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**Validating Selfhood: Holocaust Survivor Communities and Experiential Kin
in Postwar Britain**

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedicated to all of those women in my family who put their passions on hold for practicality.

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Abstract

Those who survived the Holocaust settled predominantly, but not exclusively, in Israel, the United States, Canada, South America and, to a far lesser extent, Britain and other countries. This thesis will examine individuals who resided in Britain after the war and the organisations that they formed. It will consider how three survivor associations, the '45 Aid Society, Association of Jewish Refugees and the Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain, which mainly consisted of young survivors aged twenty-one and under in 1945, fostered validation for individuals. These organisations became communities for survivors and an example of 'experiential kin', where shared experiences lead to strong bonds and a sense of belonging. This thesis will reflect on how communities can be defined within these contexts and whether these were able to act as surrogate families for individual survivors as they developed in a postwar context. It also explores how a survivor can be defined, the hierarchies of suffering that form in response to fluid definitions, the role of the second generation and how survivors interpret current events through the lens of their experiences whilst maintaining composure in order to argue that the attainment of validation is a central quest for survivors.

This thesis utilises a mixed methodology stemming primarily from newly conducted oral histories with Holocaust survivors in order to contextualise the origins of these communities and situate these groups into wider British society and cultural discourses. A key conclusion that this thesis draws is the importance of being considered a survivor within these groups and the significance of shared identity and belonging. This manifests through the central theme in this thesis of validation, where survivors seek to not just have their identities accepted as 'valid', but also their memories. Somewhat paradoxically, this aligns with a desire to remain 'in the background' and to be free to pursue their identities outside of their status as a survivor.

Introduction: “The End of the Line”¹

Have you really
Made peace with the world
As you near
The end of the line
Will you leave
With a sigh or a smile
Will you cling
To the remnants of time.²

Michael Etkind (Survivor of multiple concentration camps)

The above poem, published in a Holocaust association journal in 2009, evokes the sentiment that as survivors grow closer to the end of their lives, they evaluate their experiences, identities and histories. For many survivors, coming to the UK was the start of a new life, in which they forged community networks and ties that helped them come to terms with the trauma they had experienced. In the absence of a family, they created groups to support each other, with bonds that began to resemble familial relationships, what can be considered ‘experiential kin’. Through reconstructing a sense of unity represented by a family, survivor and refugee associations played a vital role in the slow process of recovering from the traumas they had experienced during the Holocaust.

Organisations such as the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), the ’45 Aid Society and the Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain (CSAGB) were instrumental in facilitating personal composure. Graham Dawson’s oral history theory work on composure has reflected on the dual meaning of the term, where an interviewee “composes” their narrative, as in “the shaping and organising of temporal experience” and this gives them a sense of wellbeing, providing

¹ Michael Etkind, ‘Do you still look at life...’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (2009), p. 37.

² Ibid.

composure.³ Lynn Abrams notes that “a respondent, in order to retain composure, will find a way to talk about a difficult experience in order to avoid dealing with the emotions the recall might bring forth”.⁴ Dawson has reflected on how composure is an “inescapably social process”, highly dependent on the audience and social recognition; where versions of the self and world “figured in a narrative correspond to those of other people”.⁵ This correspondence can apply to narratives within communities as well as larger cohorts such as societies. Ways to achieve composure can differ between individuals, but the narrative structure in an interview is usually significant, such as beginning with a complication and ending with a solution or using familiar narrative models and tropes from film, literature or history.⁶ This sense of coherence, well-being and wholeness feeds into notions of kinship and belonging within these groups and provides validation for survivors, not just of their memories but their identities as survivors, and manifests within the oral history interviews conducted for this research.

How a survivor can be defined and what factors this definition depends upon, along with the ‘right’ to belong to these groups, are central strands of this thesis. It also considers intergenerational relationships within these associations and how the second and often third generations, the children and grandchildren of survivors, bring renewed energy to these organisations and take their messages and aims forward into the future. The scope of this thesis is chronologically broad, covering the origins of these associations in the two decades following the end of the Second World War and considers debates within these groups that have developed from the 1970s to the 1990s, some of which continue to have resonance today. This

³ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 22.

⁴ Ibid; Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 88.

⁵ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 23.

⁶ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 128.

thesis adopts a thematic approach focusing on definitions, hierarchy, notions of family, friendship, the second and third generation and how survivors negotiate their identities in public spaces such as the media in order to argue that while survivors do not primarily seek to have their identities as survivors validated, they desire community and belonging with their experiential kin and those who have experienced similar trauma.

There is a general oversaturation and societal preoccupation with the Holocaust which has been defined as a “central reference point” for humanity.⁷ It is important to outline these debates occurring within the historiography as a crucial foundation for this thesis and its place in the existing literature because it provides an explanation and discussion of how survivors have been seen as hagiographical figures in a general environment of Holocaust preoccupation. Historians such as Geoffrey Hartman have warned that there is the danger of “fetishizing, or erecting a cult of the dead” as a result of a societal emphasis on the Holocaust.⁸

The prominence of the Holocaust within these discourses has influenced the notion of invaluable lessons, where society seeks to prevent future comparable genocides. This exists despite the difficulty in comparing the Holocaust to other events and the controversial discussions around doing so. The issue of Holocaust lessons reinforces the mantra of never again that has become a cliché in Holocaust discourses.⁹ Tim Cole refers to this as “misplaced optimism” that “engaging with the

⁷ Ronnie S. Landau, *Studying the Holocaust: Issues, Readings and Documents* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 2.

⁸ Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p. 1.

⁹ Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2004), p. 156.

past will make us better citizens”, emphasising that the general notion of Holocaust lessons has become problematic.¹⁰ It can provide “false comfort”, or false hope exemplified in the idea of a Holocaust myth, which can often be confused as reality.¹¹ Peter Novick also finds the idea of lessons challenging due to the lack of resonance of the Holocaust in everyday life – summarising that “lessons for dealing with the sorts of issues that confront us in ordinary life, public or private, are not likely to be found in this most extraordinary of events”.¹²

Therefore, it is difficult to draw comparisons between a genocide such as the Holocaust and the day-to-day lives of individuals in the society we currently live in. Although the term lessons can be viewed as a problematic word choice to engage with in this regard, it provides a lens in which the Holocaust is made accessible to a broader, non-academic audience.¹³ This becomes necessary due to the complexities of the atrocities committed and the desire to educate and attempt to prevent further intolerance, persecution and mass-extermiation. Here Cole’s assessment can be invoked that “representing the complexity of the past to a public audience inevitably opens oneself up to charges of simplification at best”.¹⁴ Alon Confino has drawn on this notion and highlighted that the history of the Holocaust is read “from the present day backward” in this simplistic presentation of history, but highlights that it is essential to consider how the Holocaust was not viewed as fundamental for decades after the fact.¹⁵

¹⁰ Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 184.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 185.

¹² Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 13.

¹³ Samantha Power, ‘To Suffer by Comparison?’, *Daedalus*, Vol.128, No.2 (Spring, 1999), p. 44.

¹⁴ Tim Cole, ‘Representing the Holocaust in America: Mixed Motives or Abuse?’, *The Public Historian*, Vol.24, No.4 (Fall, 2002), pp. 129-30.

¹⁵ Alon Confino, ‘Telling About Germany: Narratives of Memory and Culture’, *Journal of Modern History*, Vol.76, No.2 (June, 2004), p. 395; This will be further examined in this Introduction in a section on memory theory, the Holocaust and historians.

The notion of Holocaust ‘lessons’ is further emphasised in the use of the Holocaust as analogy or as a benchmark. The Holocaust has been referred to as a “measuring rod” for all other atrocities and reflects upon the “trivializing and relativizing” effect this has had on perceptions of the Shoah.¹⁶ It has also been suggested that the Holocaust has become extensively mobilised to create “an image of victimhood so horrific that all other suffering must be diminished in comparison or inflated to fit its standards”.¹⁷ This will be explored in the sixth chapter of this thesis through the lens of Holocaust relativization and by comparing it to other genocides. Omer Bartov overall finds this invocation and perception of the Holocaust “a dangerous prism through which to view the world”, because “victims are produced by enemies, and polarising people into these two categories eventually makes for more victims”.¹⁸ George Kren has also noted the importance of words and phrases acquiring new meanings and becoming “loaded with special feelings and values”.¹⁹ The issue of terminology and victimhood relates to the broader thesis of survivor associations and the identities of survivors themselves, as many remain “trapped within the very conditions of their own victimhood”.²⁰ Here, the centrality of identity to this thesis cannot be underestimated and it is a theme that will be considered throughout.

Additionally, owing to a misuse of the Holocaust as analogy, individuals become immersed in a desensitised culture where invocations of the Holocaust “carry less shock value” or “set an unreasonably high standard of horror”.²¹

¹⁶ Omer Bartov, ‘Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews and the Holocaust’, *American Historical Review*, Vol.103, No.3 (June, 1998), p. 809.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bartov, ‘Defining Enemies, Making Victims’, p. 811. See Chapter Three of this thesis for discussions of hierarchy and definitions of victimhood/survivorship.

¹⁹ George M. Kren, ‘The Holocaust Survivor and Psychoanalysis’, in Paul Marcus and Alan Rosenberg (eds.), *Healing their Wounds: Psychotherapy with Holocaust Survivors and their Families* (New York: Praeger, 1989), p. 3.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 815.

²¹ Power, ‘To Suffer by Comparison?’, p. 32.

Densensitisation as a concept stems from psychological studies regarding depictions of violence in video games, “by which initial arousal responses to violent stimuli are reduced, thereby changing an individual’s ‘present internal state’”.²² This concept can be extended to the Holocaust, suggesting that the more Holocaust material that is consumed, the less shock value and impact such horrors carry. Yet despite the case being made for the existence of a desensitised Holocaust culture, the emphasis remains on the memory of the Holocaust and what it means to remember. Remembering can have a variety of meanings: for the historian, it represents the way memory is constructed and portrayed in public spheres, whereas from the perspective of collective public memory, the focus becomes an almost religious injunction and a sense of justice or ‘never again’.²³

Despite this, there is a recognition from scholars that the Holocaust has marked “both break and continuity”, becoming “a transformative event in an unchanged world”.²⁴ This reinforces Bartov’s contention that the Holocaust is used as a “measuring rod” or a benchmark.²⁵ Dan Stone acknowledges how the Holocaust has been subject to changes over time and differing historiographical emphases, such as “from collaboration to resistance, from perpetrator to victim”, reflecting how these interpretations of history do not represent “an immutable body of knowledge”.²⁶ Therefore, it is prudent to examine the relationship between historians and the evolving study of the Holocaust.

²² Nicholas L. Carnagey, Craig A. Anderson and Brad J. Bushman, ‘The Effect of Video Game Violence on Physiological Desensitization to Real-Life Violence’, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol.43, No.3 (2007), p. 491.

²³ Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, p. 8.

²⁴ Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), p. 13.

²⁵ Bartov, ‘Defining Enemies, Making Victims’, p. 809.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 20.

There is an overall anxiety present within the historian and their writing of Holocaust history, where there is an abject fear of being unable to adequately “represent and explain” the Holocaust while maintaining sensitivity.²⁷ For instance, Hannah Pollin-Galay has examined different ‘ecologies’ in terms of Holocaust study and testimony, remarking upon “forensic” approaches that seek to recreate history in minute detail as if for a trial, or a more “personal-allegorical” framework that focuses on the emotions and personal recall of personal trauma.²⁸ The issue of how to maintain sensitivity within Holocaust Studies is largely applicable to this thesis as it negotiates the emotions and perspectives of individuals on issues which have the potential to be controversial within their communities.

In response to this anxiety, resulting in an insecurity that primarily surrounds “evidence” and uncovering “the truth”, there is a “positivistic attachment” to the accumulation of facts.²⁹ This attachment can present itself as detrimental to the study of the Holocaust and its history due to an absence of direct archival documentation and reliance on oral history methodology and testimony in studies such as these.³⁰ The Methodology chapter of this thesis will examine the importance of subjectivity and discuss the contribution such an approach has made to this project/research. But this notion implies that the Holocaust *should* be treated differently to other topics by the historical profession. Saul Friedländer has taken a direct view on this topic, and believed that the historian should approach the Holocaust with “all the tools at his disposal and without any forbidden questions”.³¹ However, the anxiety still remains for historians, with the feeling of taboo stemming from asking certain questions.

²⁷ Monica Black et al, ‘Cultural History and the Holocaust’, *German History*, Vol.31, No.1 (2013), p. 68.

²⁸ Hannah Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing: Language, Place and Holocaust Testimony* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 4-6.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Black et al, ‘Cultural History and the Holocaust’, p. 68.

³¹ Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust*, p. 35.

Despite this, he felt that departing from “imposed lesson syndrome” would inevitably lead to the crimes of Nazism diminishing in importance and historical impact.³² Friedländer was also wary of the psychological toll that “intellectual work” on the Shoah could have on historians, and recommended a “balance between the emotion recurrently breaking through the ‘protective shield’ and numbness that protects this very shield”.³³ Therefore, we can observe the importance of emotional management for historians; attempting a balance between the embracing of emotions that these sensitive discussions may trigger but not becoming too disconnected. Joshua Hirsch has suggested the following, remarking upon the difficulties of ‘objectivity’ within such a delicate and upsetting subject:

If scholarship can never be wholly objective, writing about the Holocaust presents the historian with a limit case of scholarly implication. One of the effects of the trauma constituted by genocide and concentration camps is that it continues to thrust upon those who encounter it in the present the subjectivities assumed by or forced upon the participants in the events of the past. What reference to the Holocaust is not marked by an identification with the position of victim, perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, resister, or one of the many shades in between?³⁴

³² Ibid.

³³ Saul Friedlander, ‘Trauma and Transference’, in Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (eds.), *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 209.

³⁴ Joshua Hirsch, *After Image: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p. ix.

Hirsch's contention conveys the challenge of subjectivity to historians, particularly those who study the Holocaust. However, he presents this subjectivity and interpretation as an enrichment to academia rather than a burden. Subjectivity is a key theme within this thesis and will be examined in the methodology chapter. Overall, Friedländer's expectations of the historian reflect the role that the historical profession can play not just in unpacking the concepts of commemoration and memorialisation but also contributing to that phenomenon themselves. This theme is addressed in the sixth chapter, which examines the perceived conflict and differing aims of commemoration, education and academia. Overall, this thesis is situated within an evolving appreciation of and preoccupation with the Holocaust in British society, where it receives a high degree of media attention and political discussion. It is essential to consider this emphasis when conducting a research project into these survivor associations that have formed in postwar Britain and how they have evolved throughout the twentieth century, as well as the sources that can assist with such a task.

In addition to a societal preoccupation with the Holocaust, it is also prudent to discuss how Holocaust memory has become more prevalent, and indeed to establish frameworks and definitions for memory in these contexts. Therefore, it is prudent to broadly examine the concept of memory and how it applies to history before expanding to consider the overlaps and diversions between collective, individual and national memory. Memory has been labelled a "notoriously slippery term" for historians, as individual memories, while being structured to make sense of our past and present lives, do not exist in a vacuum and are shaped by time, place, history, politics, culture and economy.³⁵ Memory as a concept reverberates through

³⁵ Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson, 'Keep Calm and Carry On': The Cultural Memory of the Second World War in Britain', in Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (eds.), *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 3.

public life at “high voltage”, generating numerous debates but also indicating how the contemporary “presentness” of memory cannot be underestimated, “forging the past to serve present interests”.³⁶ This presentness enforces the notion of how collective memory “privileges the interests of the contemporary” rather than prioritising the past.³⁷ This is reflected in Efraim Sicher’s assessment that no historical event can be recorded “devoid of interpretive perspectives of after”, highlighting the importance of the present in terms of memory construction and maintenance.³⁸

There has been some concern from historians as to how a preoccupation with memory can reflect “an egocentric obsession with the past-in-the-present in the guise of preparing for a ‘better’ future”.³⁹ The Holocaust reflects this notion as present-day issues become intertwined with our understanding of the Holocaust and general education surrounding the theme conveys the desire to prevent a future laden with atrocity.⁴⁰ There is a critical concern that the destruction of European Jews is receding into the background, with a challenge to “fundamental assumptions about our civilisation”, but whereby the “consequences of consequences” becomes more and more remote, assigned to history rather than emotive memory.⁴¹ Furthermore, it is important to consider how chronology and the passage of time have affected *how* the Holocaust is remembered. Peter Novick has reflected on the Holocaust as a

³⁶ Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, ‘Introduction: Mapping Memory’, in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds.), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 1.

³⁷ Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies’, *History and Theory*, Vol.41, No.2 (May, 2002), p. 180.

³⁸ Efraim Sicher, ‘The Future of the Past: Countermemory and Postmemory in Contemporary American Post-Holocaust Narratives’, *History and Memory*, Vol.12, No.2 (Fall/Winter, 2000), p. 81; Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson, ‘Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method – Popular Memory Group’, in Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 78-9.

³⁹ Brewster S. Chamberlin, ‘Doing Memory: Remembrance Reified and Other Shoah Business’, *The Public Historian*, Vol.23, No.3 (Summer, 2001), p. 74.

⁴⁰ This theme is discussed in further detail in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

⁴¹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews, Vol.III* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), p. 1187.

“largely retrospective construction” which “would not have been recognisable to most people at the time” in reference to the public.⁴² For example, Novick cites the 1961 Eichmann trial as a significant turning point for this “presentation” of the Holocaust to the public “as an entity in its own right, distinct from Nazi barbarism”.⁴³ This example is indicative of the importance of the societal construction of Holocaust memory, reflecting the influence of chronology in constructing and reconstructing a changing narrative which is being read and understood differently across different generations and cultures.

Roger Petersen has suggested that the memory of war overall is a “collective phenomenon constantly constructed through a myriad of social interactions, such as among survivors, the State, academia and the media”.⁴⁴ This is a point that considers cultural interaction in the formation of how societies collectively remember events, serving as what Alan Berger deems an “important practical function”.⁴⁵ This stems from the concept of identity and “a common myth of origin”, which provides a sense of cohesion amongst members of a community or society.⁴⁶ These all-encompassing ideas have been argued to organise “collective action” by providing a common lexicon and “set of understandings as to how the world functions and ought to function”.⁴⁷ Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson refer to this as “dominant memory”, whereby the power and pervasiveness of historical representations is enhanced, particularly within the realms of dominant institutions and “formal politics”.⁴⁸

⁴² Ibid, p. 20.

⁴³ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 133.

⁴⁴ Roger Petersen, ‘Memory and Cultural Schema: Linking Memory to Political Action’, in Francesco Cappelletto (ed.), *Memory and World War II: An Ethnographic Approach* (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 131.

⁴⁵ Patrick Finney, *Remembering the Road to World War Two: International History, National Identity, Collective Memory* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 14-15.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Finney, *Remembering the Road to World War Two*, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁸ Johnson and Dawson, ‘Popular memory: Theory, Politics, Method’, pp. 76-7.

Collective memory refers to how groups, societies, nations and tribes share a narrative with regards to the past.⁴⁹ This reflects how present concerns within these groups and societies shape and determine “what of the past we remember and how we remember it”.⁵⁰ Collective memories are argued to originate from shared communications with its basis in society “and its inventory of signs and symbols”.⁵¹ This can be applied to small collectives such as families and isolated communities, or can be applied on a larger scale to societies.⁵² Rather than being merely “historical knowledge” shared by a group, it can be argued that it is a process that is ahistorical, where events are reduced to “mythic archetypes” for a shared common narrative.⁵³ This becomes important to the development of this thesis, as these communities share a common narrative of origin and can occasionally present challenges to the cohesiveness of the group.

There have been numerous writings that have critically engaged with collective memory, such as the argument that “memories are at their most collective when they transcend the time and space of the events’ original occurrence”.⁵⁴ This argument emphasises how collective memory becomes more influential and powerful as the chronological distance from the initial event grows. It had been suggested by Wulf Kansteiner that this point in Holocaust memory was reached in 2002, where “a limited range of stories and images” are shared by millions of people particularly within the Western world, despite very few being part of or having a personal link to the events themselves.⁵⁵ However, Susan Crane did not agree that this point had been reached in terms of the Holocaust, and has argued that younger

⁴⁹ Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, ‘Collective Memory – What Is It?’, *History and Memory*, Vol.8, No.1 (Spring-Summer, 1996), pp. 34-5.

⁵⁰ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, pp. 3-4.

⁵¹ Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, pp. 188-9.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁴ Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, p. 189.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

generations still have access to the “lived experiences” of survivors despite their temporal distance.⁵⁶ Unlike Kansteiner, she believed that the link between the Holocaust and the present had not yet been severed and that the collective memory of the younger generation is all the more vivid due to the presence of survivors.⁵⁷

Moreover, unlike with individual memories, which seem liable to fade and be subject to influence from Holocaust tropes,⁵⁸ the power of collective memory seems to strengthen as time passes, reflecting new influences, interests and nuances.⁵⁹ As Peter Novick has suggested, there is a circular relationship between collective identity and collective memory, whereby we choose to retain memories because they express part of our sense of self.⁶⁰ Aspects of this identity as an individual or a community can be seen to be an illusion since memory is an open system and is not fixed, where memories exist as “representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective phenomena”.⁶¹

Despite this, memory is grounded in individual, generational, political, and cultural levels of identity.⁶² Therefore, how past events are recalled in a collective setting is important and demonstrates a strict set of criteria, for instance, “if they [memories] fit within a framework of contemporary interests”.⁶³ The importance of small groups such as survivors and veterans cannot be underestimated in terms of

⁵⁶ Susan Crane, ‘Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol.102, No.5 (December, 1997), pp. 1378-9.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Christopher Browning, ‘Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp’, in Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 317.

⁵⁹ Finney, *Remembering the Road to World War Two*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 7.

⁶¹ Jan Assman, ‘Communicative and Cultural Memory’ in Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 113-4; John R. Gillis, ‘Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship’, in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 3.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, pp. 187-8.

the influence they can exert on the national memory if their visions can meet with other socio-political objectives.⁶⁴ This notion informs this thesis by way of the influence survivors can potentially exact on memory on a broader scale, through how their views are represented in the media.

Sociologist Iwona Irwin-Zarecka further enhances the importance of memories fitting group identities and discusses how “a narrative of victimisation can serve to bolster group identity or to support political claims”, with the past being used to “various ends”.⁶⁵ However, that does not mean collective memory becomes “a terrain where anything goes”.⁶⁶ Therefore, the notion of collective memory becomes problematic as it raises the issue of which collective and under what condition are memories prioritised. National and communal dialogues of memory are not predictable nor indeed the same. In sum, scholar Susan Crane has highlighted collective memory as something that exists, “perpetuated in specific groups”, where individual and personal memories are expressed as part of a group identity, citing memory theorist Maurice Halbwachs’ statement that “The groups to which I belong vary at different periods of my life. But it is from their viewpoint that I consider the past”.⁶⁷ Therefore, this approach is central to this thesis as it is demonstrative of how these groups remember the Holocaust and what informs their relationships based on accepted or contested memories and a shared origin story or past.

Often in memory discourses, individual memory becomes subsumed under the rubric of collective memory by academics, with the importance of personal

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1994), p. 18.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Crane, ‘Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory’, p. 1376.

recollections being rejected or minimised.⁶⁸ This places emphasis on the idea that individual memory does not exist as it is “expressed through the cultural construction of language in socially structured patterns of recall”.⁶⁹ These theorisations, however, serve to depersonalise the traumatic experiences that affected these individuals. While individual memories may inform collective memory, they can be considered separate from the whole and do not lose meaning in isolation. Anthropologist Jonathan Boyarin has noted the conflicts between approaching memory as strictly individual or solely collective, citing pitfalls in both approaches: memory, he notes, is symbolic and therefore neither purely individual nor “literally collective” because it is not superorganic or elevated above individual members of society.⁷⁰ Wulf Kansteiner as a historian agrees with Boyarin’s notion of the impossibility of separating collective and individual memory and deems that there has not been an adequate conceptualisation of collective memory as a valid and separate category.⁷¹

The role of the historian sits within a functionalist approach advocated by Maurice Halbwachs and informed by Emile Durkheim’s work on collective consciousness, key proponents in the paradigm of collective memory, whereby it is argued that individuals cannot remember outside groups such as communities and societies.⁷² This conveys how the historian aims to create distance from these sociological ideas in order “to return to one of their favourite subjects, the objectives and actions of individuals in history”.⁷³ Although a historicist paradigm had focused initially on the individual and their actions in history, this trend in historiography has

⁶⁸ Anna Green, ‘Individual Remembering and ‘Collective Memory’: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates’, *Oral History*, Vol.32, No.2 (2004), p. 37.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Jonathan Boyarin, ‘Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory’ in Jonathan Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 26.

⁷¹ Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, p. 180.

⁷² See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis Coser (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.181.

seen a decrease in popularity with increased emphasis on memory, society and social change.

Whilst individual memories have a vital place in shaping the collective, it cannot be ignored that human memory is indeed fallible and subject to fade. Despite this, the impact of these memories on the life of the individual Holocaust survivor cannot be underestimated. In addition, Amos Funkenstein has highlighted how collective memory theorists have ascribed historical consciousness and memory to human collectives, but have failed to recognise that these processes “can only be realised by an individual, who acts, is aware and remembers. Just like a nation cannot eat or dance, neither can it speak or remember”.⁷⁴

Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam argue that it is often forgotten that collective memory is a metaphor that makes an analogy between individual and community memory (an example of collective memory within smaller cohorts); in Novick’s opinion, this is a metaphor that works best when communities change slowly.⁷⁵ There is a perceived “fierce ideological and psychological opposition between memory and history” as they are seen to be markedly different, but memory allows readers to integrate the “relevance of history” into their own lives.⁷⁶ While it can be argued that there was previously a “forced distinction” between survivor memory and Holocaust historiography, this is changing to an increased emphasis on the survivor’s voice.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Amos Funkenstein, ‘Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness’, *History and Memory*, Vol.1, No.1 (Spring-Summer, 1989), pp. 5-6.

⁷⁵ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 267; Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, ‘Collective Memory – What Is It?’, *History and Memory*, Vol.8, No.1 (Spring-Summer, 1996), pp. 34-5.

⁷⁶ Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler, ‘Introduction’, in Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler (eds.), *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 19.

⁷⁷ James E. Young, ‘Between History and Memory: The Voice of the Eyewitness’, in Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler (eds.), *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 278.

Although memory can be “elusive and ambiguous”,⁷⁸ it provides the move towards the importance of perception and human feelings in a field that lacks a significant amount of archival evidence due to the destruction of records in the chaos of the last days of the Second World War.⁷⁹

Evolving approaches to trauma and the survivor voice

It is the aforementioned field of the survivor and their voice that will formulate the key conceptualisations for this thesis. It would be impossible to write a thesis on how Holocaust survivors have interpreted their experiences in the survivor associations they form without considering the chronology of survivor psychology and responses to their trauma. The early stance of survivor psychology is an interesting topic to engage with from the perspective of this thesis as it lies in the interdisciplinary plain between history and the psychological effect of survivorship on the individual.

Immediately following the end of the Second World War, French researchers were examining survivors and deeming them to suffer from “post-concentration camp asthenia”, with the term “KZ-syndrome” being introduced by Danish physicians shortly afterwards.⁸⁰ Paul Friedman, in his 1948 article on displaced persons with particular reference to concentration camp survivors, considered the emotional numbing and detachment that was already starting to take place, with surface-level resilience masking deep emotional trauma and encouraging

⁷⁸ Omer Bartov, ‘Intellectuals on Auschwitz: Memory, History and Truth’, *History and Memory*, Vol.5, No.1 (Spring - Summer, 1993), p. 94.

⁷⁹ Berel Lang, *The Future of the Holocaust: Between History and Memory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 4.

⁸⁰ Karolina Krysińska and David Lester, ‘The Contribution of Psychology to the Study of the Holocaust’, *Dialogue and Universalism*, Vol.16, No.5/6 (2006), p. 143; Also see: Leo Eitinger, ‘Pathology of the Concentration Camp Syndrome’, *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol.5 (October, 1961), pp. 79-87.

experiences to be repressed.⁸¹ The symptoms convey the development of what we now recognise as post-traumatic stress disorder, covering somatic complaints to suicidal ideation, sleep difficulties, and the disruption of social and interpersonal functioning.⁸² This theorisation developed further in 1961, where psychiatrist William G. Niederland coined the term “survivor syndrome”.⁸³ Niederland’s thesis extended the previous notion of “KZ-syndrome” by elaborating further on the experience of the survivor in their postwar lives such as the inability to experience pleasure, apathy, extreme survivor guilt and feelings of worthlessness.⁸⁴

The accepted view of the aforementioned symptoms was that survivors were merely depressed, but Niederland foregrounded the acute trauma experienced by those who had survived and their concomitant guilt.⁸⁵ Paul Chodoff, also a psychiatrist writing in the 1990s has drawn on the nature of a syndrome affecting survivors and how it mimicked an organic disease, “as if nothing of importance had happened in their lives since” – conveying the reverberating impact of the nature of traumatic memory and the consistency with the symptoms described.⁸⁶ These are broadly grouped within a PTSD framework that psychology has contributed to the historiographical understanding of trauma, leading scholar Cathy Caruth to suggest that PTSD has become “a symptom of history”, in the sense that the traumatised “carry an impossible history with them”, or they “become themselves the symptom

⁸¹ Paul Friedman, ‘The Road Back For the DP’s: Healing the Psychological Scars of Nazism’, *Commentary Magazine* (1 December, 1948) <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-road-back-for-the-dpshealing-the-psychological-scars-of-nazism/> [Accessed 10 October, 2017]

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gene A. Plunka, *Holocaust Drama: The Theatre of Atrocity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 276-7.

⁸⁴ Ibid; Also see: Miri Peleg, Rachel Lev-Wiesel and Dani Yaniv, ‘Reconstruction of Self-Identity of Holocaust Child Survivors who Participated in “Testimony Theater”’, *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, Vol.6, No.4 (July, 2014), p. 412.

⁸⁵ Plunka, *Holocaust Drama*, pp. 277-8.

⁸⁶ Paul Chodoff, ‘The Holocaust and Its Effects on Survivors: An Overview’, *Political Psychology*, Vol.18, No.1 (March, 1997), p. 153.

of a history that they cannot entirely possess”.⁸⁷ This perspective contrasts with the notions of posttraumatic growth as investigated by psychologists Rachel Lev-Wiesel and Marianne Amir, where survivors “bounce back” from trauma in response to social support and convey an absence of depression symptoms.⁸⁸ This therefore raises the discussion of the dichotomy between survivor vulnerability and resilience.

Natan Kellermann, a clinical psychologist heavily involved with the AMCHA project in Israel, which assists survivors with the impact of their traumatic memories, has written of a five period chronology of “postwar adjustment”.⁸⁹ These periods begin with an “emotional crisis” directly after the war, where survivors recover from physical ailments caused by the camps, search for surviving relatives and attempt to come to terms with their experiences.⁹⁰ He summarises it as the “surviving survival” period and marks it as the beginning of a new journey.⁹¹ This then gives way to the “immigration and absorption period” of the 1950s and the “social adjustment and reintegration” period of the 1960s and 1970s, dominated by the idea of “building” – families, communities, cultures and finances.⁹² In this period, there is a concerted effort to “move on and leave the tragic past behind”.⁹³

As the introduction of this thesis and this research overall will suggest, this notion of leaving the past behind is not as simple as was initially expected. This, in turn, fuels Kellermann’s fourth stage present in the 1980s and 1990s, which he terms “aging and regression”, whereby survivors began to slow down, allowing their

⁸⁷ Cathy Caruth, ‘Trauma and Experience’, in Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (eds.), *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 194.

⁸⁸ Rachel Lev Wiesel and Marianne Amir, ‘Posttraumatic Growth Amongst Holocaust Child Survivors’, *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, Vol.8, No.4 (2003), pp. 229 & 234.

⁸⁹ Natan P. F. Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma: Psychological Effects and Treatment* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2009), pp. 22-23.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

repressed memories to come to the fore. This led to the introduction of many new treatment programmes for these individuals as they began to face their traumatic experiences.⁹⁴ Finally, the fifth period of postwar adjustment is marked by the public's increasing respect for survivors for their accomplishments, for having survived and been able to cope with the resultant trauma.⁹⁵ This stage is marked by survivors being invited to speak and document their life stories. This thesis will work within Kellermann's framework as a series of chronological reference points because they best convey the changes that occur within these survivor associations and organisations as the twentieth century advanced into the twenty-first.

Whilst many survivors have attained recognition and a sense of composure as to their experiences, they can still feel the burden of their "impossible history", and it can manifest in terms of loneliness.⁹⁶ Hartman reflects on this in the context of family gatherings, where the survivor realises that they are the sole representative of a previously large family that perished.⁹⁷ Child survivors seem to be especially vulnerable to this feeling of not belonging, as they felt misunderstood by their parents and elders, who were persecuted as adults, but did not feel a sense of belonging with the second generation, who had never experienced persecution.⁹⁸ In addition, many of those who had been children in 1945 were the sole survivors of their families, having lost relatives at an age where their identity was still forming, leaving them susceptible to trauma. Sarah Moskowitz has written of how child survivors continued to seek and yearn for love, possessing the "tenacity of hope" and

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience', p. 194.

⁹⁷ Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, pp. 24-5.

⁹⁸ Milton Kestenberg and Judith S. Kestenberg, 'The Sense of Belonging and Altruism in Children who Survived the Holocaust', *Psychoanalytic Review*, Issue.75, Vol.4 (Winter 1988), p. 534.

“human resourcefulness”, further illustrating their resistance despite specific vulnerabilities.⁹⁹

A sense of loneliness does not seem to be mitigated by the presence or later creation of a family. This was reflected in Lawrence Langer’s example of a Holocaust survivor who felt that he could not take satisfaction in the lives and achievements of his children because his memories cast a shadow over his present-day life.¹⁰⁰ Langer’s assessment marked this attitude as “exemplary rather than exceptional”.¹⁰¹ Arlene Stein also agreed with this notion of loneliness and the survivor isolating themselves from their family as a means of identity management.¹⁰²

Although survivors may feel a sense of distance from the world – having suffered inhumane treatment by the Nazi regime – they recognise what it means to be happy, as they have faced such extreme opposites.¹⁰³ Therefore, this contrast reveals the individuality present in how survivors interpret their experiences through frameworks that do not just consider vulnerability but also resilience. This individuality is exemplified by Kahana, Harel and Kahana’s five key examples of the strength and resilience of Holocaust survivors: firstly, creating a nurturing family life, secondly, securing professional success, then setting up survivor associations and honouring their past memories, followed by humanitarian and religious pursuits, and lastly, ensuring the Jewish community survived.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, “despite evidence

⁹⁹ Sarah Moskowitz, *Love Despite Hate: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Adult Lives* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 34.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Arlene Stein, ‘As far as they knew I came from France’, *Stigma, Passing and Not Speaking about the Holocaust*, *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol.32, No.1 (2009), p. 58.

