaust clearly spiraled into David's consciousness and influenced his identity as Jew, but it also influenced his identity as a contemporary citizen of the world. As he describes himself and Ziva, they are "odysseys," a description I interpret as "cosmopolitans." I found it interesting that while only Sara mentioned being involved in Holocaust related organizations, a kind of community amongst 3Gs still exists. Ziva thought all Jews were Holocaust survivors until she was in her late teens. Jenny assumes her Jewish cousins were the catalyst for her invitation to Israel. In some ways, it seems all the participants felt a kind of casual sense of community among other 3Gs, although none specifically noted such feelings.

In further qualifying the interviews I conducted, it should be noted that each was approached as an independent conversation. I explained to each participant the intent was to simply learn about their own experiences, knowledge and perceptions. While the intention was to explore how the Holocaust had informed their individual identity, I refrained from attempting analysis of the interviews until they were completed. Before each interview, all participants signed a consent form that explained their rights to stop the interview at any time or to refuse to answer any question they were not comfortable answering. While there were occasionally moments of hesitation while participants considered the best way to answer a question, during none of the interviews did I encounter any resistance to questions I asked. All the participants were likewise agreeable to being directly quoted. All understood, however, that their names would be and have been changed. The entirety of the conversations are not included in this paper. While I felt each interview developed into a unique conversation with interesting contextual anecdotes, for the sake of brevity and analysis, only background information and discussions relevant to my research have been included here.

Research Issues

I found it telling that not one person asked if I were Jewish or had a personal connection to the Holocaust. While it is possible my surname, my appearance, or even the regional dialect my speech cannot overcome hinted at a different background and each understood I was there to find out specifically about them, I was surprised to realize every individual I spoke to, at one point or another, felt they should educate me about specific events or terms or places. Ziva, for instance, stopped to tell me I should interrupt anytime I did not know a term she was using. Sara likewise stopped to spell a name and to ask if I knew what The March of The Living was.⁶² Even Stephanie tried to highlight her own knowledge of Indonesian and Dutch culture and showed a certain sensitivity to having her heritage correctly identified. What I took from these observations was that, to these 3Gs, I was an outsider and they wanted to share with or educate me about their own understandings. They were assuming an obligation to educate me on their unique language and symbols. In this observation, I see a strong commonality amongst individuals who never met each other that hints at a broader group identity. I also see a tendency to view themselves as participants in the process of establishing a cosmopolitan or global society.

Before introducing the interview participants, the interviews themselves, and drawing any further conclusions, the issues with my research must be confronted. While this paper required me to be very familiar with the Holocaust in a historical sense and to review a breadth of literature from multiple disciplines, my research and conclusions are based primarily on oral

⁶² The March of the Living is a program that brings Jewish teens from all over the world to Poland on Holocaust Memorial Day, to march from Auschwitz to Birkenau, the largest concentration camp complex built during World War II, and then to Israel to observe Israel Memorial Day and Israel Independence Day. According to the organization's website "The goal is for these young people to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and to lead the Jewish people into the future vowing Never Again." <http://www.motl.org/> (accessed 3 March 2011).

history. Where I have already acknowledged the issues with my methodology regarding how I located participants, a brief discussion of the problems inherent in conducting interviews is also warranted.

Oral history has always stood apart from other methods of “doing history” because it a source of inquiry that can easily be influenced by factors such as bias or inexperience. An inexperienced interviewer may not frame questions or guide conversations in a way that will achieve the desired results. Or a biased interviewer may frame questions and guide conversations with the intent of achieving desired results. It is further challenging for an interviewer to separate their own narrative from the narrative they are listening to. My own personal perspective clearly influenced my hypothesis-- that 3Gs have been impacted by the trauma their grandparents’ experienced. Yet, I entered into this research with a somewhat intentionally ambiguous expectation. I did not know how others may have learned about their grandparents’ trauma and I did not know how 3Gs would identify themselves precisely because I am not one and therefore have no personal perspective on their actual identity. To that end, I tried to leave my interview and survey questions very open-ended. For example, I simply asked participants to “Tell me about the first time you remember hearing about the Holocaust” rather than asking what their grandparents told them. Likewise, I simply asked participants “How do you identify yourself?” but did not lead them by asking “Do you identify yourself as a Jewish American?” or “Do you identify yourself as a 3G?” In all my conversations with participants, I tried to let them insert whatever adjectives or narratives popped into their own stream of consciousness.

While I feel I did a fair job of allowing participants to tell me what they thought rather than me asking if they felt one way or another, there are still issues I must acknowledge. First, all of the participants knew exactly what I was doing. By way of introduction, they were all

informed of my status as a graduate student studying how, if at all, their identities were impacted by their grandparents' experiences during the Holocaust. All were also given a consent form to sign that further presented the project as a very formal, academic endeavor. As such, all participants had advance opportunity to prepare what they may have considered "proper" responses to give me. As some of the interviews were done via emailed surveys, some participants also had the opportunity to more carefully consider or even edit what they wanted to say to me. As one oral historian has reflected, "All oral narratives are spoken with an audience in mind, but reminiscing with one's contemporaries and responding to an oral historian are very different contexts. While the oral history interviewer undoubtedly influences the narrative outcome through engagement with the interviewee, the nature of the dialogue between an interviewer and interviewee is not the same as that within a cohesive social group such as a family."⁶³

It is important to consider the interview process does not exist in a vacuum. It is very much a relationship between interviewer and interviewee that is subject to an array of external or subconscious influences. It is thus important when undertaking an oral history project for the interviewer to recognize their own motivations or needs. I may have, for instance, been too willing to accept certain explanations and answers because they fit easily into my own understanding or may not have followed up on certain comments that may have struck another interviewer as relevant.

A factor also to be considered in oral history is that of social or cultural context. Personal recall is often determined by the social or cultural context in which the remembering takes place.

⁶³ Lorraine Sitzia. "Telling Arthur's Story: Oral History Relationships and Shared Authority." *Oral History* 27, no. 2 (Autumn, 1999), 58-67 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40179545> (accessed 25 May 2011), 40-41.

Oral historian Lorraine Sitzia explains “Whether we are aware of it or not, our culture gives us an inner script by which we live our lives. The main acts for the play come from the way our world understands human development; the scenes and key characters come from our families and socialization, which provide the pattern for investing others with emotional significance; and the dynamics of the script come from what our world defines as success or achievement.”⁶⁴ She also argues oral historians should be concerned with the implications of collective memory. Sitzia suggests understanding “memory” as a way to describe different ways of knowing about the past is flawed in that many social scientists agree oral history isn’t personal memory and expressions of historical memory are really socially constructed narratives.⁶⁵ Language and patterns of narrative that emerge in oral histories are cultural constructions, socially structured patterns in recall. Personal memory belongs to the unconscious and is rarely articulated, especially to an outsider, which I have earlier admitted I may have been perceived to be. Thus, I must consider that I was asking people to share specific opinions and recollections that they constructed into narratives they thought would properly answer my inquiries.

Maurice Halbwachs posited that individuals remember through engaging in dialogue with others. This dialogue of remembrance may take place within a family, in social interactions, in religious activities, even at work.⁶⁶ Wherever they occur and with whomever we engage in the dialogue, Halbwachs argued the groups that are the most dominant in our lives will produce the most dominant and lasting memories. In other words, our “memory” is often that of our environment, thus our narratives of remembrance will reflect a cultural script. As Sitzia also pointed out, remembering always invokes broader public discourses such as those of the popular

⁶⁴ Sitzia, “Arthur's Story”, 33-34.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 37.

⁶⁶ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

media.⁶⁷ In other words, how even 3Gs recall the Holocaust may be a reflection of how it has been presented to them by places like the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum or by films like *Schindler's List*.⁶⁸ Sitzia suggests respondents will often participate in oral history interviews out of a need to compose a past that can be lived with.⁶⁹

Participants may also choose to participate in an interview because they are seeking to affirm or address whatever expectations they imagine the audience (in this case myself and anyone who may read my academic paper) has. All of the individuals I interviewed are either students at the graduate level, business owners, or professionals. They were all well-spoken, well-educated individuals fully aware of being in a unique group as 3Gs. This is important to consider in that it places them in a category that could easily be categorized as belonging to a higher, even “elite”, level of social stratification. This level places the participants within a group that is likely to share similar cultural scripts and is not necessarily an accurate sampling of 3Gs as a whole. Again, this can be traced back to my method of snowballing on Facebook. 3Gs who are not part of the same social network may have had very different reactions to my questions and relayed an entirely different narrative.

It is also relevant to point how the participants I spoke with could be seen as “elite” or as experts in their own minds because it does two things. One, while I was still in a position of being an outsider, as a scholar, I was at a level that matched their own. This may explain their willingness to speak with me. It is also possible they had their own agendas that might have directed their interactions with me. For instance, Ziva and David were very outspoken in their opinions of Israeli politics and social issues, as if wanting to persuade me to support or understand their views. Sara was very succinct in her answers, as if perhaps not wanting to allow

⁶⁷ Sitzia, “Arthur’s Story,” 40.

⁶⁸ *Schindler’s List*, DVD, directed by Steven Spielberg, 1993.

⁶⁹ Sitzia, “Arthur’s Story,” 40.

me too much room for interpretation. Whatever the motivation to participate, the narrative that emerges is likely to conform to a cultural script or template. As notable oral historian Michael Frisch has commented, though, while “The social, discursive and psychological structures of remembering have led some social scientists to minimize (or even discard) the value of individual memory especially as it is displayed in oral histories... surely the interesting issue is not that individuals draw upon contemporary cultural discourses to make sense of their lives, but which ones, and why.”⁷⁰

Throughout the interviews, the analysis, and my conclusions, I have tried to be conscious that the respondents were providing me with a special kind of historical evidence—their own memories and interpretations of events. I refer to it as historical evidence because their narratives should be included in the discourse about the Holocaust as an historical event with far reaching consequences. Whatever issues may be inherent in oral history as a research methodology and whatever flaws my own research may have, I firmly believe that engaging in conversations about memories and interpretations with a unique group of historical actors is an important means of legitimately identifying part of the Holocaust’s story.

The Interviews

Jenny

I knew Jenny from a few graduate courses we had taken together. As the interview approached, she informed me she had been doing research, had found photo albums and scrapbooks, and had gotten clarification from her parents on the family tree she’d found. When I

⁷⁰ Michael Frisch, “American History and the Structures of Collective Memory: A Modest Exercise in Empirical Iconography,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 4 (March 1989), 1130-1152 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1908633> (accessed 27 May 2011), 1131.

told her I would love to see any of these materials but was really more interested in her, she seemed relieved I did not expect her to accurately give me genealogical details, but remained hesitant she would be able to offer me anything interesting.

When I met Jenny one afternoon at her place of work, what I observed of Jenny was uncertainty. I believe being interviewed made her very self-conscious and she seemed to approach it as one would a research paper. At no point did she ever mention her grandmother and I wondered if this was an attempt to stay focused on the topic-- the one relative who survived the Holocaust—or an intentional omission. As she also glossed over her relationship with her siblings, which she simply describes as good, I tend to think Jenny really wanted to make sure I understood about her grandfather. She was even more uncomfortable discussing herself. As her comments about Israel and the southern United States showed, she seems conflicted as to what group she identifies with. She was raised in Georgia as a Catholic, yet she seems to want to identify with her Jewish family from New Jersey.

Jenny's grandfather resides in Livingston, New Jersey. The first time Jenny remembers actually hearing about the Holocaust was on a visit to her grandfather's as a small child. She remembers a wall filled with old photographs. She was particularly fascinated by one group photo taken in the 1920s or early 1930s. Jenny had asked him "Who are these kids?" He pointed to individuals in the photo and told her "that was Aunt so and so or Aunt such and such" and identified one boy as himself. When Jenny asked where the picture was taken, he said in Romania. She remembers being curious about this and he tried to explain it to her. He said all his aunts, uncles, his grandfather, and lots of other people had all died in "a bad war." He told her he had fought in the war. He kept reiterating that lots of people died and that it was a very bad thing. Jenny now understands her grandfather to have fought for a love of country. She believes he

identified himself as an American and believed that was what he simply needed to do for the good of his country. Jenny's grandfather has recounted his war experience to her and the family. She said he gets very emotional but he never directly mentions a battle. He says nobody should ever have to go through that but that everyone needs to understand the importance of what happened. Jenny thinks this is where he is indirectly trying to bring the Holocaust into the discussion. She says he marched through Germany and Poland to Italy. He only learned everyone in his extended family was dead when he had returned home.

Jenny says she first became actively interested in her grandfather's story and side of the family when she was a senior in high school. She felt a strong disconnect to the environment she found herself in. As she heard over and over about the South's history, she wondered about the North's history and about her own history. At this point she began asking questions and began to really consider the wall of pictures in her grandfather's home. Somehow her curiosity was directed toward one of her great aunts who had done genealogical research and drawn up a family tree. Jenny paused when she was trying to remember her family's original surname. While the current pronunciation is similar, the European spelling had been changed and she seemed frustrated that she couldn't recall what it had originally been. Jenny explained her grandfather had been born in America in the 1920s but his parents had moved back to Romania when he was about three years old. When things started to "get bad for Jews in Europe," the family [meaning her grandfather's immediate family—himself, his parents, and two sisters] returned to America.

Jenny's father was raised Jewish. Her mother is Catholic. She said her mother had occasionally tried to relay how her Ukrainian family had been persecuted as well when they were living in the Ural Mountains. Jenny dismisses this as an attempt on her mother's part to try to

relate. Interestingly, although Jenny later said her family was very close and all had positive relationships, this is the only point during the interview in which Jenny directly mentions her mother. When Jenny's parents married, their different religious backgrounds made it very challenging. People were a lot less accepting. They could not find a priest or a rabbi who would marry them. Jenny's parents ultimately decided to raise her and her siblings as Catholics. She seems complacent with the decision, as if it were simply a logical choice based on maternal heritage and perhaps a pragmatism based on the religious demographics of the area in which she was raised. Throughout her childhood, she describes her family as rather "hard-core." Somewhere in her teen years, however, she said this religious observance lessened to a holiday attendance of church.

Jenny says she is now more comfortable in more community-based organizations like Judaism that encourage her self-described liberal values. She says her father did not completely turn his back on Judaism when he agreed to raise the kids Catholic. Jenny explains she was exposed to some Jewish traditions by her father and through visiting her grandfather, where they would participate in any Jewish holidays being observed. Jenny's father visits her grandfather often and they are close, but she says it wasn't always that way. Jenny describes her father as having been "a hippie" at one point. She points to the facts he left New Jersey for the south and a Catholic wife as means of evidencing this description. She says her grandfather is okay with her dad not practicing Judaism as long as he attends services when he is visiting.

Jenny's older brother maintains his Catholic faith, serving as a missionary all over the world. On one of his trips, he met a blonde-haired, blue-eyed young Austrian woman who is now his fiancée. Jenny says the girl is actually very nice, but says "there is this stereotype of being very cold" that the girl seems to easily represent. Jenny's father was very upset by her brother's

choice. He was adamantly opposed even at one point. Jenny described this as very uncharacteristic and said it was the only time she has ever heard her father speak so negatively about another person or culture. When her brother brought the girl with him to attend a party in New Jersey with their grandfather's family, Jenny describes it as "awkward." She said her sixteen year old cousin's "very Jewish boyfriend who no one had before met either received a warmer reception. But it is okay now and it wasn't that bad because my grandfather had had plenty of time to adjust to the idea." Jenny's older sister is married to a Muslim man, works in interfaith relationships, and is involved in many community programs. Her father had not reacted that strongly to her sister's choice and Jenny seems to find this odd since he had been resistant to her brother's choice in a spouse.

Jenny studied for one year in New Jersey during her undergraduate experience. Jenny spent a lot of time with her grandfather and other family in the area. Jenny says she is close to her grandfather.

Jenny's sister has worked with the United States Holocaust Museum Memorial and tried to get her grandfather to come to the museum when the family was all visiting Washington, D.C. Her grandfather refused. Jenny stated that she found it "telling that he vehemently would not even consider going", but did not elaborate on why she thought so. Jenny says it is likely either her grandfather or her father would be willing to watch a movie about the Holocaust. "*Schindler's List*, for example, might be okay. But my grandfather especially does not like the History Channel type movies or documentaries." Jenny explains this is because "one does not know who they will see." Jenny explains this not as if it is something her grandfather has ever vocalized, but as if she has observed this behavior and finds there is a very obvious reason for it.

When I asked Jenny what she thought about America's interest in the Holocaust, she said she relates it to a "flavor of the month mentality." She pointed to other trends of interest like Irish culture or the American Civil War. She said "I hear all the time in the South, 'We never owned slaves!'" To Jenny, acknowledging the tragedy is a means of allaying guilt. She is doubtful most Americans realize we could have done more during the Holocaust to help the Jews of Europe. Jenny says Americans like to appropriate tragedies. "If we want to feel guilty about something, we can, and then we can commercialize it to boot." Jenny mentions a movie that is being made about the Holocaust. It is focused on Auschwitz and is by a director she says goes too far. She is very adamant that "Hollywood not treat the Holocaust in so gory a manner and turn it into a morbid spectacle. Lines should be drawn!"

When asked about 9/11, Jenny remembers her grandfather saying "I hope people don't lose their minds over this." Perhaps because of his physical proximity to the events and because his granddaughter had married a Muslim, Jenny says he seemed to have a certain defiant and proud attitude. She quotes him as having said "Our family is what I dreamed America would be like." When pressed for her own reactions to 9/11, Jenny points to recent debates about whether a mosque should be allowed to open near the site of New York City's World Trade Center. Jenny automatically compares this to "how the Jews were treated." She sees it as "non-American" behavior that has been transformed into an anti-Muslim mentality and becomes notably agitated by what she sees as hypocrisy. She finds it frustrating that "Americans can display extreme guilt and reverence [regarding the past] on the one hand but are incapable of recognizing the connection with what is happening in the Middle East."

When asked about Israel, Jenny admits that if she did not have a Jewish background, she would probably look at the situation as "just crazy." She says she does not at all believe "the

Israelis are any more deserving than the Palestinians.” She says she thinks “it sucks how it happened” [Israel’s conception as a sovereign state] but she also thinks it is good to have a place that is culturally Jewish. Jenny recalls she was invited at age twenty-five to come to Israel as her birthright. She laughs “I’m not sure how that happened. Perhaps they got my name because of my cousins who are Jewish?” She says she refused because she just did not think it would have meant anything to her because “I’m not Jewish. It would have seemed alien.” “Besides” she says “as an American I would have been too afraid for my safety.”

Elaine

I was introduced to Elaine via a mutual friend on Facebook. Elaine and I communicated exclusively via email. I found her written responses to be very open, unhesitating, and reflective. She answered every question I asked her and her quick responses suggested to me someone who is very ready to enter into a discussion about her experiences and perspectives.

Elaine grew up in Evanston, Illinois, a city of about 70,000, just north of Chicago. She describes it as “a diverse, but pretty segregated, suburb (the first suburb north of the city – so it is somewhat urban/interesting). It is the home of Northwestern University-- so there are a relatively large amount of cultural amenities. In a lot of ways, Evanston feels like a small town – but you also have Chicago in your backyard. It was a great place to grow up.” She currently still lives in the Chicago area.

Elaine said she does not remember how the Holocaust was brought up, but remembers her mother referencing it when she was young. Elaine thinks she must have been under ten years old because she does not think it had been brought up at school yet. Her mother told her that both of her parents were Holocaust survivors. Elaine said her mother did not want to tell her about

their experiences because she did not want to scare her. Her mother felt she had been told their stories when she was too young. Elaine says she remembers thinking to herself “What could be so terrible?” By the time Elaine was twelve or thirteen, she had learned about concentration camps and about Hitler’s rise to power. As she learned more about the Holocaust in school, Elaine started to make up scenarios about her grandparents’ experiences which ultimately turned out to be “more gruesome, in many ways, than the reality.” Elaine understood her grandparents were “survivors”, but did not learn the actual details of their experiences until her early teens. By then, Elaine says “I had started to get into American history, so I was more able to understand their experiences in context.”

Elaine’s grandfather died when she was thirteen. She said she was very close to him and remembers him fondly. Although very young when she knew him, she did not think he seemed to be too “traumatized or horribly embittered by his experiences, although I know he was very harsh to my uncle as a child (and took out a lot of anger on him).” She insists he was very loving and sweet as a grandfather, though. Elaine’s grandfather was from Poland and was in his late teens when the war began. Elaine says he participated in the resistance, but was defeated quickly. His family split up into two groups after the Nazis invaded Poland. Elaine explains “Half of his family – including his parents and several of his many siblings – went out in the woods to hide. They were all killed by Nazis – I believe in the woods, by gunfire – but I am not sure. The rest of his family, including him, hid in the attic of a Christian family – and they survived. There are stories about an infant who was “sacrificed” (smothered due to crying – which could have given up the family’s hiding place) but I do not know if that is true. The infant did die during the time in hiding, though. I don’t know much about the Christian family that saved my grandpa, but I remember my grandma sending them old clothes (and other useful stuff)

when I was a kid.” According to Elaine, her grandfather remained very religious until his death and actually died from a stroke while at synagogue.

Elaine said her grandmother has always been a big part of her life and she fondly remembers her babysitting frequently. As an adult, Elaine seems less certain of her feelings toward her grandmother. When asked to describe her current relationship with her grandmother, she explains “As I have gotten older, I have understood more about the ‘difficult’ aspects of my grandma’s personality (and her negative effect on my mom). Visiting her is not always very fun, but I do make sure to visit and call her every few weeks. I do love and respect her very much, but she can be hard to deal with. I try to be a loving and helpful grandchild.” In her response, there appears to be a level of tension, but it seems unclear whether Elaine is protecting herself, her mother, or her grandmother by saying she has fond childhood memories of her grandmother.

Elaine’s grandmother lived on a small farm in Czechoslovakia before the war with her parents and about seven siblings. Her grandmother was in her late teens and, as the oldest child in her family, was sent to care for younger cousins in a nearby town sometime around the time the Nazis arrived in Czechoslovakia. Elaine is not certain of the details, but says it was during this time that her grandmother’s family disappeared. Her grandmother was later sent to the camps and used for slave labor. She was sent to several camps, including Auschwitz, and did a great deal of physical labor, including digging holes to bury Nazi artillery. Her grandmother survived to the end of the war and was eventually freed by Russian troops.

Elaine’s grandparents met after the war, while in a displaced persons camp in Austria. Elaine shows some pride in her grandmother’s survival when she says “My grandma (totally alone) made friends with my grandpa’s sisters and their children (she helped care for the kids).

She picked my grandpa to marry (out of several brothers) but they were never really “in love.”

They were just two survivors, trying to move forward.” She describes their marriage as not feeling like a partnership, despite the marriage lasting until her grandfather’s death.

Nevertheless, like many survivors trying to move on with their lives, Elaine’s grandparents had a son while they were still in Austria. After the young family moved to America, Elaine’s mother was born in 1951. Elaine absolutely believes the Holocaust defined her grandparents’ later lives. She does not hesitate to say “Their experiences from the Holocaust made them totally ineffectual parents to my mom and uncle which, in turn, impacted their personalities/lives to this day. After such a traumatic series of events (and no way to process it), my grandparents were simply not ready to raise other human beings, especially in a new country/culture.”

Elaine said she learned most of the details about her grandparents’ experience from her mother. Acknowledging this, it is possible that some of Elaine’s perspectives of the story are influenced by her mother’s own feelings. Elaine says “My mom had a very difficult time growing up with her parents. My grandparents had just experienced such horrible trauma and, really, were not ready to be parents so soon after the war – but that was just what you did to move on. My grandma treated my mom (as a very young child) much like her therapist – telling her every detail of the camps and using my mom as a sounding board for her own trauma. Of course, in the early 1950s, there was no mental health care for survivors, so my grandma did not know how else to deal with her experiences. So my mom, at seven or so, knew *way* too much about these horrible experiences – the death of my grandma’s family, her life in the camps...” Elaine says her mother’s own encounter with the stories was traumatic and scared her. As a result, Elaine says her mother was very reluctant to pass on the stories to Elaine. Elaine says “As

I got older, she told me outlines and some stories – but, to this day, I still do not know tons of details.”

It is interesting to note that Elaine’s grandmother had shared her experiences with her daughter. Elaine says her grandmother has only rarely spoken about her experiences to her, however. She does not remember her grandfather ever mentioning the Holocaust or his life before it. Elaine says her grandmother has declined several opportunities to formally tell about her experiences during the Holocaust. Yet her grandmother does talk about her childhood on the farm in Czechoslovakia. Elaine describes those stories as “often very sweet and nice – she enjoys talking about her siblings and her animals. When she starts talking about the start of the war (when she went to care for her cousins) – which I have only heard her do a few times – she tends to get upset. She seems to say, ‘It was sad, it was in the past – why bring it up?’ She doesn’t understand, or care about, people’s efforts to ‘remember’ the Holocaust or make sure every survivor ‘tells his story’. She would rather forget it.”

I asked Elaine to briefly explain her mother’s relationship to her grandmother. “My grandma and my mom have always had a poor relationship – my grandma has consistently been very tough on my mom and, at times, quite cruel. My grandma always told my mom, as a child, to “stop complaining” because nothing my mom could experience was as bad as the Holocaust. That’s a tough bar to clear! Thus, my mom has grown up to doubt her own instincts/feelings, have trouble expressing her emotions (with confidence) and she is often afraid to “expect more” from people and things. Because, hey, at least it’s not the Holocaust! I don’t know if it is/was about “protecting” my grandparents, but my mom does have trouble relating to her emotions and, moreover, giving herself permission to *feel* and express them. She always feels guilty when she

asks for “more” from someone or something. She was always told, essentially ‘Stop complaining, it’s not the Holocaust’.”

Elaine is not sure if her grandmother is religious or not. She describes her grandmother as “a very sad, angry and bitter person- to this day... My grandma continues to observe the traditions of the Jewish religion, but does it with, basically, no heart. It seems as if her faith is gone. I do see the Holocaust as a bomb that erupted and severely impacted that side of my family. I can see how it affected my grandma, for sure, but also my mom and my uncle. It is impossible to figure out what mental/emotional issues (on that side) are genetic and which are trauma-based/nurture-based.”

While Elaine does have a sister, her sister’s developmental disabilities prevent them from talking about her grandparent’s experience. Elaine does occasionally talk to a cousin about it. Elaine is also willing to tell other people her grandparents were survivors if it comes up because she is proud of her grandparents for having survived. Perhaps as a way of explaining herself she says also admits “in explaining my family, I think it is informative to know about the Holocaust’s role in making my grandma/mom who they are.”

Growing up, Elaine’s immediate family was only somewhat active in the Jewish community and did not attend synagogue regularly. The family did celebrate most Jewish holidays. Elaine and her sister attended religious schooling once a week throughout high school and both had bat mitzvahs. When I asked Elaine how she identified herself, she said “Lots of ways... an American, a Chicagoan, a Social Democrat/progressive/liberal, an Atheist, a Jew, a daughter, a sister, a friend...(and many more).” I was surprised she identified as Jewish right after she’d identified as an Atheist. In explaining what role religion plays in her life, she later

clarified “I am an atheist – so faith, itself, plays no role in my life. I consider myself a Jew culturally and ethnically.” By the time Elaine had completed high school, she says she and her mother identified as Atheists. Because her dad and sister were not interested in continuing to attend services, the whole family ended their synagogue membership. Elaine explains “I enjoyed the cultural and traditional aspect of it. I am still very proud to be a Jew and proud of my family and its history. I didn’t love going to Sunday School/Hebrew School (like most kids), but I had friends there, so I didn’t hate it. I liked the cultural camaraderie more than the religion. From a young age (13, 14, 15), I knew I did not believe in god (even though I did not have a formal name for it until later). But I loved/love *knowing* about Judaism, speaking a little Hebrew, and being a part of the culture. I still celebrate the big holidays with friends who are more religious Jews. And, if I have kids some day, I would want them to understand and love the Jewish religion and culture.”

Elaine has travelled internationally. She has not been to Poland and never visited a concentration camp or former ghetto but says she would like to. She has travelled to Prague in the Czech Republic. Although her grandmother was not from that city originally, she was thrilled about the trip and is proud of a picture of Elaine in Prague. Elaine offers that she also has been to Israel on the “Birthright” trip. Elaine describes it as a wonderful experience that was “quite emotional.” Her grandmother was especially happy and proud that Elaine went to Israel. She believes it is because her grandmother really wants her to feel connected to her Jewish roots.