¹⁰³ Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ Boaz Kahana, Zev Harel and Eva Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants: Late Life Adaptations* (New York: Springer 2005), p. 144.

indicating their specific vulnerability”, survivors have revealed their strength, with psychological studies confirming their resilience in cognitive and daily functioning, physical health and stress management.¹⁰⁵ This ascribes to the “inoculation perspective”, whereby these individuals feel triumphant at their survival into old age, contributing to the maintenance of Jewish traditions, a culture that Nazi policy attempted to eradicate.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the inoculation refers to the resilience survivors have towards further trauma and struggle, illustrating that nothing could be worse than their Holocaust trauma. As a result, many survivors appear to cope more effectively due to their previous trauma.

Often for survivors, rebuilding their lives after trauma and struggling for a new existence prevented the trauma of the past from occupying their day-to-day thoughts.¹⁰⁷ These struggles could include recovering from starvation and illness, but most importantly coming to terms with the fact that “there would be a future after all”.¹⁰⁸ As a result, there was a general resolution to “leave the past behind” instead of “giving into grief”, and to “deny victory to the Nazis” through a commitment to showing strength rather than weakness.¹⁰⁹ This is embodied in the subtitle often associated with the '45 Aid Society of ‘Triumph Over Adversity’, conveying that the experience of trauma has led to a conquering of difficulties, promoting the perspective that these survivors are resilient.¹¹⁰ Whilst there undoubtedly were psychological struggles following such traumatic experiences, Kellerman notes a passage towards rehabilitation often existed, whether that was starting again in a new

¹⁰⁵ Peleg, Lev-Wiesel and Yaniv, ‘Reconstruction of Self-Identity of Holocaust Child Survivors’, p.412; Marilyn Armour, ‘Meaning Making in Survivorship: Application to Holocaust Survivors’, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, Vol.20, No.4 (2010), p. 462.

¹⁰⁶ Kahana, Harel and Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ '45 Aid Society, ‘Products’, <https://45aid.org/products/> [Accessed 21 September, 2020]

country or fighting for a nation to exist in the case of Israel. This can be described as repression, which can make Holocaust trauma like “an atom bomb that disperses its radioactive fallout in distant places, often a long time after the actual explosion”.¹¹¹ Henri Obstfeld, writing in the Introduction to the Child Survivors’ Association book, *We Remember*, also highlights that survivors were “busy trying to build a new life, trying to forget, suppress what they had experienced, because remembering was unbearable”.¹¹²

Once they had retired, survivors had become less focused on careers and bringing up their families, therefore had more time to reflect. As a result, their carefully crafted repression began to dissipate and led to a re-emergence of trauma. One common symptom was the late-onset of nightmares.¹¹³ The delayed onset of psychological symptoms has triggered a “conscious working through” for survivors, which has, in turn, allowed them to find more “inner balance” and consequently more confidence with becoming active in Holocaust education and commemoration in a delayed chronology.¹¹⁴ It is this confidence that the sixth chapter of this thesis will explore in tandem with survivors becoming outspoken on contemporary events within the media, oral history interviews and within their communities.

However, a critical contextual point needs to be noted in that many studies on survivors focus on psychopathology, whereby the “healthy aspect of the personality of patients in analysis” is often disregarded.¹¹⁵ There is an overall lack of nuance in the vocabulary of psychoanalysis “for healthy functioning that they

¹¹¹ Natan P. F. Kellermann, ‘The Long-Term Psychological Effects and Treatment of Holocaust Trauma’, *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, Vol.6, No.3 (2011), p. 197.

¹¹² Child Survivors Association of Great Britain - AJR, *We Remember: Child Survivors of the Holocaust Speak* (Leicester: Troubador, 2011), p. xxii.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 45.

¹¹⁵ John J. Sigal and Morton Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth: Intergenerational Effects of the Holocaust* (New York: Preager, 1989), p. 25.

have to describe psychopathology”.¹¹⁶ There is an imbalance which favours “pathological inheritance” but focuses less on survivors picking up “the shattered pieces of their lives” to produce “more than adequate postwar functioning” and success.¹¹⁷ The reasons for this may be methodological from the field of psychology or psychoanalysis, or perhaps fuelled by notions that to consider survivor strength following their experiences, we risk minimising their pain and loss.¹¹⁸ This crucial contextual aspect will be noted throughout this thesis when there are discussions of psychological studies on survivors, acknowledging the limits that can exist in these fields. As Aaron Hass has summarised, he became “exasperated and dumbfounded” at these assumptions of psychopathology, emphasising that “These were not the survivors who surrounded me during my lifetime”.¹¹⁹ He went on to note that these survivors managed to “revive a self-respect which had been under continuous siege” and this conveyed “incredible resilience”.¹²⁰

Overall, this thesis aims to draw a balance between the discussions of psychopathology and traumatic impact with the resilience that survivors have developed as a result of their experiences. The thesis will be mindful of the tensions between posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic growth which can fuel the complicated relationship between vulnerability and resilience present within individual survivors and the groups that they have formed.¹²¹ This represents a “paradoxical learning curve” that has taken place within therapy and trauma more broadly, with a growing appreciation that the experiences of Holocaust survivors and

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Aaron Hass, *The Aftermath: Living with the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. xv.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 9; Lev Wiesel and Amir, ‘Posttraumatic Growth Amongst Holocaust Child Survivors’, pp. 229 & 234.

the psychological impact are resistant to rigid classification.¹²² In spite of this, it must be credited that the psychological study of survivors, notably those conducted soon after the war, originated in a “specific historical context, where survivors were struggling for both recognition and compensation and that these early studies helped them gain both”.¹²³ Therefore, psychological studies of survivors serve a valuable historical source for contextualisation in the recognition of survivors and have value for this study when methodological limitations are taken into account.

In spite of the duality of individual survivors reactions to their experiences, Langer suggests that survivors “don’t feel at home in this world any more” due to their experiences, but that they learn to live with them as the element that sets them apart from others.¹²⁴ However, this notion leads to the “two distinct ways” of imagining survivors, which Henry Greenspan defines as one being “through a ceremonial rhetoric in which we honour survivors as celebrants and heroes”, and the second being “a psychiatric rhetoric in which the same survivors are ghosts and wrecks”.¹²⁵ This perspective is something survivors are very resistant to as it places them on a pedestal and labels them as heroic or damaged. This is a theme explored in Chapter Four within broader discussions of survivor self-concept.

Novick also presents a similarly striking argument in which he represents Holocaust-survivorship as “terminal”.¹²⁶ He justifies this perspective by arguing that being identified as a Holocaust survivor by society is a “lifelong attribute”, provoking feelings of having been set apart and categorised for having survived.¹²⁷

¹²² Ibid, pp. 9 & 34.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 27.

¹²⁴ Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, p. 35.

¹²⁵ Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony* (Minnesota: Paragon House, 2010), pp. 63-4.

¹²⁶ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 67.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Being defined in this way can lead to survivors worrying that they are perceived as “a museum piece, a freak, a ghost” or what Kahana, Harel and Kahana more succinctly refer to as “damaged goods”.¹²⁸ This is a novel interpretation in some ways as it suggests that many do not self-identify as survivors; instead, this label is forced upon them, setting them apart from the rest of the population. This elevation mirrors the attention foisted upon the last remaining First World War veterans who were feted. Harry Patch, Britain’s ‘last fighting Tommy’, who died in 2009, “never asked to be famous” yet by dint of his old age represented a generation.¹²⁹

The importance of the postwar period

This thesis is broadly situated in the post-Second World War experience of Holocaust survivors, the associations they formed and in the wider debates about the attention and status given to survivors. Within many archived oral history interviews conducted with Holocaust survivors, it is their postwar experiences and current reflections that have received much less attention. There has been a vast body of literature on the Holocaust; it can arguably be defined as the most prominent theme within twentieth-century historical study, with many books and articles devoted to the subject. As previously suggested, there is such a preoccupation with writing about the Holocaust years that the postwar period can often seem like an afterthought. This became particularly apparent during the course of my research with archived interviews in the oral history collections of the British Library, the Wiener Library and the Imperial War Museum. Within the eighty interviews I consulted as part of this research, approximately ten per cent of the conversations were based on the pre-war lives of survivors, examining their families and

¹²⁸ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 67; Kahana, Harel and Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants*, p. 77.

¹²⁹ Richard van Emden, *The Soldier’s War: The Great War Through Veterans’ Eyes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 12.

experience of schooling before occupation, eighty per cent was focused on deportation, ghettoisation and the concentration camp experience and roughly ten per cent covered the postwar lives of individual survivors and their community relations with other Holocaust victims.

Too often, I found a five minute summary at the end of these interviews of 'I met my husband/wife in... (year) and we had (number) children'. Yet survivors' postwar lives were undoubtedly so much more varied than these brief biographical sentences suggested. Their subjectivities in the postwar period, revolving around how they adapted to cope with their traumatic histories with detail on how they raised their families and built new lives, are mostly missing. My study retrieves those fragments from the archived interviews while placing their postwar lives centre stage in twelve newly conducted interviews. By giving space to the period following their arrival in Britain in late 1945 and early 1946, I was able to reconstruct their lives after their trauma, focusing on the lives they had led since. The interviewees relished being more than a survivor in interviews that discussed their family lives and their work, both paid and voluntary, confirming that these were of interest in tandem with their Holocaust survivor identity. Individuals took up the opportunity to reflect and emerging themes included hierarchy, family, the second generation and the impact of current events on their perception of their memories.

In very few instances did I find in archived interviews survivor perspectives of adjusting to the UK, how they felt they were received, their experiences finding work or educating themselves and how they integrated into the Jewish community already resident in the UK. When it did occur, there was often a lack of specificity, depth and focus. Only in Martin Gilbert's collected volume on a group of survivors who settled in Britain did I find the level of detail I was seeking on the immediate postwar period. However, this was devoted to a single group and did not represent a

phenomenon of a turn to the individual postwar existence and composure of all UK-based survivors.¹³⁰ The importance of talking about the postwar lives of survivors is noted by Regina Steinitz:

I could end my story of survival at this point. We had arrived. Germany and the years of persecution lay behind us. A new, entirely different life stood before us, and we were young and healthy enough to devote ourselves to it entirely. But everything that has since happened has had to do with our experiences during the persecution.¹³¹

Similarly, interpersonal relationships between survivors were rarely discussed either in archived interviews or historical analyses. Gilbert's volume did this but in very positivistic tones, and did not consider there might be a darker side and some tension aside from what he perceived as "normal sibling rivalry".¹³² I wanted to consider how individuals dealt with the label of survivor, how the sharing of stories was not always cathartic but could provoke tension and how survivors related to each other. By doing so, I found widespread evidence of hurt, exclusion, friction and rivalry as much as a familial dynamic and sense of belonging. I could find some resonance in the existing literature that helped to provide some pre-existing information, but no study that brought the UK survivor groups together and allowed for some voice of comparison or light to be shone on these communities and the interpersonal relationships they formed.

¹³⁰ See Martin Gilbert, *The Boys: The Story of 732 Young Concentration Camp Survivors* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996).

¹³¹ Regina Steinitz and Regina Scheer, *A Childhood and Youth Destroyed: My Life and Survival in Berlin* (Berlin: Leonore Martin and Uwe Neumärker Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2017), p. 98.

¹³² Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 442.

It is in addressing this gap and drawing together disparate themes that the thesis' originality and strength lies. It aims to rebalance historiography fraught with claims of psychopathology and consider the strength that survivors can draw from forming communities and associations such as the ones under study. It must be emphasised that liberation and adjusting to freedom was a slower process than previously thought, with many viewing the moment of liberation as "not in itself a notable event due to physical exhaustion, poor health and low morale".¹³³ Whilst the impact of carrying and coping with such a history cannot be underestimated, survivors "obtained employment, raised families and were involved in their communities", and it is those community relations and validation of selfhood that this thesis seeks to focus upon.¹³⁴

The idea of survivors carrying their story as an impossible history is reflected in the immediate postwar reactions to the Holocaust and survivors attempting to recreate a sense of community. It is crucial to consider the immediate reaction from survivors in the postwar period for this reason. Whilst French survivor Simone Veil, among others, found the Jewish community in France to be unwelcoming on her return from Auschwitz,¹³⁵ scholar Margarete Feinstein notes that there was a desire in the immediate postwar period for refugees and survivors to live communally in a kibbutz.¹³⁶ Defined as "a collective settlement in Israel, owned communally by its members, and organized on co-operative principles", a kibbutz

¹³³ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 205.

¹³⁴ William B. Helmreich, 'Against All Odds: Survivors of the Holocaust and the American Experience', in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (eds.), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 753.

¹³⁵ Simone Veil, *A Life: A Memoir* (London: Haus Publishing, 2007), pp. 82-3.

¹³⁶ Margarete M. Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 165.

quickly fostered community and familial relationships.¹³⁷ This transitory phase into “life in freedom” allowed for a reduction of anxiety, increased emotional health and developed social skills.¹³⁸ The importance of kibbutzim is enhanced by Kahana, Harel and Kahana’s assessment that survivors were able to adapt and build new lives in “environments that provided acceptance and opportunities”.¹³⁹ Young survivor Esther Traubova Mandel emphasised in her recollections to Sarah Moskovitz that:

The best medicine I ever took in my life was when I went to Israel to a kibbutz at twenty-one. It was the best thing for me in helping me to become a person. The pace is rougher there. You relate to people, make friendships. You work hard. It’s a healthy atmosphere. I made a few very good friends. There were Americans, Dutch, Scotch, and Irish on the kibbutz. I got to know people. It helped me to grow up and become more confident.¹⁴⁰

Marking life on the kibbutz as “medicine” is indicative of the benefits many survivors felt they derived from that style of living. The psychological importance of kibbutzim cannot be underestimated as it provided a crucial transition, and helped to remedy Chodoff’s psychiatric assessment that “rosy fantasies about postwar life” and the “post-disaster utopia” were quickly shattered, instigating disillusionment.¹⁴¹ However, Chodoff himself is sceptical of a mostly positive assessment of the kibbutz and reflects that adjusting to new customs, languages and

¹³⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, ‘Definition: Kibbutz’, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/103247?redirectedFrom=kibbutz#eid> [Accessed 25 March, 2019]

¹³⁸ Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, p. 165.

¹³⁹ Eva Kahana et al, ‘Trauma and the Life Course in a Cross National Perspective: Focus on Holocaust Survivors Living in Hungary’, *Traumatology*, Vol.21, No.4 (2015), p. 312.

¹⁴⁰ Moskovitz, *Love Despite Hate*, p. 130.

¹⁴¹ Chodoff. ‘The Holocaust and Its Effects on Survivors’, p. 153.

environments was difficult for survivors in general.¹⁴² Additionally, the view of kibbutzim from the perspective of Holocaust survivors and sharing their memories are not entirely positive. Binyamin, a Holocaust survivor who lived at the Gan Shmuel Kibbutz in Northern Israel, reflected on the needs of the kibbutz coming first, with survivor members primarily not wanting to share their experiences, as well as being encouraged not to share these memories of trauma.¹⁴³ Scholar Dan Bar-On also highlights this aim to “normalise” traumatic experiences and navigate their way through demanding societies that become more pronounced in the kibbutz context.¹⁴⁴ It appears evident that there was a struggle to rehabilitate yet preserve an “unsettled, visceral past”.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the “recreation” of the Jewish community was a priority after such decimation. Consequently, kibbutzim aimed to provide these functions with the motivation of recovery in order to serve the needs of the future state of Israel.¹⁴⁶ Sociologist Eva Kahana has indicated that survivors who settled in Israel, then Palestine, had “moved beyond their traumatic past and identified strongly with their new homeland”.¹⁴⁷ This thesis aims to discover whether this is also the case for survivors who settled in the UK.

A larger pattern of Holocaust survivors creating surrogate families within their communities as a response to their trauma is traced by Feinstein.¹⁴⁸ This shows congruence with survivor organisations and how close friendships and communities were created out of shared traumatic experiences. The warm familial bonds that were

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Micha Balf, ‘Holocaust Survivors on Kibbutzim: Resettling Unsettled Memories’, in Dalia Ofer, Françoise S. Ouzan and Judy Tydor Baumel-Schwartz (eds.), *Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 167.

¹⁴⁴ Dan Bar-On, *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of Holocaust Survivors* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁵ Balf, ‘Holocaust Survivors on Kibbutzim’, p. 167

¹⁴⁶ Paul Marcus and Alan Rosenberg, ‘The Religious Life of Holocaust Survivors and its Significance for Psychotherapy’ in Alan L. Berger (ed.), *Bearing Witness to the Holocaust, 1939-1989* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p. 173.

¹⁴⁷ Eva Kahana et al, ‘Trauma and the Life Course: Focus on Holocaust Survivors Living in Hungary’, *Traumatology*, Vol.21, Issue.4 (2015), p. 317.

¹⁴⁸ Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, p. 171.

fostered represented a “need for family” that was essential for those who had few or no surviving relatives.¹⁴⁹ This connection, which will be explored in the fourth chapter of this thesis, led to friendships that became as “deep and strong as sibling relationships” due to having faced similar hardships and a sense of understanding emanating from those shared experiences.¹⁵⁰ This becomes important for psychological wellbeing in the immediate postwar period as well as in the years and life stages that followed, as it is primarily acknowledged that close familial and interpersonal relationships increased levels of wellbeing amongst survivors and “buffered” the ill effects of trauma.¹⁵¹

Examples of survivor communities convey how close survivors could become when brought together by their experiences. This is what scholar Michael Nutkiewicz describes as “corporate pain”, where there is an emphasis on the distress and sorrow of the collective as well as the individual.¹⁵² This becomes an aspect of the traditional Jewish notion of “*zachor*”, an imperative verb with religious connotations that has meanings associated with both “remembering” and “telling”.¹⁵³ We can apply this concept to these communities as there represents an obligation or imperative to remember within these cohorts. Indeed, it appears that participants in interviews conducted by psychologists Finkelstein and Levy used historical imperative as an example in 58 per cent of their responses, with 38 per cent of those surveyed emphasising this reason as the main factor in their willingness to disclose their experiences publicly.¹⁵⁴ Overall, immediate postwar phenomena such as

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Kahana, Harel and Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants*, p. 112 and pp. 140-1.

¹⁵² Michael Nutkiewicz, ‘Shame, Guilt and Anguish in Holocaust Survivor Testimony’, *The Oral History Review*, Vol.30, No.1 (Winter-Spring, 2003), p. 5.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Laura E. Finkelstein and Becca R. Levy, ‘Disclosure of Holocaust Experiences: Reasons, Attributions, and Health Implications’, *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, Vol.25, No.1 (2006), pp. 128-9.

kibbutzim and bonding in displaced person camps, reflected the desire for community by survivors. Therefore, it is vital to examine the definitions of a community and to consider how this has manifested for the survivor population both within the UK and in a more international context.

Defining the importance of community

There have been many sociological debates as to what constitutes a community, and while it has become a widely used term, it is a concept that has been subject to contestation.¹⁵⁵ Fields such as social science, political science, history and philosophy have often been divided in their use of the term “community”, but Gerard Delanty in his volume on the idea of community argues that “virtually every term in social science is contested, and if we reject the word ‘community’ we will have to replace it with another term”.¹⁵⁶ He goes further to emphasise how sociologists have designated community as based on a “spatially-bound locality”, whereas anthropologists apply it to “culturally-defined groups” such as minorities, whilst in other usages, it refers to political community and collective identity.¹⁵⁷

Community generally implies relationships that go beyond “casual acknowledgment” and implies a certain closeness, bond and sharing of “common goals, values, and, perhaps a way of life that reinforces each other, creates positive feelings, and results in a degree of mutual commitment and responsibility”.¹⁵⁸ We can define survivor associations in this way as communities, as although they do not always encourage positive feelings and relationships, there is an often unspoken

¹⁵⁵ Gerard Delanty, *Community* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. x.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ John G. Bruhn, *The Sociology of Community Connections* (New Mexico: Springer, 2005), p. 30.

bond of shared experiences between them which can go beyond “casual acknowledgement”.¹⁵⁹ The notion of “choice” discussed by Bruhn is also highly relevant as “members can choose to associate with, or connect to, each other”.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, many survivors *choose* to interact in specific groups while avoiding others. This can lead to cliques forming within these survivor association groups based on affirming who belongs and excluding those who others may not view as a survivor.¹⁶¹

Sociologically, there has been much discussion as to communities being either “in transition” or in decline, but it appears that community has a “contemporary resonance in the current social and political situation, which appears to have produced a worldwide search for roots, identity and aspirations for belonging”.¹⁶² It is the theme of belonging and validation which unites this thesis within a broader theme of subjectivity and selfhood, and this cannot be considered without the evolving idea of community and definitions. Indeed, community can be considered to have a “transcendent nature” that cannot be confined to one place.¹⁶³ This can be seen within survivor associations as they are not always geographically close or united within a defined space but still have contact and consider themselves a community based on shared experiences.

Furthermore, while ideas of shared religious descent and experiences are not enough to create or sustain these communities, the “feelings of belonging together” are fundamental.¹⁶⁴ Community is, then, a mental construct and a basis for collective identity within these groups, with a “sufficiently malleable” character to allow space

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ See Chapter Three of this thesis.

¹⁶² Delanty, *Community*, p.x.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p.xii.

¹⁶⁴ Gertrud Neuwirth, ‘A Weberian Outline of a Theory of Community: Its Application to the 'Dark Ghetto'', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.20, No.2 (June, 1969), p. 154.

for individuals whilst maintaining “commonality”.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the community is not fixed, “reified or static”, but rather a “fluid, on-going construction”.¹⁶⁶ This fluidity in community structure becomes applicable to survivor associations as they have changed in their emphases as the chronology has advanced, becoming responsive to the evolving needs of the members of their groups and the generations that may follow.

In addition to kibbutzim, there are many other early examples of survivors banding together in search of community. William Helmreich defines this simply as “survivors, by and large, seek out each other”, that “the intensity of their experiences strengthens the bonds of friendship that they either had before the war or developed afterward”.¹⁶⁷ Jacqueline Giere focuses on this notion in her 1998 chapter on the “She’erit Ha-peletah” – “the rest that remained, the surviving remnant”, a title which displaced persons gave themselves in the days immediately following liberation.¹⁶⁸ She coins the term “transit community” to underscore the responsive and reactive nature of this group and discusses the requirements for this, which were increasingly difficult as she feels communities are based on “a mutual past and future” whilst the “survivor-migrant community seemingly only has the present”.¹⁶⁹

Ways around forging a distinct and unifying past could involve focusing on “recent traumata” and negotiating a common identity that reformulated individual

¹⁶⁵ Anthony P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 109.

¹⁶⁶ Louise Ryan, Eleonore Kofman and Pauline Aaron, ‘Insiders and Outsiders: Working with Peer Researchers in Researching Muslim Communities’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol.14, No.1 (2011), p. 50.

¹⁶⁷ Helmreich, ‘Against All Odds’, pp. 757-8.

¹⁶⁸ Jacqueline Giere, ‘We’re on Our Way, but We’re Not in the Wilderness’, in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (eds.), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 703.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 710.

suffering into collective trauma.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, these past identities are constructed but give meaning to “actions in the here and now”, resulting in those who were “forced to be objects” becoming active subjects and “taking life into their own hands”.¹⁷¹ As a result, survivors could seek empowerment in this way. Indeed, in the years that followed the war, many immigrant associations or *Landsmannschaften* were formed, not only to be “mutual-aid organisations” that provided material assistance, bonding and connection,¹⁷² but also to “commemorate their lost homelands” through the medium of “Yizkor Bikher”, memorial books designed to be shared throughout the community.¹⁷³ The role that organisations such as these played internationally cannot be underestimated: they provided “communities of memory in which they could share their experiences and feel at home with others who understood their trauma”.¹⁷⁴ It is this basic and succinct summary that often defines the survivor associations under study for this thesis, whereby there is space to communicate with people who understand because of shared experiences. Notably, after an initial period of discussing common experiences, this focus seems to disappear from survivor associations; there is no longer a need to continue to dissect the past, and this is replaced by an unspoken acknowledgement that ‘being together’ is sufficient.

This thesis draws its subjects from the ‘45 Aid Society, Association of Jewish Refugees and the Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain. The parameters of this research are UK-based survivors who came to the UK between 1945 and 1950 and integrated into the pre-existing Jewish community. The rationale

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p.711.

¹⁷² David Slucki, ‘A Community of Suffering: Jewish Holocaust Survivor Networks in Postwar America’, *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol.22, No.2 (Winter, 2017), p. 117.

¹⁷³ Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 99.

¹⁷⁴ Slucki, ‘A Community of Suffering’, pp. 120-1.

for focusing on British survivor associations is mainly due to the extensive preoccupation and attention that has been given to the survivor experience in the United States and Israel, leaving the experiences of British-resident survivors largely absent.¹⁷⁵ Whilst the UK had allowed the emigration of many survivors, it was designed as a temporary haven for survivors looking to gain entry to the US many, however, did not ultimately make this onward journey.¹⁷⁶ The origins of these survivor associations and the context of attitudes to the refugee in postwar Britain will be examined in the second chapter of this thesis.

Many of the survivors who joined groups such as the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain (CSAGB) and the '45 Aid Society, and it is these three main groups for Holocaust survivors and refugees from Nazism on which this study will focus. For this reason, the predominant victim group represented are Jewish. This is due to those of Jewish origin, who were the main target of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution, and the lack of presence of other victim groups within the above survivor organisations. This does not appear to be a deliberate move from these survivor groups, but a lack of visibility of other victim groups. A further explanation may also be the smaller numbers of these groups being geographically scattered, leaving less opportunities for communities of suffering to form. The birth nationality of my interviewees includes German, Austrian, Czechoslovakian, Polish, Romanian, Hungarian and Dutch. The debates surrounding nationality and the experience of suffering will be unpacked in the third chapter of this thesis through the lens of survivor hierarchy and how survivors interpret each other's experiences and define each other.

¹⁷⁵ For further information on the international focus of survivor communities with British narratives being absent see Dalia Ofer, Francoise S. Ouzan and Judith T. Baumel-Schwartz (eds.), *Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

¹⁷⁶ Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 38.

The process through which I chose my interviewees and debates on the use of archived interviews against those conducted directly by the researcher will be examined in the following chapter along with critical methodological issues such as consent, ethics and composure. The choice of interviewees by the researcher is also mindful of the controversies surrounding how a survivor can be defined, and by extension who has the right to give themselves this label. This is a theme that will be examined in detail within the third chapter of this thesis. However, for the necessary parameters of this research, I will be relying on the definition as suggested by Anita Lasker Wallfisch in her AJR letter, supported by fellow survivor Kitty Hart Moxon: a survivor of the Nazi regime is a person who lived under the Nazi regime or occupation in the war years, facing death in the concentration camps, ghettos or in hiding.¹⁷⁷ This definition incorporates the considerations of the conservative school of direct experience of violence and threat of death but factors in the experiences of those who went ‘underground’ and thus faced the same prospects if caught. Whilst the plight of the Kindertransport and other refugees was considerable and worthy of consideration, it is beyond the parameters of this thesis. Further topics outside of the parameters of this thesis are the comparisons on an international basis of the Holocaust survivor experience.

The impact of age and consideration of ethics was also a considerable factor which provided limits to the range of interviewees I was able to access as a researcher, due to the increased frailty and ill-health of survivors, potential impact of age upon memory, and assessing the psychological wellbeing of interviewees and their ability to be interviewed without provoking psychological harm. These issues will be addressed in the Methodology chapter of this thesis and will consider a psychological framework of age and experience as it relates to the ethics of the

¹⁷⁷ Anita Lasker Wallfisch, 'Letter to the Editor: "Holocaust Survivors: and "Refugees": In Search of a Definition', *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.5 (May, 2010), p. 7.

interview and the potential impact upon survivors as interview subjects. Furthermore, a fundamental limitation towards finding interviewees for this project reflects its timing; many survivors are no longer alive in order to share their traumatic narratives. However, this has provided a 'right time' for this thesis, many of the older survivors have passed away, and the younger cohort, predominantly child survivors, remain. Although, as Louise London has noted, the numbers of survivors permitted entry to Britain post-1945 was much lower than the numbers who arrived as refugees from Nazism in the 1930s.¹⁷⁸

Oral History and the Holocaust

Dan Bar-On asserts that listening to and conducting oral history interviews has become an auditory challenge for the historian.¹⁷⁹ This stems from the openness that has developed from survivors and their responses, where “ten or fifteen years ago, we would not have received such varied, detailed testimonies”.¹⁸⁰ Bar-On uses the examples of the interviews his students undertook to convey the sense that “something is changing”, both within the survivors and those who interview them.¹⁸¹ It can be argued that this perceived change reveals itself in timing and chronology – Bar-On, writing in the 1990s, expressed how the timing of his work was indicative of its breadth and depth of responses, citing likely refusal from many survivors in the earlier years but concern that in the years that followed, it would be “too late” to extract this knowledge, perspective and experience.¹⁸² Yet my study reveals that Bar-On was too pessimistic that “a few years from now it would be too late” as there are still survivors alive today who actively bear witness to their traumatic experiences.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, pp. 20-1.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 20-1.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 21.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Fifteen years on from Bar-On's assessment of the field, this really is the last possible time to conduct oral history interviews with survivors; in a few years, there will be nobody left who can testify first-hand to the horrors of the Holocaust. Consequently, interviewing the last remaining survivors about their lives after the war is both timely and crucial. This provides a sense of urgency and the answer to the question 'why now?' It is within this context that the interviewees were approached. Fuelled by an awareness of their advancing age and encouragement from "societal interest in the Holocaust", they often agree to be interviewed, as part of the practice of "engaging en masse in the task of leaving a record".¹⁸⁴ And this task of preserving their histories can indeed have its own limitations – oral testimonies can provide "conflicting accounts and disparate opinions", but its subjectivity and examination of individual selfhoods is a key strength, and allows empathy into the multitude of ways events can unfold and affect individuals.¹⁸⁵ This is a topic that will be addressed extensively in the following chapter.

Interviewing survivors is not a recent phenomenon, Joanne Rudof has highlighted that David Boder's 1949 work 'I Did Not Interview The Dead' is an early example of this type of work, with interviews taking place in displaced person camps in France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany.¹⁸⁶ A key aspect to a broader discussion of evolving testimony contexts is the changing chronology and emphasis in survivor oral history. Institutional priorities at organisations such as Yale can be seen as responding to a dwindling survivor community. As a response, these institutions have had to 'expand their missions' to include not just collecting

¹⁸⁴ Maria Rosenbloom, 'Bearing Witness by Holocaust Survivors: Implications for Mental Health Theory and Practice', in Alan L. Berger (ed.), *Bearing Witness to the Holocaust, 1939-1989* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p. 328.

¹⁸⁵ Dan Phillips, 'What Lies Beneath the History of Conflict? Using Personal Testimony for Learning', *Oral History*, Vol.38, No.1 (Spring, 2010), p. 117.

¹⁸⁶ Joanne Rudof, 'Research Use of Holocaust Testimonies', *Poetics Today* Vol.27, No.2, p. 452.

testimony but preserving and circulating it for future generations in ‘socially relevant’ ways for ‘those who will have had no exposure to living witnesses’.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman found that many interviewers for the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale were psychotherapists, with survivors recounting their stories often for the first time in these settings across the 1990s.¹⁸⁸ By contrast, survivor subjects in the interviews newly conducted for this project had imparted their stories in an oral history setting multiple times over the decades before the interviews with the author took place. Consequently, the psychological burden of recounting their stories for the first time is not a factor.

Therefore, what emerges is a comparative difficulty between the two chronologies and differing interview contexts as survivors have reached a certain level of equilibrium regarding their experiences. Furthermore, comparisons between the institutional contexts of testimony against those interviews conducted by the author become further complicated owing to a divergence in aims, method and practice. For instance, the Shoah Foundation affirmed that its interviewers would be trained ‘not to engage in discussion’ but to work as guides by asking questions to facilitate the survivor telling their story ‘in their own words’.¹⁸⁹ What Noah Shenker highlights as problematic with this approach is that it did not seem to consider ‘how the interviewer was to select and present questions to a witness without necessarily serving as an active partner in dialogue’.¹⁹⁰ Therefore there is an inherent tension

¹⁸⁷ Noah Shenker, ‘Through the Lens of the Shoah: The Holocaust as a Paradigm for Documenting Genocide Testimonies’, *History & Memory*, Vol.28, No.1 (Spring/Summer 2016), pp. 141-2.

¹⁸⁸ Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992) pp. 40-41.

¹⁸⁹ Shenker, ‘Through the Lens of the Shoah’, p. 151.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

between trying to foster rapport and facilitate a comfortable environment for the survivor to recount their narratives and a more institutional aim of chronology, coherence and the limited presence of the interviewer on recorded footage. There is a contrast here with the methodology adopted at Yale and for this research, where there were no institutional priorities short of ethical guidelines to be followed and the fostering of rapport in the interview process to gain an insight into individual survivors' perspectives on their postwar British communities.

In addition, Henry Greenspan has noted the benefits of survivors being interviewed multiple times by the same person over an evolving chronology and how this seeks to address the feature of 'the unsaid' in testimony. In Greenspan's view, the 'unsaid is, by far, the largest category of silences' within testimony and reflects a general underestimation as to the 'extent to which survivors are deliberate about how and what they recount'.¹⁹¹ This places the agency of the interviewee as a central focus, and through sustained conversation, researchers can aim to glimpse the changes in 'how survivors explain their lives...over the course of multiple interviews'.¹⁹² In the interviews undertaken for this project, Greenspan's framework of the 'unsaid' becomes present, due to questions that may not be asked, a rapport or 'chemistry' between interviewer and interviewee, and the anonymity promised to individuals if they so choose. This becomes more evident in non-institutional oral history, whereby the focus is on rapport and composure more than objective, consistent data-gathering. As a result, tensions between survivors can be observed more poignantly in more personalised modes of oral history that divert from institutional conventions.

¹⁹¹ Henry Greenspan, 'The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irretrievable', *The Oral History Review*, Vol.41, No.2 (2014) p. 230.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 231.

While research on the Holocaust is extensive and commands an extensive presence in digital archived oral history, one area that is under-researched is the postwar experiences of survivors, particularly in Britain. This thesis aims to fill that significant gap by in-depth interviews with survivors on how they adjusted to living in the UK and formed bonds with fellow survivors. This project is indeed timely as the interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2019 when many survivors were in their late 80s and 90s. There is an extensive literature on the notion of ‘time running out’ for scholars to interview survivors and record their testimonies.¹⁹³ It can be observed that we are living in a time where the last survivors reach the end of their lifespans; therefore it is prudent to make the most of that time in order to enrich our studies with first-hand testimony on a variety of issues. It is within this context that organisations such as Beth Shalom are attempting to ask the last remaining survivors thousands of questions, in an interview process so intensive it lasts a week or more. Many survivors view this as excessive, with the feeling that enough has been done in terms of collecting testimony, the priority has shifted to broadly distributing testimonies and messages to the public. But the example of Beth Shalom, a Holocaust museum and education centre in Nottinghamshire, indicates the emphasis that has been placed on making the most of survivors still being alive and being able to ask them questions. It is within this theme of the importance of being able to ask questions that my research is situated.