Elaine confesses she sometimes feels emotional seeing depictions of the Holocaust, but she also feels disconnected because she has seen them so many times. It is the oral histories that tend to have an emotional impact on her. Elaine does think about the Holocaust often. She says “I often think about my grandparents’ experience, and the experiences of their families. I think

about all the great aunts/uncles that I know on my dad's side – but are all dead on my mom's side. I think of what it would have been like to know them and their children. It's sad to have such a huge loss in my family. I think about the (totally f*cked up) fact that, without the Holocaust, I would not be here today. My grandparents would never have met if not for the Holocaust and ending up at the DP camp. I often think about my little sister, who is disabled, and how she would have never survived the Holocaust. I think about how *young* my grandparents were and what they had to overcome (with no help). I think about how I would have (if I would have) been able to survive similar trauma. Mostly, I think about my grandma and wonder about her sadness/anger/bitterness and how much of that was caused directly from her experiences in the Holocaust. I wonder what she was like before the Holocaust and mourn for the personality that was lost.”

Overall, Elaine says she feels very lucky to be alive and “living in a place as (relatively) wonderful as America. I try to appreciate what I have. I know that, two generations ago, my family was living on a farm and surviving a genocide and that, a generation later, my mom/uncle were in college, and now every grandchild (besides my disabled sister) has finished college and, often, gone on to graduate school. My family has come so far in just 60 years. I do feel very lucky and proud to have what I have. I am thankful to all those who sacrificed for me.”

Elaine thinks it is important for Americans to learn about the Holocaust. She is more inclined to see it taught as a genocide in the hopes people will be “less likely to repeat it (or at least will recognize it when it is happening).” She says that “because Jews are just white people in America, it is easy to forget that there is anti-Semitism in the world, and even within America.” To Elaine, the Holocaust is still a fresh wound. “It is important to realize that, ONLY 60 YEARS AGO, the Holocaust was a reality. I think people often think the Jews have no

reason to complain anymore – but they are still a hated minority (and a very small one).” Even so, and despite saying she is very interested in history in general, Elaine says she has not really done much to learn more about the Holocaust beyond having visited Yad Vashem while in Israel. She admits she has actually avoided learning about the Holocaust because it is too personal and emotional for her to view the topic as simply historical.

Elaine says she feels very close to other Americans and considers herself a patriot. She liked how the nation seemed to come together immediately following 9/11. Having said that, she is quick to add that it does make her nervous to observe any sentiment, be it national pride or religious inclination become what she terms fanatical. She finds it disconcerting to see any group bound together by a negative focus on another group and offers anti-Islamic sentiments in the United States after 9/11 as an example. In general, she does not find some level of nationalism too concerning, however. She thinks “people should experience a healthy sense of brotherhood with their fellow countrymen. Sometimes we only think about ourselves as patriots and countrymen when something horrible happens.”

While she concedes that she disagrees with many of the policies of the Israeli government, she displays caution at criticizing the nation too much. Elaine thinks “it is important to remember the historical context in which the country exists, and the importance of maintaining a safe haven for the Jewish people (so that there is always protection from any future genocide/discrimination).” Elaine says the lessons she has learned from the Holocaust are “Love those around you – and tell them – because you never know when they will be gone. People are capable great evil, especially when they are vulnerable or desperate. Beware of hate and hate speech, as they can escalate into horrible things. Prejudice and hate, at any level, can be dangerous – especially when good people don’t stand up to fight it.”

Stephanie

I was introduced to Stephanie by Judi, a friend and fellow student at the university I attend. Stephanie is the wife of Judi's brother-in-law. Judi has known Stephanie for twelve years, but knows very little of her past. When Judi began taking classes toward completing a degree in German and in history, Judi says that Stephanie was furious and described her interests as irrelevant and impractical. While she had eventually apologized and has recently become more encouraging, Judi still found the confrontation troublesome. When Judi learned of my research, she hesitantly offered to contact Stephanie. At some point, Judi had been told by another family that Stephanie's grandparents had been Holocaust survivors. Judi had been told Stephanie's grandparents even bore tattoos on their arms. Both Judi and I assumed this meant Judi's family was Jewish and that this explained her suspiciousness of Judi's studies.

We were both intrigued to hear Stephanie's story when she agreed to meet me. The three of us met at a local restaurant one evening. Stephanie began to tell a story neither Judi nor I had anticipated. Stephanie's interview was perhaps the most challenging one I conducted. The conversation flowed back and forth at a pace dictated more by Stephanie's retrieval and processing of memories than by the questions I asked.

Stephanie believes both her maternal grandparents were Holocaust survivors, but insists she does not know anything about their experience. Somewhere between the age of six and ten, Stephanie remembers standing in the kitchen with her grandfather, whom she called Opa. Her grandfather said to her "Your Oma [her grandmother] and I were in a concentration camp." She does not remember why he said this. She does not recall if something was going on or if it was about something he was reading, just that it was said very matter of fact. She is not sure if he

meant they had been in a camp together and she is not sure when or where the camp would have been. She said she has no memory of ever hearing any other details regarding the fact.

Stephanie had travelled to Holland with her grandparents for about six weeks when she was about nine years old. She says “I don’t know if it was then- or if it was once we got back home, after I saw everything and met family, so that could be it. I don’t really recall. But I do remember him saying those words and I don’t know why it registered or what we were talking about to bring it up.” I ask if she thinks she even knew what a concentration camp was. Hesitating, she answers “I kinda felt like I knew what that was but I don’t know why I would. Or maybe I just made the connection once I learned what it was and him saying that to me it all kinda clicked maybe. I don’t know why I remember him saying it.” At this she seems annoyed as if she thinks I doubt her memory or perhaps doubts it herself. As she talks, her voice and facial expression have changed to reflect what appears to be frustration.

Hoping to encourage more recall, I ask Stephanie about the context of the memory and specifically about the trip to Holland. Stephanie said she remembers visiting a lot of churches on the trip to Holland and visiting what seemed to be a very large, extended family. Bringing up the trip seems to prompt an explanation about her family’s heritage. “I know that they’re from Indonesia originally but they [her grandparents] grew up in Holland and my mom was born in Holland and then they moved to California.” I asked if she ever talked to her mother about her grandparents’ past and she answered that she does not talk to her mother much at all so, no, she has never asked.

Stephanie identifies herself as “Dutch and Irish and that’s because my dad’s Irish and my mom’s Dutch. That’s kinda it. No religion really. I mean, my grandparents were Seventh Day

Adventist. My dad didn't really attend church so there's no other religion involved. Not that I ever went to church much." She laughs. Stephanie says everything was church related in her grandparents' life. Her grandparents didn't eat meat, wear makeup, watch TV, or do anything that did not focus on the Church and their beliefs. "It was all about the Lord."

When she would hear something about the Holocaust in school, Stephanie sometimes imagined what her grandparents might have gone through. Still, she brushes it off with "I don't know the extent of what they went through. I would imagine that it wasn't *that* bad because they were around to tell about it." She says the way her grandfather so matter of fact said they had been in a concentration camp gave her the impression it was not "traumatic." She says "I didn't get any real indication that it was tragic. It was just like a bad time they went through for maybe a minute."

Stephanie suddenly remembers "Grandpa said, 'When we moved to California it was very important that we were by the church, and that we were by water, and that we were close to work.' Her grandfather felt it was very important, if anything ever happened, they had water and food. She says she didn't think much of that as a child, but, upon reflection, now finds it curious. Nevertheless, she says she would not describe him as "a hoarder."

Stephanie does not know why her grandparents decided to come to the United States or chose California to settle in. She says there was not a large Dutch community in their town, no other family members came to the United States, and there were not any significant friendships that might have drawn them there. She says her grandparents were as devoted to each other as they were to their Lord. They even worked together. She was a nurse and he was a housekeeper at the hospital. They did everything together. She says the hospital and their church were within

a mile or two of their home. They paid no attention to world events or politics. She says any books, radio, music, or TV programming was always about “the Lord.” With three very large Seventh Day Adventist churches in the fairly rural Napa Valley area she grew up in, Stephanie thought the denomination was the norm for most Americans.

When she was about seventeen or eighteen years old, she thought it would be “kinda cool to do the family tree thing on my mother’s side.” When she called and asked her grandfather about his family, he gave her so many details, she quickly became overwhelmed by the project and lost interest. She says there is a rumor in her family that her grandfather’s side of the family was Indonesian royalty. She says her cousin was told this by her mother, Stephanie’s maternal aunt. She thinks her grandfather was originally from Jakarta and must have been in his early twenties at the time of the Holocaust. She says there was nothing unusual about the way he told her about the family tree. She does not remember him indicating any significant losses or mentioning the Holocaust.

After her mother remarried and moved out of her parent’s home, her father took custody of Stephanie. He does not talk about her mother’s side of the family out of what Stephanie believes is a desire to not upset her. She does not know if he has any information about her grandparents’ experience in the Holocaust, but wants to ask him. At this point in the conversation, Stephanie suddenly blurted out “I don’t know anything.” I patiently tell her we can stop talking about it at any time. I also tell her that is not entirely true. I try to point out to her that this very distinct memory from such a young age is actually a lot. She retells the story and begins to change her tone. She wonders how she could find out more. She wonders why he said that, if maybe he wanted her to know but didn’t want to tell her too much too young. She is surprised to learn Judi was told they had tattoos on their arms. She can’t remember seeing tattoos

so she is curious who would have told Judi that. She is surprised she would have ever said anything to anyone because it seems such a small, insignificant memory. She says her husband teases her about being “Dutchanese” or “Ethiopian.” She is annoyed by that because he always “comes up with some kind of nationality that’s not even close to what I really am.” She says she goes with Dutch if someone asks. She balances the identification with her dark hair, dark eyes, and tan complexion by explaining Indonesia and Holland once had close ties.

Stephanie remembers her grandparents were very excited about the trip they took her on to Holland. She does not recall them ever going to Holland again or hearing about any other trips before that one. Somewhere she has a photo album filled with pictures of the trip with captions handwritten by her grandfather. She says her grandparents were “Polaroid happy.” She laughs remembering them taking pictures of family photographs on the walls of family member’s homes. She does not remember any cemeteries or similar destinations that might indicate some kind of loss or Holocaust related tragedy.

She wondered aloud how long her grandparents were married and when they were married. She wondered if they were there together or not during the war and in any camps they might have been sent to. As if she has again reviewed the memory, she interrupted herself to say she remembers her grandfather’s exact words were that he and her grandmother were in a concentration camp. Although she had a darker skin tone, Stephanie suddenly wonders if her grandmother was even Indonesian. She admits she is not able to differentiate who is or is not Dutch. She says all of the family they met in Holland had dark skin and hair too. “To me, Dutch is dark skin and dark hair. I guess for everyone else it’s light skin and blonde hair, but not for me based on everything I grew up seeing.”

Stephanie is not sure where she put the notes she taken as her grandfather had told her about the family tree. I ask if she is curious for herself or for other reasons. She admits she would like to know more but says her strained relationship with her mother has prevented her from really trying. She says she tried to reconnect with her grandmother, mother, and aunt when she returned to California after the birth of her daughter some seven years before. Her grandfather had passed away by then. She wonders aloud who she could ask about her grandparents' experiences during the Holocaust. She wonders if her father knows anything. She is sure she could still call her aunt and ask. She laughs that she certainly will not ask her mother and wishes her grandfather was still around so that she could ask him. She is confident he would tell her now because he would have told her "anything." She thinks he just did not tell her more about it at the time because she was so young.

Stephanie says she does get angry imagining her grandparents could have been treated badly. When she sees images from the Holocaust or hears about the Holocaust, she finds it "interesting." Yet she admits she does not really know enough about it to be interested in learning anything more. She seems to relate a historical knowledge with personal knowledge and explains "They survived it so why dwell on it, I guess." She says maybe if her grandfather had told her more she would now have more interest. In trying to qualify her knowledge of the Holocaust, she says she understands there that were atrocities. She admits she does not know why it escalated to the point it did, or why people were singled out, or how it is even possible that nobody resisted. Interestingly, she seems to connect her opinion of the Holocaust with whatever religious upbringing she has maintained. She explains the perspective of the Seventh Day Adventists is that absolutely no one except for God may pass judgment on another human being. As such, Stephanie says she is unable to comprehend how it became okay for so many

people to follow one man and treat others so badly. She wonders if that is perhaps a factor in her grandparents' strong faith and why they clung so tightly to a lifestyle centered on religion. As for the persecution that occurred during the Holocaust "I certainly wouldn't have allowed it and I don't think most people would stand for it."

It was a challenge to come up with questions to ask Stephanie. At first she was resistant, insisting she really didn't know anything. Once she began to talk, to think back over her early memories, however, it was a challenge to know how to reframe my series of prepared questions to correlate with the fact she is not Jewish and is barely aware of her family narrative. Despite how different her story is from the rest, however, I ultimately decided Stephanie's story is still a good illustration of what I observed in the others. Jewish or not, she was dealing with the same struggle to understand her world and come to terms with a traumatic family history.

I believe Stephanie was willing to be identified with descendants of Holocaust survivors because it made up for and offered some explanation for the lack of familiarity and closeness she experienced in her family. Whether Stephanie's memory of a long ago conversation is the result of a true experience in her grandparents' lives or not, I do not doubt it adds to the way Stephanie understands her family and, by extension, herself. Indeed, to spend one's formative years in a very religious household with an absent mother could leave any child feeling frustrated. For Stephanie, there is a real sense of loss in the lack of communication in her family. If her grandparents had survived persecution and resisted the urge to be angry or judgmental, then there is something she is able to be proud of. Her identification with and defensiveness about her grandparents' nationality indicates Stephanie values their narrative. By the end of our conversation, she is resolved to find out more about them because "obviously there's some kind of story there, even if it's not about the Holocaust."

Sara

Sara was introduced to me via a university colleague's cousin. Sara and I exchanged emails over the course of a month before finally finding a good time to talk on the telephone. I spoke with Sara for about forty minutes one evening in the early spring of 2011. Despite being one of my last interviews, Sara proved a challenge for my interviewing skills. She is a very approachable and receptive individual, but she also has a very succinct way of speaking that made any open ended questions I asked seem redundant.

Sara currently lives in New York. She and her husband are expecting their third child. She is a lawyer, but no longer practices. Instead, she devotes her time to volunteer work and to her children. All of her volunteer work focuses on the Holocaust, either in educational programs or memorials. She is currently a docent at the Simon Wiesenthal Museum in New York, which she describes as "of course having a Holocaust section" but more focused on contemporary examples of genocide. She also serves as the president and chair for the New York chapter of Next Generation, which she explains is a group of survivor grandchildren organized under the auspices of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. As we speak, she emails me a link to the organization's website.

Sara grew up in Livingston, New Jersey. As the oldest grandchild, she says she was "extra close" to her grandfather. Sara describes her family as "very close knit" and her childhood as having taken place in an almost "small town" type of world. Sara's maternal grandparents were both Holocaust survivors. She says her grandmother is from a very small town in Poland. Her experience was in Siberia under Russian rule. Sara says her grandmother is certainly a survivor in the context of an individual who was displaced and sent away from their home and

everything they knew. It is her grandfather's story that seems to dominate Sara's identification of her family's survivor story though.