Some of my research was conducted against the backdrop of accusations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party that has undermined Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership. This impacted upon three specific interviews conducted since January 2018 as well as memorial meetings and educational initiatives. Syria, concerns over Russia’s dominance in Ukraine, the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and genocides

¹⁹³ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 21.

taking place around the world also shaped the memories that were produced in the oral history interview. The dictum of never again rises to the fore and the fear of recurrence continues to emerge and be prevalent amongst the survivor community. My sixth chapter will examine the impact of these developments in current events and affairs and the impact that this can have on survivors, addressing Michael Rothberg's discussion of "multi-directional memory", which consists of "making the past present".¹⁹⁴ Overall, this thesis is timely due to the current activism of survivors. It is this self-confidence that they have received and their relationships inside these organisations that warrant discussion, attention and investigation.

The importance of validation and belonging

The overarching framework of the thesis is validation, as exemplified in the current activism of survivors, lauded for their testimony and affirmed as possessing the identity of 'survivor'. Shared belonging within these survivor groups and the acceptance of individual experiences and memory is key for survivors to feel a sense of composure. It is, as Sanjay Srivastava has written: "that most intimate and most staunchly defended of our senses: the sense of attachment and belonging".¹⁹⁵ Karyn Hall, writing for *Psychology Today* in 2014, focuses on a broad definition of validation as "the language of acceptance" and "the acknowledgment that someone's internal experience is understandable and helps you stay on the same side, with a sense of belonging, even when you disagree".¹⁹⁶ This term is applicable to the survivor community in that whether these survivors feel as if this belonging is to a

¹⁹⁴ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) p. 35.

¹⁹⁵ Sanjay Srivastava, 'Ghummakkads, A Woman's Place, and the LTC-walas: Towards a Critical History of "Home", "Belonging", and "Attachment"', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol.39, No.3 (2005), pp. 376-7.

¹⁹⁶ Karyn Hall, 'Create a Sense of Belonging', *Psychology Today Blog* (24 March, 2014) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pieces-mind/201403/create-sense-belonging> [Accessed 18 February, 2019]

family or quasi-familial group, a gathering of peers or a coming together of friends – whilst disagreement occurs, the general consensus is unity.

The theme of validation enhances the feeling of belonging and emphasises the value of relationships within these settings.¹⁹⁷ Hall acknowledges that “some seek belonging through excluding others”, echoing the theme of the third chapter of this thesis whereby categories are employed within the survivor community as to who belongs and who does not.¹⁹⁸ She focuses on the pain and conflict that this can bring about, and indeed this will be interpreted as discomposure in the interviews I have conducted.¹⁹⁹ Discomposure is exemplified by instances of upset, anger, tears or silence that convey disequilibrium in the interview setting. Yet this is an isolated phenomenon of tension within these groups, with the possibility of rejection over validation.

However, this thesis will also consider the multitude of ways survivors can gain validation from their interactions with their survivor peers and community. They can be defined as experiential kin, an example of the Yiddish notion of “tsuzamen”, where situational bonds are formed that in some instances can become as strong as family relationships.²⁰⁰ But there are, of course, gradations that can be observed, and it is essential to consider these examples that lie outside of an overarching theme of harmony and unity. Family as a theme is not just demonstrated by the bonds forged between survivors in the immediate postwar period but is also represented by the biological families these survivors went on to create. By the very existence of the second generation, they allow for a sense of composure and confidence in the future, and themselves can validate their parents’ survival by

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, p. 77.

simply being born, giving a reason for endurance and continuation in violation of the Nazi aims of eradication.

Validation can manifest in other ways, such as being identified as a survivor, possessing that status and its associated “moral gravitas”,²⁰¹ being able to express views in public discourses and have those views respected and acknowledged, and being invited to speak to schoolchildren. The latter is an example of validation that occurs outside of the survivor community and in wider societal discourses, illustrating the various ways in which the trope of validation can manifest itself. The fundamental aspect of validation as a theme that unites the chapters of this thesis is the reinforcement a survivor identity for these individuals, every action therefore becomes driven by emphasising who belongs. Whilst this is problematic for people who themselves identify as survivors but who are not viewed as belonging by others, many do not deliberately seek out this form of validation. It can become a secondary reward rather than a primary motivation. This nuance is one that will be acknowledged throughout this thesis.

Overall, this thesis focuses on the theme of belonging and validation as it manifests in British survivor associations such as the '45 Aid Society, Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain and the Association of Jewish Refugees. It uses a mixed methodology to appreciate the complexity of these organisations, and how many of their developments are context-bound within the individual groups themselves but also in broader attitudes to the refugee in twentieth-century Britain. The emphasis is on recounting individual perspectives of these subjectivities with respect to the similarities and differences that may emerge. The methodology chapter which follows draws attention to the literature surrounding the use of oral history,

²⁰¹ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 156.

memoirs, poetry, artwork and newspapers and draws on my reasoning for why I chose these sources for my research. I demonstrate that survivor associations in the UK are not an example of complete unity, harmony and shared belonging, but survivors do indeed gain a multi-faceted range of benefits from their involvement in these organisations. Whilst every organisation has its own internal politics, contexts and tensions to consider, this thesis highlights the overall impact of these organisations as well as broadly assesses the postwar lives of survivors within these organisations and the debates that emerge.

The significance of this study lies in its amalgamation of disciplines and methodologies in order to create a consistent, cohesive narrative and argument about these survivor association groups. This thesis contributes to the field of Holocaust Studies by widening the scope of survivor community to explore Britain as a rarely discussed haven for survivors, contributing to a narrative that is sensitive to the role these different ecologies play, as highlighted by Hannah Pollin-Galay.²⁰² In terms of contemporary British history, it cements the place of these survivors in British culture, their assimilation and the lives they have gone on to lead as successful citizens. Therefore, this thesis contributes a key discussion to the history of the settlement of British Holocaust survivors and their place in British society. Oral history methodology and frameworks such as composure and discomposure are used in this thesis in ways which prioritise the sense of equilibrium across the life of a survivor, rather than in the limited temporal space of an interview.

In sum, survivors of the Holocaust immigrated to a variety of different countries in the postwar period, including Britain. This thesis will examine British resident survivors and the organisations that they have formed and will consider how

²⁰² Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, pp. 4-6.

these survivor associations, mainly consisting of young survivors aged twenty-one and under in 1945, settled in the UK and kept in touch with each other. Chapter One begins with a methodological overview of the research, including how interviewees were chosen and approached and ethical considerations for oral history research. Chapter Two will consider the origins of these survivor associations in the postwar period, contextualising them with the development of refugee history and narrative in postwar Britain. Chapter Three will move on to highlighting the issue of definitions of survivorship and how some interviewees felt a hierarchy of suffering and rejection from these communities. Age is significant to this study as most were children or young adults at the time of liberation, with a stark minority being under the age of eight. The presence of child survivors within these narratives raises questions of childhood memory and whether this is treated in the same way as the memories of those survivors who were adults in 1945.²⁰³ The fourth chapter of this thesis moves beyond debates and definitions in order to chronologically trace the development of the dynamics of these associations through the lens of family, friendship and an overall sense of belonging. Identities of survivors will be extensively examined within this chapter as survivors try to navigate where they belong and how prominent the label of ‘survivor’ is within their overall self-concept. Chapter Five will build on these themes of belonging and examine the second and third generation, the children and grandchildren of these individuals and the place that they take in their communities. Finally, the sixth chapter of this thesis will bring survivor associations into the twenty-first century by discussing potential retraumatisation that survivors feel at consuming pictures of death and atrocity in the media and how they utilise their identity as survivors to impart crucial messages of tolerance. This thesis, then, utilises newly conducted oral history interviews in order

²⁰³ See Chapter Three of this thesis for further discussion of how childhood memories are regarded in these survivor communities.

to argue that Holocaust survivors desire to belong to a community but often face challenges. It is to oral history that we now turn.

Chapter One – “That is what really happened to me”: The Case for a Mixed

Methodology²⁰⁴

Now, as I have made this testimony for future generation [sic] to come, to study, to find out what actually happened to me as I remember it, they will say, how comes? It sounds like a novel. It sounds like a fairy tale. But that is the truth. That is really what happened to me.²⁰⁵

In an interview conducted in 1996 by the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation, Joseph Carver, a German Jew incarcerated in multiple concentration camps, placed emphasis on *why* survivors give testimony and the importance of bearing witness. He asserted that it is a way to challenge Holocaust denial and leave a historical record in response to how unfathomable the events seemed to those who had not experienced it. Therefore, it is prudent to examine *why* survivors speak about their experiences and the contribution oral history makes to Holocaust Studies more generally. This thesis examines testimonies in detail in order to construct an image of how Holocaust survivor associations and the individuals that comprise them form communities and interact as a group, sharing memories, experiences and perspectives on current events. It utilises a mixed methodology in order to draw its conclusions regarding Holocaust survivor organisations in twentieth-century Britain, such as the importance of how a survivor self-identifies, the importance of community, selfhood, validation and belonging.

²⁰⁴ Susan Fransman, Interview with Joseph Carver, *Visual History Archive* (8th February, 1996).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

This chapter will consider the key methodological debates alongside the literature on oral history, poetry, artwork, newspapers and material culture that are utilised in the thesis. A mixed methodology is vital as it enables an unravelling of subjectivities and selfhoods through a variety of means, to reveal how these discourses within these private communities can be represented to a larger public. Using a sociocultural history approach is key to unpacking these selfhoods to examine how these communities have taken shape and the role that these individuals play within their group dynamics. The key debates that inform this thesis include those of ethical concern and how this has structured the research I have undertaken, in addition to how the frameworks of intersubjectivity and composure have influenced the interview setting. This provokes questions of how a researcher should consider these factors when undertaking research with the feelings and subjectivities of living people who have experienced trauma.

A fundamental conceptual framework that underpins this thesis is that of trauma. Cathy Caruth has presented the traditional definition of trauma as an “injury inflicted on the body”.²⁰⁶ However, she goes on to note that psychological and medical literature suggests that trauma can also be considered as a wound inflicted upon the mind, and it is this dual definition of physical and emotional/psychological trauma that she prefers to use.²⁰⁷ We have seen in the introduction of this thesis that trauma becomes enmeshed with memory and that “horrible experiences are engraved on the mind, never to be forgotten”.²⁰⁸ Arlene Steinberg, writing in 1989, noted evident contradictions in defining trauma and traumatic neurosis and discussion of how an individual’s personality and selfhood could be irreparably changed by

²⁰⁶ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 3.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Richard J. McNally, *Remembering Trauma* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 1.

Holocaust experiences.²⁰⁹ This thesis will refer to how an individual's identity could change due to trauma rather than using frameworks of 'damage' that are unproductive and promote an image of survivors as less than whole due to their experiences. Therefore, a consideration of trauma and its psychological impact on individuals undoubtedly raises issues surrounding terminology, and a critical methodological consideration is how we can describe those who have "experienced terrible events".²¹⁰ Should we call them a victim? Or is survivor a better term? These debates reveal how word choice is of central importance. We shall return to the problem of defining a survivor in the third chapter of this thesis and consider its impact on individual composure, a term that will be examined and defined within this chapter.

A recurring theme throughout this thesis is survivors' interpretations of their trauma and its impact on their self-concept. In addition to this, there are varying coping strategies and methods that survivors deploy in order to attain composure both inside and outside of the interview setting. This may be something outwardly sought, such as attempting to fit in by joining survivor associations and seeking a community among Holocaust victims (their experiential kin), or it may be coincidental such as the inner peace survivors can get from their families along with reassurance for the future and the continuation of their family trees. How language affects the expression of the lived experience, particularly the traumatic lived experience, is an interesting issue to examine.²¹¹ Indeed, second generation writers such as Elizabeth Rosner have echoed survivor Elie Wiesel's dictum that language

²⁰⁹ Arlene Steinberg, 'Holocaust Survivors and their Children: A Review of the Clinical Literature' in Paul Marcus and Alan Rosenberg (eds.), *Healing their Wounds: Psychotherapy with Holocaust Survivors and their Families* (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 23 & 27.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

²¹¹ Kren, 'The Holocaust Survivor and Psychoanalysis', p. 14.

is inadequate when representing the Holocaust.²¹² Andrea Reiter has also dealt with this phenomenon and highlights an incompatibility between “the experience and the affected person’s capacity to report it”, due to real life and real events not offering themselves “in the form of stories”.²¹³ This, in turn, places a high expectation on “the expressive powers of language” to communicate the survivor experience, which lays threat to a survivor’s testimony.²¹⁴

Due to the demand that is placed on language, there is a disbelief that can occur within audiences, where literal accounts are taken as metaphorical.²¹⁵ This relates to the quote from Joseph Carver cited at the start of this chapter, where he highlighted how to many people it would seem like a novel or a story more than the facts of his life and his history.²¹⁶ Not only can this provoke discomposure within the survivor, but it can also silence them, owing to a sense of feeling belittled – therefore survivors have had to keep “overcoming their resistances” in order to portray their experiences and attempt to find the correct language to communicate their memories.²¹⁷ The strength for survivors to overcome a resistance to share their narratives conveys the interplay between vulnerability and resilience where many survivors find themselves.²¹⁸

This thesis addresses the important theme of subjectivity and selfhood in order to discuss how individuals have interpreted their experiences and how this has influenced their identities as part of these survivor associations in the UK. Unpacking

²¹² Elizabeth Rosner, *Survivor Café: The Legacy of Trauma and the Labyrinth of Memory* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2017), pp. 205-6.

²¹³ Andrea Reiter, *Narrating the Holocaust* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 13.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-4.

²¹⁶ Fransman, Interview with Joseph Carver.

²¹⁷ Reiter, *Narrating the Holocaust*, pp. 13-4 & 18.

²¹⁸ Dov Shmotkin and Tzvia Blumstein, ‘Tracing Long-Term Effects of Early Trauma: A Broad Scope View of Holocaust Survivors in Late Life’, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol.71, No.2 (2003), p. 223.

and researching the experiences of individuals through life documents and their subjectivities remains a relatively new phenomenon within the historical discipline. The traditional view that if you went “deep into the context” or “spent enough time in the archives” or “waded your way through the mass of documents”, you would gain an overview that could be largely applied to that particular experience group, no longer holds as much weight.²¹⁹ However, there was less consideration as to how “even the most ordinary life makes it possible for the reader to visit other worlds through the prism of another person’s memories, feelings and perceptions”.²²⁰ As Penny Summerfield has extensively discussed with regards to terminology, “histories of the self” and “personal narratives” avoids the “connotations of chronology and accuracy attached to ‘life histories’”.²²¹ Instead, what emerges is a “snapshot of life” and an embracing of “voluntary and involuntary narratives”.²²² This conveys the overlap within personal narratives of sub-text and overt mention of particular themes, emotions and events. The focus here historiographically has been seen as a “turn of the personal” and material relating to ordinary people, popularising history from below.²²³

The shift to the subjective and personal conveys the “recognition of the importance of the interpretive and subjective qualities of narratives” as a key strength; Summerfield uses the example of the BBC People’s War website as seeking to describe “what it was like” rather than “what happened”.²²⁴ The theme of subjectivity and its importance also relates to interpretive constructivism, where the focus and importance is on “how people view an object or event and the meaning

²¹⁹ Michael S. Roth, *The Ironist’s Cage: Memory, Trauma, and the Construction of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 26.

²²⁰ Penny Summerfield, *Histories of the Self: Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 2.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

that they attribute to it”.²²⁵ This indicates that perceived facts and objectivity are not viewed as important or central; instead, the focus remains on the individual’s interpretation and perception of what they believe to be true. The emphasis on the community in these instances cannot be underestimated as they come to share meanings, interpretations and “ways of judging things”.²²⁶ The importance of community to this thesis cannot be underestimated, and its definition and significance are unpacked in the introduction of this thesis along with its effect on memory and shared origin stories.

Cultural history also becomes an essential approach in order to focus “upon the ways in which human beings have made sense of their worlds, and this places human subjectivity and consciousness at the centre of cultural enquiry”.²²⁷ As explored in the introduction to this thesis, memory becomes a vital lens through which to investigate how identities are constructed and maintained in order to assess how these individuals and groups made sense of their worlds. Cultural history also draws on the dual concepts of symbolic and material culture, the former based on the “world of the human mind” through mediums such as language, and the latter based on cultural activities “within a social context”, such as “social relationships and economic production”.²²⁸ In terms of this thesis, survivor organisations that formed in the postwar period are a reflection of how their individual members have banded together and merged their stories into a cohesive narrative which in turn defines the community and affects belonging. When this works, it can lead to something resembling a surrogate family and a close bond among survivors, as

²²⁵ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), p. 27.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 28.

²²⁷ Anna Green, *Cultural History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 4.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2.

discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, and when this does not work, memory becomes contested ground and hierarchies of suffering can form.

Oral history interviews, both archived and newly conducted are the primary source that underpins this thesis. Whilst the qualitative interview seems so familiar for today's scholars as a way of "securing knowledge", Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein have suggested the interview process and procedure is "relatively new historically", with individuals not always being viewed as "important sources of knowledge about their own experience".²²⁹ This thesis places the individual centre stage: the interviewees are the most important source of knowledge and their insights enable a study of the experiences of individuals within survivor associations in twentieth-century Britain. This emphasis is important to note because both an institutional perspective and how individuals contribute to these organisations is paramount.

However, the view oral testimony gives us as a "window to the subjective" is "not transparent".²³⁰ This can perhaps explain why oral history as a methodology and approach has come under criticism for being unreliable and *too* subjective, diverting away from the prospect of historical 'truth' and the importance of the archive and written material. However, it has been argued by Lynn Abrams that all sources are subjective to varying extents.²³¹ Paul Thompson goes further to argue that, "Every historical source derived from human perception is subjective, but oral historical sources allow us to challenge that subjectivity".²³² What is central here is the presence of the individual and their subjectivities, allowing the interviewer to ask

²²⁹ Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, 'From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society', in Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (London: SAGE, 2001), p. 4.

²³⁰ Summerfield, *Histories of the Self*, p. 108.

²³¹ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 22.

²³² Paul Thompson, *Voice of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 173.

follow-up questions and reveal *why* people have certain views. This exists in contrast to written documents of deceased historical actors, where researchers speculate as to authorial intention.

Oral history as a methodology has also been criticised because memories are constructed and thus have supposedly limited value. Whilst memories and testimonies are framed in the same way, letters, reports and other documents are also constructed and considerations also need to be made regarding their advantages and limits. Alistair Thomson takes issue with the interpretation of memory as constructed and problematic as he argues that many oral historians do not use oral history as a literal source of what happened, but instead as a view into “how the past is resonant in our lives today”.²³³ This has connotations for a study such as this. Sarah Moskovitz, when writing about the youngest Holocaust survivors to arrive in the UK in 1945, highlighted:

It is understood that when adults recall events and persons from their childhood, the truth is necessarily subjective. The author, cannot, of course, attest to the accuracy of all recollections, but she does attest to their importance in the portraits of these survivors.²³⁴

Moskovitz’s words highlight the subjectivity involved in memory and the issue of accuracy. But most importantly, she exemplifies how these stories work in the “portraits of these survivors”, grounding how these memories shape the individuals

²³³ Alistair Thomson, ‘Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia’ in Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 301.

²³⁴ Sarah Moskovitz, *Love Despite Hate: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Adult Lives* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), p. 46.

whose lives were affected.²³⁵ Therefore, what is most important is how these individuals perceive, represent and shape their own experiences, relying on the emotions that are stirred up more than veracity or accuracy. In sum, as Penny Summerfield has noted, “Oral history is a demanding methodology as well as one which raises complex theoretical issues”.²³⁶

Furthermore, this claimed limit of the reliability of oral history can be mitigated by Arthur Marwick’s suggestion that “the evidence [oral history] offers should, as far as it is possible, always be checked against other kinds of source”.²³⁷ Paul Thompson and Alessandro Portelli also advise verifying information using alternative sources.²³⁸ Yet Corinna Peniston-Bird notes that the issue of verification should not endorse an idea of oral history as only being “of value when confirmed by documentary sources: if that were the case, it would be superfluous or, at best, an addendum”.²³⁹ Oral history is valuable to a study in its own right precisely because of the opportunity to study subjectivity and the construction of personal narratives. This particular study utilises oral history to examine Holocaust survivor associations, their construction and maintenance of community through the narratives of their members.

When speaking directly about the Holocaust in these contexts, it is crucial that historians take survivor testimony seriously “on its own terms” rather than a weapon against denial or as a simple provider of “colour” or “texture” to Holocaust

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. viii.

²³⁷ Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 215.

²³⁸ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, in Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 53.

²³⁹ Corinna Peniston-Bird, ‘Oral History: The Sound of Memory’, in Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird (eds.), *History Beyond the Text: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 107.

representations or existing sources.²⁴⁰ James Young concurs with this perspective and argues that it is vital to examine historical agency in Holocaust eyewitness narratives, without discarding material because of an obsession with factual inaccuracy that can inhibit a survivor sharing their story.²⁴¹ A preoccupation with provable facts from survivors can provoke a certain sensitivity that a survivor's story is being denied its place in an overall Holocaust experiential narrative. This is also highly reflective of child Holocaust survivors, who convey a sense of anxiety that their memories are not viewed as valid or factual due to their young age at the time of the events they are recalling and sometimes contested identity as a survivor.²⁴²

In this thesis, oral testimony is used unapologetically and often without other forms of evidence to substantiate it. Furthermore, these survivor organisations often do not keep formal records of membership and archives that researchers are able to draw on, with many of their meetings and events being informal and taking place within the private sphere. This personal space within which these associations carry out their business convey how these organisations began as small, private groups and have maintained their community support structure. As such, these groups do not have formal archives or monitoring of membership trends across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

The ethics of interviewing Holocaust survivors

Interviewing Holocaust survivors raises a number of ethical considerations: the old age of the participants, and its effect on recall, as well as the possibility of triggering traumatic memories. One of the ways in which these were mitigated was through a

²⁴⁰ Tony Kushner, 'Holocaust Testimony, Ethics and the Problem of Representation', *Poetics Today*, Vol.27, No.2 (2006), p. 289.

²⁴¹ Young, 'Between History and Memory', p. 57.

²⁴² See Chapter Three of this thesis on hierarchy and definitions.

gatekeeper who, following the development of trust, approached individuals they believed suitable and advocated on my behalf. In addition, as these survivors were all familiar with each other and kept in contact, it was important to establish with my interviewees how informed consent worked and that they could end the interview at any point. This was utilised through participant information sheets, informed consent forms and reiterating this verbally at the start of the interview. This is a factor for all oral history interviews but becomes more significant when conducting interviews with Holocaust survivors who are elderly and have endured highly traumatic experiences.

Alan Ward in his guidelines for a legal and ethical framework for oral history, firmly states that “it is important that both parties are aware that it is unethical, and in many cases illegal, to use interviews without the informed consent of the interviewee, in which the nature of the use or uses of their recording is clear and explicit”.²⁴³ As a result, interviewees were informed of the potential usage of their quotations in this thesis but also associated publications. Therefore, strict guidelines of informed consent have been observed for this research project, such as the obtaining of ethical approval by the University of the interview questions, who took into account the age and potential for the reawakening of trauma, as well as the expectation that provisions would be made to guide interviewees to the correct support if retraumatisation occurred. The interview questions were designed so as not to ask explicitly about topics such as hierarchy and Holocaust denial in order to avoid discomposure within the interview setting and any upset to the interviewee. However, if survivors raised these topics and conveyed that they were comfortable discussing them, follow up questions were asked, and the conversation continued.

²⁴³ Alan Ward, ‘Is Your Oral History Legal and Ethical?’, <http://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/ethical-and-legal/> [Accessed 20 March, 2019]

Holocaust survivors were considered a vulnerable group by the Ethics Board at the University of Kent due to their historic trauma. Therefore, a detailed application process originated in consultation with the University before any interviews were undertaken. This ensured that I was prepared to consider problems that may arise in advance and plan for contingency, but also to have my process as a researcher scrutinized to ensure no harm came to the survivors I interviewed.²⁴⁴ Harm is a broad concept and indeed open to interpretation, but in these instances, I interpreted harm as emotional upset and potential retraumatisation. Interviewees were able to terminate the interview at any point and were given the opportunity to ask questions and stipulate how they wanted their interview to be used. As Ward notes, access restrictions as stipulated by the interviewee must be honoured.²⁴⁵ I informed interviewees that they could place restrictions on how the material could be used.²⁴⁶ This consideration is essential when using oral history as a methodology as it involves the opinions and emotions of living people. Survivors as a group or community who know each other well is the primary context which informs my study, as I have needed to balance the views of the individuals and how they are affected against the impact this may have on the community and these groups as a whole.

As the oral history for this project consists of recent recollections of those survivors who are still alive, it is prudent to consider whether anonymity and

²⁴⁴ As a result of ethical approval from the Ethics Board at the University of Kent being granted in December 2018 (previous ethical approval was given in 2016 for my MA dissertation project on a similar topic), I was marked as having possessed the relevant skills and training to undertake the interviews. In the ethics application, I set out exclusion and inclusion criteria for this project which is attached in the Appendices, and I was considered the person to judge whether these criteria had been met.

²⁴⁵ Alan Ward, 'Is Your Oral History Legal and Ethical?'

²⁴⁶ For the foreseeable future I do not anticipate archiving these interviews online as they do not conform to the modes of oral history expressed in archives such as the Imperial War Museum and British Library which are based less around rapport and more surrounding factual 'recovery' information. I have sound recordings and transcriptions of all interviews available on request.

pseudonyms *should* be adopted to protect the identities of interviewees. I gave the option for a pseudonym, and all of them declined. However, after reviewing the transcripts and some of the conclusions I have drawn from their recollections, the decision was made to anonymise each participant within this thesis. Whilst these survivors had agreed to their names being used, I felt uncomfortable interpreting their recollections publicly and in ways that might disrupt their positions in these survivor communities should they be identified by their peers. This was informed by Penny Summerfield's discussion of anonymity:

I wanted to protect them from the embarrassment which my mediation between their words and 'the public' might cause. Anonymity screens interviewees from the ultimate manifestation of the power imbalance in the oral history relationship, the historian's interpretation and reconstruction in the public form of print of intimate aspects of their lives.²⁴⁷

The decision to use pseudonyms, therefore, protects interviewees from the conclusions I have drawn as a historian. This will be further reflected on in my discussion of how I conducted interviews as an outsider to the Jewish and Holocaust survivor communities in this chapter. I sought to avoid instances where I could be labelled as an outsider who did not or could not understand through the use of pseudonyms. Using pseudonyms thus not only protects my interviewees but also has allowed me to freely pursue interpretations without these being tied to the name of the individual interviewees.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 26.

²⁴⁸ Pseudonyms are used for the purposes of this thesis but the raw data and transcripts have reference to the survivors' original name and contains their biographies.

One example of an interview that did not go ahead is indicative of the commitment I made to oral history best practice and the guidelines I had been given on my project. I had made arrangements to interview a male survivor in his late 80s at his home and had called the day before in order to confirm the appointment. At this point, he did not recall who I was, and on multiple occasions following that he contacted me, believing each time that it was our first conversation. In discussion with colleagues who were experienced in oral history and ethical matters, I decided that, whilst this survivor's long-term memory was probably intact and unaffected, it would be unethical to interview him. It would be impossible to judge whether he would be able to give meaningful and informed consent as his short-term memory appeared very poor. This example illustrates how an oral history project that works with the elderly needs to consider the potential issues of long and short-term memory in its subjects and make a judgement call as to whether interviewing an individual is ethical.

The importance of seeking advice from others in this instance cannot be underestimated; I was able to draw on advice from my supervisor and other experienced oral historians in order to make my decision regarding this one case. For my application for ethical consent at the University level, I was asked to give strict exclusion criteria, which included those with memory problems and conditions and those in active psychological or psychiatric therapy directly linked to their Holocaust experiences. As well as being unethical, interviewing people with memory complications would further enhance the idea of silence, repression and language not being able to summarise their experiences and may enhance discomposure in the interview setting. These instances of frustration, upset and anger could become more fraught within interviews with individuals who had difficulty with recall as they would not only be reliving traumatic memories but attempting to reconstruct those

experiences whilst hampered by significant memory lapses which had the potential to cause significant distress.

Oral history frameworks and their value to Holocaust Studies

Despite a suggestion of silence and the lack of language as a descriptive agent for experiences, gerontologists (multidisciplinary experts in ageing) have noted that, as one ages, telling life stories through either reminiscence or oral history (formally) or with family and friends (informally) becomes an essential part of exploring and developing identity.²⁴⁹ Lynn Abrams, as an oral historian, has also focused on the importance of life review for an individual's identity, arguing that during the interview process, the "respondent actively fashions an identity".²⁵⁰ For Abrams, this is grounded in the Western concept of the individualised self and the narrative that contains such an expression, with the aim being to construct a linear, coherent story.²⁵¹

Life review and reminiscence provides a modicum of "making sense" of their life events and taking the time to reflect.²⁵² This can have benefits for an aging person's self-esteem and wellbeing in later life, enhancing the idea of continuity yet fluidity.²⁵³ It has also been considered that the ageing process actively encourages the elderly to review and attain a sense of "coherence and wholeness" about their lives as they come to a close.²⁵⁴ Mark Klempner presents the ultimate goal of the

²⁴⁹ Sarah Housden and Jenny Zmroczek, 'Exploring Identity in Later Life through BBC People's War Interviews', *Oral History*, Vol.35, No.2 (Autumn, 2007), p. 101.

²⁵⁰ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 33.

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 35.

²⁵² Alistair Thomson, 'Remembering in Later Life: Some Lessons from Oral History' in Joanna Bornat and Josie Tetley (eds.), *Oral History and Ageing* (London: Open University, 2010), p. 27.

²⁵³ Housden and Zmroczek, 'Exploring Identity in Later Life', p. 101.

²⁵⁴ Shmotkin and Blumstein, 'Tracing Long-Term Effects of Early Trauma', p. 224.

survivor narrative as finding closure, conveyed by a sense of completion and “the feeling that one does not have to dwell on the distressing events from the past”.²⁵⁵ Oral historians have defined this sense of closure or completion as composure.

The importance of life review and recounting life stories for the older generations is particularly crucial for survivors of trauma. The key benefit of storytelling to the Holocaust survivor is the move away from negative self-conceptions of helpless victimisation, to a position of an active witness who educates others through their narratives.²⁵⁶ This narrative can be seen to play out when survivors speak in schools, a theme explored in Chapter Six of this thesis. But does the interview process as assisting the attainment of composure pressure oral historians to assist in the healing process for their interviewees? This is undoubtedly best left to trained professionals such as counsellors. But where the oral historian can assist is within the realms of composure, journeying with their interviewee and allowing them space to “mirror past actions” and bear witness, recognising that “empathic unsettlement” will be present due to the nature of a survivor’s story.²⁵⁷

This thesis will adopt the theoretical framework that composure provides in terms of a state of equilibrium within the interview setting as well as a general attainment of life composure. The idea of a general attainment of life composure is a slight deviation from the standard definitions of composure as a strictly interview-based phenomenon. But for the purposes of this thesis, the concept of composure will have further application, extending far beyond the interview situation. While composure certainly can occur in the interview setting, it can also be clearly observed outside of that environment. Further composure can be seen in the existence of the

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Kahana, Harel and Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants*, pp. 8-9.

²⁵⁷ Sean Field, ‘Beyond “Healing”’: Trauma, Oral History and Regeneration’, *Oral History*, Vol.34, No.1 (Spring, 2006), p. 39.

second generation and how they provide optimism for their survivor parents by their very existence, therefore they attain a sense of their life being complete and reassurance for the future. Whilst this is present in the interview setting, it is also present more informally, for instance, in the relationships between survivors and between the families they formed outside of their associations in the postwar period.

A key signifier of composure in the oral history setting with Holocaust survivors are fond recollections of a joint origin story. This can be glimpsed in the recollections of '45 Aid Society members of the setting up of the Primrose Club, a club that allowed for survivors to mix not only with each other but other members of the British Jewish community. The impact of these stories in interview settings provide smiles from the interviewees and a sense of nostalgia, reflecting how composure can be found through an accepted narrative and sense of belonging in a positive story such as that of the club's formation. The Primrose Club more specifically will be examined in Chapters Two and Four. Furthermore, survivors who speak in schools can be seen to have attained composure and therefore feel confident telling their stories to public audiences. However, whilst the importance of finding a shared narrative and a sense of belonging is vital for survivor validation, as the third chapter of this thesis conveys, the attainment of composure for some may simultaneously produce discomposure in others who are excluded from definitions of who is a Holocaust survivor.

Discomposure has been defined as “a kind of psychic unease at their [the interviewees'] inability to align subjective experience with discourse”.²⁵⁸ This can be due to an “absence of cultural representations which validate a narrator's

²⁵⁸ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 69.

memories”, or an unsympathetic interviewer or audience.²⁵⁹ Here the overall theme of this thesis of validation cannot be underestimated, as survivors do not feel that their experiences are represented or considered as valid. Discomposure can manifest itself “through irritation, tears, inconsistency and silence”.²⁶⁰ There are many instances that can provoke discomposure in Holocaust survivors within the interview setting. An insensitive interviewer can lead to an interviewee’s failure to achieve composure and bring about discomposure, as Hannah Pollin-Galay has noted when discussing moments of tension that can arise in an interview setting with Holocaust survivors.²⁶¹ She found that culture shaped the interviewing style, with Israeli interviewers generally having a much stronger presence in interviews, offering comments, corrections, reactions, interpretations, and follow-up questions.²⁶² This more aggressive stance was noted as more likely to produce instances of tension or discomposure when interviewing survivors.²⁶³

In the third chapter of this thesis, I discuss whether oral historians ought to hold survivors accountable for their comments and how they may inadvertently exclude other individuals from their definition of a survivor. Some oral historians have argued that the interviewer should be more interrogative in order to exact analysis. In the case of my thesis, I feel strongly that this would have been counterproductive.²⁶⁴ Whilst there are instances of tension in these organisations, they are a large community who know each other. If I had adopted a more probing interview stance, particularly on controversial notions such as survivor hierarchy, it

²⁵⁹ Juliette Pattinson, ‘The thing that made me hesitate ...’: Re-examining Gendered Intersubjectivities in Interviews with British Secret War Veterans’, *Women's History Review*, Vol.20, No.2 (2011), p. 248.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ See Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, Chapter 1, pp. 14-65.