Sara's grandfather was one of nine children born in Krakow, Poland to "a pretty traditional, religious family." When the Nazis came to Poland, her grandfather was sent first to the ghetto in Krakow, then later to the Plaszow labor camp. I recognize the camp immediately but listen politely as she explains Plaszow was the camp portrayed in the film *Schindler's List*. She informs me Amon Goeth was the commandant of Plaszow. She then reflexively spells his name for me. During the course of the Nazi occupation of Poland, Sara's grandfather lost both his parents and all of his siblings. He was the sole survivor in his family. She says most were gassed, but his mother was shot by a Gestapo man while she held her grandfather's baby sister in her arms. I regret later that I am surprised enough by Sara's matter of fact recount of something so horrifying I do not ask how she knows this detail. Sara's grandfather spent some time working in Plaszow before he was "miraculously" added to Schindler's famous list. He then moved to the ammunition factory Schindler had established and remained there until the end of the war.

Sara says she cannot recall specifically learning about the Holocaust or her grandfather's story. As a child, she attended a Jewish school and her grandfather would often speak at assemblies or events the school held. She says her grandfather talked about his experience often. He would tell about "his parents and siblings that were lost and who we were named for." She says that while Thomas Kenneally had written *Schindler's List* years before, it was probably the release of the film that made telling his story "increasingly important to him." She says she was in ninth or tenth grade at the time of the film's release and her grandfather accompanied her school on a trip to go see the film.

Her grandfather devoted much of his time to talk about the Holocaust and his experience. She says he recorded an interview with Stephen Spielberg's Shoah Project⁷¹, his testimony was recorded by USHMM and the Yale Archives, and he is mentioned in multiple books. While Sara insists her grandfather did not focus on the Holocaust in his own life, he was very active in talking about it and sharing his experience. Her grandfather served on multiple Holocaust education and remembrance community task forces. She describes his activities as all being focused on education and remembrance. His charitable donations were also directed towards such activities. Sara describes her own volunteering and charitable donations as being the same.

Sara cannot remember her grandfather ever struggling to explain the context of his experience or ever questioning why it had happened. She concedes that, because her grandfather was so vocal about his experience, she may have gained an understanding or acceptance of the Holocaust earlier than most kids. She thinks much of this has to do with how survivors deal with their experience. For her grandfather, she says it was all about "rebuilding." He felt one had "to get back up" and keep going. After he came to the United States, he started a new business and a new family. She says he was never "bitter" about his experience.

Sara has travelled internationally a great deal. As a teen, she went on The March of the Living, spending one week touring Poland and another in Israel. While in Poland, she explored the city of Krakow and visited synagogues and Holocaust related sites. Her mother went on the trip too and Sara describes it as a "very good bonding experience." She says her grandfather was encouraging of her trip, but "He never went back to Europe." Since that trip, Sara has travelled to

⁷¹ References to Spielberg's Shoah project are referring to the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education. It is a nonprofit organization housed at the University of Southern California and established by film director Steven Spielberg in 1994. The Foundation records the testimonies of survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust. <http://college.usc.edu/vhi/> (accessed 3 March 2011).

Israel a number of times and been elsewhere in Europe. She says she has not really explored Holocaust sites on any of these subsequent trips, although “In Italy and Paris, I went to Jewish cemeteries.”

When I ask Sara how she feels about images of the Holocaust and especially how she feels at their proliferation over the last two decades, she says it does not bother her. Her voice gains an agitated edge, however, when she explains that she is bothered when the images are utilized by Holocaust deniers. She says when one considers “the influx of Holocaust related literature and film, you have to look at each with a critical eye.” Here Sara allows herself to temporarily veer from what seem to be deliberate responses. She gets excited as she recounts a recent experience concerning a friend’s twenty year old Italian au pair. She says the friend’s grandmother was recently visiting and when the au pair noticed numbers tattooed on her arm, she asked what they were from. The grandmother told the au pair she had received them during the Holocaust at a concentration camp because she was Jewish. Sara says the au pair looked at the elderly woman “like she was crazy. She just couldn’t understand. For an Italian teenager to not know about the Holocaust at all—it’s a scary thought.”

Sara insists that the Holocaust should be seen as the world’s worst genocide and should be used to understand the “warning signs of genocide.” She says impassionedly “You know there’s a very big genocide going on *right now*-- in Darfur. Clearly the world hasn’t learned enough to try and prevent genocide from happening again.” With her proximity to New York City, I ask Sara if she felt any concern about the American reaction to 9/11. At first she says “There is no parallel.” She reflects a little longer and says “If anything I think September eleven was a wakeup call to the world...extremists were willing to go to crazy lengths to get their point across.” She draws a parallel between Muslim extremists and Nazis. She wonders “Who would

have ever thought” Muslim extremists would fly planes into buildings and “who would have ever thought” concentration camps would have existed. She says the world needs to understand the dangers of such “prejudice, intolerance, and hatred.”

Sara asks me how other 3Gs have responded. I tell her as ambiguously as possible that most respondents have expressed very similar experiences and perspectives as her own. I hope she will draw on her roles as a kind of spokesperson for 3Gs to want to set herself apart from the group and make a definite statement. Instead, she just listens and I cannot tell if my response leaves her relieved or indifferent. She does tell me she has sent me an additional email with another link. She says it is a “surprise” for me to look at later. After we hang up the phone, I look at the email she has sent me. It is a forwarded thread of messages from a clinical psychologist who has written a play exploring the relationships between three generations of Holocaust survivors. The woman is interested in starting a group therapy session for 3Gs in New York. The sessions are called “From Surviving to Thriving.” The goal of the group sessions is described as “to provide a safe therapeutic environment for sharing commonalities, and at the same time tap into each person’s unique sense of identity, vulnerability, personal strength, and creativity.” Although I am intrigued by the psychologists’ intentions, I am not sure why Sara chose this to share with me. I consider that she is perhaps trying to suggest 3Gs are indeed a unique group

David and Ziva

A mutual friend on Facebook connected me with Ziva. After exchanging emails with Ziva, I learned that her husband, David, was also a 3G, but, according to Ziva, they had very different stories. Both agreed to speak with me and I spent the better part of a morning enjoying the way the young couple’s dialogue intertwined and encouraged one another’s stories.

David says it is hard to answer when he first heard about his paternal grandfather's experience in the Holocaust. He says it has been a part of his consciousness since he was a child, but wasn't sure whether that stemmed from the Jewish school he attended or from his family. Ziva agrees she never experienced any kind of shocking realization about her maternal grandfather's experience during the Holocaust either. For both, it was common knowledge, a fact that had just always been known.

Ziva's grandfather had left on a Kinder transport when he was twelve or thirteen and made it to the United States, coming first to Birmingham, Alabama and then to Atlanta, Georgia. She describes his story as "not basic" but suggests she sees it as perhaps not traumatic and even typical. He was a Reformed German Jew, his father was hurt on Kristallnacht, and after he arrived in the United States, he received letters saying that his family had been killed. When Ziva's grandfather had come to the United States, he was cared for and later adopted by a woman who had other children. Ziva says those children became his siblings and are the extended family she knows now. She says he later joined the army during the Second World War and helped to liberate concentration camps. Because he was so young at the time and maybe not prepared to deal with so great a loss, she says he has devoted the last few decades of his life to trying to find any other family members who might have survived. She says he is "reconstructing his history." To that end, the entire family (Ziva, David, and Ziva's grandfather, uncles, aunts, parents, siblings, and cousins) travelled back to Germany the previous summer. They had visited his old house, his school, the prison his father had been sent to, and gravestones of family members. Here David interjects to say there is a book her grandfather has compiled of all the correspondences and the telegrams he received from his family. They say the letters provide very few clues to what was really happening as they were written to a twelve year old boy. Ziva says

they say such things as “Are you wearing a coat? Be polite and pay attention in school. And things aren’t great.” She says in the last letter her grandfather received from his mother, she had gotten a visa and was hopeful to soon join him in America. After that, only a death certificate arrived and they believe she died of malnutrition. The father is believed to have died from beatings he received while imprisoned. Ziva says her grandfather constantly has to relearn and adapt the story of what happened to his family. Recently he had learned that his father did not die where he thought he had.

David’s grandfather was a poor, Hassidic Jew from Lodz, Poland. He was sent to a ghetto and then sent to multiple work camps over the course of five to seven years. Eventually he ended up in Auschwitz and was eventually liberated by the Americans. He survived by saying he knew how to do whatever job was needed, whether or not he really did. David says “Of course, he saw all kinds of atrocities and he can tell you all the regular stories, like the selections in Auschwitz.” He had one brother who survived.

David says his grandfather is not that involved with his immediate family. David explains his father had what David describes as a “traumatic” time growing up and struggled with the responsibility of having to help raise his younger siblings. He says that it was no secret his grandfather had survived the Holocaust but that his grandfather did not talk to his children about his experiences at all. It was only one day in the 1990s when his grandfather was visiting that he began to open up about his experiences. David’s mother was driving him through a very orthodox Jewish area of Muncie, New York—the town David grew up in. He pointed out a young boy with the traditional side curls and said “I used to look like that.” From there, the stories began to flow. Before he opened up to David’s mother, David says there was nothing known beyond him being a survivor. He says his father’s side of the family is not naturally

communicative anyway. Now “If you say my legs hurt around him, he tells a story about walking in the woods for six weeks. If you say you are hungry he complains about a hot potato. He’s always psychologically been one dimensional but now it’s like a machine. He will not stop. He cannot hear other stories in the context of his. There is no relating or complaining. He does not respond to anyone who tries to relate or compare his story.” His grandfather participated in Steven Spielberg’s *Shoah* project so the family has a recorded version of his testimony. David describes his grandfather as a “constant repetition of stories.”

Especially as he has aged, his grandfather goes through cycles where he will choose one story to repeat over and over again. His grandfather, it would seem, is still working through his memories. David laughs that his family actually takes note of the ways each story changes with every telling. David and his sister talk about it a lot, comparing the stories they’ve been told and how they’ve changed. His sister is a creative writer and David says she has done “some interesting work” writing about his process of repeating and reworking the same stories over and over again. She tries to connect how the stories develop over time. She also explores her own personal perspective of his stories. His sister studies the Torah and Talmud and teaches. Their grandfather has gender issues with her studies and thinks she should focus instead on having children since she has been married for eight years. The sister perceives the stories their grandfather shares with her all have a context within her ongoing conflicts with their grandfather. David’s parents also write. He says maybe this is why it is an active dialogue in his family. He says “That’s really where I get the most knowledge and understanding. And kinda the way that I place it in my life is from discussing it with my family.” The stories his grandfather tells David follow a “when I was your age” outline that are meant to relate a work ethic or inform David of business matters.

Ziva's grandfather has conversely always been very active in telling his story to schools and community groups. In fact, Ziva admits that, up until perhaps her late teens or early twenties, she thought every Jew was the grandchild of Holocaust survivors. She says "My grandfather has dedicated his life to reconstructing this part of his life and he writes books and he talks... The amazing part is he doesn't really share the Holocaust stories with us. He doesn't really have Holocaust stories. He has post-Holocaust stories cause he never lived through the Holocaust... I need to go hear the stories. He was published. He was written up in books. I need to go hear him speak because I think that would give me a different perspective. I need to go but it's just one of those things."

Ziva describes her grandfather's reaction to the Holocaust as an extreme attachment to his family. He calls each of his four children and all of his grandchildren every day. She laughs that he has to know where they all are every day, at every moment of the day, and what they are doing. She describes this closeness as an obsession but there is no hint of it feeling like an intrusion or obligation to her. She indicates her aunts, uncles, parents, siblings, and cousins are all content to be so close. She says, at one point, all four of her grandfather's children's families lived within a mile of him. The family is no longer spatially this close, but the intimacy remains. David and Ziva are currently living with her parents and both seem completely comfortable with the arrangement.

Ziva has two brothers but only talks about it with her cousin. David draws a comparison for her "It's a basic awareness. You guys live it constantly because the family value permeates everything... It's just an incredible family dynamic... and now that I've married into the family, our family is our life." Ziva says there is also less to discuss because it is so out in the open.

David spent the last nine years living in Israel. He says he definitely talks to his Israeli friends about it and offers that many of them are also Americans. He hesitates and looks to Ziva to answer if they talk to their friends about it here in the United States. They agree that probably half their friends are 3Gs. They agree they probably talk to each other about it a lot because “it influenced us” so much and say they learn a lot in the comparisons because there is what they describe as such a stark difference between their two grandfathers and their two families. Looking to him, she asks ‘do we talk about it with our friends? It comes up but it’s not like...’ He interjects and suggests to Ziva she probably does talk about it to her friends. He tries to explain “It’s not weird. I guess it’s just we’re in the kind of Jewish community where there’s a lot of knowledge about it. It’s informed a lot of our identities so it’s not kind of like a weird thing to bring up.” Both Ziva and David attended Jewish schools and both agree that, among their friends, there was almost a Holocaust overload it was discussed so much. Ziva remembers she had an entire semester about the Holocaust in the Eighth grade. She also participated in the March for the Living and went to camps.

David’s grandfather has never been back to Europe. David has been to Poland and Germany but did not visit any of the camps. He says his grandfather cannot see it as a historical event and there is no interest in returning. David says “My grandfather in his own mind isn’t a survivor. He had his own experience where it’s just so individualized and particularized to him.” “Whereas Ziva’s grandfather is kinda a Holocaust historian and has dedicated himself to understanding it and has related it to the impact in his life... My grandfather hasn’t done that mindfully, just kinda in a guttural... not in a thought out kind of way.” Ziva says “He’s a survivalist. The stories will run from the Holocaust to everything else. It’s all about one long struggle.” David describes him as a simple man who doesn’t know anything else about it

whereas Ziva's grandfather is like a historian trying to relate it to his life. Ziva explains David's grandfather struggled throughout his entire life and he is all about living. David says he was young enough that his connection to his pre-war life faded in light of his struggles during and after the war. Ziva's grandfather had an easier life. His family was well off and lived in urban areas with all the social and cultural advantages that made him very "worldly." In the United States, he was adopted by a supportive family, went to law school, married, and built the Jewish community in the area. He is dedicated to explaining the Holocaust to others and is concerned with Jewish continuity. Her grandfather does not share stories with his family about the Holocaust but will write about it and gives her family everything he writes. She says he is just now starting to tell how he helped liberate camps while in the army and how his ability to speak German meant he helped in interrogations and was in intelligence. Her mother had not even heard any of the stories. She says it is not that he withheld them; he just probably thought he had told them. "He definitely doesn't contextualize anything. He's not like 'I'm sharing this so you will remember.' It's just *so* much a part of our family."