²⁶² Ibid, p. 37.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ This was a question to a paper I gave in June 2018 about the issue of hierarchy. It was directly suggested I could have been more aggressive with my interview style in order to find out why there was a prominent hierarchy in the survivor community and who was responsible for perpetuating it.

is likely that they would have ‘closed ranks’, and prospective interviewees may have withdrawn. Therefore, this suggests that there are practical considerations to oral history projects that combine with ethical problems that may emerge.

Holocaust denial can also represent a marked instance of discomposure for survivors as they feel that their experiences have been challenged, which can provoke insecurity in their overall identity as a survivor. Deborah Lipstadt refers to Holocaust denial as employing “a basic strategy of distortion” where the truth is mixed with “absolute lies”.²⁶⁵ It provides an increasing challenge to the idea of the Holocaust as a “foundational past”.²⁶⁶ What is particularly interesting is how deniers use the term “revisionism”, which is considered a healthy historical practice.²⁶⁷ Despite this, Lipstadt argues that within the field of Holocaust history, the term has become perjured due to deniers using the word to legitimise their opinions.²⁶⁸ The prospect of challenging Holocaust denial can motivate survivors to speak. This was particularly the case in the very early stages of the post-war period, when perpetrators were brought to trial. Many felt that they were providing the “raw material for future historiography”, where it was expected that the events of the Holocaust would be doubted because they were so unfathomable.²⁶⁹

The above example reflects the multiple uses of testimony, not just as a means of storytelling but also as a way of witnessing and evidence-gathering, making survivors feel as if they are participating in “collective truth-telling”.²⁷⁰ This is particularly key when the subject is disputed and complex – leading to scholars

²⁶⁵ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 2.

²⁶⁶ Black et al, ‘Cultural History and the Holocaust’, p. 70.

²⁶⁷ Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 20.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 21.

²⁶⁹ Julia Wagner, ‘The Truth About Auschwitz: Prosecuting Auschwitz Crimes with the Help of Survivor Testimony’, *German History*, Vol. 28, No.3 (2010), p. 350.

²⁷⁰ Nutkiewicz, ‘Shame, Guilt and Anguish in Holocaust Survivor Testimony’, p. 18.

propagating the view that every Holocaust survivor testimony “deals a blow” to denial.²⁷¹ This represents the often unrealistic expectation of testimony that it acts as a counter to Holocaust denial. In reality, according to Tony Kushner, “nothing will persuade those of such anti-Semitic tendency”.²⁷² However, there is also an additional pressure on survivor testimony to make that challenge, leading to unconscious distortions of memory. And yet, the majority of society, historians included, feel an “understandable reluctance” to challenge the accuracy or veracity of testimony, fearing by doing so it will “give the denier ammunition” to subject memories to intense interrogation when a survivor has already suffered so much.²⁷³ The prospect of people denying their story becomes a form of discomposure for Holocaust survivors as it diverts their narrative away from closure and instigates a sense of disequilibrium.²⁷⁴ For this reason, I did not explicitly raise the topic of Holocaust denial or enquire as to its impact on the individual survivor unless they raised these themes unprompted.

In sum, discomposure as a concept is continually present within this thesis and the survivor community. There are many examples within this thesis of how survivors reflect on their experiences and cannot attain composure. The definition of discomposure, as with composure, will be used as a general sense of life equilibrium or disequilibrium as well as how these manifest in the oral history interview. I shall examine this by considering the perceived hierarchy of survivors, the place of child survivors and those on the periphery. Chapter Four, for example, considers the discomposure young survivors experienced following adoption in the UK, a result

²⁷¹ Phillips, ‘What Lies Beneath the History of Conflict?’, p. 117.

²⁷² Tony Kushner, ‘Oral History at the Extremes of Human Experience: Holocaust Testimony in a Museum Setting’, *Oral History*, Vol.29, No.2 (Autumn, 2001), p. 86.

²⁷³ Mark Roseman, ‘Surviving Memory: Truth and Inaccuracy in Holocaust Testimony’, in Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 230.

²⁷⁴ Pattinson, ‘The thing that made me hesitate ...’, p. 248.

of feeling that their identities had been repressed and denied. It also considers how older survivors felt a sense of discomposure at the prospect of integrating into the British Jewish community upon arrival, after being made to feel unwelcome. And it is not just the first generation that can experience discomposure; this is also present in the second generation when the Holocaust past of their parents is not dealt with adequately in their childhoods. Moreover, discomposure is a feeling that does not fade with time but can also re-emerge in the present day with the media reporting of current events, with survivors fearing that the axiom 'never again' is unrealistic. This sense that history might be repeating itself, albeit with other groups in other societies, can bring about retraumatisation and discomposure. As a consequence, this thesis will critically engage with the notion of 'never again' and how survivors interpret this adage in their narratives.

The "act of storytelling" and the interaction fostered between older and younger generations can itself provide composure for survivors.²⁷⁵ This is dominant in Holocaust Studies as there is usually a significant generational gap between researchers and interviewees. This generational gap can highlight, in some instances, why survivors agree to be interviewed; primarily, to combat a sense of potential loneliness that old age can bring by spending time with interviewers.²⁷⁶ As well as a remedy to isolation, survivors can feel that they are actively educating a younger generation.²⁷⁷ Oral historians refer to this relationship between the interviewer and interviewee as well as the interpersonal dynamics of an interview as intersubjectivity.²⁷⁸ This, in short, implies that different factors influence this relationship and impact upon what parts of the story are given emphasis. As phrased

²⁷⁵ Leonore Weinstein, 'Holocaust Testimony: A Therapeutic Activity for Older Adult Holocaust Survivors', *Activities, Adaption and Aging*, Vol.27, No.2 (2002), p. 28.

²⁷⁶ David W. Jones, 'Distressing Histories and Unhappy Interviewing', *Oral History*, Vol.26, No.2 (Autumn, 1998), p. 50.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 54.

by Lynn Abrams, “a different interviewer would solicit different words, perhaps even a very different story or version of it”.²⁷⁹ Each party plays a role that is based on their own assumptions and past experiences, presenting a particular self that reflects “appropriate performances”.²⁸⁰ This can occur before the interview has taken place, where both the interviewer and interviewee have pre-existing notions of each other; Abrams gives the example of an academic background for an interview providing a sense of credibility but also a perceived intellectual “gulf” between the two parties.²⁸¹

When the interview takes place, factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and appearance can also influence the relationship that forms during the interview process.²⁸² Oral histories that examine the Holocaust extensively rely on the intersubjective relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, even more than other contexts, to establish rapport, which leads to a more open and honest conversation about experiences that are of a sensitive nature. However, it must also be considered that narratives can be resistant to modifications based on intersubjectivity; accounts from the same interviewees may have many similarities in different interview contexts, even as far as the word choice and phrases that are chosen.²⁸³ Intersubjectivity, therefore, does not change the content of a narrative in an oral history setting, but can perhaps change the emphasis on what topic becomes a priority for discussion.

Whilst the intersubjectivity of the interview did not seem to affect the direct content of the answers I was given, there were extensive examples of varying types

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 58

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 60.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Pattinson, ‘The thing that made me hesitate ...’, p. 258.

of intersubjectivity in the interviews I undertook. The primary intersubjectivity present within the interviews I conducted was age, but also present were considerations of gender, religion, political beliefs, education and where I grew up also became a factor. This then changed the emphases present within the interview and reflected small incidences and anecdotes that indicate why survivors presented me with their stories in such a way, based on their own assumptions about my identity.

My age, gender and sexuality were interpreted in a variety of ways by the survivors I interviewed. The most evident example was that interviewees drew extensively on their grandchildren, mentioning them often, and remarking that many of their grandchildren were close in age to myself. Several male survivors commented on my marital status through the physical cue of no wedding ring and joked of their grandsons' eligibility and asked me, "are you married yet?"²⁸⁴ This gendered factor may not have taken the same angle of marriage proposals if the interviewer had been male, or even if a female interviewer had been older than myself, aged in my early to mid-twenties at the time of interviewing. My gender, age and marital status thus facilitated humorous exchanges which helped develop rapport. My response was in a similar humorous tone; there was a potential for rapport to be broken. Through age-related intersubjectivity, my interviewees reflected on the generational gap between themselves and myself as a researcher. This also became embedded in a general discussion of education, whereby survivors drew on their grandchildren's university experiences and compared them with my own. This lessened the intellectual "gulf" that Abrams' noted often overshadows the interviewer/interviewee relationship because they had experienced higher education via their grandchildren which provided a shared lexicon and points of reference.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

²⁸⁵ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 60.

Age was also of significance and was accentuated by several interviewees who made self-deprecating comments about being old, that I must think they were “ancient” and presenting presumptions regarding my technological literacy.²⁸⁶

Whilst age was the most significant factor in shaping the memory that was produced, there were indicators that political beliefs and religion were also important. It was often assumed that, as a young female researcher from a University, my political beliefs would be more centre-left as well as on the side of ‘Remain’ in the European Union referendum vote and ‘Brexit’ debates that followed. Brexit was a key contextual factor to the interviews I conducted as some of them took place in the lead up to the 2016 referendum, while others took place in 2018 after Article 50, the formal process of leaving the European Union, had been triggered.

My religious identity also became enmeshed with my political beliefs, particularly within discussions about alleged Labour anti-Semitism, which will be discussed further in Chapter Six. The assumption was often made that I was Jewish based on my interest in the Holocaust, my name and my appearance. Wendy Ugolini has examined this phenomenon of assumption regarding the experiences of Italian Scottish women in the Second World War. She reflected on being of ‘Italian’ appearance with dark hair and dark eyes and her marital name creating an assumption she was indeed Italian. Despite being explicit to her interviewees that the ‘Italian connection’ was through her husband, she noted that the distinction became ‘blurred’, where interviewees would enquire about her family.²⁸⁷ Whilst in my own interviews, survivors did not blur the distinction in quite the same way, it is indicative of how interviewees can make powerful assumptions that affect rapport

²⁸⁶ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

²⁸⁷ Wendy Ugolini, ‘The Internal Enemy “Other”’: Recovering the World War Two Narratives of Italian Scottish Women’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, Vol.24, No.2 (2004), p. 146.

within the interview context. In the same way as Wendy Ugolini's interviewees assumed she was Italian by way of her name as well as her appearance, my interviewees assumed Jewish identity or heritage through my name. One of my interviewees commented that both 'Ellis' and 'Spicer' sound like anglicised Jewish names: 'Ellis' has biblical origins from the Hebrew prophet 'Elijah', while 'Spicer' closely resembled 'Spitzer', a Polish Jewish surname. One survivor noted that my physical features were of distinctly Jewish origin, with the comment "Rabbi, don't you think she looks like one of us?"²⁸⁸ He noted with surprise and amusement that I was not of Jewish descent and suggested I should examine my family's history to make sure. These assumptions drove forward the rapport present in the interview. Whilst these exchanges did not seem to provide meaningful changes to the narratives I collected, they do convey how the subjectivity of the interviewer is also part of the oral history process. As a result, these subjectivities need to be analysed and interpreted in tandem with the identities of the interviewees.²⁸⁹

Locating interviewees

I anticipated that my place as an outsider to the Jewish survivor community whilst conducting this research. However, most survivors regard non-Jewish interest in the Holocaust positively. A survivor I spoke to at a Holocaust memorial meeting in Epping Forest District in February 2019 echoed this assertion, maintaining that he wanted people outside of the community to care and to take forward the challenge of ensuring that the Holocaust is remembered. Methodologically, working within these groups as an outsider affects the intersubjectivities present within the interview in a positive way. There was always a brief conversation at the beginning of the

²⁸⁸ This occurred at a Holocaust Memorial Working Group meeting in Epping Forest District in February 2019.

²⁸⁹ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. viii.

interview as to *why* I was studying the topic which was often followed by a discussion of my relationship with the Holocaust Educational Trust as an ambassador. This charity promotes general Holocaust awareness and education and since 1999 has run the ‘Lessons from Auschwitz’ project, enabling schoolchildren from around the country to visit the camp and listen to survivors, an initiative I was able to participate in as a teenager.²⁹⁰ My association with the Trust was met positively by survivors in the interview setting.

As a non-Jewish interviewer, I was often educated about the intricacies and subtleties of the Jewish faith and holidays that I might not have been aware of. This was prompted by the recognition from individual survivors that I was interested given my ambassador role and thesis project. This led to my interviewees being demonstrably keen to help me understand Jewish culture further. I was given a warm welcome and insight into their culture as a friendly outsider, as I showed a willingness to be taught and to understand. This exists in a climate described by Louise Ryan, Eleonore Kofman and Pauline Aaron in their article on researching Muslim communities, whereby the scholar needs to “gain access, trust, negotiate with community gatekeepers, establish rapport and overcome suspicion”.²⁹¹ Whilst I did not feel I was treated with suspicion, there was a question of access and community gatekeeping, which informed the ways in which I could get in contact with survivors. A second generation member from the ’45 Aid Society, who is very active in the day-to-day running of the organisation, was able to liaise with me and get to know me before sending out an email to their survivor members to gauge interest. If they consented, this second generation representative would forward their

²⁹⁰ For more information about the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Lessons from Auschwitz project please see Holocaust Educational Trust, ‘Lessons from Auschwitz Programme’, <https://www.het.org.uk/lessons-from-auschwitz-programme> [Accessed 13 November, 2020]

²⁹¹ Ryan, Kofman and Aaron, ‘Insiders and Outsiders’, pp. 49-50.

details on to me, establishing myself as a trusted person by their community under her guidance as a gatekeeper.

I have also used archived interviews as sources in this thesis. This enables not only a point of comparison, to see whether the interviews I have conducted convey similar themes to pre-existing interviews and past narratives, but a necessary pragmatism given that many survivors are no longer alive to be interviewed. According to April Gallwey, secondary re-use of interviews has been viewed by oral historians in a more clinical and less personal way; despite this, interviews that have been conducted by others and archived can still be viewed as a primary source that offers “individualised narratives”.²⁹² These narratives are freely available online via the British Library’s Sound Archive, the University of Southern California’s Visual History Archive and the Imperial War Museum’s oral history collections.²⁹³ The uses of these transcribed archived interviews are becoming more apparent across a range of disciplines but raises issues of informed consent and confidentiality.²⁹⁴ The challenge for archivists, librarians and historians is to “ensure that oral history transcripts and audio are utilized by researchers in complete adherence to the wishes and legal restraints outlined by their creators”.²⁹⁵

A further complication is that there is a lack of ethical guidelines for secondary usage of these interviews, focusing predominantly on the gathering of primary data.²⁹⁶ Due to the rapport that can be created in the interview setting and

²⁹² April Gallwey, ‘The Rewards of Using Archived Oral Histories in Research: The Case of the Millennium Memory Bank’, *Oral History*, Vol.41, No.1 (Spring, 2013), pp. 39 & 44.

²⁹³ Ellen D. Swain, ‘Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century’, *The American Archivist*, Vol.66, No.1 (Spring/Summer, 2003), p. 155.

²⁹⁴ Jane C. Richardson and Barry S. Godfrey, ‘Towards Ethical Practice in the Use of Archived Transcribed Interviews’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol.6, No.4 (2003), p. 347.

²⁹⁵ Swain, ‘Oral History in the Archives’, p. 155.

²⁹⁶ Richardson and Godfrey, ‘Towards Ethical Practice’, p. 347.

the intersubjectivities that are present, a responsibility exists for the interviewer towards their subject. This, however, becomes further removed and arguably “tenuous” in the event of the secondary reuse of archived interviews.²⁹⁷ Guidelines for consent can become hazy, but these archives adopt strict criteria in order to gain permission for their usage and publication in a public platform. Therefore, as researchers using these vast public archives, we can assume that strict criteria for consent have been adopted. Joanna Bornat has succinctly summarised the benefits of secondary analysis of oral history interviews, and cites them as opportunities for the “reconceptualization of original data, setting it into new frameworks of understanding, searching for new themes and positioning it alongside other, subsequent, data sets and research outcomes”.²⁹⁸

It is this objective that I aimed to meet in my research: my data set of eighty interviews with individual Holocaust victims, twelve I conducted myself and seventy-three archived recollections, sit alongside a range of other sources. These include artwork and material culture such as the memory quilts of the '45 Aid Society, poetry written by survivors and their families, newspaper and magazine articles, memoirs and Hansard, an official record of all Parliamentary debates. While oral history is the principal methodology and source material for this thesis, these other approaches and pieces of evidence work effectively together in tandem and enable the construction of a thematic history of these organisations and their members. It is therefore vital to straddle a consideration between an institutional and

²⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 348.

²⁹⁸ Joanna Bornat, ‘Crossing Boundaries with Secondary Analysis: Implications for Archived Oral History Data’, Paper given at given at the ESRC National Council for Research Methods Network for Methodological Innovation (19 September, 2008) https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joanna_Bornat/publication/237258161_Crossing_Boundaries_with_Secondary_Analysis_Implications_for_Archived_Oral_History_Data/links/00463531975a38bb5b000000/Crossing-Boundaries-with-Secondary-Analysis-Implications-for-Archived-Oral-History-Data.pdf?origin=publication_detail [Accessed 20 February, 2019] p. 2.

personal history of organisations such as these, which further justifies the importance of a mixed methodology.

Memoirs work alongside oral history in this thesis to express an appreciation and focus on individual recall and subjectivity within the historical field. The traditional relationship between historical writing and memoir had been uneasy, “situated between historical narrative and novels”, but progressed to an interest in “subjective experience” and how these were represented in the form of memoirs.²⁹⁹ Whilst memoirs are formulated with memories, they become monologues that have been arranged, oscillating between past, present and featuring speculation as to the future.³⁰⁰ This has links to survivors being expected to speculate on the future and act as prophets who warn of danger. Furthermore, there is a consideration of the present and making memories “interesting to a larger public”, which closely resembles discussion of the pressure of survivors to make their narrations relevant and relatable to a modern audience.³⁰¹

A conflict exists between memoirs as a primary or secondary source, in light of their retrospective constructions. But in spite of this, it can be argued that “the quality of [the author’s] retrospection is not analytic”.³⁰² Therefore, this would suggest that memoirs could be viewed as primary sources as they are representative of an eyewitness’s later construction of events. But naturally, many sources are retrospective, and this does not dismiss their value. Whilst it should be considered that memoirs might have other, more modern influences on recall, they should be treated as primary sources as they enable the researcher to examine the subjectivities

²⁹⁹ Gabriel Motzkin, ‘Memoirs, Memory and Historical Experience’, *Science in Context*, Vol.7, No.1 (1994) pp. 104-5.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 105-6.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid, p. 106.

of authors. Contextual factors to consider in a perceived re-emergence of the memoir in recent years consist of a “reorganization around trauma” that places the traumatic experiences of the author as a key marketing strategy, with “an interview figure the marketing people can dangle as interview bait”.³⁰³ In terms of the Holocaust, it can be observed that survivor memoir has received further attention for these reasons, with survivors being elevated to otherworldly, heroic figures.

The increasing attention and preoccupation paid to the Holocaust in our modern society have formed concurrently with a growth of a “new literary subgenre” of “misery literature”, although it is difficult to say whether these two developments have shaped each other.³⁰⁴ Further development within the genre of “misery literature” or memoirs is the trope of victim and villain/perpetrator and good/evil.³⁰⁵ This thesis will focus on Holocaust victims and their representations of their experiences but will explore in the third chapter how to define a Holocaust survivor and victim and engage carefully and critically with those terms. Using memoirs will provide information in a similar fashion to an oral history interview as a retrospective construction of past experience, but that should not dismiss its value. However, more power resides with the memoirist as they are selective about what they write and include in their volumes. Therefore, if they choose to mark issues of tension and competitive suffering as prevalent, this is conveyed as a pre-meditated message rather than a by-product of rapport.

Glenn Sujo reflected in 2001 on a Buchenwald survivor’s assertion that artwork could be a solution to preserving Holocaust memory, through “narratives

³⁰³ Steve Almond, ‘Liar, Liar, Bestseller on Fire’, *Boston Globe* (6th March, 2006), A11, quoted in Anne Rothe, *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011), pp. 87-8.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

that will let you imagine even if they cannot let you see” glimpsed in a “work of art”.³⁰⁶ This thesis will utilise artwork from the survivor community through the memory quilts of the '45 Aid Society, a multi-layered textile project that creates a visible representation of the memory of these survivors and their families. This project, originating in 2015 to mark the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of many of its members from Theresienstadt, sought to emphasise their survival and “the love of family that lives on”.³⁰⁷ Whilst many of the society’s survivors were no longer alive when the project began, the second and third generations had extensive involvement in the creation of the quilt squares commemorating and celebrating the life of their relatives. For the survivors that were still alive, they were able to draw on their children and grandchildren as a critical form of composure, the enthusiasm of their descendants getting involved in projects such as these gives survivors reassurance of their commitment to Holocaust education and commemoration.

A further aim of the project was to incorporate every survivor name from the organisation into embroidered maps of Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland and Hungary, as shown below:

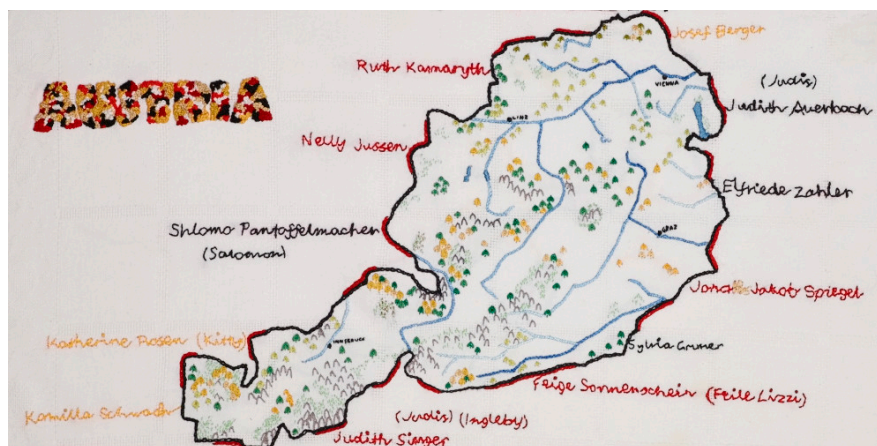


Figure 1: '45 Aid Society, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for the Boys: A Celebration of Life* (London: '45 Aid Society, 2016), p. 152.

³⁰⁶ Glenn Sujo, *Legacies of Silence: The Visual Arts and Holocaust Memory* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers and Imperial War Museum, 2001), p. 92.

³⁰⁷ '45 Aid Society, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for the Boys: A Celebration of Life* (London: '45 Aid Society, 2016), p. i.



Figure 2: '45 Aid Society, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for the Boys: A Celebration of Life* (London: '45 Aid Society, 2016), p. 153.

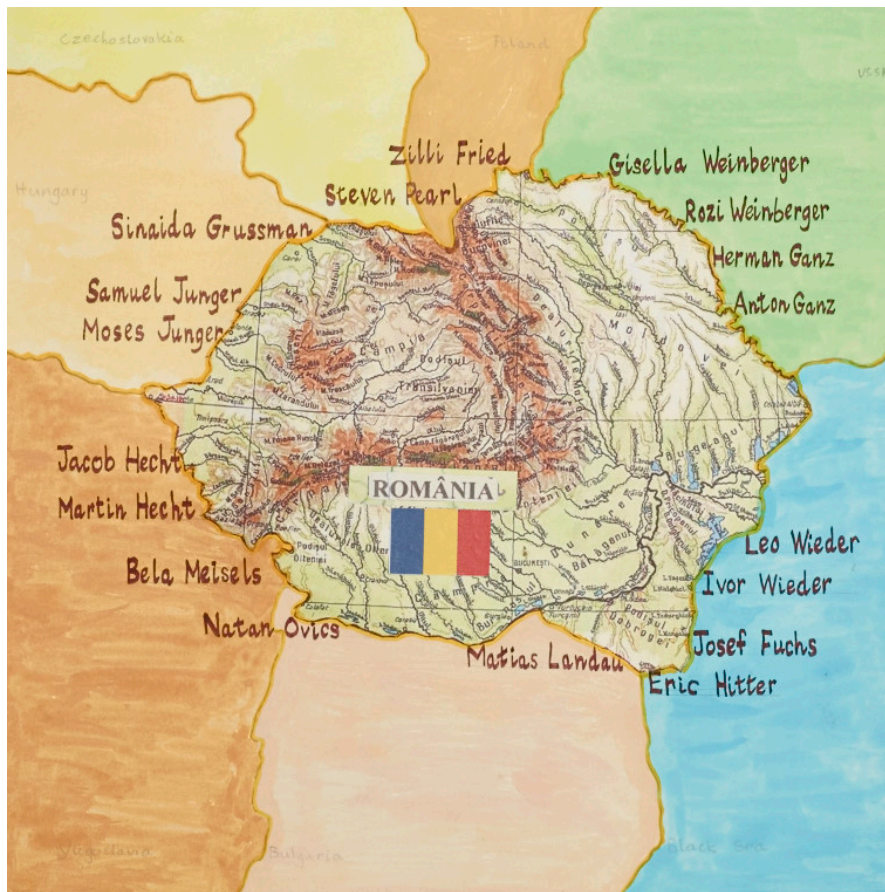


Figure 3: '45 Aid Society, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for the Boys: A Celebration of Life* (London: '45 Aid Society, 2016), p. 155.



Figure 4: '45 Aid Society, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for the Boys: A Celebration of Life* (London: '45 Aid Society, 2016), p. 155.



Figure 5: '45 Aid Society, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for the Boys: A Celebration of Life* (London: '45 Aid Society, 2016), p. 156



Figure 6: '45 Aid Society, *The '45 Aid Society Memory Quilt for the Boys: A Celebration of Life* (London: '45 Aid Society, 2016), p. 157.

As evidenced by the illegibility of each individual name on the map, the nationality most represented within the '45 Aid Society's membership is Polish. This evocative map of survivors and where they came from shows the different nationalities that made up Jewish victims of the Holocaust and indeed Holocaust victim groups more broadly. Yet of course, left unsaid is the fact that it would be impossible to embroider the names of the considerably larger number of those who perished. The use of the memory quilt squares that were created by survivors and their families further convey the subjectivity of survivors, kin and communities that will be unpacked in this thesis.

An additional source that allows us to examine the subjectivity of survivors and their families in terms of artistic output can be glimpsed in the poetry they produce, often for journals such as *The Journal of the '45 Aid Society*, which published its first annual issue in 1976 and *AJR Information*, published monthly from January 1946, which went on to become the *AJR Journal*. These journals contain numerous reflections and musings from survivors and their families on a variety of topics: such as current events and atrocity, politics, their shared pasts, commemorative events and charity work. These journals also contain instances of survivors directly reflecting on their pasts and current lives through the medium of poetry. Poetry has become a useful tool for the historian as a primary source, with a growing appreciation of the subjectivity of the poet and the poet's "perception of his or her experience".³⁰⁸ However, Julia Ribeiro has emphasised that "the use of poetry as a historical source goes beyond the unveiling of personal experience" and "must account for the act of choosing to enunciate in poetic form".³⁰⁹

Therefore, we need to consider *why* survivors and their relatives choose to recount their feelings through the medium of poetry. Jay Winter has examined the motivation for composing poetry in the context of the First World War and highlights its place as "a new language of truth-telling" about conflict and war, which can also be observed in prose and the visual arts.³¹⁰ He also emphasises its power of expression, particularly in relation to the trauma of bereavement, which all survivors would have experienced in the camps, ghettos and in hiding.³¹¹ Whilst the poetry of the survivor associations was intended for a private rather than public audience, the

³⁰⁸ Julia Ribiero, "Knowing You Will Understand": The Usage of Poetry as a Historical Source about the Experience of the First World War', *Alicante Journal of English Studies*, Vol.31 (2018), p. 118.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 119.

³¹⁰ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.

³¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

members of the Society and their families, it is a more public sharing of poetry than between close family and friends. These are now freely available online, so despite their original function as a newsletter for the organisation, they are now within the public sphere.

However, we cannot underestimate the more confined, private nature of these poems being shared, particularly in the earlier years of the journals before they were available online. The journals from these two groups will also be of high value to this thesis as it allows for a history of the associations in their own words, highlighting which issues receive attention at specific points in time in order to create a narrative. These journal articles and poems encapsulate all of the themes under study in the chapters of this thesis, including hierarchy, close family bonds, friendship, the second and third generation and the impact of current events. From the perspective of poetry and the journals more broadly, there will be an overall consideration that poems are time and place-specific, and contexts that may shape the perspectives conveyed in these poems and articles will be highlighted where relevant.³¹²

Newspapers are another useful source that I draw upon in this study. Robert B. Allen and Robert Sieczkiewicz have presented the value of newspapers to historians as “rich”, and highlighted the ease of access from digitised newspapers, enabling “powerful searching” functions.³¹³ However, this is not a recent phenomenon, and it has been noted that the cultural turn has inspired a focus on “language, meaning and identity” in order to make the popular press and indeed

³¹² Jerome J. McGann, ‘The Text, the Poem, and the Problem of Historical Method’, *New Literary History*, Vol.12, No.2 (1981), p. 278.

³¹³ Robert B. Allen and Robert Sieczkiewicz, ‘How Historians use Historical Newspapers’, *Proceedings of the 73rd American Society for Information Science Annual Meeting on Navigating Streams in an Information Ecosystem*, Vol.47 (2010) <https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1920365> [Accessed 21 February, 2019]

newspapers in general a valuable historical source.³¹⁴ The value of newspapers as a historical source lies in their effectiveness as a method of “exploring the representations and narratives that circulated throughout society”.³¹⁵ This thesis draws upon newspapers to examine Holocaust survivors as public figures and how their views are represented within the media. As Adrian Bingham notes, newspapers assist in “setting the agenda for public and private discussion, and in providing interpretative frameworks through which readers make sense of the world”.³¹⁶

Yet despite the value of newspapers to historians in situating public opinion, attention to social and historical context must be observed in order to understand how these articles were produced and received.³¹⁷ The importance of context cannot be overestimated, as well as the simplistic assumption that newspapers are indicative of entire public opinion rather than being an expression of some opinions and the “complexity of the communication process”.³¹⁸ In the sixth chapter of this thesis, I examine the contexts that inform the coverage of events of hatred and racism and how survivors interpret these. In a similar fashion to oral history, newspapers should not be dismissed as an “unreliable” or a less “traditional source”; they have significant contribution in that many newspapers run daily or weekly issues and are dated, leaving “no gaps in the record” or the issue of “writing after the fact”.³¹⁹ It is the immediacy and reactivity of newspapers that provide an interesting examination from the perspective of this thesis as we can engage with how Holocaust survivors react to events of violence and atrocity but also to developments within Holocaust education and commemoration more broadly. The immediacy and reactivity of

³¹⁴ Adrian Bingham, ‘Reading Newspapers: Cultural Histories of the Popular Press in Modern Britain’, *History Compass*, Vol.10, No.2 (2012), p. 142.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 140.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 142.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 145.

³¹⁸ Glenn R. Wilkinson, ‘At the Coal Face of History: Personal Reflections on Using Newspapers as a Source’, *Media History*, Vol.3, No.1-2 (1995), p. 213.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 213-4 & 216.

newspapers is a key aspect here as we can follow the responses of survivors to current events in as close to real time as possible.

In tandem with newspapers up until the present day being utilised, the Parliamentary debate archive Hansard will be used in order to provide information regarding discussions of the Holocaust in the House of Commons. Hansard has been defined as:

A “substantially verbatim” report of what is said in Parliament. Members’ words are recorded, and then edited to remove repetitions and obvious mistakes, albeit without taking away from the meaning of what is said. Hansard also reports decisions taken during a sitting and records how Members voted to reach those decisions in Divisions.³²⁰

Therefore, the Hansard archive, available online, provides researchers with detailed and verbatim information as to discussions in Parliament on a wide variety of issues, making it a “vital historical source”.³²¹ The ease of access to every debate and speech in Parliament since the nineteenth century has been emphasised, conveying the seeming transparency of doing so. This thesis will use Hansard predominantly in the second chapter of this thesis from the perspective of debate surrounding British governmental responsibility to refugees from Nazism, and in the sixth chapter where current events are compared with the Holocaust from the view of violence, hatred and racism. Of course, it is a controversial issue to invoke comparisons to the

³²⁰ Hansard, ‘About Hansard Online’, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/about?historic=false> [Accessed 21 March, 2019]

³²¹ Greg Howard, ‘On the civilised nature of Hansard’, *Parliament Blog* (12 July, 2018) <https://commonshansard.blog.parliament.uk/2018/07/12/on-the-civilised-nature-of-hansard/> [Accessed 15 February, 2019]

Holocaust, and this thesis will be sensitive to these debates, by contrasting differing views on this issue and indeed many others.

In conclusion, there are many ways and many potential sources in order to unravel subjectivities and therefore contribute to this thesis, which is focussed on the subjectivity of individual Holocaust survivors and their group relationships in survivor associations. Oral history assists us with unpacking how these individuals interpret their experiences and the world around them in their own words. By using the creative outputs such as poetry and the memory quilts of the '45 Aid Society, a more subconscious and creative process is reflected, whereby survivors and their families express themselves through art. This represents how vital a cultural history approach is to this research, as we can investigate how these communities have taken shape through the subjective processes of art, oral history and poetry. Whilst newspapers do not present a subjective view from the perspective of the individual, they are valuable to this project as they highlight what topics are reported, what news is considered a priority and whether trends can be observed within the media such as the focus on survivors and general societal preoccupation with the Holocaust. Similarly, Hansard can give us insight in a similar way to newspapers but in terms of what is gaining ground in the political arena and receiving Parliamentary attention. Overall, a mixed methodology is vital to this thesis as it allows for a study that examines the subjectivities of survivors within the groups they have formed as well as a broader perception of the Holocaust and its survivors in present society.

Chapter Two – “Life did not end in 1945, it began”: The Development of Holocaust Survivor Associations³²²

The sentiment behind Gideon Jacoby’s assertion that “Life did not end in 1945, it began” was a recurring motif in the oral history interviews conducted for this project.³²³ Survivor organisations such as the ’45 Aid Society and the Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain were not formed in a vacuum and were dependent on attitudes to the refugee and survivor in twentieth-century Britain, both from society as a whole and within these communities more specifically. The Association of Jewish Refugees (henceforth AJR) is different from the ’45 Aid Society and the Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain (henceforth CSAGB) as it was set up in 1941 for refugees from the Nazi regime rather than specifically for survivors of the extermination camps and forced labour. This chapter examines these three organisations through their correspondence, publications and oral histories with members of these groups to contextualize their origins in twentieth-century Britain.

It is vital to consider how these organisations reflected the changing attitude towards refugees and the Holocaust, showing survivors and other refugees from Nazism to be in the midst of a transition between ‘charity cases’ or dependents to contributing members of British society. Sources such as Parliamentary debate archive Hansard, pamphlets for refugees, Central British Fund documents and Mass Observation will be examined to ground these organizations into the politics and policies of the twentieth century. This is important because these debates on refugees, fair share and support became central political issues; therefore, it is critical to contextualise these organisations more broadly. Additionally, it is prudent to

³²² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

³²³ Ibid.

discuss crucial debates and contexts within the organisations themselves as small communities, and how these associations have changed their emphasis with time to reflect the growing needs of their members. It is important to examine how these associations have developed in order to reflect on the place they hold in British society over seventy years following the end of the Second World War. Central to this chapter and indeed this thesis is beginning to outline how these organizations have assisted survivors, from their origins to the present day before expanding on a thematic approach to investigating these groups.