David says he made a very dramatic decision at seventeen that was directly influenced by his awareness of his family narrative. He moved to Israel and joined the army. Growing up in a very orthodox Jewish environment, David says Jewish identity was central, but he says it was all based in religion and education. And while he says his parents were kind of Zionist, they were still not completely supportive of his moving to Israel. By moving to Israel, he says he was trying to make his own path that had nothing to do with politics. "When I moved to Israel I was able to kinda engage my Jewish identity in this sort of total life way by serving in the army, and as a Jew nationally, it's part of the Jewish story, all that... it's just like the continuing story of the Jewish struggle... So when you can cast your lot in and there's still a place where you can be a

Jew and struggle as opposed to in America, I mean we all have to struggle to kind of exist, it's very different, this kind of existential struggle that has a lot to do with identity and kind of physical things too."

Ziva also has strong connections to Israel. Ziva was born in Israel but her parents returned to care for her paternal grandmother. Her younger brother is soon joining the army in Israel. Ziva has studied in Israel. But where David grew up in an orthodox Zionist world, she grew up in a secular Zionist world. Their families are very politically different in their perspectives. They describe her family as more Israeli, as more left-wing. David and Ziva married in Israel and say they do plan to return to Israel permanently someday. They say they "feel more fluid" about their nationality and where "home" is. "We're not really a part of any community because we are more transient." They have a hard time identifying themselves politically and nationally. Their religious perspectives also are complicated. They describe themselves as probably being more Israeli thinking because they are more observant of Jewish law.

They definitely see differences in how religion is approached in the two countries. David tries to explain Jews in the United States are more definitional in their religion. He says it is more about which congregation one belongs to and who the rabbi is. In Israel, they say they get to just be Jews and pray. It does not matter as much which denomination they are or who the rabbi is. They say they also see their Israeli friends as being a more global community. David says "Judaism is the heart of our cultural, where we jump off from." But, he explains "We're looking at being part of a global community." Ziva agrees and says "We're kinda odyssey-ers." David insists they struggle with categorization and shares "It's an ongoing conversation." He says it is a conversation that even effects their decisions in how they dress. Ziva has recently

decided to start covering her hair, yet David has decided not to wear a *kippah* because it is a social separation in Israel.⁷² He admits “We define ourselves differently based on where we are.” He also admits “I like to push boundaries a little bit.”

Ziva and David struggle to understand how the Holocaust has become a common topic of discussion in America both in a scholarly and popular context. David says he noticed this more in Europe than America. Ziva begins to relate popular knowledge of the Holocaust back to Israel. She has observed that, since most Israelis are immigrants from places besides Europe, Israeli kids have no real connection to the Holocaust. Ziva and David say they feel themselves a minority when they are in Israel that has an obligation to educate others. They do not see this in United States. Ziva does not like the Holocaust being marketed as a unique, separate genocide. She says “Every genocide is a different situation.” She believes the Holocaust should be used a means of establishing commonalities between cultures. She observes what she sees as a more appropriate trend among American Jews, who “have moved from trying to maintain a different identity to trying to find one that unifies all people.” David points to Ziva’s grandfather who sees the Holocaust as a global subject and experience. He says this is why her grandfather specifically goes to public schools and speaks to non-Jews about it.

David sees the Holocaust as a subject that is “ready to be marketed as unique.” To him, the challenge is to break free of the victim identification and not use it as a tool. He criticizes past and present Israeli politicians as being “responsive” instead of “responsible.” Both Ziva and David point to Israel’s establishment of Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) on the date of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. They do not think the point should be about Jews rising up

⁷² A *kippah*, also known as a *yarmulke*, is typically a cloth, spherical shaped cap customarily worn most often by Orthodox Jewish men to fulfill the requirement of covering their heads as a reminder of God’s presence.

and resisting oppression. They insist the Jewish community in American is trying to be more inclusive. Ziva says when she is in Israel “My entire perspective changes on everything.” Part of her feels there should be a return to original values and Israelis should take a “step back and contextualize.” She says “The Holocaust should be taken out of the equation, it should not be the reason Israel exists, it should not allow entitlement.” Israelis “should evaluate if they are there for the right reasons” and consider more carefully what they are going to do with the power they have. Ziva insists again that Israeli Jews do not know much at all about the Holocaust because they have no connection to it. In Israel, the Holocaust is just one of multiple persecution stories told by Jews who have immigrated from all over the world. She believes for Americans, it is a connection everyone recognizes.

David gently interrupts to say he thinks Ziva cannot separate herself enough to realize how much her perspective is based in the Holocaust and her grandfather. He thinks he may have had the advantage growing up in what he describes as a “vacuum” in which he did not know so much so early. Ziva admits her family is all so aware of her grandfather’s experience; it does influence all of their lives. She says there are two paths in her family. Her grandfather’s children and grandchildren are all either in what she calls “helping professions” like social workers or healthcare and religious fields like rabbis or they are in more practical, business related fields like law and real estate. David points out the two paths are also gender specific. Her uncles have been very successful in business. Ziva says her grandfather loves that his sons have a lot of money and big houses. For her grandfather, it is the American dream realized. “He sees it as, ‘Look what I did, from a world gone to a world that is so great.’” She thinks a lot of it comes directly from her grandfather’s personality. Because her grandfather left his family and home so young, he was forced to develop the kind of social skills that would make him successful in his

new world. Nevertheless, his own experiences do not necessarily help him understand why one would venture beyond the world he established for his family. Ziva is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Global Public Health. Her specific interests are immigration issues and African culture. She spent a year in Africa, living with a tribe of converted Jews. Her grandfather does not understand why she would be interested in Africa.

In describing their families, David again relays how his father is not close to his grandfather. Even though his father is a psychologist, David says his father cannot separate his own emotions and frustrations enough to communicate with his grandfather. He describes his father as a warm person, but says he has a hard time verbalizing things. David is a musician. He uses music to get people to express themselves, to reach out, but he says that is a hard thing for him to do, it does not come naturally to him. He is a quiet introvert and says he got that from his father who is that way because of his own father. He says his grandfather "hoards" excesses of items he finds "good deals on." His father is the opposite and has a hard time spending money. In recent years, however, he says his father has been going to wholesale clubs when he gets depressed and will buy large quantities of items. David says he sees these behaviors as illustrative of "an imbalance between the generations." David says he is trying to figure out how to balance it himself, in his own way.

David seems both envious of and grateful for the closeness in Ziva's family. He admits there is a sense of community with her family that is lacking with his own. David and Ziva both agree it is perhaps a regional influence, too. David says "In the north, in New York, you don't see yourself as American or not American. You are Jewish." Ziva says her family has always realized that "In the south, if you want it, you have to build it." She says that is exactly what her grandfather did when he helped establish the Jewish community in their area of Atlanta. Ziva

indicates it has not always been easy to be Jewish in the South, though. She says there is always the threat of anti-Semitism. She relays how a fence outside her school was once spray painted with swastikas. She thinks she must have been in Kindergarten at the time, but she very clearly remembers that there was an assembly held the next day and the kids were told very clearly what it meant to have the symbol painted on their school. She says she was too young to remember what exactly was said, but she remembers it was definitely explained. She also remembers the whole school participated in cleaning it up the next day and remembers the local news media's cameras coming.

David thinks Ziva's story shows real differences between their individual experiences as well as some regional differences. David says "In New York it is not socially integrated, you are Jewish and in your own world, and something like that just wouldn't happen." He does not see that as necessarily a positive thing either, though. In the community he grew up in "there is no allegorical, practical application" of Judaism to the real world. For him, a practical application of Judaism is what happened in Israel and what he sees as having happened in the South. He points out, however, that he does value the environment he grew up in himself because he credits it with having given him "a more complete religious education" than Ziva's more secular one.

David suddenly remembers hearing about the Holocaust in school the first time. He can't recall how the war was described but he says he recalls hearing in perhaps second grade that it happened "fifty years ago." He says so much of the Jewish history he'd been taught had happened in ancient times. To learn there was recent Jewish history really surprised him. Ziva recalls learning much more about the Holocaust and the state of Israel instead of discussing "ancient" Jewish history and that she was conversely surprised to learn Israel had only become a Jewish state "fifty years ago." They are thus unsure how religiously they want their own future

children to be educated and what kind of perspective they should get. David feels his perspective is what gives him the ability to be global. Ziva feels it is important that they learn like she did that it is a family narrative of ups and downs. Both are sure they will tell their kids about their family's narrative openly because it is so much a part of who they are. Ziva says she sees no way it could be avoided. Because her family tree is so small, there is no dispersion or dilution of the story and the closeness that resulted. They say they are prepared to raise their children as transients in the sense that there will be a lot of going back and forth. To Ziva, Israel does not feel like a foreign country. She says there is an extended community of family friends that makes the distance seem smaller.

Ziva and David express concern when they consider the relationships between Jews and a contemporary global society. Ziva says she was amazed by the March of the Living and her trips to the camps. She says it definitely impacted her identity as a Jew. Although David says he enjoyed visiting the Jewish community in Poland, to him it is just a place. For Ziva, the ability to see it "in color" and visualize the spatial realities of the places, to see Jews actually still living in Poland, to see where houses were in relation to camps, to see something she learned as ancient history is very real. David says he does not feel anger towards Europeans. He says he tries to focus on the present world by separating from the same historical world that he feels empowers him. Both agree they love Germany and German culture, especially the younger generation. David and Ziva sympathize with "the history they [younger Germans] have been born in. People as individuals just have to deal with the history they're dealt, just like we do. We're not anymore righteous because our grandparents went through a very hard thing. We're gonna be judged for what we do. We just happen to have this history that informs stuff."

Ziva says she did notice open anti-Semitism on a visit to Budapest, Hungary and was “a bit scared to think it could happen in our time.” She described it as “very in your face” and observed that most Jews were moving away from Budapest as a result. Both David and Ziva say they are fascinated with the way European Jews deal with their Jewish identities and engage it. Yet they believe most Israelis and American Jews are dismissive of the contemporary European Jewish experience, as if, David explains “the small pockets don’t count.” Ziva is concerned Germans are being “force fed their own guilt” because she believes “they deserve to have some kind of pride.” She worries the younger generation is growing up to believe their entire culture and history is shameful. David agrees “One intense behavior breeds another one.”

David sees parallels between the Holocaust and how Americans regard Muslims now. He relays comments that Ziva’s grandfather recently made after participating in a prayer service at a local synagogue. David says her grandfather used a passage in the Torah that mentions extremism as a spring board for comments placing responsibility on Muslims for the way they are regarded in America post-9/11. Ziva seems uncomfortable at this but does not say anything. She simply nods in agreement with David’s conclusion. He says “This goes against the idea America is different, that it could never happen here.” He says this is “the problem” with the Holocaust being appropriated by Jews. He hopes the real legacy for his family and for Ziva’s family is to not judge people on religion or race. He says he hopes that is the part of their grandfathers’ Holocaust experiences that they will someday pass on to their own children.

Conversations with Jewish Americans who are not 3Gs

As limited as my group of research participants ultimately turned out to be, I struggled to determine what precisely made them different. Based on the literature I reviewed and my own

personal experience, my hypothesis had been that 3Gs would profoundly be affected by the trauma their grandparents experienced. While that trauma had certainly factored greatly in each of their lives, I still had not clearly determined what role the Holocaust played in their identities. To that end, I decided to interview Jewish Americans aged eighteen to forty (a group herein referred to as “non-3Gs” for comparative purposes) whose family was not involved in the Holocaust and were not directly impacted by the event. The intention was to see if any differences or similarities emerged in comparison of the two groups. The interviews were all conducted via email using a survey that mimicked many of the questions asked of 3G participants. While some of the questions were rephrased, they followed the same method of inquiry as those asked of 3Gs and often were the exact same questions.

Again, I found each of the following participants using social snowballing. One was actually the referrer for a 3G I interviewed. She then put me in contact with another Jewish American woman who was not a 3G. The other female respondent to my survey was a contact from Facebook who was introduced to me by another friend when she moved to the Atlanta area. I did not even realize she was Jewish until shortly before beginning to distribute the surveys. I do have an intimate personal relationship with the only male respondent. I do not believe his awareness of my research impacted his answers as he has never read any of my research. His willingness to participate was certainly influenced by our relationship, yet our conversations have rarely broached the subject of his faith or his perspective of the Holocaust beyond a superficial depth.

I was surprised how excited and quick the following respondents were to answer my questions. One told me she is “jealous” of my field of research. Another thanked me for asking, saying she was “honored” to discuss this. These responses are interesting in their own right.

Juxtaposed with the responses of 3Gs, I believe they offer the opportunity for informative comparative analysis that helps inform my final conclusions.

Adelle

Adelle describes being Jewish as “fairly important” in her own life. She did not answer if she belongs to a synagogue but described her specific religious affiliation as “just Jewish.” When asked how she identifies herself, she said “Being a Jew is part of who I am, not what I do. I think what they call it now is being a ‘cultural Jew’.”

Adelle describes her family as having been active in a Jewish community growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She describes it as “a terrific place in which to be raised. My Jewish community was a conservative synagogue.” Adelle says the Holocaust is not a subject that ever comes up among her circle of Jewish friends or family. Her synagogue was where she learned about the Holocaust. “I would guess the first time I heard about the Holocaust was Sunday school. What I remember most is that we heard about the Holocaust all the time and it seemed to be the main focus of our synagogue.” Adelle recalls at her synagogue “we heard about the Holocaust all the time. The sanctuary was covered in blood-red carpet. I remember much anger and I also remember much pride and competition between the Jewish families. I learned to not really enjoy being in a room full of Jews because of the sense of entitlement and the one-upmanship that would occur.”

Despite an apparent frustration with the conservative community she was raised in, Adelle still seems to value the broader Jewish traditions she learned. She says “My faith has mainly been about believing in people. I still am not sure whether there is a G-d, but I most certainly believe in people. As far as being Jewish goes, it’s more about family and community

for me than anything else.” Adelle recently moved to Atlanta, Georgia from Minneapolis, Minnesota. She says she was amazed to find what she perceives to be “an enormous Jewish community” and says she was thrilled to have recently participated in a Seder with her non-Jewish fiancé. She says “The thing I treasure about religion in general is bringing friends and family together. And that is definitely something that I have chosen for myself.” Adelle says she does not feel her own life has any special purpose because of the Holocaust. Yet she does admit she feels obligated to feel a certain way about the Holocaust because she is Jewish. Nevertheless, she seems a little defensive of her Jewish identity and says “There has been no expectation from anyone around me to be anything different.”