“I Came as a Stranger”: The Refugee Context

Many refugees and survivors recall coming to England as a stranger, being unfamiliar with British customs, but grateful to be in a country of safety.³²⁴ Factors that shaped the reception of survivors and refugees are crucial to an understanding of the formation of Holocaust survivor associations. This includes debates and constructions of policy that permitted refugees in the pre-war period and later Holocaust survivors to immigrate to Britain and highlight the restrictions that were put in place.

The perception the government had of Britain as a place of refuge and how this collided with practical considerations is also central. This is due to the imbalances between rhetoric, principles and economic factors in addressing humanitarian concerns in preparation for war as well as during the war itself. These debates were fuelled by discussion in public discourses as to what extent immigration and refugees *should* be allowed, and under what conditions, in a depressed economy with a generalised anti-Semitic feeling that was fuelled by times

³²⁴ Anthony Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1970: Their Image in AJR Information* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010), p. 22.

of hardship. This is particularly evident in the postwar period in the UK as the economy had been shaken by total war, and it was felt that British resources could not be stretched any further. Fiscal concerns, therefore, had the potential to increase anti-Semitic behaviour and thought, as some members of the population racially stereotyped refugees as a drain on resources and emphasised the Jewish origin of many refugees arriving in Britain in this period.

In addition, these individuals integrated into the pre-existing Anglo-Jewish community and Britain more broadly. Many refugees became naturalised and were grateful for permission to adopt British citizenship. This gratitude has led to a restricted, 'Whiggish' narrative focusing on the positive aspects and ignoring the challenges that many refugees and survivors faced upon arrival in Britain. These could include enduring outright anti-Semitism, feelings of weariness, deciding which area to settle into, what values and cultural assets to prioritise, and whether to integrate or remain insular within their refugee communities. Although many refugees were not considered 'survivors' (a theme that will be examined in the next chapter), all survivors were refugees, and the historiography of the broader settlement of refugees in Britain provides a crucial insight into the initial welcome and practicalities of survivors arriving in the UK. It is essential to address these contextual considerations as these survivors and refugees settled in Britain; many adopted British citizenship, therefore, it is vital to situate their narratives into the politics and policies of twentieth-century Britain.

Holocaust survivor Hugo Gryn, who later became a Rabbi, predicted that the twentieth century would come to be known by future historians not just as the century of "great wars", but also that of the refugee through "an extraordinary period

of movement and upheavals”.³²⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* has marked the usage of the term refugee as stemming from the flight of the French Huguenots in the seventeenth century, therefore taking its origin from the French term *refugié*.³²⁶ We have seen marked and consistent use of the term since its first invocation, having come to represent those impacted by war and atrocity necessitating individuals and groups to flee to other countries.³²⁷

Although refugees have been a fact “since time immemorial”, the twentieth century allowed for the issue to become, as Michael Marrus has noted, “an important problem of international politics”, seriously affecting global relations.³²⁸ Overall, the twentieth century has become known as “the century of enforced travel...of disappearances”.³²⁹ The perceptions of the last century as being one of massive upheaval and trauma is a further context within which this thesis is situated as it foregrounds how survivor associations evolved from their origins in the postwar period into the twenty-first century as we would recognise them today. Furthermore, the term refugee itself constitutes a powerful label, combining “humanitarian concern, national and international public policy and social differentiation”.³³⁰ It is a term that elicits sympathy, as these individuals flee from danger rather than migrating for economic reasons, but is a less pejorative term than asylum seekers, with the implication of the latter being that their refugee status is in doubt or needs

³²⁵ Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 15.

³²⁶ Oxford English Dictionary, ‘Definition: Refugee’, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/161121?rskey=GUZvAE&result=1#eid> [Accessed 17 April, 2019]

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 3.

³²⁹ John Berger, *Keeping a Rendezvous* (London: Granta Books, 1992), p. 12.

³³⁰ Roger Zetter, ‘Refugees and Refugee Studies - A Label and an Agenda’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.1, No.1 (1988), p. 1.

to be proven.³³¹ The third chapter will note the importance of terms and definitions, and this thesis will be sensitive to the controversies that surround such themes.

Despite the power of the label ‘refugee’, the tens of millions of twentieth-century refugees were increasingly presented as a problem, albeit a problem that was observable at the periphery of society. This highlights what Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox have deemed “social and spatial marginality”, which led to refugees becoming imperceptible within British society.³³² This periphery echoes into the historiography, with national and local British history becoming sluggish in their response to the integration of ethnic minorities and refugees.³³³ Tony Kushner has highlighted that “the key refugee movement in relation to memory work in Britain...has become that of the refugees from Nazism”, replacing the “earlier iconic status of the Huguenots”.³³⁴ Thus, while the history of the Huguenot passage to Britain brought the usage of the term refugee into the English language, the displacement of people as a result of Nazism increased awareness of the regime’s policies of persecution and elicited a combination of sympathy and suspicion towards these refugees.

The first wave of refugee migration from Nazi Germany occurred in 1933, shortly following Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor on 30th January. This early flight from Nazism by Jews, political enemies and intellectuals who feared for their safety, owed more to rhetoric and brown-shirt street violence rather than institutional or organised persecution. It is challenging to pinpoint waves or exact numbers of

³³¹ Habitat for Humanity, ‘Asylum Seekers & Migrants: A Crucial Difference’, <https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2016/09/refugees-asylum-seekers-migrants-crucial-difference/> [Accessed 17 April, 2019]

³³² Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p. 3.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, p. 10.

refugee arrivals due to unreliable figures. A. J. Sherman in *Island Refuge* has highlighted that:

First, the countries of origin seldom recorded all cases of emigration, even when the departing national was forced to sign an undertaking not to return. Second, there was no single organisation, either international, governmental or private recording actual numbers of refugees. The Jewish organisations maintained the most accurate statistics, but then only for individuals who came officially to their attention when applying for assistance: many refugees thus escaped notice altogether. Moreover, the countries of reception often found it impossible to distinguish in practice between ordinary travellers and refugees. Such statistics as were kept were often deliberately understated by governments or by the refugee organisations, desirous of minimising anti-alien and anti-Semitic feeling. Sometimes, on the other hand, statistics were inflated to demonstrate that a country had received more refugees than it in fact had.³³⁵

As Sherman notes, there were numerous factors indicating a certain unpredictability and unreliability in some of the statistics available for this period regarding refugees due to the involvement of multiple organisations, a difference between official and informal assistance and government interference with figures. Furthermore, the Home Office appeared to avoid keeping statistics regarding the issue, in a move

³³⁵ A. J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (London: Paul Elek, 1973), p. 269.

Louise London has suggested saved them “from having to give precise answers to embarrassing questions asked in Parliament and the press about the number of Jewish refugees in the country”.³³⁶ However, when pushed for figures, there was a reliance on statistics provided by the organisations set up by the Jewish community to assist refugees.³³⁷ Therefore, there is a methodological reliance on data and figures which by their very nature are incomplete, but reflect what figures were utilised at the time and for what purpose.

Despite unclear figures, the number of refugees allowed entry into Britain steadily increased during the 1930s and peaked following crisis events such as Kristallnacht across many German cities in November 1938.³³⁸ Using Mass Observation, surveys with the British public taken as a social experiment, Tony Kushner has asserted that the number of refugees approximated by respondents was grossly inflated, the actual numbers being ten per cent of the average estimation by respondents.³³⁹ This challenged popular discourses and an assertion that Britain was “flooded”.³⁴⁰ In Kushner’s view, this reflects the lack of visibility of refugees and a lack of contact between them and wider British society alongside “anti-alien press with its scare-mongering stories about the ‘flooding’ of Britain”.³⁴¹ This is indeed a theme whereby parallels can be drawn with today’s society, where presentation of refugee or asylum seeker numbers in the press can be subject to politically-motivated inflation, which will be examined in the sixth chapter of this thesis through a lens of how Holocaust survivors react to the ongoing refugee crisis in Syria.

³³⁶ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 9.

³³⁷ Ibid & Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 269.

³³⁸ Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 262.

³³⁹ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, p. 114.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

Political attitudes and representations of refugees in Parliament can be viewed within a wide lens of the idea of ‘fair share’ and seeking a global dimension to help solve the refugee crisis caused by Nazi actions and policy. *The Observer* on 31 July 1938 had drawn attention to the need for “every great country” to take “her proportionate share” in response to the increasing refugee crisis.³⁴² This was reflected in how “no country can be viewed in isolation”; the scale of the problem deemed an international response necessary.³⁴³ Kushner and Knox have referred to Britain’s “alien entry procedures” as being “gently eased” within a broader climate of international restrictionism in the months between Kristallnacht in November 1938 and the outbreak of war in September 1939.³⁴⁴ This conveys the British government promoting a traditional self-image of a nation proud of “offering shelter to those persecuted for their political or religious beliefs or their racial origins”.³⁴⁵

There appears to be a quantifier based on practicality, that whilst Britain desired to present itself as a saviour for the refugee it was within “narrow limits” for “demographic and economic reasons” which suggested that Britain was *not*, in fact, a “country of immigration”.³⁴⁶ This seems an almost paradoxical conflict between national self-perception and reality: Anthony Grenville, writing as a high-profile member of the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) has described the treatment towards refugees in this period as “far from welcoming”, with “grudging and ungenerous” behaviour.³⁴⁷ However, despite the 1930s being years of “constant flux” for refugees, overcoming “bureaucratic obstacles” in an “insecure, suitcase-

³⁴² Unknown Author, ‘The World’s Week: Continued’, *The Observer*, 31 July, 1938, p. 10.

³⁴³ Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p. 126.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 108.

House of Commons, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (22 March, 1938, Vol.333, col. 991-2).

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 7.

dominated world”,³⁴⁸ it was acknowledged that Britain was intended as merely a temporary destination for refugees and immigration.³⁴⁹ For instance, asylum in “countries of first refuge” such as Britain were seen as fundamentally transitional, a view extending through government into the Jewish community and organisations that assisted refugees.³⁵⁰ Indeed, Rachel Lubin, a German-Jewish Kindertransport refugee, asserted that her 1939 transit to Britain was merely a stop-gap to obtaining passage to America, where Britain was intended as a place of safety where she could learn English.³⁵¹ This epitomises the intended “peripheral role” of Britain “as a temporary haven”.³⁵²

The belief in Britain as a temporary haven extended from immigrant groups to immigration policy. The British government was often criticised for “consciously” avoiding “articulating clear and comprehensive policy” on the issue, reflecting that if the UK developed further policy, “it would be pushed into responsibility for solving” broader immigration issues.³⁵³ This conveys a certain anxiety regarding the British government not wishing to lead an international response to solving the issue of refugee settlement. Sir Samuel Hoare, then Home Secretary, made the fullest statement regarding Government refugee policy in the House of Commons on 22 March 1938:

While, therefore, it is proposed to pursue the policy of offering asylum as far as is practicable, and steps are under consideration to enable this policy to be carried out

³⁴⁸ Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p. 129.

³⁴⁹ Conrad Wood, Interview with Anon (20 March, 1996), Reel 3.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80016057> [Accessed 10 May, 2018]

³⁵⁰ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 38.

³⁵¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Rachel Lubin, 16 February, 2018.

³⁵² London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 38.

³⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 8.

effectively, it is essential to avoid creating an impression that the door is open to immigrants of all kinds. If such an impression were created would-be immigrants would present themselves at the ports in such large numbers that it would be impossible to admit them all, great difficulties would be experienced by the immigration officers in deciding who could properly be admitted, and unnecessary hardship would be inflicted on those who had made a fruitless journey across the Continent. I am anxious that admission shall not be refused to suitable applicants, including persons whose work in the world of science or the arts or business and industry may be advantageous to this country. It must, however, be remembered that even in the professions the danger of overcrowding cannot be overlooked, whilst in the sphere of business and industry the social and economic difficulties must be taken into account.³⁵⁴

Hoare's speech reflects the aforementioned tension between Britain wanting to portray itself as a safe haven for refugees and its recognition of the nation's self-interests, particularly from an economic perspective. However, the speech does not highlight much in the way of practical solutions; it appears to become waylaid in rhetoric and attempting to soothe anti-refugee sentiment, prioritising this over humanitarian concerns.³⁵⁵ This can be further glimpsed in a Home Office brief prepared for the conference at Geneva in February 1938, which Sherman cited as

³⁵⁴ House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (22 March, 1938, Vol.333, col. 991-2).

³⁵⁵ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 1.

central to the view that individual merit was much less significant than “how he [the refugee] might be fitted into the economy without detriment to British nationals” at complete government discretion.³⁵⁶ Therefore, there was no observable system in place to decide which refugees were desirable to accept into Britain. It was acknowledged by the government that whilst individual refugees may not be “undesirable”, “their uncertain numbers might create social and labour problems” in addition to economic strain providing for these new arrivals.³⁵⁷ In sum, “minimising policy on refugees was seen as a way to minimise British involvement in action on refugees”, reflecting the hope that private organisations and the Jewish community would be able to find solutions independently in a country experiencing economic depression and high unemployment.³⁵⁸ The emphasis was on a zero cost, zero burden system whereby the government did not hold any financial responsibility for refugee arrival and settlement, but this system became increasingly complicated.

The Anglo-Jewish community played a role in tandem with the government in avoiding refugees becoming a burden on the state. This reflects an overall desire for the government to minimise state immigration policy. The Jewish community continued to take financial and moral responsibility for refugees, particularly survivor children, in a British economy that was struggling. Organisations and committees were set up in order to address the issue of refugees from Nazism arriving in Britain. One such group was Otto Schiff’s Jewish Refugees Committee (JRC), formed in March 1933 and financed by the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF).³⁵⁹ Whilst the JRC’s needs had first claim on the funds of the CBF,

³⁵⁶ Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 82.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 87 & 236.

³⁵⁸ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 8; Daniel Snowman, *The Hitler Emigres: The Cultural Impact on Britain of Refugees from Nazism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2002), pp. 86-7.

³⁵⁹ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 39.

Wiener Library, London, 536 024/00474, The Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, Report for 1933-1943 (12 June, 1944) pp. 4 & 7.

Louise London argues that they received a small allocation proportionally, as the CBF's priorities included reconstruction rather than relief and expanding emigration to Palestine as a key outgoing expense.³⁶⁰ However, despite the emphasis on Palestine, figures provided in the 1943 annual report of the CBF, based on the period since 1933, would appear to indicate that the allocation was weighted heavily in favour of Britain (whether this was explicitly allocated to the JRC remains to be seen):

ENGLAND	..	..	..	..	..	£2,070,000
PALESTINE	..	..	..	..	..	£653,000
KEREN HAYESOD	..	..	..	..	..	£228,000
GERMANY	..	..	..	..	..	£188,000
AUSTRIA	..	..	..	..	..	£96,000
Other European Countries	..	..	..	..	..	£114,000
HICEM, for emigration	..	..	..	..	..	£89,000
SHANGHAI	..	..	..	..	..	£15,000
SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES	..	..	..	..	..	£6,000

Wiener Library, London, 536 024/00474, The Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, Report for 1933-1943 (12th June, 1944), p. 8.

The priority and centrality of the settlement of refugees in Britain was also echoed in the 1944 Annual Report, which deemed assisting them as a “principle enterprise”.³⁶¹ This can be observed in the above chart, where the emphasis is overwhelmingly on finances being allocated to Britain for the settlement and assistance of refugees. In terms of the origins of the support of the Jewish community towards refugees in Britain, Sherman has presented the notion that the government relied on “the undertaking that no Jewish refugee would become a public charge”, guaranteed by the Jewish community.³⁶² Therefore, the idea was promoted that government did not have any burden of financial responsibility to these groups of

³⁶⁰ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 39; Wiener Library, London, 536 024/00474, The Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, Report for 1933-1943 (12 June, 1944) pp. 3 & 6.

³⁶¹ Wiener Library, London, S3b 025/00475, The Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, Annual Report for 1944 (2 October, 1945), p. 6.

³⁶² Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 31.

refugees. This had origins in 1933 with a Home Office visit from Jewish community representatives:

The Cabinet was further informed that representatives of the Jewish community had visited the Home Office and had proposed ‘(a) that all German Jewish refugees from Germany should be admitted without distinction; (b) that German Jews already admitted for the purposes of visits or who may be admitted in the future should be allowed during the present emergency to prolong their stay indefinitely’. The representatives of the Jewish community formally undertook that ‘all expense, whether in respect of temporary or permanent accommodation or maintenance will be borne by the Jewish community without ultimate charge to the State.’³⁶³

This guarantee by the Jewish community and its voluntary-staffed committees working in tandem with the Home Office and government officials represented the risks and responsibilities that the community had taken to help refugees.³⁶⁴ In light of these risks and responsibilities, leaders of these committees felt it was necessary to “have a say on refugee admissions”, making “important interventions” which influenced an adjustment in approach from the Home Office.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Ibid, p. 30.

³⁶⁴ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 25.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

However, whilst these committees and organisations carried a significant burden, their heavy reliance on volunteers “resulted in amateurism and a lack of both systematic administration and affective financial controls”.³⁶⁶ The burden carried by these Committees was represented in their pamphlets and documents, where one implored refugees not to “inconvenience” the Committees unnecessarily or complain about prolonged response times.³⁶⁷ This demonstrates the heavy workload undertaken by Committees who were vastly learning about the system as they went, reinforcing the idea of amateurism. The aforementioned amateurism was seen to reach a crisis when refugee numbers increased in 1938 and into 1939, with the private refugee organisations were struggling to cope financially with supporting an increased intake of arrivals.³⁶⁸

Other charitable ventures such as Earl Baldwin’s fund for refugee children represented the slight deviation from this dependence on sponsors and donations in late 1938 and early 1939, but this had minimal reach.³⁶⁹ Additionally, the dependence on sponsors could be problematic; Rachel Lubin indicated that the people who had guaranteed her had promised to send her to school but instead relied on her for household tasks such as cooking and cleaning.³⁷⁰ Overall, a deepening crisis led to Treasury officials questioning whether the “strict adherence to a zero-cost” policy was sustainable,³⁷¹ given that “all aspects of the refugee problem had become inextricably tangled”.³⁷²

³⁶⁶ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 68.

³⁶⁷ Wiener Library, London, OSP 2758/83160, Central Office for Refugees, ‘Do’s and Don’t’s for Refugees’ (1940).

³⁶⁸ Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 243.

³⁶⁹ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 122.

³⁷⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Rachel Lubin, 16 February, 2018.

³⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp. 95-6.

³⁷² Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p. 243.

The struggling financial situations of the refugee organisations reflected the crux of this issue, where the committees imposed strict requirements for the sponsors of refugees and limited all further applications in the summer of 1939, fearing that the impending war would leave them “financially responsible” for “unemployable aliens”.³⁷³ To summarise, the Anglo-Jewish community was unable to underwrite the cost of the rapidly rising wave of refugees, which led to pressure on the government and the authorities to provide a solution in an economy that was preparing for war.³⁷⁴ The underlying theme of the Anglo-Jewish community providing the majority of support to refugees has implications for this thesis as it demonstrates the financial strains refugee committees faced when facilitating the arrival of groups of young survivors in 1945 and 1946.

Further to the concerns from the British government about the impact of refugees on the UK economy, this was also echoed in public attitudes to immigration from Nazi Germany and occupied areas. The main opposition to refugees in the 1930s appeared to be linked to economic insecurities and the need to protect British jobs against the threat of “alien competition”.³⁷⁵ However, this is framed within a broader mistrust and dislike of the ‘nature’ of refugees, in addition to unease about their reliability.³⁷⁶

A Mass Observation commentator from Bromley did not think the town had a problem with anti-Semitism, but merely a “personal dislike” towards Jews.³⁷⁷ Moreover, a journalist from the right-wing paper the *Daily Express* expressed concern on 24 March 1938 that the government was in danger of “overloading” the

³⁷³ Ibid, pp. 243 & 255.

³⁷⁴ Snowman, *The Hitler Emigres*, p. 89.

³⁷⁵ Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p. 172.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Mass Observation Archive, 62-1-F, ‘Feelings Towards Jews, Jews and Cockneys in the East End’, p. 55.

basket when it came to Jewish refugees and how “it would stir up the elements here that fatten on anti-Semitic propaganda”.³⁷⁸ Indeed, a Mass Observation contributor concurred with the *Daily Express*’ contention that anti-Semitism had increased in response to the refugee issue.³⁷⁹ The newspaper article also highlighted that many of the refugees belonged to the extreme left of the political spectrum, related to an anti-Semitic stereotype of Jews as Communists. The article emphatically suggested that common sense needed to be utilised in terms of admitting these refugees on the grounds of economy and ideology, further reflecting the political stance of the paper.³⁸⁰

The belief of refugees tending towards left-wing political views has also been noted in the Mass Observation collection on anti-Semitism, with one commentator suggesting that “the new Jewish element” should not be allowed “too much liberty”, as “many of them will tend to be of extreme Leftist nature owing to their experience in Fascist countries”.³⁸¹ Approaching the refugee issue from an ideological angle is illuminating. Indeed, Tony Kushner has reflected on the “propaganda war” occurring in the mainstream media, where “the Rothermere and Beaverbrook press ‘empires’, including the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, were largely hostile whereas left-liberal dailies such as the *Manchester Guardian* and *News Chronicle* were generally sympathetic to the plight of those attempting to escape Nazism”.³⁸² The benefit of examining ideological supporting and rejecting of refugee assistance provides a nuanced balance of the differing interpretations that were presented in the British press and political discourses through a range of ideological standpoints. This is

³⁷⁸ Unknown Author, ‘Shall All Come In?’ *Daily Express*, 24 March, 1938, p. 12.

³⁷⁹ Mass Observation Archive, 62-1-F, p. 55.

³⁸⁰ Unknown Author, ‘Shall All Come In?’, p. 12.

³⁸¹ Mass Observation Archive, 62-1-G, ‘Anti-Semitism 1939-51: Responses and Findings from Questionnaires’, p. I.6.b.

³⁸² Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, pp. 102-3.

significant as it provides a framework for how the arrival of young Holocaust survivors was received and perceived in August 1945.

Aside from immigration concerns, there were multiple discourses that reflected a more positive perspective and representation of refugees. A.J.P. Taylor drew attention to each refugee being “walking propaganda against the Nazis” and emphasised the warm welcome they received in the UK.³⁸³ Furthermore, many Mass Observation contributors seemed unwilling to be drawn into the media’s negative portrayal of refugees from 1933; Leslie Ive argued it was “such bosh” that refugees were an economic burden and affirmed the belief that, as all immigrants have done in the past, that Jewish refugees would become a cultural and commercial asset.³⁸⁴ Observer H. Smith promulgated the view that the Jewish refugees “are bringing home to our rather detached people the realities of Nazism”, and that Britain was “setting a good example” and “building up an attitude of good will towards us which we may someday need”.³⁸⁵ This reflects Kushner’s assertion that local responses to refugees were complex, relying on an interplay between “generosity, sympathy, understanding, fear, meanness of spirit and a failure of imagination”.³⁸⁶ These attitudes began in 1933 with the first wave of refugees and continued through to the outbreak of the Second World War with the arrival of the last Kindertransport in early September 1939 and the end of the war in 1945 with the arrival of Holocaust survivors and other displaced persons.

The postwar period allows for the debates outlined thus far to come together and inform the context of Holocaust survivors and their experiences following their

³⁸³ A. J. P Taylor, *British History 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 419.

³⁸⁴ Mass Observation Archive, 62-1-G, p. I.6.b.

³⁸⁵ Mass Observation Archive, 62-1-G, ‘Anti-Semitism 1939-51: Responses and Findings from Questionnaires’, p. S138.

³⁸⁶ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, p. 122.

arrival in Britain in 1945 and beyond. Only one week after the end of the war, on 15 May 1945, Winston Churchill faced questions in the House of Commons regarding the immediate repatriation of Jewish refugees in light of the “destruction of National Socialism”.³⁸⁷ Churchill’s response to these questions highlighted the pragmatics of such a task and the “considerations of humanity” and the cruelty of doing so.³⁸⁸ This statement has been marked as a key moment in British refugee history as it allowed naturalisation and the development of the Continental former refugee community.³⁸⁹ Although this marked a crucial turning point, it must also be noted that those who re-emigrated to other countries such as the United States provided the Home Office with a mild sense of relief.³⁹⁰

Overall, reliance in the pre-war period and during the war itself was on the Jewish community and its associated organisations in tandem with the charitable efforts of sponsors and subsidies such as the Baldwin fund to facilitate refugees from Nazi Germany and occupied areas entering the UK. Despite the conflict between the humanitarian and socioeconomic considerations, the British government appeared to make attempts to assist refugees within an international climate of restrictionism and financial limits. The assistance from the UK government primarily seems to be in the form of visas rather than direct financial support. Discussion of these evolving arguments and contexts is crucial in developing an awareness of attitudes to Jews, the Holocaust and its survivors in the immediate post-war period, as it conveys the importance of self-help within the community and isolation from the British

³⁸⁷ Unknown Author, ‘Churchill rejects demand for immediate repatriation of Jewish refugees in Britain’, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 16 May, 1945; <https://www.jta.org/1945/05/16/archive/churchill-rejects-demand-for-immediate-repatriation-of-jewish-refugees-in-britain> [Accessed 10 April, 2018]

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 58.

³⁹⁰ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 260.

government that informs the origin stories of two organisations in particular – the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) and the '45 Aid Society.

**“Three layers of identity struggling to resolve themselves into a new whole” –
the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)³⁹¹**

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) originated in the pre-war refugee context outlined above. The Association was founded in the spring and summer of 1941, where nine founding members recognised the need for “an independent representation that would have tasks reaching far beyond daily or weekly welfare work, even beyond channelling into important war work or assisting in re-emigration”.³⁹² This initial aim fed into a circular to several dozen interested refugees in London in June 1941. The result was a self-representing body, which after several debates on an appropriate name became the Association of Jewish Refugees.³⁹³ In a 1962 journal article for *AJR Information*, founding member Ernst Lowenthal reflected on the AJR being a “loose association of persons”, emphasising a more informal connection with mutual aims but “giving no guarantees”.³⁹⁴ Succinctly summarised by AJR historian and member Anthony Grenville, “the AJR was founded in 1941 to represent the interests of the Jews from the German-speaking lands in Britain, becoming over the decades the largest and longest-lived of the refugee organisations”.³⁹⁵ However, as this section of the chapter will note, not every refugee or survivor spoke German or came from German-speaking lands.

³⁹¹ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 188

³⁹² Ernst G. Lowenthal, ‘By Our Own Efforts: The Beginnings of the AJR’, *AJR Information*, Vol.17, No.10 (October, 1962), pp. 4-5.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Lowenthal, ‘By Our Own Efforts’, pp. 4-5.

³⁹⁵ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. xii.

As an organisation that originated in wartime and the pre-war period following the first wave of refugees of Nazism from as early as 1933, the AJR is not what we can formally call a survivor association, and guards its refugee origins closely. This is due to the fact that it was set up to assist refugees in 1941 rather than survivors of camps and ghettos post-1945. This is a potentially controversial issue and will be examined in the next chapter that explores the perception that certain nationalities and groups had suffered more than others. The AJR aimed to serve refugees from Nazism and not necessarily the survivors of concentration camps and ghettos, being formed concurrently with the evolving atrocities in Central and Eastern Europe (although scholars differ in their assessments of when the Holocaust itself began).³⁹⁶ However, the organisation aimed to be inclusive towards all Jewish refugees: in 1946 discussions developed around how the AJR “will be of service to the whole Jewish community”.³⁹⁷ The original terms of reference from 1941 also convey this, in its vow to “safeguard the rights and interests of the Jewish refugee”.³⁹⁸ Therefore, the decision has been taken to include the AJR as an example of a survivor association because, while it was not set up to be so, the inclusion of survivors in its membership as the twentieth century advances highlights the issues of belonging and definitions that this thesis showcases.

Despite this aim of inclusivity, the aims of the AJR have remained largely unchanged, “representing all those Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria for whom Judaism is a determining factor on their outlook on life” as stated in the terms

³⁹⁶ For further discussion of the debates surrounding when the Holocaust began, see: Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005) and Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War: How the Nazis Led Germany from Conquest to Disaster* (London: Allen Lane, 2008).

³⁹⁷ Unknown Author, ‘A New Venture’, *AJR Information*, Vol.1, No.1 (January, 1946), p. 1.

³⁹⁸ Lucie Schachne, ‘Social Services at Fairfax Mansions’, *AJR Information*, Vol.17, No.10 (October, 1962), p. 9.

of reference.³⁹⁹ This has proved somewhat problematic given the later context of the arrival of refugees and survivors from Eastern Europe in the immediate postwar period, provoking certain tensions within the AJR itself surrounding who the association was *for*.⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, there is tension around who can consider themselves refugees under the purview of the AJR, given that some do not identify as strongly with Judaism as an “outlook on life”.⁴⁰¹ Overall, there are many challenges to the initial aims of the AJR to be inclusive as the situation in Europe evolved during wartime, but there appeared to be minimal adaptation within the terms of reference. This awkwardness can be seen as permeating into the debates surrounding the organisation in the present day, with a minimal application or modification to the existing terms of reference. It can indeed be suggested that, in many ways, the AJR had not changed much in respect of its core goals and aspirations since their formation in 1941, with the emphasis being on German-Austrian refugees more than survivors from across Nazi-occupied Europe.

Intriguingly, one of the main consequences of the AJR’s expansion in the mid-twentieth century is the tension between assimilating into British society while remaining somewhat isolationist within their refugee communities. Choosing to socialise only with fellow refugees and patronising refugee business ventures locally, for example, has been referred to in multiple interviews and articles in *AJR Information*. Moreover, as members aged, the emphasis increasingly lay on the representation of refugees in reparation battles and general legal and social work support. Overall, self-help and self-sufficiency underpinned the origins of the AJR. This became framed within discussions of the responsibility of the Jewish community towards refugees and the idea that refugees should not be a burden to

³⁹⁹ Lowenthal, ‘By Our Own Efforts’, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰⁰ This point was raised by a young Polish survivor following a personal conversation at a British Association of Holocaust Studies conference in March 2018.

⁴⁰¹ Lowenthal, ‘By Our Own Efforts’, pp. 4-5.

British society. This idea of ‘zero burden’ exists almost paradoxically to a “cult of gratitude” to British society for taking in refugees and allowing them the chance to start again.⁴⁰²

Whilst there was a general desire to embrace their origins as refugees, gratitude comes to the fore as an overarching concept within a broader framework of settling in the UK and British society. It can be argued that this is not entirely deserved, as there was a general desire for the government to have minimal involvement in assisting refugees, mostly from a fiscal perspective. The concept of gratitude manifests in the immediate post-war period, which celebrated Home Secretary Chuter Ede’s assertion that “the utmost should be done to maintain Great Britain’s historic tradition of affording asylum to the distressed”.⁴⁰³ This was lauded by the AJR as “a noble statement in a noble spirit!”⁴⁰⁴ War Minister Emanuel Shinwell also reflected on this spirit in 1948, remarking that “the fate of Jewry still depended to a considerable extent on the goodwill of Britain, for, running through the whole of British experience and conduct, there was a strain of common sense and human decency” that had assisted refugees with avoiding the fate of millions on the continent.⁴⁰⁵ Shinwell’s statement reflects the nobility and gratitude attached to Britain and its efforts to facilitate refugee immigration – what Tony Kushner has deemed a “cult of gratitude”,⁴⁰⁶ which existed contrary to the image Britain presented of itself as a “temporary haven”.⁴⁰⁷ This cult, in Kushner’s view, revolved around the concept that the acceptance of refugees was conditional, and dependent

⁴⁰² Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, pp. 132-3.

⁴⁰³ Unknown Author, ‘A Step Forward’, *AJR Information*, Vol.1, No.1 (January, 1946), p. 1.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ Unknown Author, ‘Events in Anglo-Jewry’, *AJR Information*, Vol.3, No.4 (April, 1948), p. 3.

⁴⁰⁶ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, pp. 132-3.

⁴⁰⁷ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 39.

on them behaving “in a certain manner”.⁴⁰⁸ This is embodied in a 1940 leaflet circulated to refugees, where they were encouraged not to use German, draw attention to oneself in any way or “inconvenience” the refugee committees.⁴⁰⁹

Yet despite these restrictions and attitudes, expressions of gratitude to Britain still have a central place as a “standard feature” in many refugee memoirs and recollections.⁴¹⁰ Examples include Martin Gilbert’s volume on the ’45 Aid Society, where these survivors emphasise their indebtedness to Britain for taking them in and helping them to recover.⁴¹¹ This idea is also reflected in the “Thank You Britain Fund”, set up in 1964 through the auspices of the AJR, internalising the pressure of gratitude and the representation of Britain as saviours.⁴¹² This reflects tripartite criteria of conveying “loyalty, contribution and gratitude” from refugees, which can obscure the historiography through becoming too dominant a discourse and obfuscating the nuances of the refugee experience.⁴¹³ There are many stories of the refugee struggle, and thanksgiving must not become so overarching that consideration of the challenges refugees faced becomes ignored.

The notions of self-help and self-sufficiency are echoed in the origins of the AJR. Jewish communities were vital in assisting refugees in light of the British government’s inability or unwillingness to help. This is explicit in Ernst Lowenthal’s recounting of the origins of the AJR, remarking on the resolve that “we refugees should build up an organisation by our own efforts”.⁴¹⁴ This contrasts with the reliance in the mid-1930s on agencies “created for their benefit by British

⁴⁰⁸ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, pp. 132-3.

⁴⁰⁹ Wiener Library, ‘Do’s and Don’t’s for Refugees’.

⁴¹⁰ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 22.

⁴¹¹ See Martin Gilbert, *The Boys*.

⁴¹² Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, pp. 132-3.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ Lowenthal, ‘By Our Own Efforts’, pp. 4-5.

well-wishers”.⁴¹⁵ The section of the journal *AJR Information* which advertises refugee businesses that were set up, supported and patronised by fellow refugees and AJR members reveals the emphasis on self-help and self-sufficiency. Refugees did not want to be seen as a burden on society but instead wanted to contribute to it. It is within this context that the AJR originated in, where many refugees went on to own businesses and forged their own success.

A further challenge to the AJR can be glimpsed in the contentious debate around the inclusion of the term refugee in the association’s name. Some felt that by continuing to refer to themselves as refugees was inappropriate after naturalisation and citizenship had been made possible for many in the 1950s. A letter to the editor of *AJR Information* in 1952 commented: “Should we earmark ourselves as refugees for the rest of our lives? ... If one wants to be a useful member of the Community one has to take root and should not be reminded all the time that one does not really belong to it”.⁴¹⁶ This sentiment is evocative, reflecting that some felt they had sufficiently assimilated into British society and did not feel the need to set themselves apart from others. Refugee communities preferred to socialise and associate internally rather than externally with wider society; therefore, there are contrasting views on how successfully assimilation had occurred.

Despite some isolated agreement that the AJR’s name should be changed, the broader majority of correspondents appeared to be against the notion.⁴¹⁷ One member in favour of keeping the name ‘Association of Jewish Refugees’ remarked: “Every Association with serious purposes should make it clear *by its very name* which are its principle aims. Drop the word ‘Refugees’ from the Association’s style and you

⁴¹⁵ David Maier, ‘From Foundation to Maturity - The AJR story’, *AJR Information*, Vol.46, No.7 (July, 1991), pp. 6-7.

⁴¹⁶ Unknown Author, ‘Our Gallup Poll’, *AJR Information*, Vol.7, No.7 (July, 1952), p. 6.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

will not achieve this object’.⁴¹⁸ Connecting the name of the Association to its founding principles and responsibilities to former refugees was a common sentiment echoed throughout 1952 correspondence in *AJR Information*. It was particularly noted that “Now the name of the AJR has acquired historical and sentimental value it should be retained”, evoking the sense of history and pride that many of the former refugees felt in their histories of coming to the UK and the gratitude they felt to the AJR for helping to facilitate as smooth a transition as possible.⁴¹⁹

Overall, it was from a position of identity that prompted many members to oppose the suggestion, as they did not associate the term refugee with “any kind of second-class status”.⁴²⁰ As a result of this, it was felt unnecessary to modify the name of the association. The debate surrounding the use of the term ‘refugee’ in the AJR’s name highlights this self-conception of the AJR and its attempt to represent all refugees despite some difficulty with that principle in practice. However, present-day incarnations of AJR meeting groups do not utilise or emphasise ‘refugee’ in their title, such as ‘Bromley Continental Friends’, which is perhaps not indicative of associating refugee as a term with second class status but a recognition that generations have followed who may not identify with that label.⁴²¹ This intergenerational shift is marked and thus this thesis will be sensitive to how the descendants of survivors interpret the experiences of their parents and grandparents in differing ways.⁴²²

Further to the suggestion that the term ‘refugee’ had become a central tenet for the identity of those who had settled in the UK, consideration needs to be made

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 209.

⁴²¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Georgia Mandel, 15 February, 2018.

⁴²² See Chapter Five of this thesis.

as to how these refugees integrated into British society and culture. Phyllis Lassner suggests that Jewish refugees “occupied a precariously in-between space in British society, always learning to be innocuous but recognized nonetheless as different in ways that could never fit any British cultural setting or cultural category”.⁴²³ In spite of this, there is a general “refugee refrain” referred to by Grenville that individuals felt “British, but not English”, recognising that there was some element of difference and ‘otherness’ informing the place of refugees in Britain and British consciousness.⁴²⁴ This issue can be framed more broadly in attitudes “towards the foreigner” in Britain, in which the AJR in 1946 cited as “fast disappearing in a world of improved communications and international cooperation”.⁴²⁵ A widespread problem of low-level anti-Semitism could be glimpsed in Britain, with attitudes of uneasiness and the issue of trusting Jews, but this was often not linked to Fascism as explored in the AJR journal *AJR Information* in 1947.⁴²⁶ This article found that while outward discrimination was not apparent, Britons were generally “Jew-conscious”, drawing a “subtle distinction” between Gentiles and Jews, regarding the latter as untrustworthy, alien and ‘other’.⁴²⁷ This factor may have affected integration as refugees felt an unwelcoming atmosphere by some members of local communities from the perspective of race, which could in part explain the reluctance for refugees to deviate from their groups as a safe space.

Whilst there was an initial mistrust towards refugees, it can be considered that the refugees successfully bridged “the substantial gulf” between their countries

⁴²³ Phyllis Lassner, *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust: Displaced Witnesses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 12 as quoted in Angela Davis, “Belonging” and “Unbelonging”: Jewish refugee and survivor women in 1950s Britain’, *Women’s History Review*, Vol.26, No.1 (2017), p. 140.

⁴²⁴ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, pp. 100-101.

⁴²⁵ Louis W. Bondy, ‘England and the Foreigner’, *AJR Information*, Vol.1, No.9 (September, 1946), p. 68.

⁴²⁶ Herbert Friedenthal, ‘Anti-Semitism in Britain’, *AJR Information*, Vol.2, No.5 (May, 1947), p. 35.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

of origin and Britain as their country of refuge.⁴²⁸ The argument has been made that refugees “salvaged” aspects of their “cultural, social and intellectual heritage” to reformulate their identities within a British context, balancing both Continental and British identity.⁴²⁹ This existed in the challenge of a more insular society than one we would recognise today, representing a dismissive attitude to European culture and “confident of the superiority of its institutions, traditions and way of life over those of mere continentals”.⁴³⁰ In sum, there was a widespread struggle to adapt to unfamiliar clothes, climate and customs.⁴³¹ The concern about identity is reflected in a 1960 speech in Germany by AJR member and historian Eva Reichmann, “I am no longer a German; and I will never be an Englishwoman, for all that England gave me the right to live when my native land denied it me”.⁴³² Grenville summarised Reichmann’s issue as: “three layers of identity struggling to resolve themselves into a new whole”; that of refugee, German citizen and British subject.⁴³³ This reflects the struggle to adapt to a new country and culture, and becomes a common theme in survivor and refugee dialogues. Many struggled to blend together their different layers of identity into a “new whole”, reporting feeling that they were neither fully part of their original cultures nor were entirely British.⁴³⁴

Whilst refugees from Nazism were applauded for their assimilation, it can also be argued that the refugee community themselves were reasonably inward-looking. This insularity led to social circles and support networks that were based mainly around the AJR and the broader refugee community: from patronising businesses set up by refugees to social groups such as the AJR Club and living in

⁴²⁸ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, pp. 19-20.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 85 & 163.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

⁴³¹ *Ibid*.

⁴³² Eva G. Reichmann, ‘1960 Speech’, quoted in Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 188.

⁴³³ *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁴³⁴ Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p. 3.

areas such as Golders Green that were considered more ‘refugee-friendly’ or indeed ‘Jewish-friendly’. This reflects Kushner and Knox’s discussion of the spatial dimension of refugee relations in the postwar period, where certain spaces were viewed as friendlier to Jewish refugees.⁴³⁵

Grenville acknowledged that “most found it easier to form friendships and social circles with people from a similar background, with a similar culture and interests, and correspondingly harder to establish such relationships with British people”.⁴³⁶ This can also hold true for the wider Anglo-Jewish community, whereby there was a “continuing separateness” between Anglo-Jewry and Continental Jews despite the “admirable” organisational response from the Jewish community towards refugees.⁴³⁷ This could be considered a class-based phenomenon: Grenville’s contention is that Anglo-Jewry descended from working-class Jewish immigrants from Tsarist Russia, and therefore there was an overall suspicion about “the assimilated Jews of Central Europe, with their middle-class aspirations and pretensions to high culture”.⁴³⁸ This view revolves around the suggestion that German-Austrian Jews were fully assimilated into Germanic culture and hardly retained any of their Jewishness, whereas the immigration wave from Tsarist Russia was largely a working class, more orthodox or observant community. This may be an overly simplistic approach that nullifies the importance of how the ‘old wave’ of refugees viewed themselves as British Jews and indicates that class-based tensions within these groups has been overstated. Furthermore, many of the Holocaust survivors interviewed for this project were not German or Austrian but

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 150.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain*, p. 23.

came from observant or Orthodox Jewish communities in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Romania.⁴³⁹

Despite the general feeling that the AJR and its associated refugee community were somewhat isolationist in their socialising habits, using the journal *AJR Information* as a case study gleans interesting information with regards to refugee assimilation over insularity in terms of language. Generally, articles in German appeared sporadically, in the form of poetry, literature or within specific themes such as restitution news.⁴⁴⁰ There was an overall desire to maintain the status quo, whereby the majority of the journal articles would be in English, in order to reflect the assimilation of the refugees, their place in British society but also so that non-German-speaking allies of the movement could be kept abreast of organisational news.⁴⁴¹ This was felt to be essential both politically and in terms of identity as the refugees could portray themselves as fully assimilated into British culture rather than unacculturated political exiles.⁴⁴² This is further embodied by fervent debates around the topic and the theme of assimilation more broadly, where some refugees lamented at how they managed in the early years of settling in the UK to “work through” *AJR Information* in English.⁴⁴³

Many journal contributors in 1952 remarked that they did not understand why people were complaining about the lack of German articles given that most refugees had been in Britain for thirteen years. This was perceived as “quite a sufficiently long period to acquire at least the necessary knowledge to read

⁴³⁹ See memory quilt images in Methodology chapter that include the embroidered names of survivors from the '45 Aid Society by country of origin.

⁴⁴⁰ Unknown Author, ‘Our Gallup Poll’, p. 6.

⁴⁴¹ Werner Rosenstock, ‘Continuity and Expansion: The Services of “AJR Information”’, *AJR Information*, Vol.17, No.10 (October, 1962), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Unknown Author, ‘Our Gallup Poll’, p. 6.

English”.⁴⁴⁴ This contention existed in parallel to an AJR correspondent who argued many refugees “do not master their new language” – and that editors should “Give the older refugees a treat and no headache” by publishing solely in German.⁴⁴⁵ Overall, the fact that the aforementioned correspondent was distinctly in the minority would appear to indicate the refugees were broadly assimilated in terms of language and the culture that accompanied it, even if they did not fully associate in wider British society as Grenville had suggested.

A reasoned middle ground appeared to formulate in the 1950s, that “a little corner in German every now and then” would “remind us from time to time of our origin and our spiritual inheritance’, with ‘stray glimpses at the sunny past’.⁴⁴⁶ Overall, the case study of the journal highlights the willingness of the AJR to engage with debates on shared interests and themes in spite of occasional moments of heated tension. Additionally, further debates are emphasised here, such as the perceived exclusion of non-German or Austrian refugees such as those who came from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. Therefore, many refugees and Holocaust survivors did not have German as their first language or possess any degree of fluency to be able to consume a journal published entirely in German.

A non-contentious, universally agreed-upon issue within the AJR, not subject to debate, is that of the need to support its members. This has included social work, guidance on acquiring reparations and legal advice for the status of the refugee in terms of naturalisation.⁴⁴⁷ Overall, the AJR took a central role in supporting refugees in both material and sociocultural ways, cementing themselves

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Social and wellbeing support under the auspices of the AJR will be covered in detail in Chapter Four.

as an organisation with the wellbeing of refugees at its heart. This increases the close identification with the AJR as a group and community structure.

A central issue where refugees required assistance and support from the AJR is in terms of reparations from Germany. There has been a growing discussion of *Wiedergutmachung* (reparations, which translates as ‘to make good again’ from German) within the historiography of refugees and the Holocaust, marking the move from West Germany to compensate Holocaust victims as a crucial step in the commitment to “restorative justice” and “recognition of wrongdoing”.⁴⁴⁸ There is also reference to the symbolic acts of historical apologies, but in this instance, it is noted how *Wiedergutmachung* had a “distinctly material form of apology” in allocating restitutive, financial awards to survivors.⁴⁴⁹ Discussing reparations outside of the national context and within victim groups, Raul Hilberg reflects on the request from Holocaust victims for three things: restitution of confiscated Jewish property, indemnification for survivors and reparations in order to rehabilitate the displaced.⁴⁵⁰

Much has been said with regards to victim silence in the 1940s and 1950s,⁴⁵¹ with Regula Ludi referring to this period as “the decisive years of postwar victim reparation”, where groups were working towards recognition of survivor suffering and restitution.⁴⁵² It is within this context that the AJR dominated in the early years of its formation. Reparations are seen to be essential for the refugees

⁴⁴⁸ Jean Axelrad Cahan, ‘Reconciliation or Reconstruction? Further Thoughts on Political Forgiveness’, *Polity*, Vol.45, No.2 (April, 2013), p. 174.

⁴⁴⁹ Robert R. Weyeneth, ‘The Power of Apology and the Process of Historical Reconciliation’, *The Public Historian*, Vol.23, No.3 (Summer, 2001), p. 18.

⁴⁵⁰ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Vol.III, p. 1155.

⁴⁵¹ See Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 83 for discussion of the Holocaust ‘silence’ and market considerations.

⁴⁵² Regula Ludi, ‘The Vectors of Postwar Victim Reparations: Relief, Redress and Memory Politics’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.41, No.3 (July, 2006), p. 443.

and the AJR as their representatives for not only recognising the suffering of these individuals and to lobby for recompense but also to assist with material concerns. This is especially true in the case of older refugees who required support, and refugees who were denied their pensions due to Nazi policy and their flight to the UK.

The AJR journal *AJR Information* extensively covers *Wiedergutmachung*, as one of the key issues affecting refugees in the immediate postwar period. Unsurprisingly, the organisation is keen to promote its own role alongside larger, more international organisations such as the Claims Conference, officially known as the ‘The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany’ and the United Restitution Organisation (URO).⁴⁵³ This is epitomised in a 1991 reflection on the early years of the AJR, where the assertion is presented that “so much progress had been made had been in large measure due to the assistance which the AJR had rendered to individual claimants”.⁴⁵⁴ This topic of the represented centrality of the AJR is also reflected within the broader theme of legal support and the status of refugees in terms of naturalisation.

The same 1991 *AJR Journal* article discussed the popularity of a biweekly “Legal Advice Bureau” run by volunteers in order to advise refugees in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁵⁵ The commitment to this advisory function of the AJR is represented in some of its earliest aims outlined in 1946, the first year *AJR Information* was published – “The problem of refugees in this country will be no less our concern, and legal, economic and social questions and all the factors which add up to their status, will be dealt with extensively”.⁴⁵⁶ Chronologically and contextually, it is

⁴⁵³ Maier, ‘From Foundation to Maturity’, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Unknown Author, ‘A New Venture’, p. 1.

essential to note here that the first issue of the publication in January 1946 appeared concurrently with the Home Secretary's announcement that "pre-war refugees were entitled to apply for naturalisation".⁴⁵⁷ Many expected the AJR to reduce in significance once this mission was accomplished, but Werner Rosenstock emphasised in 1962 that naturalisation was not a solution to all refugee problems.⁴⁵⁸ Consequently, the AJR remained a necessary organisation due to the need for its social care and support structure, which will be examined in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Overall the AJR included survivors of the Holocaust, its camps and ghettos, but these survivors became part of the AJR's purview relatively late in the origin story of the organisation. The overall story of the AJR reflects a growing evolution of the refugee community in Britain and its struggles between assimilation and isolation within their new culture. This has broader connotations for identity that will become a recurring aspect of this thesis. The support given to the members of the AJR is extensive, reflecting a broad range of needs from a wide range of individuals, progressing as those needs changed within the twentieth century.

"A very unique community": The '45 Aid Society⁴⁵⁹

The '45 Aid Society was formally set up in 1963, but its origins date back to the immediate postwar period. Indeed, its name firmly places their foundational year as 1945.⁴⁶⁰ The founding members of the Society were part of a cohort of 732 young concentration camp survivors who were flown to Britain in a series of groups after

⁴⁵⁷ Rosenstock, 'Continuity and Expansion', pp. 5-6.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Michael Daniels, Interview with Chaim Fuks (October and November, 1990), Parts 12-14. <https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors/021M-C0410X0125XX-0001V0> [Accessed 6 June, 2018]

⁴⁶⁰ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 2.

a pledge from the British government to accept up to 1,000 unaccompanied child survivors.⁴⁶¹ Tony Kushner has noted that “these children do not ‘fit’ easily into wider narratives, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, or whether local, national or global”.⁴⁶² The first group were flown from Prague to Windermere in the Lake District by RAF Stirling bombers, with further cohorts following later but failing to reach the 1,000 person limit.⁴⁶³ The reasons for this failure to meet the limit varies, but the “harsh limitations imposed by the Home Office...based on a narrow reading of what typified Jewish suffering during the war” was significant, along with the desire for young survivors to travel to Palestine and North America.⁴⁶⁴ Therefore, it is unsurprising that the 1,000 person quota was never reached, but for more complex reasons than the absence of other child survivors.

Originally, those survivors aged 16 and under were eligible for the transports, leading to individuals lying about their ages in order to join the transports to the UK. It was soon clarified that the young people would need to be no older than 15, prompting a further revision of their date of births, a fairly straightforward process due to their lack of documentation and the visible effects of malnutrition affecting the onset of puberty for these young people, making individuals look younger. Therefore, many who were older than 16 were able to join the cohort of 732 as part of the transport to the UK. Marie Paneth, an art teacher who worked with some of the Windermere children, summarised it as, “In our case they had cheated the Home Office, because the permits were officially to be given

⁴⁶¹ Ronald Channing, ‘Profile: Ben Helfgott MBE – Survivor, Comrade, Conciliator’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.6, No.7 (July, 2006), p. 11.

⁴⁵ Aid Society, ‘The Boys’, <http://45aid.org/45-aid-society/the-boys/> [Accessed 25 April, 2018]

⁴⁶² Tony Kushner, ‘Wandering Lonely Jews in the English Countryside’, *Jewish Culture and History*, Vol.12, No.1&2 (2010) pp. 223-224.

⁴⁶³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Leah Rubenstein, 26 April, 2018.

⁴⁶⁴ Kushner, ‘Wandering Lonely Jews in the English Countryside’, pp. 231-232.

only to people who had not yet reached their sixteenth birthday”.⁴⁶⁵ Gideon Jacoby suggested that “most of us were older than that [15]” because “they couldn’t find enough younger survivors.”⁴⁶⁶ Lydia Tischler remarked on the irony inherent in lying about her age: “In Auschwitz I had to make myself older because I wasn’t 16 yet, in order to survive. And, then to come here I had to pretend that I wasn’t 16”.⁴⁶⁷

The Society had nicknamed themselves ‘The Boys’, an informal association that has endured to this day, despite there being around 70 to 80 girls in the party, approximately ten to fifteen per cent of their overall numbers.⁴⁶⁸ Additionally, the lack of girls within the group, originally perceived as the lack of female survivor numbers of the correct age, has been revised to accommodate how many girls were in hiding throughout the war, therefore not within camps or sent to Sweden to recuperate therefore not eligible for this particular scheme.⁴⁶⁹ Michael Freedland, in his biography of former Chair and current President of the ’45 Aid Society, Ben Helfgott, wrote that the group soon began to consider themselves “The Brothers and Sisters”, suggesting a familial bond that is unpacked in Chapter Four of this thesis.⁴⁷⁰

Following their arrival in London, the first group of young survivors were taken to an old RAF base in Windermere, where the priority was restoration of physical health, emotional recovery, learning English, bonding with each other and regaining trust in others. However, many viewed these children as “beyond

⁴⁶⁵ Marie Paneth, *Rock the Cradle* (Manchester: Second Generation Publishing, 2020), p. 16

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Sheila Melzack, Interview with Lydia Tischler, *Wiener Library* (2006), Tape 1.

⁴⁶⁸ Simone Redbart, Interview with Solly Irving, *Visual History Archive* (21 January, 1997); Bea Lewkowicz, Interview with Minia Jay, *Visual History Archive* (18 December, 1996).

⁴⁶⁹ Kushner, ‘Wandering Lonely Jews in the English Countryside’, p. 233.

⁴⁷⁰ Michael Freedland, *Ben Helfgott: The Story of One of the Boys* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2018), p. 97.

redemption”, with their traumas being so pronounced that there “was a sense that they could never recover sufficiently to be part of the nation”.⁴⁷¹ Language acquisition appeared to be a key priority not just for the Central British Fund or the Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps, who had facilitated the arrival of these survivors, but for the children themselves, who were inquisitive about learning about the new society they found themselves in.⁴⁷² One survivor described the staff at Windermere as “angels from heaven” and deemed the Central British Fund as “absolutely fantastic with us”.⁴⁷³ Following a transitory period in the Lake District, these survivors were moved to hostels in smaller groups, with twenty to thirty survivors housed in each place.⁴⁷⁴ Mrs Tattenbaum, a matron of one of the hostels, noted that living in this way was a great source of comfort to the residents in terms of their education, careers and re-integration into society, facilitating their ability to “settle down so well”.⁴⁷⁵

A multi-faceted approach is needed in order to examine the development of the '45 Aid Society, reflecting a history rich in contextual factors and relationships between survivors. This approach initially revolves around the refugee context discussed in previous sections of this chapter and how expectations were managed for the survivors in terms of citizenship, work and training – embodied in the context of the Jewish community facilitating their arrival in the UK. Secondly, the central notion underpinning the '45 Aid Society of ‘keeping together’ and maintaining the bond of a surrogate family, providing financial, social and psychological support in a similar way to the AJR, but from a much more familial community. Arza Helfgott, wife of the current '45 Aid Society President Sir Ben

⁴⁷¹ Kushner, ‘Wandering Lonely Jews in the English Countryside’, p. 233.

⁴⁷² Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 291; Lewkowicz, Interview with Minia Jay.

⁴⁷³ Wood, Interview with Anon.

⁴⁷⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

⁴⁷⁵ Malka Tattenbaum, ‘A Few Recollections of my Interesting Work with the Boys who Survived the Holocaust’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1980), pp. 14-15.

Helfgott, remarked that “The Boys were a group of people who had a zest for life that was vibrant, exciting and an influence to enjoy and hold up to my own children”, and places their bonds and support for each other as paramount in enjoying their new-found lives in the UK.⁴⁷⁶

Charity and fundraising are also a crucial part of the '45 Aid Society collective identity, with notions of ‘giving back’ that can also be related to a cult of gratitude discussed previously in this chapter. This can also provide tensions in the conception of the Society as a charitable organisation externally, including helping other charities, and internally for the purpose of assisting fellow survivors. Paul ‘Yogi’ Mayer, leader of the Primrose Club, a youth club set up for ‘The Boys’, highlighted that the principle of the '45 Aid Society was that “so much was done for us it is now time for us to look after ourselves and others”.⁴⁷⁷ The present-day priorities of the Society, such as education, remembrance and the importance of the second generation also require consideration as they convey a subtle shift away from direct survivor support. This direct support was more urgent in the first two decades of their arrival in the UK as they began to settle down.

The entry of ‘The Boys’ to Britain was not unconditional; it was widely understood by the British government that they would emigrate following their recovery and training (although this did vary later to a “restriction not to enter employment without consent”).⁴⁷⁸ Joanna Millan echoes this temporary intention in a letter to the editor of the *AJR Journal*, highlighting that “the British Government was persuaded by the Jewish community to take us in, but only on a temporary

⁴⁷⁶ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 152.

⁴⁷⁷ Lyn E. Smith, Interview with Paul ‘Yogi’ Mayer (1997), Reels 6-7.
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80016767> [Accessed 10 May, 2018]

⁴⁷⁸ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p. 267.

basis”, highlighting that “we were not allowed to take British citizenship”.⁴⁷⁹ She went on to emphasise that the planes leaving Prague were “returning empty having dropped off Czech airmen who had been fighting with the RAF”.⁴⁸⁰ In her view, this represented the cost-neutrality demonstrated in the survivors arriving in the UK, where Jewish refugee committees financed hostels and children’s homes without government assistance.⁴⁸¹

Documentation from the Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps, an offshoot of the Central British Fund (CBF) and Jewish Refugee Committee (JRC) affiliated, is indicative of these costs, reflecting that the “experiment in long-term carefully planned rehabilitation” had been an “expensive business”.⁴⁸² This was mainly with reference to accommodation and immigration away from the UK to countries such as America and Palestine, which had been “slow” at the time of the memorandum in July 1947.⁴⁸³ An additional CBF memorandum from 1947 indicates that “well over” a quarter of a million pounds (£6.8 million equivalent today) had been spent on ‘The Boys’, with the majority being allocated to maintenance, education and medical services, and a minority being allocated for emigration.⁴⁸⁴ Some of the funds were spent on income support so that “if the boys did not earn enough to pay the rent and have some pocket money, CBF made up the difference”.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁷⁹ Joanna Millan, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.16, No.4 (April, 2016), p. 7.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² Wiener Library, London, 1239/4, Memorandum by unknown author, Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation – Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps (1947), p. 2.

⁴⁸³ Wiener Library, London, 1239/3, Report by Chairman, Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation – Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps (17 July, 1947), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸⁴ Wiener Library, London, 1239/4, Memorandum by unknown author, Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation – Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps (1947), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸⁵ Daniels, Interview with Chaim Fuks.

Whilst there was the previous agreement that residence in the UK would be temporary and allow for the survivors to subsequently emigrate, it is acknowledged that many were not fit enough to pass rigorous medical inspection due to lung damage from tuberculosis and exposure to toxic chemicals in concentration, extermination and forced labour camps, and required further financial support despite being in paid employment.⁴⁸⁶ Roman Halter stated how “they were always short of money, did everything they could with very little” but that it was difficult for them to “understand at the time” that the “committees did what they could in order to maximise the people they could support”.⁴⁸⁷

A further CBF memorandum from October 1948 reflects on diminishing costs as the survivors grew more financially independent and moved into “industrial employment”, but the author reflects that it would be regrettable to cut back expenses on education for the brightest of the young survivors.⁴⁸⁸ Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox have emphasised a policy of limiting the ambitions of the survivor children within the employment sphere, where there was “no intention that the children would stay in Britain and could not conceive of them other than as, at best, skilled workers”.⁴⁸⁹

A compelling counter-argument was made by survivor Leah Rubenstein when the issue of education and limiting ambitions was raised; she fervently asserted how she and many of her peers did not have even a basic elementary education, and so it was natural they would gravitate to more skilled manual

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Lyn E. Smith, Interview with Roman Halter (December, 1996), Reel 16.
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80016549> [Accessed 17 May, 2018]

⁴⁸⁸ Wiener Library, London, 1239/5, Leonard G. Montefiore Memorandum, Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation – Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps (14 October, 1948).

⁴⁸⁹ Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p. 212.

occupations such as tailoring and dressmaking, particularly in view of their ages.⁴⁹⁰ She represented the group as largely impatient, feeling that they could not catch up on their education after approximately five years of missed schooling and that a more manual occupation route was more suitable than returning to school. This exists contrary to a view that portrays ambition as being quashed among the survivor children, rather an awareness of practicalities and a certain impatience.

The transitional move between training, the hostels and employment were described by prevalent counsellor and human rights activist Helen Bamber as a “bleak period” for the young survivors, as work made them feel exploited and treated like a commodity.⁴⁹¹ However she does note that this seemed to be a universal negative feeling amongst workers and their treatment in the postwar period.⁴⁹² This is particularly in light of the labour shortages that British industry faced and the perceived weakness of the unions. Thus, more was expected from these workers despite them having less support from the unions.⁴⁹³ Survivor narratives convey gratitude to the CBF and the Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps as well as the Jewish Refugees Committee by highlighting that their support continued until it was felt they were entirely “self-sufficient”.⁴⁹⁴

Support as a theme echoes throughout the development of the '45 Aid Society, as it does with the AJR, from its beginnings in the immediate postwar period to the present day. This sponsorship took the form of psychological, social and financial support. This emphasises the '45 Aid Society goal of keeping

⁴⁹⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Leah Rubenstein, 26 April 2018.

⁴⁹¹ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 412.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007), p. 332.

⁴⁹⁴ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 404.

together' and fostering a surrogate family dynamic. A pivotal case study of these relationships in action is the founding of the Primrose Club for 'The Boys' in 1947, many of whom felt lonely without the close relationships fostered in the hostels, necessitating the need for a meeting place.⁴⁹⁵ Minia Jay noted that the Primrose Club began by "taking over two houses to make it into a club", where attendees would "meet up to play games and talk", mostly at the weekends so as not to clash with working and studying.⁴⁹⁶ There were also some rooms in the upstairs part of the club where those who lived in other areas of the UK outside of London could stay when they visited the capital. Hershel Orenstein stayed in these rooms when he visited from Glasgow for the 1948 Olympic Games, held in London.⁴⁹⁷

For an institution that only lasted three years, "its presence in the Anglo-Jewish youth scene was immense, and, in many ways, its influence lives on, certainly in the lives of its old members".⁴⁹⁸ As indicated in the Methodology chapter of this thesis, the Primrose Club provides a key framework for composure in the oral history setting. It represents a joint origin story for the members of the '45 Aid Society that marks positive experiences and interactions in their formative years which seek to provide a sense of recovery and starting again.

Whilst the Primrose Club provided a valuable meeting space for the '45 Aid Society members in their early years of adulthood, there was a long-term issue of the Society having their own space after the setting up of the society in 1963, similar to the Jewish Care-run Holocaust Survivor Centre in Hendon, North London.⁴⁹⁹ Member Frank Farkas raised the issue in an open letter to the Society in

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 376.

⁴⁹⁶ Lewkowicz, Interview with Minia Jay.

⁴⁹⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hershel Orenstein, 4 August, 2018.

⁴⁹⁸ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 123.

⁴⁹⁹ Frank Farkas, 'Open Letter to the '45 Aid Society', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1994), p. 24.

1994, discussing how the organisation had channelled so much effort and financial resources into external charities that they had failed to meet their own initial and fundamental aims.⁵⁰⁰ Farkas went on to enforce that the '45 Aid Society should prioritise the needs of its members rather than outside charitable organisations, and invoked the old adage that 'charity begins at home'.⁵⁰¹

In response to Mr Farkas' letter, Chairman Ben Helfgott suggested that the notion of using the money raised towards this goal of a meeting space for the Society threatened the independence which the organisation had so closely guarded.⁵⁰² He elaborated further that the Society had been active in fundraising within the broader Jewish community for numerous causes, and that it was unreasonable to expect the broader Anglo-Jewish community to support a venture such as their own meeting space.⁵⁰³

This example is illustrative of the society's anxiety not to be seen as a burden on the state, but rather productive and charitable members of wider society. As Saul Hoffman, a '45 Aid Society member, noted, whilst money was used "amongst ourselves if it was needed", the priority was "helping other people" as an independent organisation.⁵⁰⁴ By presenting the '45 Aid Society in this way, as a group that assisted each other but also helped others, Saul indicated that he was proud of the fact that "we done it by ourselves".⁵⁰⁵ Notions of burden and the refugee community are closely entangled in the secondary literature and relates to

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Ben Helfgott, 'Reply to Frank Farkas', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1994), p. 25.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2018.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

this “cult of gratitude” discussed by Kushner and the notion of giving back to a community that facilitated their entry to the UK in 1945.⁵⁰⁶

What underpins the notion of ‘giving back’ to society and the Jewish community is the assimilation of the ’45 Aid Society members and their adoption of British values and identity. This reflects what Richard Bolchover refers to as “acculturation” which revolved around “social integration and acceptance”, based on a “belief that Jews might absorb without pain, coercion or compromise what they saw as undoubtedly beneficial elements and characteristics of the culture and society in which they lived”.⁵⁰⁷ This reflects a blending of the two cultures and identities which can enrich both sides.⁵⁰⁸

Survivor Margalit Judah asserted multiple times during our interview that anglicisation was a vital venture for the children who arrived in 1945, with English lessons and later elocution lessons.⁵⁰⁹ Margalit went on to discuss the initial banning of speaking in German at various centres, including the Hendon Holocaust Survivor Centre, reflecting this ultimate aim of becoming “anglicised as quickly as possible” and becoming part of the British Jewish community.⁵¹⁰ This reflects a broader climate whereby refugees were given a list of “do’s and don’ts”, key ‘don’ts’ including speaking German.⁵¹¹

Assimilation or acculturation was thus forced upon or strongly encouraged in the young survivors who formed the ’45 Aid Society. Despite this, many survivor

⁵⁰⁶ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, pp. 132-3.

⁵⁰⁷ Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 78.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Wiener Library, ‘Do’s and Don’t’s for Refugees’.

recollections focus on their interest in British culture, learning English and fitting in and their desire to learn British ways.⁵¹² Martin Gilbert noted that whilst there was a high degree of truancy in other lessons, this was not true for English.⁵¹³ This conveys the importance of language to the young survivors and how vital this would be for being able to settle more permanently in the UK or emigrate to a country such as America as it would provide them with the means of communication and thus by extension employment, accommodation and a social life.

Within the '45 Aid Society, poems from their journal highlight their commitment to this linguistic and cultural duality within their cultures and assimilation as a priority. Peter Brandstein's poem 'Thirtyfive Years', published in 1981, prioritised the importance of learning British ways and passing this on to their children, making it as important to them as "remembering the Holocaust".⁵¹⁴ This places British culture and "ways" as a central focus.⁵¹⁵ This is indicative of Bolchover's discussion of acculturation, where it is possible and indeed desirable to blend cultures together in order to assimilate. The mention of the second generation here is also interesting, highlighting the significance of being British and 'fitting in' whilst remembering their history and honouring the past, which will be examined in the fifth chapter of this thesis.⁵¹⁶ This had unforeseen side effects, with many of the second generation remarking that they feel as if they don't "fit in" anywhere, due to their blended upbringings in between cultures.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹² Bea Lewkowicz, Interview with Minia Jay.

⁵¹³ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 291.

⁵¹⁴ Peter I. Brandstein, 'Thirtyfive Years', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (March, 1981), p. 21.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ellis Spicer, Email correspondence with Beth Joffe, 6 December, 2017.

Michael Etkind, referred to as the “society’s poet”, echoes similar themes to Brandstein’s ‘Thirtyfive Years’ in his poetry with perspectives of England as his “adopted home”, with one from 2003 called “England”, where he pleads for Britain to become “a beacon” against injustice, hatred and dictatorship.⁵¹⁸ 2003 was the year of the Iraq invasion and war, and it is likely that this influenced Etkind’s work and concerns about horrors being conducted inflicted against civilians and dictatorship in the Middle East. The subject of survivors taking an interest in current events, following international atrocities and finding a voice in mainstream culture and media platforms form a theme at the periphery of this thesis and will be critically engaged with in the sixth chapter of this thesis.⁵¹⁹ These two examples of poetry from the society reflect their allegiance to Britain and integration into society and current events as citizens with British identities rather than as outsiders. This indicates a level of retaining their histories and identities but taking on aspects of their new homeland and shelter in an example of Bolchover’s acculturation in action.⁵²⁰

In the present day, the members of the ’45 Aid Society have become more integrated into British society, their status cemented, and their peers provided for in financial, social and psychological ways. In recent years, the organisation has changed its emphasis to a broad focus on education, for instance speaking in schools and to other groups, and the importance of the second generation. Survivor Saul Hoffman echoes the change in emphasis in his narrative:

But as time went on and again, our Chairman and most
of us agree with this, that as time goes on, one of our

⁵¹⁸ Michael Etkind, ‘England’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (2003), p. 55.

⁵¹⁹ This theme will be examined further in Chapter Six of this thesis.