When asked to describe her relationship with her grandparents, Adelle says “My relationship with my grandparents was great, although due to some unfortunate circumstances, I was closer to my mother’s parents than my father’s parents.” She explains “I was closer to my mom’s mom than any of the grandparents. She died a year ago. My grandfathers died many years ago, but my dad’s mom is still with us.” She says that she is “trying to remedy some of that now, but it may be too little, too late.”

Adelle has travelled internationally, but says she has never felt uncomfortable about being Jewish while she was travelling. On one of her trips abroad, she did visit a former concentration camp or ghetto. After the visit, she felt sad and shocked. She says she was stunned to realize “this could ever happen to anyone and that there are people spreading the lie it never happened.” She has also listened to or spoken with a Holocaust survivor. She says she has done her own research about the Holocaust. She describes her response to images of the Holocaust in emotional terms. She says she feels “sadness, shock, disbelief.” Adelle thinks it is important for Americans to “learn about any genocide so we never forget.” Thinks Americans should look to

the Holocaust for lessons about “How easy it can be to let hate overtake common sense and human decency.” She also points out “And it wasn’t just Jews who died. MANY Christians died as well. Another important lesson is those who helped the Jews. People who stepped up and risked so much for something they believed was right. It’s extraordinarily powerful stuff.”

Adelle says she feels distant from other Americans and does not feel close to Israel at all. She admits the surge in nationalism or patriotism which followed the events of 9/11 did concern her. She says what she loved about the unity she observed in the immediate aftermath “was how we as *human beings* connected over the enormous loss and violation. What scared me was the venom and hostility towards a perceived new enemy.”

Jonathan

Jonathan debated how to answer when asked how he identifies himself. His immediate response was to say he was a male and an American. I reassured him that there was no wrong answer and his identification as such was fine, but he settled on a genderless, national descriptor as his final answer, saying “as an American.” He describes himself as “Reform” Jewish but says “currently I’m a non-practicing Jew by choice.” Jonathan values the importance of being Jewish in his own life as simply “important.” He clarifies that his religion is important to him but has not “been very good at implementing it in my life.”

Jonathan says his family was active in a Jewish community growing up. Jonathan grew up in Trenton, New Jersey before his family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the end of his elementary school years. He says “I grew up going to Hebrew school and my religion was a large part of my life. When we moved when I was 10, it was a strange transition into public school. I got made fun of a lot for being Jewish. It was a growing Jewish community and we

joined a new synagogue close to home. In just a few years the area had a large amount of new Jewish families. We were very involved at the synagogue.” He describes his relationships with his grandparents as close. He says “I was very close with both sets of Grandparents. I'd say they were vital in my growing up. Incredible support and life lessons taught on both sides. My Mother's side had more influence on me and I'm still incredibly close with my Grandfather who just turned 90.”

When asked if he feels his life has any special purpose because of the Holocaust, Jonathan admits “I do feel just me being alive as a Jewish person is ultimately the most important thing I can do. After a whole race of people is attempted to be wiped off the planet, I do take pride in being Jewish and still here.” Jonathan says he does not feel obligated to feel a certain way about the Holocaust just because he is Jewish. He explains “I don't think you need to be Jewish to feel any certain way about the Holocaust.” Yet he also says “I think maybe growing up I felt it important to know more about it, because it happened to my people.”

Jonathan cannot recall specifically being taught about the Holocaust. He knows he learned about it “When I was a child. Growing up Jewish and going to Hebrew school for the first 10 years of my life, it would be hard not to know about it.” He has spoken with or listened to a survivor. He firmly believes “it's important for everyone in the world to learn about the Holocaust, not just Americans. It's a key part of the history of the world. I think you must know the details so it will never happen again.” When asked what lessons he thinks people should glean from the Holocaust, Jonathan says “The main lesson has to be tolerance. Hatred on that level has to be understood.”

Jonathan has travelled internationally. On one trip in 1989 as a teen, he visited Dachau concentration camp. He says “It was very emotional. I remember being mostly in a state of shock and wandering in almost a haze. I remember crying a lot that day and not exactly knowing why.” He says this was the only time he has done further research into the Holocaust and did so just to prepare for the visit. When he sees images of the Holocaust, Jonathan says he feels “Sick to my stomach. [It is s]till hard to imagine it's real.”

Jonathan describes his level of feeling close to other Americans as being in the middle of “very close” and “very distant.” He says he has never felt uneasy about being Jewish in his travels abroad or throughout the United States. He does admit “I've been to Israel twice and was more nervous of just general violence.” Despite having travelled twice to Israel, both times with his entire family to celebrate either his bar mitzvah or his brother's, he rates his level of feeling close to Israel as “very distant.” Jonathan worked in New York City at the time of the 9/11 attacks. He says he was not concerned by the nationalistic or patriotic unity displayed in the immediate aftermath. When asked, he responded “No, because it was a surge based on a horrific event against Americans, regardless of religion. We were united in preventing terrorism not taking over the world.”

When asked if the Holocaust ever comes up among other Jewish friends, family, or acquaintances, Jonathan says “Yes, in fact one of my most memorable experiences when I traveled through Europe in 1989, I was drinking in a Bier garden one night in Germany and a man maybe in his early 50's starting talking to me. He asked what my friends and I were doing and where we were from, etc. I don't recall how me being Jewish came up, but he apologized to me as a German for what his people and country did to the Jews.” Jonathan recalls “I was shocked and honestly wasn't sure how to take it. Either he truly hated what Hitler and Germany

had done, or he felt guilt of his own based on his family's involvement, or quite possible he was just drunk. Either way I will always remember it and was actually quite moved.”

Claire

Claire automatically identifies herself as a “Jewish American.” She grew up in Akron, Ohio and says her family was active in the Jewish community. She describes Akron by saying “It’s a medium sized community. There’s not a large number of Jewish people in Akron, but there is a very large Jewish community a little over 30 minutes away in Cleveland, Ohio. Cleveland has over 30 synagogues while Akron has three.” She does not belong to a synagogue. In fact, she now describes her religious affiliation as “secular” and says it does not play an important role in her life. In explaining why she still identifies herself as Jewish, Claire says “My faith is more a secular, cultural experience for me now. I no longer attend synagogue, I stopped after I was Bat Mitzvahed. My family and I celebrate the major holidays together. I also wear a Star of David necklace every day. I barely ever take it off. While I don’t find myself to be particularly religious, I identify myself strongly as a Jew.”

When asked to describe her relationships with her grandparents and whether they were close, she immediately explains “My maternal Grandparents aren’t Jewish.” She also says “My Grandfather on that side passed away long before I was born and I didn’t have much of a relationship with that Grandmother.” She does know “My Grandfather on that side served in WW2 and liberated a concentration camp. He never told anyone in the family which one though.” My Grandparents on my father’s side are both Jewish and were much more religious than I was growing up. My Grandfather on that side passed away when I was in kindergarten, so I don’t have many memories with him. My Grandmother and I were extremely close though. She

was the only grandparent that I really knew, and I never took that relationship for granted. Sadly, she passed away in 2006. Both of their parents left Europe before WW2.”

Claire says she does feel her life has a special purpose because of the Holocaust but does not elaborate. She also admits she does feel obligated to feel a certain way about the Holocaust because she is Jewish. She “first heard about the Holocaust when I was 7 or 8 years old, but it wasn’t anything extensive. I just knew that it was a part of World War II and that millions of Jews and others were murdered.” She adds that “When I was in 7th grade (12 years old) I learned about it extensively at my Sunday school. My class took a trip to the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC as a culmination of our lessons.”

Claire has made an effort to try and understand more about the Holocaust. She says the Holocaust does come up in conversations with her family or Jewish friends. In fact, she says “I still live with my parents and we watch a lot of WW2 and Holocaust specials on the History Channel and PBS together.” She has spoken with and listened to a Holocaust survivor. When she encounters images of the Holocaust, Claire says it is hard to explain how she feels. She offers “I feel sad, angry, and depressed.” and adds that “It just makes me wonder how an entire group of people could have so much hatred towards other human beings, simply because they were different.”

Claire has travelled internationally. She says she has felt uneasy about being Jewish when she has travelled. She describes it by explaining “Two of the times I traveled abroad I went to Germany to visit my ex-fiancé who was stationed at an Air Base there. It just felt odd being able to walk around Germany freely while wearing a Star of David necklace without fear of punishment. Whenever I saw an elderly citizen, I couldn’t help but wonder if they had been a

Nazi, if they had worked at a camp, or if they had helped to commit war crimes.” Although she has been to Germany, Claire has never visited a former concentration camp or ghetto. She does want to, however, and would like to visit Poland especially. She says “It is a lifelong dream of mine to attend March of the Living and to visit Auschwitz and the remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto.”

Claire does think it is important for Americans to learn about the Holocaust. She believes “History is bound to repeat itself if we as a people cannot learn from the past.” In describing what lessons she thinks ought to be gleaned from studying the Holocaust, she says “People should learn to embrace, accept, and even celebrate differences between different individuals. Discrimination and hatred does not solve the problems of a nation, in fact it only exacerbates them.”

The surge of unifying nationalism and patriotism after 9/11 did concern Claire. She says “It honestly worried me that too many people would become fanatical about their patriotism and possibly seek to harm Muslims in our country. I was afraid that people would ignorantly associate all Muslims as terrorists and something along the lines of the Japanese internment camps of WWII would occur again in our country.” Claire ranks her level of feeling close to other Americans as in the middle of “very close” and “very distant.” She ranks her level of feeling close to Israel the same.

Kelly

Kelly thinks of herself as “just Jewish.” When asked how she identifies herself, she answered “as a reform Jew, because I grew up going to a reform synagogue. However, these days, I am probably a Humanist Jew, if anything. I think there is a lot to say about tradition and

remembering those that came before me, etc, but I'm not terribly "religious." Faith-wise, I probably identify more with agnostics." Kelly does not currently belong to a synagogue. She says her faith does not play much of a role in her life and ranks it close to "not very important." She explains "I'm one of those horrible people that only puts stock into it when there is a crisis—the rest of the time, I don't even really think about it."

Kelly describes her family as having been active in the Jewish community while she was growing up in Kennesaw, Georgia. She says "I came from one of two practicing Jewish families in my elementary school (until second grade when the other family moved to a new school district). We all went to the same synagogue in Marietta, Temple Kol Emeth. We started going there when I was about four and the congregation met at the Jewish Community Center... At the time, the congregation had something like forty families, so it was fairly small and intimate. It was after the congregation had its own sanctuary that it grew, got too big, and we ended up leaving. My mom taught Sunday School for sixth and third grade and I went to Hebrew School until I was in fourth grade (and no, I didn't have a Bat Mitzvah)." Kelly says "That was the extent of the Jewish community as far as I was concerned. The rest of my friends were protestant or catholic, and with few exceptions, were not particularly religious, either, especially as we got older."

In describing the community she grew up in, Kelly mentions an incident that still bothers her. She says "It wasn't until High School that I really felt like me being Jewish was a problem for anyone. I was at an afterschool function my sophomore year at North Cobb High School when I was ganged up on by my peers *and* their parents for 'not being a follower of Jesus Christ'." She says she has felt uneasy about being Jewish as she has travelled the United States. She admits "I've always wondered if I should keep the fact that I am Jewish under wraps in case

something like the Holocaust were to happen, again.” She says she never felt uneasy about being Jewish when she travelled internationally, though. She says “Abroad, I have never felt as though I would have a problem. When I was attending the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, it was never really an issue.” She returns to her feelings of uneasiness in the US by saying “I have felt the most uneasy in the United States around very religious and abrasive Protestants. But I am not sure that that has to do entirely with being Jewish or it is just the fact that I do not believe exactly as they do (and thus I am wrong, will go to hell, must be “saved,” etc).”

Kelly offers many details about her family when asked if she was close to her grandparents growing up. She says her father was raised Methodist. When she was younger she was not close to his parents. She says she became closer to them as she got older. She explains “They were closer to my cousins, and I always took this to mean they didn’t like me as much because I was Jewish. However, when I grew up, I learned it had less to do with religion and more to do with the fact that my cousins’ mother was the youngest of my grandparents’ children, the only girl, and the ‘favorite’. Well, maybe not the favorite, but they frequently did a lot of babysitting for my cousins, whereas my parents tried not to ask. They didn’t want to impose and would rather keep their asking to emergencies.”

Her mother was raised Jewish and Kelly explains children are traditionally raised in the religion of the mother. Her mother’s parents divorced when her mother was eleven. She says both her maternal grandparents had Eastern European roots. Kelly says “I think I probably would have been very close to her mother, but she died when I was three of breast cancer. Even still, in that short period, I think we were close. My mom and I spent every weekend with her in Oak Ridge, Tennessee (where my mom grew up) with her until she moved into Hospice in Marietta.” Of her maternal grandfather, Kelly says “I was very close to my grandfather, though he lived in

Maryland. He always visited at the major Jewish holidays—and even some of the minor ones. But he, too, died when I was eleven or twelve.” Kelly connects her own faith to him. She considers “Most of what I do know and celebrate I do because of him, I think. I guess I kind of feel that my Jewishness honors him more than anything else.”

The first time Kelly remembers hearing about the Holocaust was between the ages of five and seven. She recalls her mother reading a book about it to her. She struggles to recall details. She says “I can’t remember what the book was called, whether it was autobiographical or fiction, or even the country in which it took place, but I do remember that the story was about a girl and her family. They escaped by hiding in [a] farm cart underneath hay, had sewn their jewels into their clothes, and somehow smuggled the family samovar out of the country.”⁷³ Kelly recalls that “mostly what I remember is thinking that the story must have taken place *so long ago*. I had images of the 1800s, not the 1940s floating through my head.” She says I think it was probably later, when I was in Hebrew school, that I realized how recent the Holocaust had been. I know, anyway, that my mom read the book to me before *Schindler’s List* came out, because I saw it with my parents as soon as it was on video.”

Kelly says she does not feel her own life has any special purpose because of the Holocaust. Yet she admits she does feel obligated to feel a certain way about the Holocaust because she is Jewish. While she has travelled internationally, she has never visited a former ghetto or concentration camp. She has listened to or spoken with a Holocaust survivor. She says she has also done her own research on the Holocaust to try and understand more about it. When

⁷³ A samovar is an urn shaped pot or device used in Russia typically to heat water for tea. See “Samovar,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/samovar>, (accessed 19 June 2011).

asked how she feels when she encounters images of the Holocaust, Kelly says “very sad is the best way I can really describe it, even though that seems a little understated and simplistic.”