⁵²⁰ Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, p. 78.

objectives was to over the years it shouldn't disappear and shouldn't be forgotten, because it can be so easy to forget. So yes, our aim was to bring it to the forefront, that it's a terrible thing that happened, we were there, we are the witnesses, and for the society, for humanity, to keep it alive that people shouldn't make the same mistakes and fall in this terrible propaganda things, and life would be a much better place to live in. And that's why.⁵²¹

Hoffman acknowledged that the priorities of the '45 Aid Society have changed over time to reflect the society the individual members now live in, where many survivors are now elderly, financially secure and in the twilight of life, but society by and large still need reminding not to forget the Holocaust. Kurt Klappholz as Editor of the *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* commented in 1980 that societal interest in the Holocaust more broadly had significantly increased and that this had drawn more attention to the Society. This in turn had given the Society a platform to discuss the Holocaust and their experiences as survivors.⁵²² This echoes the example of how survivors become more self-confident in their status as survivors and their opinions which contribute to the overall theme within this thesis of validation, which will be discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Klappholz also asserted that one of the central aims of the Society was to bear witness and play a role in the remembrance of the Holocaust. This had evolved from the founding aim of support into an understanding that, as witnesses, these

⁵²¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April 2016.

⁵²² Kurt Klappholz, 'Editorial', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1980), p. 3.

survivors felt the pressures of duty to educate.⁵²³ He went on in 1985 to discuss the problematic idea of ‘historical lessons’ in terms of the Holocaust and highlights that everyone had differing motives for commemorating the same event, but many members placed importance on remembrance for the sake of their perished families, which was particularly crucial on anniversary dates.⁵²⁴

However, there is a difference between education and commemoration, and this cannot be understated. Contributors to the journal often highlighted the two differing aims presented and how they are not mutually exclusive.⁵²⁵ The leadership of Ben Helfgott as Chair until 2017 appears to have played a role in fostering this emphasis, with a 2006 profile by Ronald Channing in the *AJR Journal* referring to him as a “leading member of Holocaust education organisations” and various entries by Mr Helfgott in the *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* echo that same sentiment about education being a key priority.⁵²⁶

The second generation also marks a changing emphasis in the Society’s focus from its original aims. This is clear fairly early on in the formation of the ‘45 Aid Society as a formal association in the 1960s, where members kept in touch about their families, primarily through the journal, which saw its first publication in 1976 with second generation news.⁵²⁷ As time has passed on, this emphasis has become more pronounced, as first generation survivors grow frailer, leading to the second generation forming the main basis of the organising committee for reunions and the activities of the Society more generally. This is a process that was fully

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid, pp. 2-3.

⁵²⁵ Jeffrey Tribich, ‘The Yad Vashem Summer Institute 1985’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1989), p. 24.

⁵²⁶ Channing, ‘Profile: Ben Helfgott MBE’, p. 11.

⁵²⁷ Kurt Klappholz, ‘Editorial’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1976), p. 3; This will also be explored in Chapter Six of this thesis.

endorsed by the first generation of survivors, who marvel at the second generation for their energy and commitment to the cause that began with 732 young men and women in 1945.⁵²⁸ The second generation within the Society have a pivotal role to play as encouraged by their parents, with many speaking in schools to children about the Holocaust. The second generation will be discussed extensively in Chapter Five, through the lens of how their survivor parents raise them to how they interpret and cope with their families' histories through getting involved with these survivor associations and groups.

Overall, the '45 Aid Society can be seen as the group that exemplifies how an organisation can change as time passes by, responsive to current events and the beliefs of survivors and their children about what is a priority for the Society. While they foster a generally cohesive, familial relationship as a group with their own identity, some individual members view this as the formation of cliques within the overall community.⁵²⁹ In spite of this, the organisation has evolved over the years, from a reasonably insular organisation that placed emphasis on helping each other and raising money for good causes when possible, to an outward-facing large organisation that facilitates schoolchildren being taught about the Holocaust by survivors and their children. They also have a role in ensuring the Holocaust remains in discussion, with their testimonies fuelling that preoccupation. The addition of the second generation maintains this momentum and ensures that the mission of the society continues when the first generation has gone. The final association under study, the Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain, by contrast, takes a different approach to the second generation and formed under very different circumstances.

⁵²⁸ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016.

⁵²⁹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Leah Rubenstein, 26 April, 2018. This theme of 'cliques' will be examined in Chapter Three through examination of a 'hierarchy' of survivors and in Chapter Four through unpacking familial and friendly relationships in these groups.

Recognition, Reparations and Rapport – the Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain (CSAGB)

The Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain (CSAGB) has a more recent origin story than the ’45 Aid Society and AJR. It was formed in June 1995, following a split from the Jewish Care-run Holocaust Survivor Centre.⁵³⁰ This organisation formed in response to the lack of recognition towards the suffering of child survivors in the wider survivor community, informed by debates surrounding a hierarchy of suffering and how a survivor can be defined.⁵³¹ Their more recent origins can indicate how retirement serves as the point where the past can become more prevalent, whereby the psychological impact of the survivor experience reaches critical levels. Furthermore, the quest for recognition by child survivors forming their own group does not just indicate the desire to be recognised by the survivor community but by society at large. This is particularly with reference to reparations and the Claims Conference, which sought to provide material recognition of survivor suffering.⁵³² Whilst the battle for recognition in terms of reparations was a critical factor in the development of the CSAGB, the quest for a safe space and camaraderie amongst like-minded individuals of similar experiences has become the primary focus of this organisation. This theme echoes throughout the three associations under study but becomes more prevalent for the CSAGB amongst debates of exclusion and hierarchy.

⁵³⁰ Henri Obstfeld, ‘The Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain-AJR’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.7, No.4 (April, 2007), p. 4.

⁵³¹ See Chapter Three of this thesis for a more in-depth discussion of hierarchical survivorship.

⁵³² Joanna Millan, ‘Letter to the Editor: Child Survivor Pensions’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.14, No.12 (December, 2014), p. 7.

It seems that a “special kinship” developed amongst child survivors who felt at odds with the older generation of survivors.⁵³³ This, in part, can explain why child survivors have banded together into separate survivor associations, to explore their emotions with those who experienced feelings of division. The issue of division and feeling unwelcome is a powerful one in the origins of the CSAGB, as this group was formed for those of similar ages with comparable experiences but also to represent a gap in the way they were perceived by older survivors. This reflects Marouf Hasian Jr’s notion that child survivors were largely ignored by society until the early 1990s, a time in which the importance of these “youthful purveyors of Holocaust memories” were finally recognised following the deaths of many older survivors.⁵³⁴ Potential reasons cited for this include the idea that somehow, child survivors were “lesser”; that they did not suffer the same hardships as older survivors and that their memories were not as reliable due to their youth.⁵³⁵ Therefore, child survivors were not recognised as important “purveyors” of Holocaust experiences until older survivors were no longer alive to speak in public and act as witnesses.⁵³⁶

The chronology of the origins of the CSAGB in the 1990s raises issues of how retirement can influence the survivor’s desire to look inward and become introspective and reflective on their experiences as children during the Holocaust, as many child survivors were in their sixties during this decade. Their younger ages impacted their ability to commit to a group and regular meetings but also to take time to research their roots and unpack their memories as Margalit Judah has indicated:

⁵³³ Kestenberg and Kestenberg, ‘The sense of belonging’, pp. 557-8.

⁵³⁴ Maroun Hasian Jr, ‘Authenticity, Public Memories, and the Problematics of Post-Holocaust Remembrances: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Wilkomirski Affair’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol.91, No.3 (2005), p. 238.

⁵³⁵ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hannah Zohn, 13 March, 2018; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

⁵³⁶ Hasian Jr, ‘Authenticity, Public Memories, and the Problematics of Post-Holocaust Remembrances’, p. 238.

I think the only effect retirement has is whether you belong to a group, because you have the time to go to meetings, to go and socialise. Maybe to look for your roots to go back to your town or village where you came from. So, all that sort of thing in retirement. Certainly, the child survivors have got more members in recent years, and I think that's where the retirement bit comes.⁵³⁷

The influence of age on survivor recollections is well-documented in the literature. Paul Marcus and Alan Rosenberg trace this pattern in the context of life reviews in oral history, whereby a survivor has repressed their memories as they find them disorientating and “disorganising”.⁵³⁸ They argue that this “reaches a crest” in old age due to the inability to bring together “past, present and the shrinking future”.⁵³⁹ This is particularly evident in the transition from paid employment to retirement, with “the spectre of frailty and mortality” looming.⁵⁴⁰

Retirement can be a key trigger point for traumatic memories to return to the surface. In their younger years, immersion in paid work not only provided economic resources and social networks for both male and female survivors but also helped them to ward off intrusive memories.⁵⁴¹ Upon retirement, those memories become like a “broken record” that continues to spin.⁵⁴² Perle Susman reflected in my interview with her that it took a lot of effort for her and her husband to “get back on our feet”, leading to both of them working full-time before they had children.⁵⁴³ As

⁵³⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁵³⁸ Marcus and Rosenberg, ‘The Religious Life of Holocaust Survivors and its Significance for Psychotherapy’, pp. 195-6.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Kahana, Harel and Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants*, p. 3.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid, p. 8.

⁵⁴² Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 19.

⁵⁴³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

families grew, it can be argued that survivors who were stay-at-home parents also found themselves distanced from intrusive memories through channelling their energies into raising their families.⁵⁴⁴

The former chief psychologist at the Israeli AMCHA project, Natan Kellermann, has noted how “excessively busy” survivors kept themselves and concluded that this was a way of repressing their memories. Therefore, by being busy in the present they could avoid dwelling on their pasts. This represented the “contradictory effort” from survivors to simultaneously remember yet forget, and to approach yet avoid.⁵⁴⁵ Dov Shmotkin and Tzvia Blumstein have also highlighted this in their psychologically focused work on survivors, relying on the “interplay of vulnerability and resilience” that accompanies long-term trauma.⁵⁴⁶ This provides further challenges for the mental health of the survivor, as despite the intrusive and painful nature of these memories, they are “imperative for maintaining a unified self”, what oral historians would call composure.⁵⁴⁷

The influence of the survivor’s memories on their identity and sense of self is palpable, particularly when challenged by other survivors who question who has the right to call themselves a Holocaust survivor. How the CSAGB define themselves is fascinating, encompassing a broad framework of what it means to be a survivor:

We had survived the Second World War, varying in age
from older teenagers to babes-in-arms and had

⁵⁴⁴ Peleg, Lev-Wiesel and Yaniv, ‘Reconstruction of self-identity of Holocaust child survivors’, p. 412. This theme will be touched on more in Chapter Five of this thesis.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Shmotkin and Blumstein, ‘Tracing Long-Term Effects of Early Trauma’, p. 223.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 224.

See Methodology chapter of this thesis for discussions of how composure can be defined.

experienced Nazi persecution throughout Hitler-dominated Europe. We survived in different ways – in ghettos, on the run, in hiding, or in concentration camps, and a few of our members came on the Kindertransports.⁵⁴⁸

This broad definition of survivors incorporates those who came to Britain on the Kindertransport in 1939 before the worst atrocities were committed as well as those who remained in hiding for the duration, a mutable point which shall be explored in the next chapter but markedly a very inclusive definition which opens up further debates as to the place of some refugees within the survivor rubric. The point is also emphasised that the child survivors will be the last living witnesses to the horrors of the Holocaust, which reflects growing respect and recognition given to their experiences in recent years.⁵⁴⁹

Despite the tensions that exist within the Holocaust survivor community more broadly, it can be argued that the Child Survivors' Association forms a very amiable, relaxed group atmosphere. This is echoed by one of the members, who highlighted that “for many of us, being together is sufficient”, but there is space within a “relaxed social atmosphere” that “enables us to discuss our experiences should we wish to do so”.⁵⁵⁰ This represents a diversion from the initial assumption that Holocaust survivor groups can become like a surrogate family – as the environment here appears to be a loose-knit circle of friends or an extended family dynamic, with the analogy “like cousins at Christmas” being invoked and the

⁵⁴⁸ Obstfeld, ‘The Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain-AJR’, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Henri Obstfeld, ‘Annual Conference of Child Survivors’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.5, No.6 (June, 2005), p. 5.

importance of making friends and acquaintances.⁵⁵¹ This exists in contrast to the ‘outside’ friends of survivors, where there is the feeling of “still putting on an act”.⁵⁵² As a result, being with other child survivors provides a “safe space” or “safe environment” where the survivor does not need to explain themselves and is spending time with people who understand their history and perspectives.⁵⁵³

As well as the need for a safe space and survivor camaraderie in the face of community-based tension surrounding survivor definitions, the CSAGB reflects a need for communication and information. This does not only revolve around emotional issues of loneliness or isolation, but also current events and news that may be of interest to or directly affect the child survivor. An example of this is reparations, where child survivors allied together to lobby the Claims Conference, formally named ‘Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany’ to recognise the suffering of survivors in both material and moral aspects.⁵⁵⁴ Whilst the Claims Conference had been in existence since 1951, the settlement for child survivors was not made until the early 2000s.⁵⁵⁵ This successful claim was made in a one-off payment “in recognition of their [child survivors’] emotional loss”.⁵⁵⁶ In the same discussions, questions were raised whether they were entitled to a pension, in view of their families who lost their ability to claim their pensions “due to their early deaths in the camps”.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

⁵⁵² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁵⁵³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016.

⁵⁵⁴ Joanna Millan, ‘Letter to the Editor: Child Survivor Pensions’, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁵ Claims Conference, ‘History’, <http://www.claimscon.org/about/history/> [Accessed 24 April, 2018]

⁵⁵⁶ Joanna Millan, ‘Letter to the Editor: Child Survivor Pensions’, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

This contextual angle forms a broader basis for how the child survivors communicated with each other and banded together for a common goal, using mediums such as their newsletter and the *AJR Journal* as a key lobbying tool for disseminating news and information. But there are smaller, less grandiose manifestations of this communication phenomenon. A ‘ring around’ twice a year for survivors living outside of London from the formation of the Association onwards helped to counteract loneliness among isolated survivors and reaffirm that they are not cut off from the CSAGB community by not living in the capital.⁵⁵⁸ Newsletters and journals from the CSAGB are used to disseminate information, celebrating the birth of grandchildren, marriages and commemorating lives through the publication of member obituaries.⁵⁵⁹ This is particularly key for survivors who are further removed from the community, for instance living outside of London or who are too frail to venture out frequently and travel to meetings and events.

The CSAGB conduct their own forms of support in a very personal way, and it can be suggested that by its alliance with the AJR, they could ally their personal strengths with a more prominent institution that had more reach and resources. This is reflected in the CSAGB becoming a special interest group of the AJR in 2006.⁵⁶⁰ This was not an entirely harmonious decision; interviewees have highlighted the division caused by such a change due to the worry that the predominant focus of the AJR was German and Austrian refugees from the pre-war period rather than Eastern European survivors of the postwar period.⁵⁶¹ There was also some fear that by allying with the AJR, the CSAGB would lose some of the independence it had come to enjoy as a smaller, more intimate organisation.

⁵⁵⁸ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Obstfeld, ‘The Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain-AJR’, p. 4.

⁵⁶¹ This point was raised by a Polish survivor following a personal conversation at a BAHS conference in March 2018.

One interviewee however did not echo these concerns, and asserts that it was a bureaucratic and convenient decision – the AJR had social workers at its disposal, more resources than the CSAGB could offer and therefore more support and expertise in the material day-to-day concerns that could affect survivors.⁵⁶² He went on to joke that this only came from “putting AJR after our name”, leading the CSAGB to become the CSAGB-AJR but the organisation were able to reap numerous benefits from its continuing relationship with the AJR.⁵⁶³ This reflects the marked differences of opinion that shaped the growing debate leading to the decision in 2006 as this particular interviewee viewed it as a small concession for obtaining maximum assistance rather than a sacrifice of principle or autonomy. In sum, the relationship between the CSAGB and the AJR reflects a marriage of convenience for resource purposes and has been a cause of varying tensions within the groups.

Overall, the CSAGB grew from a quest for recognition for the suffering of child survivors and the validation that could be sought from campaigning and lobbying, and by ‘being together’ among experiential kin. Debates such as what defines a Holocaust survivor and who can lay claim to that status does not seem to matter internally, with the organisation being formed to counteract that perceived negativity and challenge to the validation of the child survivor experience. However, the search for child survivor recognition also developed within an international discourse of reparations, which is informed by attempting to ‘measure’ suffering, define who was a survivor and ultimately who had the right to claim for reparations as part of the Claims Conference. This informs debates of survivor hierarchy and definitions, which will be explored in further detail in Chapter Three.

⁵⁶² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

⁵⁶³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016.

Conclusion

The three organisations discussed in this chapter, the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), the '45 Aid Society and the Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain (CSAGB), provide a compelling case study to examine the evolving place of refugees in postwar British society. These groups began humbly, with a desire to support each other and not be a burden on the society that gave them shelter. Over time, they have developed into major charitable organisations and support networks with wide-ranging reach. This is particularly true for the two older organisations, the AJR and '45 Aid Society, which have become two of the central organisations for Holocaust victims. The CSAGB, formed in the 1990s, tried to remedy a gap in the recognition of their experiences from fellow survivors and the general public. This places emphasis on the importance of how these communities and organisations interact internally, with each other and other groups that make up the survivor community more broadly, as well as how these groups and individuals interact externally with wider British society. All three organisations reflect a desire for acculturation and assimilation, blending their old cultures with the culture of Britain as their country of settlement, shaping the importance of Anglicisation. However, these three organisations have distinct contexts, strengths and challenges to their overall community and cohesive structure, and this reflects that each association developed separately, with its own individuals and history to consider. Therefore, as this chapter has illustrated, there is a perceived need, and space for, multiple support organisations given the huge trauma of the Holocaust, the precarious situation many refugees and survivors found themselves in upon arrival to Britain and the need to stay in touch with their experiential kin.

Chapter Three – “Empathy is not a pie”: Definitions, Hierarchies and Survivors⁵⁶⁴

Martha Blend, an AJR member and Kindertransportee, composed a poem that was published in the Association’s journal in 2011 that posed: “How can you calibrate suffering? Is there a hierarchy of woe?”⁵⁶⁵ In Blend’s view, a scale of human suffering was not only unfeasible but provoked divisions in these communities. This has been deemed the ‘hierarchy of suffering’ within survivor communities, where the suffering of some has been recognised as more genuine and worthy of survivor status than other Holocaust victim narratives. This is despite a “democratic and universal” culture of pain surrounding the Holocaust and its survivors.⁵⁶⁶ George Kren has written of the word ‘survivor’ gaining currency as individuals began to recount their experiences, leading to the word ‘survivor’ becoming surrounded by an “almost mystical aura”.⁵⁶⁷ Mary Fulbrook has also indicated the differing “communities of experience” that could lead to “competitions of victimhood”⁵⁶⁸ and disputes arising as to who can be considered a survivor and an emphasis on unique suffering or having suffered the “most”.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁴ A version of this chapter of the thesis has been published, see Ellis Spicer, “One sorrow or another”: narratives of hierarchical survivorship and suffering in Holocaust survivor associations’, *Holocaust Studies*, Vol.26, No.4 (2020), pp. 442-460.

Elizabeth Rosner, ‘The Hierarchy of Suffering’, *Scoundrel Time* (1 April, 2018) <https://scoundreltime.com/the-hierarchy-of-suffering/> [Accessed 10 July, 2018]

⁵⁶⁵ Martha Blend, ‘A Hierarchy of Suffering?’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.6 (June, 2010), p. 11.

⁵⁶⁶ Black et al, ‘Cultural History and the Holocaust’, p. 75.

⁵⁶⁷ Kren, ‘The Holocaust Survivor and Psychoanalysis’, p. 3.

⁵⁶⁸ Mary Fulbrook, *Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 366.

This hierarchy is comprised of different groups, including the Kindertransport, adult refugees, ghetto survivors, concentration camp survivors both adults and children, in addition to resistance fighters, partisans and individuals of a variety of ages in hiding. Reasons for a hierarchy amongst survivors is difficult to pinpoint, but a compelling explanation is the view of second generation member and author Elizabeth Rosner, that suffering or empathy is like “a pie”, a finite resource that cannot expand to be shared by those wishing to partake.⁵⁷⁰ Links can be drawn here to sustenance and nourishment, with concern that there is not enough to be shared with everyone but to be guarded closely and only distributed to a small group.

Treating suffering as “a pie” means that some survivors feel the need to exclude others for fear that including them as a survivor will reduce the amount of support or status available to them. This can lead to insular friendship groups and associations within the broader survivor community, where groups split and divide due to feelings of rejection and a lack of understanding. Furthermore, Rosner emphasised fervently that “individual episodes of torture need not be measured against anyone else’s atrocity”.⁵⁷¹ This appears to be a growing view within the survivor community, especially among the younger cohort and the second generation.

Edith Eger embodies this in her recollections of Auschwitz retrospectively through her lens as a now clinical psychologist, discussing how there are competitive natures from individuals when it comes to suffering, but many who seek to mitigate their own suffering in response.⁵⁷² In Eger’s view, this is possibly the worst scenario to culminate from a perceived hierarchy of suffering as it presents us with a challenge

⁵⁷⁰ Elizabeth Rosner, ‘The Hierarchy of Suffering’.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Eger, *The Choice*, p. 10.

of who has the right to consider themselves victims or survivors more broadly, even separate to the Holocaust.⁵⁷³ These separate issues can include instances of abuse, crime, accidents, disease or natural disaster, and provides everyone with comparisons, mitigating their own suffering because there are people who have suffered more, something that Eger finds to be fruitless and distasteful.

Competitive suffering has also been compared to clinical work with couples in therapy, where “each seeks to occupy some moral high ground”, what Jack Drescher goes on to describe as “posturing”.⁵⁷⁴ This would suggest that this competitive structure of suffering and a perceived hierarchy is not merely confined to Holocaust survivors but is a worrying phenomenon of the human condition. This chapter will address specific instances of how a hierarchical framework is present within survivor associations, presenting the impact not just on individuals but on the group dynamics of the organisations under study.

However, the manifestation of this theme of competitive suffering within Holocaust survivors and their communities can be seen as a way to create a new sense of order to allow survivors to come to terms with their experiences and gain composure with regards to trauma. Despite this, it must be noted that composure for some may come at the cost of discomposure to others. In the interplay of subjectivities and experiences in these communities, the interaction of survivors and their memories does not assist with composure for all. The frameworks of composure and discomposure are vital to this thesis, and their definitions and theoretical debates surrounding the terms can be found in the Methodology chapter.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Jack Drescher, ‘Trauma and Psychoanalysis: Hierarchies of Suffering’, in Jean Petrucelli and Sarah Schoen (eds.), *Unknowable, Unspeakable, and Unsprung: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Truth, Scandal, Secrets and Lies* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 65.

Margalit Judah expressed her reasoning for the existence of a hierarchy as thus: “they’re focusing inwards on how terrible their experiences were, I think they don’t want other people to, I think in a way they feel it minimizes what they went through”.⁵⁷⁵ This sentiment is palpable and encapsulates the view that suffering is treated as something that cannot be shared or all-encompassing for fear of the mitigation of other experiences. Elizabeth Rosner summarised this succinctly within an overall theme of individual subjectivity and definitions:

We shouldn’t apply our own standards of harm and resilience to others and their unique suffering. Scars do not need to be visible, nor do they need to be explained or corroborated in order to fit into a hierarchy or to deserve recognition and compassion.⁵⁷⁶

There is much to be said here on the uniqueness of each individual and their suffering, reflecting that it is not productive to compare sufferings in order to make them fit into a hierarchical framework. As Eger previously suggested, comparison often gives way to personal mitigation or denigration of experiences at the hands of others.⁵⁷⁷ Irrespective of the belief that it is unproductive to compare suffering, it still occurs within the survivor community. Rosner represents the crux of the issue by touching on themes of corroboration and recognition, with the feeling of the absurdity of hierarchy, which Monica Porter noted with shock when she became aware of its existence.⁵⁷⁸ The shock value that these tensions provoke cannot be underestimated as it challenges the wide assumption encouraged by origin stories of

⁵⁷⁵ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁵⁷⁶ Rosner, ‘The Hierarchy of Suffering’.

⁵⁷⁷ Eger, *The Choice*, p. 10.

⁵⁷⁸ Monica Porter, ‘A Holocaust survivor hierarchy? How absurd’, *The Jewish Chronicle* (22 July, 2010) <https://www.thejc.com/comment/comment/a-holocaust-survivor-hierarchy-how-absurd-1.16944> [Accessed 10 July, 2018]

these organisations that survivors are experiential kin who are tied together by their experiences. Overall, there does appear to be an inward focus that Margalit Judah mentioned, which places the suffering of specific individuals above others, endorsing the idea that suffering is viewed as a finite resource or a pie that cannot adequately sustain everyone.

To summarise, this chapter will argue that there is no standout or apparent reason for why a hierarchical approach has developed in survivor communities. Rather, it seems to be a multi-faceted cacophony of causes that has instigated composure for some survivors at the risk of discomposure to others. Halina Rosenkranz has marked this sentiment as paramount for attendees of her survivor support group: “We all suffered or we would not be here”.⁵⁷⁹ A solitary approach to suffering challenges the idea of harmonious communities based on memory that a communicative memory framework encourages for the purposes of group identity. Communicative memory is exclusively based on everyday communications and *where* memories are shared, for instance, within communities, and this becomes important for this thesis as survivor narratives are shared in a more private sphere.⁵⁸⁰ It is this domain that this research aims to access through oral history interviews with survivor members of these groups and their journal letters and articles, a domain that is difficult to access via other documents due to their lack of existence or availability.

This chapter will begin with the multiple definitions that exist of who can be considered a Holocaust survivor. Jewish victims, the general public, organisations such as Yad Vashem in Israel, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the

⁵⁷⁹ Halina Rosenkranz, ‘Scars of the Past: Group Work with Holocaust Survivors and Descendants’, *Kavod: A Journal for Caregivers and Families*, Issue 5 (Spring, 2015) <http://kavod.claimscon.org/2015/03/scars-of-the-past-group-work-with-holocaust-survivors-and-descendants/> [Accessed 10 July, 2018]

⁵⁸⁰ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, *New German Critique*, No.65 (1995), pp. 126-7.

Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, historians and other writers have vocally disagreed on the parameters of victimhood.⁵⁸¹ It is essential to consider interpretations of what a survivor is, what a victim is more generally and how people have come to be defined by these terms. By doing so, we can explore notions of hierarchical thinking amongst survivor organisations, revolving around who can consider themselves a part of the group. It cannot be underestimated how important definitions become to evoking a sense of belonging. Belonging to these groups and being publicly identified as a Holocaust survivor connotes a particular status. Therefore, respect, access to a network of experiential kin and the possibility of financial reward through reparations are at stake.

Journalist Talia Lavin, writing for the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, has argued that it is mostly unnecessary for there to be a universally accepted definition of what a survivor is, but instead suggests that we should focus on how these people define themselves.⁵⁸² This is a central argument that underpins this thesis, where the importance of selfhood is paramount. However, the issue of defining a survivor remains a challenge to the subjectivity of individual victims. The impact on a survivor's wellbeing cannot be underestimated; if they feel that their experiences are rejected and their identity as a survivor stripped away, it can lead to higher instances of depression and feelings of isolation. The impact that this isolation can bring challenges to the validation of each survivor's memories and to their fundamental identity.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸¹ Ron Miller, Pearl Beck and Berna Torr, 'Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust residing in the United States: Estimates & Projections: 2010 – 2030', *Claims Conference Report* (23 October, 2009) http://www.claimscon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Jewish-Survivors-USA_v2-3_25_14.pdf [Accessed 11 July, 2018]; Lucy Symons, 'Row over definition of Holocaust survivor', *Jewish Chronicle* (14 January, 2010) <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/26071/row-over-definition-holocaust-survivor> [Accessed 11 April, 2019]

⁵⁸² Talia Lavin, 'Who is a Holocaust survivor – and does it matter?', *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (21 August, 2014) <https://www.jta.org/2014/08/21/news-opinion/united-states/who-is-a-holocaust-survivor-and-does-it-matter> [Accessed 11 July, 2018]

⁵⁸³ For further discussion of validation as a concept and how it relates to this thesis please see the Introduction of this thesis.

It is also prudent to discuss why there is a hierarchy and how it manifests itself. Discussion of this trope is speculative, sensitive and potentially controversial, as theorisations revolve around human behaviour rather than concrete observable ‘facts’. As a result, interpretation can differ and straddles an interdisciplinary edge between history, psychology and sociology. The accounts produced by child survivors revealed that age, rather than gender, was key to explaining the competitive suffering experienced by survivors in oral history interviews.⁵⁸⁴ Additionally, the experience of the child survivor affects their association with their peers, with the desire to share a connection with those who will understand, rather than those who may seek to belittle their suffering or utilise a hierarchical framework in order to make comparisons.

Consideration needs to be made of how shared memories and a communicative memory framework – where memories are shared in relation to group loyalty or belonging – foster hierarchical ways of thinking within these survivor groups. This can lead to the members of these organisations beginning to unconsciously demean the experiences of others based on their own definition of what a survivor is. This can provide a challenge to these communities, their relationships and the validation of each other’s memories and identities. Many survivors who feel a victim of a perceived hierarchy of suffering emphasise the insecurity of their survivor status and the feeling of not belonging; this would suggest that survivors seek to have their experiences validated and considered part of a group narrative of shared trauma. Margalit Judah referred to this directly and has stated: “I decided that I am a survivor and I need to be amongst other survivors, in a way to

⁵⁸⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hannah Zohn, 13 March, 2018.

validate my experience and to say yes I'm one of you rather than just on my own".⁵⁸⁵ She marked the introspective decision that she made about her identity and the need to be among others with similar experiences. Therefore, the importance of the primary validation of survivor experiences cannot be underestimated.

Hierarchy as a theme also presents itself in an oral history setting, which may bring about discomposure. To reiterate, Lynn Abrams has defined discomposure as "a kind of psychic unease at their [the interviewees'] inability to align subjective experience with discourse".⁵⁸⁶ Perhaps the adoption of a more aggressive interview style, in which survivors are asked directly about hierarchy and are challenged about why they think hierarchies exist in their associations, might elicit further analysis as to answering 'why' but risks discomposure to the interviewee. The differences between younger and older survivors become palpable here as they have very different reactions to the suggestion of hierarchy in the oral history setting. Therefore, this chapter will engage with the methodological challenges hierarchy as a topic has brought to the interviews conducted for this thesis.

Overall, the lynchpin of this chapter and indeed this thesis more broadly focuses on the validation of survivor memories and their overall survivor identity. If survivors do not feel validated by their experiential kin and do not gain acceptance within these communities, this can become very problematic for their identity and self-conception. This is where oral history can enrich a study, whereby we can examine individual subjectivities and how survivors construct their narratives

⁵⁸⁵ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁵⁸⁶ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 69; Also see: Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* and Juliette Pattinson, 'The thing that made me hesitate ...', pp. 245-263. For further discussion of discomposure see the Methodology chapter of this thesis.

around prevalent issues within their communities and broader institutions. In sum, this chapter will engage with survivor association journals, memoirs, oral history, news articles and institutional websites to engage with the theme of how a survivor can be defined and what influences hierarchical thinking amongst survivors and in their associations.⁵⁸⁷ This is an important topic to examine as it reflects on a common assumption that the survivor community is harmonious and unified in their past suffering and present composure as highlighted by Hannah Pollin-Galay's concept of 'tsuzamen', where familial-type bonding is attained through shared trauma.⁵⁸⁸ But the existence of a hierarchy raises the issue that there are controversies and tensions within these groups. This allows for a more nuanced consideration of these survivor communities and what survivors can gain or lose from their involvement.

Who is responsible for defining a survivor?⁵⁸⁹

Maybe the above question is as unreasonable as it is unanswerable. Nevertheless, it is prudent to unpack the multiple definitions that exist on what a survivor is. Does the historian possess the authority to define a survivor, based on a wealth of archival research and historiographical frameworks? Or is this responsibility more institutional, for instance, those who represent the Holocaust survivor and their experiences, such as Yad Vashem? Are these organisations informed by academic historians on their definitions or does this differentiate? Alternatively, does this task fall to those who distribute compensation such as the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany? Perhaps the duty of definition lies on a much more individual level, indicated by survivors and their peers identifying themselves as well as each other. After all, the rejection of individual experiences occurs in a framework

⁵⁸⁷ See Introduction for definitions of and the unpacking of the concept of community.

⁵⁸⁸ Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, p. 77.

⁵⁸⁹ See Dan Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 21.

of survivor associations and the broader survivor community rather than institutional enforcements of more stringent definitions. This is crucial as self-conception and the definition of a survivor based on these associations and groups fuels how the individuals within the community relate to each other.

Ronnie Landau has argued that “our emotional and intellectual helplessness in the face of the enormity of the Holocaust” has contributed to a monopolisation by many people who form the “victim group”, leading to an unwillingness to “share” the event with others.⁵⁹⁰ It is within this context that debates of whether it is appropriate to compare the Holocaust or permit it to be situated alongside other genocides in more recent years.

In addition, a “problematic conflation” has developed between Jewish identity and victimhood, but also the conflation of “suffering with victimhood”.⁵⁹¹ This reflects broader considerations of the “sanctification of suffering”, which can prove problematic as “some forms of suffering are not caused by victimization”, leading to a tendency to anthropomorphize some traumatic events.⁵⁹² There has been a tendency to view the entire Jewish faith as a victimized race historically, instead of marking individuals who have experienced direct trauma due to their Jewish faith as victims. This exists in combination with defining victimhood. Factors here include whether a definition necessitates an agent to be a victim of, such as a perpetrator, or whether individuals can be victims of more natural phenomena such as disease and natural disaster.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹⁰ Landau, *Studying the Holocaust*, p. 10.

⁵⁹¹ Anne Rothe, *Popular Trauma Culture: Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011), pp. 15 & 25.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*

Terminology is a critical issue for this chapter and indeed this thesis more broadly, and it will initially focus on how to define a survivor. This becomes further complicated due to the confused relationship between being a victim and a survivor. Specifically to survivors of the Holocaust, there has been a transformation of the Holocaust more broadly, where survival was emphasised over death as an “exceptional achievement” rather than “the collective demonizing of survivors as ruthless collaborators”.⁵⁹⁴ The term ‘survivor’ itself is an interesting one to examine, seen to be preferred for its connotations of “resilience and strength, in overcoming adversity” instead of the term ‘victim’, which it has been argued directs attention to the perpetrators and “damage they have inflicted on others”.⁵⁹⁵ This notion further evokes the passivity of the term ‘victim’ rather than the strength and resilience associated with the term ‘survivor’. This thesis will predominantly use ‘survivor’ to define these individuals as this is how they identify, but will also reflect in this chapter about how the term ‘victim’ has come to be preferred in institutional cases.