Kelly does not think the Holocaust ever comes up among her Jewish friends or family. She absolutely supports Americans learning about the Holocaust, though. She says “I think it’s important to ensure that mass genocide doesn’t take place, again. I’ve always thought that Americans currently have the power to protect those that could be suffering for no other reason than they think differently (whether it comes to religion, politics, economics, etc) and should do so just in case they are the ones needing protecting in the future.” She believes the most important lesson to be gleaned from the Holocaust is that “It may be someone else this time, but it could be you next time.”

The surge in patriotic and nationalistic feelings immediately after 9/11 did not bother Kelly. She differentiates between the sentiments and the actions they encourage. She says “The nationalism or patriotism themselves were not a concern for me. The actions that some people take in the name of those two sentiments did and do bother me.” Kelly explains “I think that a lot of Americans single out those that do not fit the ideal American image as some sort of patriotic duty—as though someone’s religious identity or heritage makes them incapable of loving the United States, themselves. After 9/11, I think a lot of bad things happened out of fear, but were okayed because those actions were labeled patriotic.” While Kelly’s husband is in the Army and one might expect a stronger patriotic sentiment from her, she still rates herself as feeling in the middle of “very close” and “very distant” from other Americans. Interestingly, however, she rates her feelings of closeness to Israel as “close.”

Analysis

My research about the identity of 3Gs allows for a number of comparisons to be drawn from the two groups I interviewed. In many ways, the responses of both groups coincide with one another to the point that it is difficult to ascertain uniqueness among 3Gs.

The expected outcome of my research was that, by the third generation, the traumatic memory of the Holocaust would have developed into a collective identity among 3Gs which uniquely determines how they interact with and understand their contemporary world.

Admittedly due to my own personal experience, I anticipated 3Gs would display a greater sense of loss or respect for history when compared to non-3Gs. I expected this sense of loss would manifest in obvious ways which would clearly display a uniqueness among 3Gs. When the responses of both groups are juxtaposed, however, it becomes difficult to draw conclusions about the impact of Holocaust memory as it informs the identity of third generation Jewish American survivors. In an increasingly cosmopolitan society, there seems to be less of a uniqueness in how subsequent generations deal with traumatic narratives. Rather, it seems there is almost a common understanding of traumatic historical narratives that manifests in a reflexive reaction.

As often happens in any research project, the project undergoes alterations and the original hypothesis may not conclude where expected. This thesis is no exception. I was initially surprised to realize the responses I received did not prove my original hypothesis. 3Gs do not seem to have their identities uniquely informed by the traumatic narratives of their grandparents' Holocaust experiences. Moving past my original hypothesis, I believe my research lends itself to another question—why are 3Gs not more informed about or affected by their family narratives? As I analyzed the responses of participants, I realized there may be some possible explanations

for this, which are explicated in the remainder of my conclusion and which, I believe, merit further research.

In analyzing the responses of both the 3Gs and the non-3Gs I interviewed and surveyed, I began by comparing their reactions to topical questions. Participants had been asked the same series of questions about events like 9/11, their perspectives on Israel, or their level of religious affiliation. After considering their responses, I concluded a different result for my research than I had anticipated.

I expected asking respondents about 9/11 would incite strong reactions. While at one level it seems almost trite to ask about the event, I felt doing so might reveal a great deal about identity. Where the Holocaust is a major historical event most Americans will at least recognize, 9/11 is an even more recognizable historical event, especially to Americans like my respondents who are in their twenties and thirties and able to recall the event as a significant moment in their lives. I asked respondents about 9/11 to see if their reactions would reveal either a stronger national identity in support of 9/11 (and the behavior and events it precipitated) or an identification that leaned more toward supporting tolerance for religious and cultural differences that disregards nationality. The best synthesis of reactions would be to say that respondents were not sure how they felt about it. Some were more direct in expressing concern about surges in nationalism afterwards, while others almost justified nationalistic sentiments as being very particular to the event itself. Even those who recognized a surge in nationalism and intolerance did not closely relate it to behaviors that precipitated the Holocaust. I am unsure whether this speaks to a lack of historical knowledge which would allow them to draw specific parallels to the Holocaust or whether it speaks more to a desire to belong to a group (in this case a larger political group) that behaves justly.

I specifically asked respondents to qualify their feelings of closeness to other Americans to see if their reactions would reveal more about how 3Gs identify themselves. Only one interview participant expressed feeling a disconnect in her ability to relate to other Americans. The rest either said they felt very close to other Americans or were somewhere in the middle of feeling distant or close and these reactions were evenly split within both groups (3Gs and non-3Gs). Elsewhere in my surveys and interviews, I specifically asked each individual “How do you identify yourself?” Some were very descriptive and added local, national, political, gender, and religious identifiers to their descriptions of themselves. No single identifier stood out. Neither “American” or “Jewish” occurred as commonalities. While both were certainly included, it must be considered that all the respondents were describing themselves to an interviewer who was specifically interested in their experiences and identities as Jewish Americans or American descendents of Holocaust survivors. Had respondents not already been allowed to presuppose this was the information I was looking for, it is entirely possible that “American” or “Jewish” would not have been used at all and that completely different descriptors would have been employed.

Another specific question I asked each individual was to tell me about the role of religion in their lives. Of the 3Gs I spoke to, three still identify enough with their Jewish upbringing to be practicing. One had never been exposed to Judaism. One had been raised Jewish but no longer identified with the religious aspects of Jewish culture. Another had not been raised Jewish, but had been exposed enough to its traditions to feel an affiliation with Jewish cultural beliefs. As a group, the 3Gs I spoke to did not express overwhelming religious affiliation with Judaism. Two of the respondents were not Jewish, but of the 3Gs who were raised Jewish, there was still not an overly strong religious affiliation displayed. The other group I surveyed was specifically

compiled of Jewish Americans. From this group, one might anticipate a stronger religious affiliation. Yet, one identified as not being Jewish at all anymore. The rest identified as more “culturally” Jewish than religious. None of the group who were introduced to me as individuals who are Jewish Americans actually practices their religion. As a whole, both groups of individuals I spoke to could better be described as perhaps culturally Jewish, but not religiously Jewish.

Among the 3Gs I spoke to, perceptions of anti-Semitism either in America or abroad were scattered. Three of the 3Gs had, at some point in their lives, felt uneasy about their Jewish heritage or had observed what could be deemed anti-Semitism. Two had not experienced or observed anti-Semitism. The remaining 3G (who is not Jewish at all and has no known Jewish heritage) lay somewhere in the middle in the sense that she saw the potential for anti-Semitism but did not have any specific experiences to relate. She was also the only one who expressed a self-perception of herself as being likely to stand up against oppression or intolerance. The respondents who admitted uneasy experiences or observations of anti-Semitism did not describe how they reacted and only one respondent admitted she has disguised or omitted her Jewish heritage before.

When asked whether they supported Israel or not, both groups of respondents were evenly divided between supporting Israel and not supporting Israel. Overall, I would say their reactions were generally hesitant. While David and Ziva were the most outspoken and perhaps the most informed about Israeli culture and politics because they have actually lived there, their reactions were similar to the rest of the respondents. There seemed a hesitation to say one way or another whether the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is something that Israelis (or Jews) should be held responsible and accountable for or whether Israelis (as Jews) are justified in their

reactions and behaviors. I had asked about Israel because I wondered if 3Gs would have a different perception than non-3Gs based on their family narratives. As Israel is often considered to be a haven for Jews following the Holocaust, I was curious whether 3Gs would disregard national or political identification and identify themselves strongly with Israel based on their Jewish heritage and the persecution and trauma their grandparent(s) endured. I interpret the overall lack of strong opinions of Israel to have more to do with political perceptions than religious affiliation. I think it has more to do with how respondents identify themselves and, overwhelmingly, that is as Americans who are only culturally Jewish. In explaining this conclusion, I find Jenny's lack of interest in making a birthright trip to Israel useful. She very simply said she did not go because it would have seemed "foreign" or "alien." From the context of the conversation, I understood she meant it would have been unfamiliar to her to be surrounded by Jewish culture. She did not mean it was because she had not been raised Jewish, however. She meant it would have seemed unfamiliar to her to be in a nation that is politically as well as culturally Jewish.

Adding to the exponential increase in public discourse about the Holocaust in recent decades is the publication of numerous fictional works in which contemporary American Jewish authors like Jonathan Safran Foer, Nathan Englander, or Nicole Krauss encounter and explore the legacy of the Holocaust.⁷⁴ Adding to the emerging genre, Israeli author Nava Semel's *And the Rat Laughed*, explores how emotional memory is transferred from previous generations to the present and on to the future.⁷⁵ The story weaves through the process of trauma transmission

⁷⁴ For literary examples, see Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close: A Novel* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2006), Nicole Krauss, *The History of Love* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), or Nathan Englander, *The Ministry of Special Cases* (New York: Vintage International, 2007).

⁷⁵ Nava Semel, *And the Rat Laughed*, trans. Miriam Schlessinger (Melbourne, Australia: Hybrid Publishers, 2008).

as the reader experiences a Holocaust survivor's own struggle to tell her granddaughter about her experience. The granddaughter's questioning forces the grandmother to recall experiences that occurred when she was too young to now fully trust her own memories and that were too traumatic and horrible to describe to a loved one she wants to protect. In her struggle to remember, the grandmother tries to sift through a surge of painful memories and produce a story her granddaughter will understand. In the process, she internalizes the memories to the point that she actually only verbalizes a few very basic facts. The exasperated grandmother tells her granddaughter "I loved and I lost. That's the end of the story. The beginning too."⁷⁶ Yet, the granddaughter is seeking information about a past she does not know and a reassurance that out of that past, her beloved grandmother emerged with a story of goodness, righteousness, and salvation. In a fascinating admission, the reader learns "The granddaughter is disappointed. That wasn't the beginning she'd been hoping for. Some day, when she retells the story, she'll choose a different way to begin it. Her own way."⁷⁷ The granddaughter continues to ask questions and patiently wait for answers because "As far as the young girl is concerned, the story has a happy ending anyway. The old woman is her grandmother after all."⁷⁸

While the story is fictional, it illuminates the difficulty with which survivors balance trauma and love, past and present. More importantly for the purposes of this paper, it illuminates how difficult it is for subsequent generations to separate their own perspectives and agendas from the reality of a trauma they did not actually experience. As the novel continues, the reader sees how the grandmother's story is passed on until almost a century later when the story takes on a life of its own. The reader presumes the old woman died without anyone realizing what she

⁷⁶ Ibid, 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 9.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 11.

had actually survived and that the granddaughter went through her life believing the story had been a happy one. Nevertheless, the story does not disappear. The real story of the horrors the grandmother had survived becomes an international rallying cry for morality. The story is repeated in classrooms, by social organizations, and in the mission statements of businesses. It becomes a part of cosmopolitan memory.

What Semel's story suggests, and what I observed from the individuals I spoke to, is that historical memory is indeed ever changing. Whether survivors experienced the Holocaust as a distant loss, like Ziva and Jenny's grandfathers, or an immediate struggle, like David and Elaine's grandfathers, it was undoubtedly a traumatic experience. Yet, like the grandmother in Semel's story, it seems possible many survivors may not want to talk about it anymore. For them, it is the past. Perhaps there is a desire to see their experiences as independent of or separate from the historical memory of the Holocaust. Perhaps there is not a desire to share the details of their experiences.

In the process of universal acceleration Matsuda described, 2Gs often bore the brunt of the survivors' trauma. 3Gs may be separated from the immediacy of the trauma, but the Holocaust has spiraled down to their generation. It is how the third generation picks up on these memories and adds to it that is important to consider. The landscape onto which 3Gs project their understandings of the Holocaust has changed as much as the memories. For many, not just 3Gs, the Holocaust has become solidified as the pinnacle moral failing of the modern world. Yet the direction of the moral compass it provides is determined as much by those who hold the compass as the compass itself. As Halbwachs suggested, the present generation understands its environment and its interaction with that environment based on the way it has reconstructed the past.

Dori Laub observed: “Trauma- and its impact on the hearer- leaves, indeed, no hiding place. As one comes to know the survivors, one really comes to know oneself, and that is not a simple task.”⁷⁹ To bear witness is to add to historical knowledge; it is an intimate animation of the traumatic process. In listening to a survivor’s recount, the listener is becoming an affective community and the narrative becomes their own memory that must then be processed. The question I am concerned with at such a point is what are the consequences of survivor testimonies being transmitted to subsequent generations?

All of the 3Gs I spoke to learned about their specific family narratives from family members—either from their survivor grandparent directly or from their parents, the Second Generation. Some clearly knew more than others about the details of their grandparent’s experiences. Some, like Elaine, gleaned the details indirectly from the perspective of a family member who, while not discounting the trauma, clearly was impacted by it and may have recounted the narrative from a perspective that did not offer the grandchild, the Third Generation, a means of interpreting the narrative other than to understand it as something horrible. Sara’s grandfather was very vocal about the details of his experience. Others, like Stephanie or Jenny, were given no details, which likewise gave them no means of understanding the trauma. To Stephanie this meant it couldn’t have been *that* bad. Jenny had to ask her grandfather about the photographs he kept, while Stephanie never asked and mentions no such memorial artifacts being present.

Ziva’s family influenced how she interprets her grandfather’s narrative although her grandfather has been very vocal in telling his story. In fact, she relies so much on her family’s

⁷⁹ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening,” *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 72.

interpretation of the narrative, she has never actually heard her grandfather tell the details of his experience. David learned the details of his grandfather's narrative from his grandfather. Yet, his means of contextualizing the narrative has been achieved through his own life experiences and influenced by how his sister and parents have interpreted the narrative. In his description of his father and grandfather's relationship, he seems willing to let the narrative also interpret how he understands his family. This can be seen in the way he understands his own relationship with his grandfather in that he believes what his grandfather chooses to speak to him or his sister about is directly relatable to his experience. David thrived on the struggle of being Jewish in Israel as opposed to the ease of being Jewish in America.

Elaine also seems to allow her knowledge of her grandmother's experience to inform how she views the relationship between her mother and grandmother and, in turn, allows it to influence her own relationship with her grandmother as an adult. David sees what he describes as an "imbalance" between his father and grandfather's generation. Elaine said she also has observed tension between her mother and grandmother. In both cases, the survivors' ability to communicate emotions to their children was directly impacted by their experiences as young adults during the Holocaust.

While relationships between survivors and 2Gs have received much study and are not the focus of this paper, what is relevant to this discussion is that 3Gs have grown up observing the strained or overly close relationships of their parents and grandparents. In addition to survivors perhaps not wanting to talk about their experiences, there are two possible explanations for why the 3Gs I spoke to actually knew very little of the details of their grandparents' experience during the Holocaust. First, 2Gs may intentionally disrupt the transmission of the traumatic narratives to their children. Elaine's mother, for example, had been traumatized by the details her mother had

told her when she was young. She intentionally would not tell Elaine the details because she wanted to protect her. It seems an obvious and almost instinctive reaction for any parent to want to protect their child from frightening and traumatic experiences. For 2Gs like Elaine's mother, the narrative was a part of her childhood experience. It would be understandable to want to protect her own child from the same kind of experience by not sharing much of the narrative.

Another possible explanation of why the 3Gs I spoke to did not know much about their grandparents' specific experience could be the increasing fragmentation of American families. Throughout the twentieth century, family units became more and more fragmented. Thanks to a multitude of factors like transportation, suburbanization, and increased opportunities for advanced education and employment, families have increasingly scattered across the United States and even the world. It is becoming more and more uncommon for a child to be raised in the same neighborhood or town as their grandparents, let alone in the same household. While all the respondents I spoke with expressed feelings of closeness with their grandparents, few actually reported growing up within close proximity to their grandparents. Ziva's family was the exception to this, but even her very close knit family was often separated—first when her parents lived in Israel, later as she lived abroad, and when her two brothers moved to Texas and Israel. Even Stephanie, who lived with her grandparents as a young child, eventually moved away from their home and, as an adult, moved across the country. The result of this fragmentation and distance may be that family narratives are not able to be passed on in great detail. Like Jenny or David experienced, the grandchild may know the basic information about their grandparent's experience, but there was not enough exposure to learn the details firsthand or really witness any lasting behavioral impacts.

Despite their awareness of the Holocaust as a traumatic event that directly impacted their families, the 3Gs I spoke to actually knew very little about the Holocaust. While all of them had travelled to Europe and some had even visited Holocaust sites, few really expressed much historical knowledge of the event beyond the details that directly factored into either their grandparents' narrative or their own travel itineraries. Most of their historical knowledge had been gleaned from public institutions of memory like the USHMM or through educational institutions like school and synagogue. Overwhelmingly, however, their knowledge of the Holocaust was based in popular culture.

While it is understandable that Sara, as the descendent of a "Schindler Jew," would be familiar with the film, all of the 3Gs I spoke to pointed to *Schindler's List* or to History Channel type documentaries as a source of historical information. At one point in my conversation with David and Ziva, they even began to list which Holocaust movies they had seen. It seems there is a disconnect between how 3Gs learn about their family narratives and how they learn about the Holocaust as a historical event that is, for them, part of a very particular, personal experience. Likewise, all of the non-3Gs I surveyed had achieved their historical knowledge of an event that some would argue also is very particular and personal to Jews through similar mediums. While this means of transmission should not be surprising for non-3Gs as they have grown up in an environment that often relies on film and television for the transmission of broader social and cultural narratives, it was interesting to observe a similar transmission among 3Gs.

Historian Tim Cole relayed an anecdote from a fictional novel in his introduction to a discussion of how Americans conceptualize the Holocaust as a mythical event.⁸⁰ In a scene from

⁸⁰Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 2000), xiii.

a 1990s novel, two men measure how much time has passed in their conversation according to two separate occurrences of a girl who appears in a red coat in *Schindler's List*, which is playing on a TV in the background.⁸¹ They calculate at least an hour has passed in their conversation because the girl in the red coat has reappeared. Their conversation and the scene have nothing to do with the Holocaust.⁸² Yet, the point of the prosaic anecdote is that the film has become a part of our cultural currency almost to the point of being banal. As Cole suggests, Americans who belong to the same age group as 3Gs are part of a *Schindler's List* generation. Almost all have either seen the film or at least know what the film is. Cole also recounts an episode of the popular television series *Seinfeld* where one character is ostracized for not displaying reverent enough behavior during a viewing of the film at a theater.⁸³ As Cole points out, we have constructed certain behavioral codes we all follow when we are engaged in the viewing of such films.

Just about any mention of the Holocaust in American culture requires an immediate reflexive reverence. In my surveys of non-3Gs, I asked respondents if they felt obligated to feel a certain way about the Holocaust because they are Jewish. Most were frank enough to admit they do feel obligated to display a certain level of reverence. While I could have framed the question differently by leaving out the factor of their Jewish heritage, I believe the responses would have been the same and I believe it goes to prove Cole's assertions about an obligatory response and cultural code we employ when the Holocaust enters into discussion.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid, xiii.

Cole calls the Holocaust a myth in the sense that it is a story which evokes strong sentiments and reinforces societal values.⁸⁴ He claims the Holocaust is one of the ruling symbols in our culture and is has become a commodity that is being consumed in America. In his critique of the director, Steven Spielberg's, choice to make a film about a Gentile German rescuer who saves passive, helpless Jews, Cole makes an important point. Americans are more comfortable imagining ourselves capable of only doing "good." We want to be comforted that we would have been rescuers or saviors, not victims, bystanders, or perpetrators. Stephanie's insistence that she would never stand for the intolerant behaviors of the Holocaust and cannot imagine who would, certainly illustrate this concept. To return to Matsuda's theories of memory and history, it also shows how each generation interprets history to fit their understandings and value systems.

Audiences who watch films like *Schindler's List* or visit a museum like the USHMM are not seeing history as it actually was. Cole forgives this as a "generational thing: the kids of survivors (or in Spielberg's case, the grandchildren of survivors) have different memories; they start restating these memories in which the Holocaust has a kind of happy end, because at least one of the parents survived."⁸⁵ Cole quotes another critic who describes the memory of the third generation as having come out of "an American post-Cold War generational sensibility distanced from the Holocaust both temporally and spatially" which accounts for why their memory is so different from those who witnessed it firsthand.⁸⁶ Again, the Holocaust fits into the symbiotic relationship between identity and memory that Novick outlined.

⁸⁴Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, 4.

⁸⁵G. Koch in Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, 93.

⁸⁶ Yosefa Loshitzky, ed., *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), in Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, 93.

Cole believes the “myth of the ‘Holocaust’ is much more interested in meaning than memory, and thus ultimately much more interested in the present than the past.”⁸⁷ For Cole, “It is almost as if we have this sense that this thing is important, but don’t quite know what it really is. We are, therefore, perhaps not really that much closer to making sense of the Holocaust. Myth has replaced reality, and indeed myth has become more important than reality.”⁸⁸ In the responses by 3Gs to my question of whether or not they compare their own lives to their grandparents’ in terms of accomplishment, most responded that they do not. However, most shared with me that they do consider what their grandparents survived and consider how fortunate they are by comparison. Elaine marveled that, because of the Holocaust, her family went from Eastern European farmers to American college graduates in a span of just two generations. She is also aware of the irony of her own existence in the sense that it was the Holocaust that brought her grandparents together. In responses such as hers, I concur with Cole that the myth of the Holocaust plays an important role in what meaning the trauma offers subsequent generations.

Where 3Gs did not experience the trauma of the Holocaust and did not even experience the trauma in its immediate aftermath (as 2Gs did), the trauma still exists as the lens through which they see the world and understand their families and themselves. Identification as a 3G is itself a socially constructed categorization that transcends any religious categorization. The way 3Gs remember the Holocaust is a socially constructed memory as well. The 3Gs I spoke to have a memory of the Holocaust that was shared with them through their families, through pop culture artifacts (like films), and through educational mediums (school lessons or museum visits). Like Halbwachs suggested, 3Gs gain a self-awareness from the historical memories they have been

⁸⁷ Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, 187.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 186.

given. They counterpoise the present with their own constructed past in their journeys toward self-awareness. In return, the way they perceive and interact with the world is through this perception of self.

3G groups hint at a cosmopolitan trend in their missions to connect, educate, and honor. Like Aaron's group, 3Gs look to the internet as a tool for interacting with a global community and, at a personal level, groups like Stacy's offer 3Gs a way to secularly celebrate their heritage while establishing a sense of community with shared commonalities. Cosmopolitanism is the idea that all social groups, despite their political or ethnic identities, belong to a single community based on a shared morality and mutual respect. 3Gs are in a unique position that almost demands their behavior be guided by more far reaching concerns. 3Gs are experiencing the transition from community to cosmopolitanism at the same time they are experiencing the passing of the survivor generation, but they are dealing with the Holocaust in much the same way as non-3Gs.

The Holocaust is a particular event in which contemporary, cosmopolitan society can establish a universal language. As Cole suggested, Americans universalize the Holocaust for the future, noting that it is a clear moral certainty on which action can be based and one that stretches across national borders. In the uncertainty of the world after the Cold War, the Holocaust fulfills the need for a moral touchstone. Defining Jewish American identity is a difficult task and evidence of 3Gs having a unique identity within the larger group identity of Jewish Americans is an even greater challenge.

Conclusions

When I entered into this research, I considered how my own identity was influenced by my grandparents' narrative. I maintain a belief that 3Gs have also been affected in a similar way by their family narratives, even if they cannot as specifically point to how exactly they have been affected. I do see some sensitivity to their grandparents' experience in that some have certainly considered what to do with their family narratives to give it meaning in their own lives. Sara sees contemporary experiences like 9/11 as a teaching tool to inform "the world" about intolerance and prejudice. Her horror that an Italian teenager would not know about the Holocaust is an interesting anecdote because it immediately was recounted after I asked Sara how she felt about Holocaust imagery in popular culture. While she says she is not bothered by it and seems to actually support its use in an educational medium, it seems she is conversely astounded that Holocaust imagery and education may not be as prolific outside of America. She believes the Holocaust should be used as a means of establishing commonalities between cultures. She observes what she sees as a more appropriate trend among American Jews, who "have moved from trying to maintain a different identity to trying to find one that unifies all people." David points to Ziva's grandfather who sees the Holocaust as a global subject and experience. He says this is why her grandfather specifically goes to public schools and speaks to non-Jews about it. In David and Ziva's efforts to understand the similarities and differences between Jewish Americans and Israelis, there is a hint of a self-identification that is still developing and, in the process, seeks to combine the two cultures.

Even as such examples suggests 3Gs may have a certain sensitivity to the Holocaust that motivates a desire to share the story with other cultures, I do not see non-3Gs as lacking the same desire to be respectful of the memory. In fact, I think the present generation, the generation to

which 3Gs and non-3Gs belong, interprets the Holocaust to be a demonstrative lesson in which their social values are reinforced. For Americans, these social values are perhaps tied to collective national ideals. Yet, even the present generation of Germans, for instance, is apt to believe itself more likely to be tolerant and compassionate. I do not think there is enough evidence in my research to suggest American 3Gs are any more inclined to present the sensitivity, tolerance, or compassion of cosmopolitanism than any other member of the same generation from any other nation.

Sociologist Cathy Caruth looked at trauma as a cultural process in which society is able to understand itself by comparing its own trauma to another. Caruth explained, “In a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves.”⁸⁹ We bring culture with us from our past experiences, but we are constantly reinforcing that culture or building new elements as we encounter new people and experiences. Collective memory is indeed a product of individual will, intention, and identity- the ingredients of memory. As Caruth describes, “Admittedly, a second and third generation of memories- those of the children and grandchildren- have since added their identities to the event itself; but also these identities show the effects of normalization and historicization, an increasing remove that renders the Nazi genocide a subject for discourse among other genocides, and incentive for art and reflection (these to be placed among other artifacts of memory), even for politics and ethics, but all of them beset (how could it be otherwise?) by the expanding networks of historical detail and nuance that encroach on the

⁸⁹ Cathy Caruth, “From Trauma and Experience” in *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, eds. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (Boston: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 204.

distinctive moral space that “the Holocaust” would rightfully claim if only we could make the images of history stand still.”⁹⁰

It is difficult to claim any overriding theme among a group of research participants, especially in light of the numbers of my research population. Within the context of a conservative estimate of at least 250,000 American 3Gs, I spoke to only a small handful. Nevertheless, I am confident that the research I conducted is worthy of merit. There is still more research that can and should be done regarding the transmission of trauma to subsequent generations. There is still more research that can and should be done towards determining to what extent traumatic narratives influence the identity of subsequent generations. Yet, what I believe comes through in the responses of those I surveyed and interviewed are a few general certainties which can facilitate future understandings of trauma as it effects subsequent generations.

It does not seem 3Gs have any clearer historical understanding of the Holocaust than non-3Gs. In many ways, 3Gs express the same kind of obligatory reverence as non-3Gs about the topic. As David said, “Judaism is the heart of our culture, where we jump off from.” I believe, for 3Gs, the Holocaust is just as significant a jumping off point for how 3Gs interact with and understand the world around them. Just like the granddaughter in Semel’s story, 3Gs may never understand the details of their grandparent’s experience and may never understand the trauma with the same level of understanding their grandparents or parents have. Rather, 3Gs understand the Holocaust in a way that only someone from their generation can.

⁹⁰Berel Lang, *The Future of the Holocaust: Between History and Memory* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 175.

The degree to which 3Gs' identities are affected by their grandparents' experiences was not as significant as I expected. I was, admittedly, surprised by this. I was perhaps more surprised to find my research showed something else, however, that I believe is an important subject for further research and discourse. 3Gs do not see themselves as a unique group and they do not know more than their peers about the Holocaust. They belong to a "*Schindler's List* generation" that may not have grown up in close proximity to the grandparents. Their grandparents may not have wanted to talk about their traumatic experiences and their parents may have further tried to protect them from learning the details of those experiences. Yet, they exist in a world where the Holocaust is common knowledge and no one wants to believe they are capable of being bystanders, perpetrators, or victims.

As Berel Lang contends and I agree, a liberal society, the kind which embraces cosmopolitan values and to which the Holocaust fundamentally stood in antithesis, requires more open discussion of the Holocaust.⁹¹ The study of Holocaust survivors has gone through several cycles. 3G research represents the newest cycle, which I believe merits further study if we are to continue positioning the Holocaust as a moral touchstone and really say "never again." 3Gs do represent a unique population in the sense that, while far enough removed from the trauma for it to be considered the past, they simultaneously represent the future while they represent the last living link to survivors. As we become an increasingly "globalized" society, learning how to deal with trauma is ever more important precisely because it can inform how we interact with other cultures. Thanks to factors like technology and opportunities for travel, American 3Gs are increasingly in contact with other cultures and societies. Understanding how they deal with their

⁹¹Lang, *The Future of the Holocaust*.

past and how they present it to others is important in understanding how traumatic events are understood by later generations.

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