Historians and writers have become the accepted authority in media articles when defining a survivor. This would, in turn, suggest that whether this is appropriate or not, scholars affect public perceptions surrounding what a survivor is considered to be. The traditional or conservative school of opinion appears to congregate behind Czech-Israeli scholar Yehuda Bauer, whereby survivors are “those people who were physically persecuted by the Nazis or their cohorts, in ghettos, concentration camps or labor camps”.⁵⁹⁶ No stranger to controversy, Bauer expressed sympathy for others who did not necessarily fit that definition, remarking in 2004: “I don't mean to denigrate the suffering of people who suffered from race laws and anti-Semitic decree, or those who fled with nothing in their possession, but

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 37.

⁵⁹⁵ McNally, *Remembering Trauma*, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁶ Talia Lavin, ‘Who is a Holocaust survivor’.

these are not Holocaust survivors”.⁵⁹⁷ Bauer’s definition exists at a controversial edge of Holocaust Studies more generally, where it has been accepted that a universally agreed-upon definition might never be found, owing to numerous controversies and disagreements.⁵⁹⁸ Hannah Yablonka, at a more inclusive edge of the field, has broadly defined a Holocaust survivor as:

All Jews in continental Europe who had suffered from Nazi oppression, either directly (the ghetto, the camps, the need to live in hiding) or indirectly (losing their families, fleeing or being expelled from countries conquered by the Nazis)... I based this definition on three measures: those who saw themselves as Holocaust survivors in early postwar years, those who were seen as such by the Jews then living in Eretz Israel (the Yishuv, i.e., pre-Israel Palestine), and those consumed by a profound sense of historic consciousness and mission due to having witnessed the magnitude of the devastation and to having been affected by it, whether directly, individually, or via their families.⁵⁹⁹

Yablonka’s definition takes a comprehensive view of those who consider themselves Holocaust survivors, and those who could be perceived as such. She cites the implications that definitions can have on consciousness and selfhood, such as a sense

⁵⁹⁷ Amiram Barkat, ‘Who counts as a Holocaust survivor?’ *Haaretz* (18 April, 2004) <https://www.haaretz.com/1.4781806> [Accessed 10 July, 2018]

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid; Myra Giberovitch, *Recovering from Genocidal Trauma: An Information and Practice Guide for Working with Holocaust Survivors* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 45.

⁵⁹⁹ Hannah Yablonka, ‘Holocaust Survivors in Israel: Time for an Initial Taking of Stock’, in Dalia Ofer, Francoise S. Ouzan and Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz (eds.), *Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 185.

of belonging to a group or feeling isolated.⁶⁰⁰ Dan Bar-On concurs with Yablonka's assessment that considered "objective definitions" do not reflect the vast array of subjectivities that make up the wartime experience, whereby many do not identify themselves as Holocaust survivors and therefore *should not* be categorized as such.⁶⁰¹ This takes on a merging of the theoretical and practical definitions that arise around what qualities or experiences define a Holocaust survivor and informs the debate around a survivor hierarchy. Indeed, Raul Hilberg has argued that a hierarchy developed in response to "no ironclad definition" of a survivor in the postwar period, which left a hierarchy where "the decisive criteria are exposure to risk and depth of suffering".⁶⁰² As we have seen, respected scholars within the discipline have come to conclusions with varying degrees of inclusivity as to what a survivor is and is not.

Whilst there is no rigid definition of what constitutes a Holocaust survivor and their wartime experiences, there are further debates to consider. For instance, what does one gain from being accepted as a Holocaust survivor under varying definitions? Diane Wolf has shown how survivors have been presented as "heroes", connoting strength and persistence, whilst Hannah Yablonka examines their portrayal as "tragic heroes".⁶⁰³ This, in turn, makes their stories "sacrosanct" by their very existence and elevates the survivor into a mysterious, hagiographical figure.⁶⁰⁴ However, some may argue that being identified as a survivor is not a positive phenomenon, and this can also have implications for the subjectivity of these individuals. Peter Novick represents Holocaust-survivorship as "terminal", arguing that it is an externally conferred diagnosis, a "lifelong attribute" that provokes

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 21.

⁶⁰² Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 187.

⁶⁰³ Diane L. Wolf, 'What's in a Name? The Genealogy of Holocaust Identities', *Genealogy*, Vol.19, No.1 (2017), p. 3; Hannah Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel after the War* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 9.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

feelings of having been set apart due to the reaction in the postwar world to their survivor status.⁶⁰⁵ Being marked out, differentiated and labelled a survivor implies a distinction, making some feel like “a museum piece, a freak, a ghost”.⁶⁰⁶

Some Holocaust survivors can feel that they lose themselves and their individuality in the magnitude of what Elizabeth Rosner has referred to as “the S word”.⁶⁰⁷ Given that the Nazis did not see these people as individuals, replacing their names with numbers, for example, they lose themselves a second time when others label them as survivors and do not consider other aspects that may make up their identities. This is unintentional; the societal elevation of survivors does not seek to dehumanise them or reduce their lives to one traumatic incident. Instead, the focus is on the profile survivors have as individuals with acquired “prophetic ability” from their trauma and elevating their traumatic experiences to the realms of hagiography and associated strength.⁶⁰⁸

The above debates regarding the positive and negative aspects of being defined as a survivor suggest an often romanticised view where survivors are defined in a more abstract way. A similarly figurative and theoretical interpretation has been adopted by Michael Goldberg, who has asserted that “anyone who manages to stay alive in body and in spirit, enduring dread and hopelessness without the loss of will to carry on in human ways” ought to be considered a Holocaust survivor.⁶⁰⁹ This places practical concerns of staying alive through such trauma and adds a further dimension of the retaining of the human spirit, which can be argued is difficult for

⁶⁰⁵ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 67.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ See Elizabeth Rosner, *Survivor Café*, Chapter 2 on ‘The S Word’, pp. 35-62.

⁶⁰⁸ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus, 1989), p. 66. This will be examined further in Chapter Six on the response of survivors to current events in media discourses.

⁶⁰⁹ Goldberg, *Why Should Jews Survive?*, pp. 20-1.

survivors in the face of their trauma. However, definitions such as these lack precise definition as to what geography should be considered, what chronology does Holocaust victim status begin with, and what method of suffering ‘counts’.

More poetically, Idith Zertal’s assessment of a survivor is that they are a remnant of another world, who came back but left a part of themselves behind in the catastrophe they experienced.⁶¹⁰ Mary Fulbrook has also referred to this theme of survivors leaving something behind by quoting Cordelia Edvardson that “we, the survivors, have lost our right to residence in life”.⁶¹¹ Edvardson’s statement leaves suggestions that survivors are ghosts that occupy a liminal space between life and death, having seen such horrors and surviving, but remaining forever changed. Therefore, these sentiments endorse views where Holocaust victims are viewed as “tragic heroes”, which elevates them to a position they feel uncomfortable in.⁶¹² This can be as problematic as it is poetic because it encourages a perspective of survivors as heroes but also as empty, damaged shells of humanity. While it is prudent to acknowledge the impact of the Holocaust experience on survivors, it is unproductive to endorse a single view of a wide group of victims crossing a large body of experiences.

While many writers such as Michael Rothberg and Idith Zertal have adopted interpretations that border on the abstract and the poetic, marking survivors as having left a part of themselves in their trauma,⁶¹³ institutions committed to educating others on the tragedy have also driven (and in some instances hindered) the move towards a universal definition of survival. Organisations such as Yad Vashem, the Claims

⁶¹⁰ Idith Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 52.

⁶¹¹ Fulbrook, *Reckonings*, p. 171.

⁶¹² Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, p. 9.

⁶¹³ *Ibid*; Goldberg, *Why Should Jews Survive?*, pp. 20-1.

Conference⁶¹⁴ and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) have a crucial role to play. As the organisations that represent the Holocaust, its survivors and the responsibility for educating the public or distributing compensation to individuals, the parameters they set for what a survivor is defined as becomes significant. This is due to the ramifications of reparation and status that being recognised by these organisations can bring.

The *Jewish Chronicle* in 2010 picked up on numerous debates of what a survivor is but reaffirmed Israeli Holocaust Centre Yad Vashem's definition that a Holocaust survivor was "someone who was in a camp, in Germany or in an occupied country after the war broke out".⁶¹⁵ In this vein, they rely on an institutional definition, emphasising that these organisations hold the primary responsibility for defining a survivor. This vague definition implies that living in these nations during the war years was sufficient to constitute being a survivor. However, the article concluded that there was no widespread definition that could be agreed on, leading David Cesarani to argue "Both terms, 'Holocaust' and 'survivor', have become woefully imprecise".⁶¹⁶ By arguing that the terms "have become" imprecise, there is an implication that definitions have become waylaid and have lost a sense of purity or accuracy as time has passed. Whether this has happened or not is subject to debate. Furthermore, we can observe that there have always been discussions surrounding the issue of defining survivors and victims of the Holocaust in a range of chronologies.

Indeed, Yad Vashem have become notorious for shying away from a precise definition, acknowledging ambiguity and stating that "it is difficult to define the term

⁶¹⁴ See Chapter Two for an overview of the Claims Conference.

⁶¹⁵ Symons, 'Row over definition of Holocaust survivor'.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

survivor”, without elaborating any further.⁶¹⁷ Indeed, journalist Jordan Kutzik has accused the organisation of “purposefully eschewing” deciding on an exact definition to avoid controversy, whereby they do not want to upset individuals by stringently suggesting who is and who is not a survivor.⁶¹⁸ An understanding of the broader Israeli context is key to explaining Yad Vashem’s approach to definitions, whereby being defined as a survivor or a refugee can significantly affect entitlement to compensation, reparations and support.⁶¹⁹ Ruth Sinai, writing for Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* in 2007, noted that government support for Holocaust survivors and refugees, however defined, should be based on need and circumstance rather than positioning within any type of Holocaust victim hierarchy.⁶²⁰ Therefore, the wider Israeli context of means-tested state support is demonstrated rather than support based on a definition of victimhood, which can perhaps begin to explain Yad Vashem’s reticence on arriving at a definition.

Sinai’s link between survivor status and financial compensation is a marked issue when considering how a survivor can be defined. With no specific definition universally agreed upon, the issue of who is entitled to financial recompense becomes more marked. Robert Weyeneth notes that reparations become “an apology that takes a distinctly material form” and this marked a crucial development in the postwar period and our understanding of victimhood.⁶²¹ Talia Lavin has explored how the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), originating in 1952, needed a highly specific definition in order to

⁶¹⁷ Talia Lavin, ‘Who is a Holocaust survivor?’.

⁶¹⁸ Jordan Kutzik, ‘Who counts as a Holocaust survivor?’, *Forward* (4 March, 2014) <https://forward.com/opinion/193810/who-counts-as-a-holocaust-survivor/> [Accessed 10 July, 2018]

⁶¹⁹ Ruth Sinai, ‘Holocaust Claims / A Foolish Hierarchy of Suffering’, *Haaretz* (20 August, 2007) <https://www.haaretz.com/1.4963485> [Accessed 10 July, 2018]

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Weyeneth, ‘The Power of Apology and the Process of Historical Reconciliation’, p. 18.

decide who was entitled to monetary support, relying on a “tiered system”.⁶²² As this chapter will go on to explore, the idea of tiers of suffering can be problematic and encourage hierarchical thinking. Talia Lavin has asserted that “beyond the distinctions necessitated by reparations”, “strict requirements for claiming a Holocaust survivor identity” are not necessary due to the psychological impact these definitions can have.⁶²³

Despite the idea that strict requirements for survivor status and identity were unnecessary, institutions needed to define who fell within their parameters, especially within the question of who was entitled to compensation. The Claims Conference defined survivors more within the realm of “Nazi victims” based on the following criteria:

A Nazi victim is considered to be any Jewish person who lived in Germany, Austria, or any of the countries occupied by the Nazis or their Axis allies or who emigrated from any of the countries below after the following dates and before liberation:

- Germany after January 1933;
- Austria after July 1936;
- Czechoslovakia after September 1938;
- Poland after September 1939;
- Algeria between September 1940 and March 1943;
- Denmark and Norway after April 1940;
- Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg and France after May 1940;
- Morocco between July 1940 and November 1942;
- Libya after February 1941;
- Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Greece after April 1941;
- Tunisia between November 1942 and July 1943;
- Italy after August/September 1943;
- Albania after September 1943; and

⁶²² Talia Lavin, ‘Who is a Holocaust survivor’.

⁶²³ Ibid.

- Areas of the former Soviet Union after June 1941.⁶²⁴

This interpretation takes a geographically- and temporally-specific approach in its consideration of who constitutes a Nazi victim. For instance, the above Claims Conference definition of a Nazi victim illustrates the difficulty in assessing when flight from these countries fell within the parameters of Holocaust victimhood. For instance, those of Austrian nationality are regarded possible victims after July 1936, when the Gentleman's Agreement, acknowledging Austria as a German state, was signed, whereas it was not until June 1941, with Operation Barbarossa, that someone living in the former Soviet Union was labelled a victim. Moreover, the definition focuses solely on Jewish suffering, and not others who could be observed as Holocaust victims such as Roma and Sinti 'Gypsies', homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, 'Asocials', those with physical and mental impairments and political prisoners.⁶²⁵

Ron Miller, Pearl Beck and Berna Torr in a 2009 report for the Claims Conference also reflect the above definition, where 'flight' cases are included in a Nazi victim framework.⁶²⁶ The Claims Conference, however, often used the terminology of victim rather than survivor, which broadens the definition. The relationship between the two terms has been previously noted in this chapter, and this becomes an instance of how the term 'victim' can also include refugees as opposed to purely survivors of camps and ghettos. This more inclusive definition is also adhered to by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), who define a survivor more specifically as "any persons, Jewish or non-Jewish, who

⁶²⁴ Giberovitch, *Recovering from Genocidal Trauma*, p. 47.

⁶²⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'Survivors and Victims', <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/the-holocaust-survivors-and-victims-resource-center/survivors-and-victims> [Accessed 13 February, 2019]

⁶²⁶ Miller, Beck and Torr, 'Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust residing in the United States'.

were displaced, persecuted, or discriminated against due to the racial, religious, ethnic, social, and political policies of the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945”, which includes, among others, “people who were refugees or were in hiding.”⁶²⁷

The context of refugees and those in hiding and where they fit into survivor organisations and associations becomes marked when we consider debates that can arise. These can include whether these communities are inclusive and/or exclusive dependent on their individual definitions and perceptions of what makes a ‘real’ survivor. There is also a controversy around whether child survivors are second generation or ‘generation 1.5’, whereby they represent a middle ground between ‘adult survivors’ (first generation) and their children (second generation).⁶²⁸ However, if individuals do not view themselves as survivors, the label ought not be forced upon them. But should we consider people who view themselves as survivors where their place is hazier within precise definitions? Ultimately, a preoccupation with definitions can do more harm than good, and can turn these communities insular where some groups are hostile to outsiders and prioritise the suffering of themselves as legitimate over the suffering of others. There is little regard for acknowledging that “All of our suffering matters”, acknowledged by a psychologist who ran a peer-to-peer support group for survivors.⁶²⁹

A key debate within survivor associations is the place of the Kindertransport as survivors and the acknowledgement of their suffering. Ralph Mollerick recalled an incident in an unspecified year that occurred at a Child Survivor conference in

⁶²⁷ Talia Lavin, ‘Who is a Holocaust survivor’.

⁶²⁸ This debate arose at an AJR gathering in Bromley in November 2017.

⁶²⁹ Giberovitch, *Recovering from Genocidal Trauma*, p. 47.

America. Tales of slave labour and concentration camps were swapped between attendees and he recollected that he was made to feel unwelcome:

While my wife considered leaving the workshop, I felt obligated to take a different position. I explained that while Kindertransportees did not suffer the horrors of the camps, we, nevertheless, suffered in other ways. We were placed on trains without our parents, sent to a foreign land where different customs and language needed to be learned; most of us never saw our parents again; we lost our possessions; our education was interrupted; we lost support and nurturing from our parents; and for most, this included loss of a comfortable life in our homes and in the communities where we once lived. The lady apologized and said that she had not realized the losses we had suffered.⁶³⁰

The frosty reception that Mollerick received from other members of the group is becoming less common within these circles due to a reduction in the number of survivors but is still observable in survivor attitudes to the Kindertransport. It is clear that the Kindertransport occupy a peripheral space in the survivor understanding of who their peers are, whereby a broad number of survivors do not consider them as part of their group of comparable suffering. When pressed about the place of the Kindertransport as survivors, Margalit Judah, a CSAGB member, qualified her position:

⁶³⁰ Ralph Mollerick, 'Voices of the Kinder: Should Kinder of the Kindertransport be considered Holocaust survivors?', *The Kindertransport Association* http://www.kindertransport.org/voices/mollerick_survivors.htm [Accessed 11 July, 2018]

A lot of people now want to be categorised as a survivor, in the Kindertransport and the refugees, they all want to be survivors. I mean, in a way that negates their own experiences, if they want to map in with us, but why? And also, the Kinder have their own issues and they should embrace that and say yes we had difficulties as well, but they're not survivors they are Kindertransport, you know. Kindertransport were people who came before the war, [they] were refugees, that's their experience, which is, it doesn't minimise their experience. And I think why this rush to everybody wants to be a survivor.⁶³¹

Margalit placed the desire to be acknowledged and recognised as a survivor as the driving force for the Kinder's activism and presence in Holocaust memory within Britain. This shows how determined the Kindertransport are to be heard and understood. This can provide 'safety in numbers' in the sense that the Kindertransport align themselves with all Jewish victims. Furthermore, it is striking that Margalit discussed the Kinder as wanting to "map in with us", creating a division between 'us and them'. While sensitive to the notion of negating experiences or validating them, she highlights a controversial notion that to present the Kindertransport as survivors mitigated their trauma and challenges that they faced as young refugees. This can put the Kindertransport quite justifiably into what Rubin Katz deemed "a category of their own", which can be compared to survival in some aspects because of the extreme challenges such upheaval brought.⁶³² This

⁶³¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

⁶³² Rubin Katz, 'Letter to the Editor', *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.5 (May, 2010), p. 7.

theme of the distinction between refugee and survivor is a nuance that often goes unrecognised in more official discourses such as the USHMM, Yad Vashem and Claims Conference definitions of Holocaust victims and survivors, where the term victim is often preferred.

The discussion of what defines a Holocaust survivor becomes fairly prevalent within survivor associations, and this can be seen in a fraught debate in the *AJR Journal* that began in April 2010 with a letter from Peter Phillips, headlined “In search of a definition”.⁶³³ This letter is framed in the previous discussion of the place of Kindertransportees, such as himself, as survivors, evoking the authority of the Stephen Spielberg Shoah Foundation, who had defined him as a survivor and interviewed him as one.⁶³⁴ Roman Licht, a Mauthausen survivor, responded in the next issue with the following retort:

Sir - It was agreed sometime ago that the term ‘Holocaust survivor’ is applied only to someone who was in a concentration camp (in Europe) and was alive on 9 May 1945 or later. Bending this simple definition for whatever reason is considered rather painful by the very few genuine survivors still alive.⁶³⁵

Mr Licht signed off his letter with his Mauthausen identification number, a “powerful way to underscore his own authenticity”.⁶³⁶ His opinion appears to ally closely with the traditional school of historiography and survivor definition advocated by

⁶³³ Peter Phillips, ‘Letter to the Editor: “Holocaust Survivors” and “Refugees”: In Search of a Definition’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.4 (April, 2010), p. 7.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Roman Licht, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.9 (September, 2010), p. 7.

⁶³⁶ Spicer, ‘One Sorrow Or Another’, p. 6.

Professor Yehuda Bauer, but stringently excludes those who survived ghettos. This makes his definition even more conservative than Bauer's. Mr Licht appears to take a firm view on "bending" this definition, implying distortion and twisting of truth by doing so. He declared that offence and pain would be caused to the camp survivors who are considered survivors by everyone, presenting this issue as a topic not subject to debate or revision.⁶³⁷ This reinforces the stringent definition that many survivors adhere to in reference to recognising suffering and a potential challenge to an authenticity that is under threat by allegedly fake or fraudulent 'survivors'. Elie Wiesel has also highlighted this by suggesting "Suddenly everybody declares himself a 'Holocaust survivor', reasoning that everybody *could* have become one".⁶³⁸ This would suggest that survivors feel that their own identity is diluted by welcoming 'lesser' suffering into the Holocaust survivor fold. This further enforces Rosner's assertion that "empathy is not a pie" and that respect for an individual's suffering does not damage the reverence for other experiences.⁶³⁹

The correspondence continued in the *AJR Journal* over the next five months in 2010 as contributors wrote letters to the editor questioning who specifically had the right to call themselves a survivor. Anita Lasker Wallfisch, part of the Auschwitz orchestra and an influential AJR member that often speaks in schools, drew a distinction between those who were in hiding from the Nazis or in camps and ghettos, who she considered survivors because they "remained alive" in the countries where they faced almost certain death, and refugees, who escaped before the atrocities fully commenced.⁶⁴⁰ Kitty Hart Moxon, a fellow Auschwitz survivor, was in agreement,

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Elie Wiesel, *A Jew Today* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 238-9.

⁶³⁹ Elizabeth Rosner, 'The Hierarchy of Suffering'.

⁶⁴⁰ Lasker Wallfisch, 'Letter to the Editor: "Holocaust Survivors" and "Refugees": In Search of a Definition', p. 7; For further discussion of the debates surrounding when the Holocaust began, see: Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005) and Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War: How the Nazi's Led Germany from Conquest to Disaster* (London: Allen Lane, 2008).

noting that those who hid were survivors while refugees and Kindertransport children were not.⁶⁴¹

These heated debates and visible tensions that also play out in the oral history interviews as well as in the pages of association journals challenge the presumption that these communities are entirely cohesive. Indeed, both scholars and the general public tend to formulate an image of survivors as a united front and respecting shared trauma. Whilst scholars are becoming more sensitive to the nuance that exists in survivor community relations, the general public has not been exposed to these narratives. Many members of the public who hear a survivor speak see them as an individual rather than seeing change word the interpersonal dynamics that can form between multiple survivors in group settings. Defining a survivor is undoubtedly the most controversial issue within these circles, as it encourages a climate of exclusion and inclusion based on who fits within those established parameters that seem to be somewhat fluid as they are subjective.

There also appears to be a fluid and subjective distinction between 'generations' of survivors. This theme is raised within Katherine Klinger's interview with child survivor Sylvia Cohen for the Wiener Library oral history collection.⁶⁴² Despite having survived incarceration in a concentration camp, Sylvia presents herself as part of the second generation of the '45 Aid Society as she was one of the youngest survivors and the others were "a bit older than us".⁶⁴³ Notably, this age difference of less than ten years is not generational and it provoked some confusion from the interviewer, prompting her to say that her assumption was the first generation was "any

⁶⁴¹ Kitty Hart-Moxon, 'Letter to the Editor', *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.5 (May, 2010), p. 7.

⁶⁴² Katherine Klinger, Interview with Sylvia Cohen, *Wiener Library* (Summer, 2006), Tape 2.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*

survivor or refugee” and the second generation were born after 1945.⁶⁴⁴ Within my correspondence and interactions with the survivor communities under study, I have also observed similar confusion and a lack of distinction between generations. At an informal gathering of survivors and refugees I was invited to attend, the facilitator, an AJR member of staff, recounted with horror the moment she mistook a child survivor for a second generation member and the upset that this caused.⁶⁴⁵ This indicates how important it can be for individuals to be recognised within a universally agreed-upon definition, which seemed to be lacking in terms of the distinction amongst generations.

In a letter to the editor of the *AJR Journal*, Marion Goldwater recalled how she had been told by Holocaust Centre board members that as a Kindertransport child she was a part of the second generation, presenting this as a “crisis of identity” that left her unsure where she stood.⁶⁴⁶ For the purposes of this thesis, I will be using the widely accepted model of the first generation being those refugees and survivors who experienced the Holocaust, and the second generation their offspring born after the end of the war in 1945. I will avoid giving credence to the concept of ‘generation 1.5’ as it has the ability to fuel a hierarchical view amongst survivors, reducing the significance of the child survivor experience and suggesting they were too young to be considered to have suffered on a par with older survivors.

The unfortunate mislabelling of a child survivor as second generation suggests that it is important to acknowledge how survivors define themselves as well as each other. The self-image of the survivor is a central factor when investigating the organisations that have formed around their experiences. Henry Greenspan examines the survivor voice and how this is rooted in the self-identity of individual survivors,

⁶⁴⁴ Klinger, Interview with Sylvia Cohen, Tape 2.

⁶⁴⁵ This took place in November 2017.

⁶⁴⁶ Marion Goldwater, ‘Letter to the Editor: Crisis of Identity’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.5, No.8 (August, 2005), p. 6.

through their sense of self that has derived from their past in general and not just their trauma.⁶⁴⁷ The survivor seeks to be identified as themselves, separate from their Holocaust experiences, but they can be elevated by society to a pedestal that cites their survivorship as the main element of who they are.

In an opinion piece for Jewish newspaper *Forward* in 2014, Jordan Kutzik highlighted this notion, recounting “interesting interactions with survivors” and whether they considered themselves to be survivors in the first place.⁶⁴⁸ Despite knowing the opinions of experts on who did and did not count as a survivor, he emphasised: “I feel that I’m in no position to tell either of them that they are wrong in their personal assessments of their own lives and survival narratives”.⁶⁴⁹ This is profound and indicates the importance of how the individual self-conceptualizes – it can be counter-productive to force a label upon those who do not identify with it.⁶⁵⁰

Indeed, many victims feel more comfortable with the notion of being a survivor of the war rather than a survivor of the Holocaust.⁶⁵¹ The reasons for this are unclear, perhaps the societal preoccupation with the Holocaust brings a level of attention many individuals are uncomfortable with. And there should be an understanding and space for survivors to identify in this way, just as there is the potential for survivors to embrace or compartmentalise specific parts of their identity if they so choose. This raises the issue of how many paths could be and should be viewed as valid for claiming a survivor identity.

⁶⁴⁷ Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors*, p. 25.

⁶⁴⁸ Jordan Kutzik, ‘Who counts as a Holocaust survivor?’

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ See Yablonka, ‘Holocaust Survivors in Israel’, p. 185; Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 21.

⁶⁵¹ Svetlana Shklarov, ‘Introduction: Holocaust Survivors from the Soviet Union’, in Svetlana Shklarov (ed.), *Voices of Resilience* (Calgary: Jewish Family Service, 2010), p. 8.

Additionally, the identity and self-conceptualisation of Holocaust survivors are undoubtedly shaped by their interaction with fellow survivors. However, this is but one aspect of the rich and full lives the survivors have led. This links in to the notion of survivor communities as a surrogate family as it provides a challenge to a linear argument that is based on constant contact, sharing of memories and strong familial relationships. Margalit Judah summarises this by suggesting “I have another group of friends”, distancing her social group from her involvement with the CSAGB.⁶⁵²

There appears to be a two-pronged discussion with regards to survivors defining themselves and each other within their organisations. Whilst the survivor craves to be recognised and accepted by their experiential kin and not experience exclusion, there are moments when the survivor needs to prioritise other aspects of their identity. This conception could perhaps indicate that an obsession with definition and categorisation of what a survivor is may do more harm than good to an individual’s subjectivity and composure. A working definition is necessary for many legal and financial contexts such as reparation and trials. But more importantly, these individuals are already “largely defined by what was done to them as a group”, with Kutzik aptly summarising that “further pigeonholing and unnecessarily subdividing them into categories can at times serve to further dehumanize them”.⁶⁵³ The wider reaction to this conflict appears to be to shy away from a concrete definition of what a survivor is, in order to prevent considerable psychological harm and distress.

However, for the necessary parameters of this thesis, I will be relying on the definition as suggested by Anita Lasker Wallfisch in her AJR letter, supported by Kitty Hart Moxon: a survivor is a person who lived under the Nazi regime or

⁶⁵² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁶⁵³ Kutzik, ‘Who counts as a Holocaust survivor?’

occupation in the war years, facing likely death in the concentration camps, ghettos or in hiding.⁶⁵⁴ This definition incorporates the considerations of the conservative school of direct experience of violence and threat of death but factors in the experiences of those who were in hiding, who despite being hidden faced the same prospects if caught.

“How do you calibrate suffering?”: The manifestation of a hierarchical survivorship⁶⁵⁵

After observing the multiple debates as to what a survivor is and how they can be defined, it is prudent to examine how this hierarchy manifests within the survivor associations under study. Of further significance is how a survivor can be positioned within this hierarchy, whether through self-definition or ascribed to them by others. Positioning within this hierarchy is dependent on how the survivor experience has been interpreted, and one way to approach this is in terms of survival rates. Those who spent the war years in hiding or in ghettos form a larger part of the survivor community. However, those who were incarcerated in multiple camps were a rarer case due to exposure to risk and lower survival rates. The length of time spent in specific camps is a further dimension to factors of hierarchy, along with age, nationality and, at times, gender.

Whilst the idea of measuring suffering is an abstract concept and a seemingly impossible task, it is a phenomenon that can be observed within survivor narratives. The importance of age cannot be disregarded, as it becomes enmeshed with notions of what a child can remember and the suffering a small child could have endured within camps. An example of this is that they were unlikely due to their

⁶⁵⁴ Anita Lasker Wallfisch, ‘Letter to the Editor: Holocaust Survivors’, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁵ Blend, ‘A Hierarchy of Suffering?’

ages. This challenges the idea that overcoming low survival rates represents occupying a high point in a survivor hierarchy, which can be represented as a conceptual pyramid, as younger children were very unlikely to survive.

Survivors have emphasised that this hierarchical discussion should not exist. Auschwitz survivor Edith Eger for example has asserted: “There’s nothing that makes my pain worse or better than yours, no graph on which we can plot the relative importance of one sorrow versus another”.⁶⁵⁶ The recognition or denial of survivor suffering within their communities relates to the broader theme within this thesis of validation, whereby the survivor experience is acknowledged and recognised or denied its place within a group.⁶⁵⁷ This has important considerations to be made in terms of individual composure, subjectivity and wellbeing through belonging and conversely exclusion.

The key consideration within notions of a hierarchical survivorship is the place of the individual who was a young child in spring 1945. This is reflected in how the age at which one experiences trauma (and whether one vividly remembers traumatic events), influences their place within a survivor ranking. Child survivors face particular challenges to psychological wellbeing and identity even before notions of hierarchy are considered. Identity has been referred to as “an inner sense of wholeness and security which is achieved when there is continuity between the individual’s perception of self and others’ perceptions of him/her”.⁶⁵⁸ This process begins in infancy and continues throughout childhood and into adulthood. There are

⁶⁵⁶ Eger, *The Choice*, p. 10.

⁶⁵⁷ See Introduction chapter for discussion of validation as a key theme within this thesis.

⁶⁵⁸ Marianne Amir and Rachel Lev-Wiesel, ‘Does Everyone Have a Name? Psychological Distress and Quality of Life Among Child Holocaust Survivors With Lost Identity’, *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol.14, No.4 (2001), p. 860.

long-term “detrimental” effects on the individual if this process is interrupted by trauma.⁶⁵⁹

Miri Peleg, Rachel Lev-Wiesel and Dani Yaniv have examined the interruption of identity formation amongst child survivors of the Holocaust and found that their childhoods “lacked the natural development process”, leading many child survivors to seek community and family.⁶⁶⁰ Indeed, Mary Fulbrook has noted that child survivors coming together was a slow and gradual process beginning in middle age. This also featured in my interviews.⁶⁶¹ Marianne Amir and Rachel Lev-Wiesel’s 2001 psychological study aimed to examine the impact of lost identity on Holocaust survivors and their psychological wellbeing in adulthood. The study found that survivors who experienced identity loss reported “significantly lower physiological, psychological, and social” quality of life as well as startlingly higher instances of depressive and anxious episodes.⁶⁶²

Inga Clendinnen has also argued that “childhood is our only certain homeland” with the sense that it is “forever lost”, which causes “chronically disabling” pain.⁶⁶³ This pain can be worsened by the lack of the validation of the child survivor’s pain and suffering.⁶⁶⁴ That recognition and validation came very late for child survivors hampered their “capacity to mourn and heal”.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Peleg, Lev-Wiesel and Yaniv, ‘Reconstruction of self-identity of Holocaust child survivors’, p. 412.

⁶⁶¹ Fulbrook, *Reckonings*, p. 397.

⁶⁶² Amir and Lev-Wiesel, ‘Does Everyone Have A Name?’, p. 865.

⁶⁶³ Inga Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp. 36-7.

⁶⁶⁴ Eva Fogelman, ‘Holocaust Child Survivors, Sixty-Five Years after Liberation: From Mourning to Creativity’, in Joanna Beata Michlic (ed.), *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present: History, Representation, and Memory* (Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2017) p. 237.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

After years of being told they were too young to remember, child survivors admit there is, what the psychologists would call, some narcissistic gratification in telling their stories their own way, and this has happened more often in recent years. As the older survivors become incapacitated and curtail public appearances, child survivors are sought out and asked to share their stories with the world. This validation of their pain, suffering, loss, and adaptation makes child survivors feel understood, often for the first time. That others want to know what happened to them enables them to feel that they, too, along with the older survivors, can contribute to the recording of history.⁶⁶⁶

Eva Fogelman notes the importance of validation for the child survivor and how this has been a relatively recent attainment. She asserts a “narcissistic gratification” that child survivors felt in response to their elevation. Her contention supports the argument of this chapter that, whilst there has been a move to accept and validate the experiences of child survivors in wider discourses, this often does not occur inside the survivor community and their associations. There is a “special kinship” amongst child survivors, with a certain divide between older survivors and themselves.⁶⁶⁷ This, in part, can explain why child survivors have banded together into separate survivor associations to explore these feelings with those who felt similarly excluded. This factor plays a role in the origins of these survivor associations, with the Child Survivors’ Association (CSAGB) being formed for those of similar ages with comparable experiences but also to represent a gap in the way they were

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 238.

⁶⁶⁷ Kestenberg and Kestenberg, ‘The sense of belonging and altruism in children who survived the Holocaust’, pp. 557-8.

perceived by older survivors.⁶⁶⁸ This reflects Maroun Hasian Jr's notion that child survivors were largely ignored by society until the early 1990s, a time in which the importance of these "youthful purveyors of Holocaust memories" were recognised as older survivors were no longer alive to give testimony.⁶⁶⁹ This reflects a previous discussion of Peter Novick's discussion of "market considerations" with regards to testimony, as Holocaust testimonies are still sought after, child survivors are brought into focus in order to address this demand with a dwindling supply of survivors able to talk about their experiences in public.⁶⁷⁰

A reason for the absence of child survivors in survivor testimonies and public discourses before the 1990s could be their younger ages, meaning that they were preoccupied with work and raising their families so did not have as much time to be active speakers on the Holocaust or dwell on their memories. Potential reasons cited for this child survivor absence include the perception that child survivors were, somehow, "lesser": that they did not suffer the same hardships as older survivors and that their memories were not as reliable due to their youth.⁶⁷¹ There was a general sense from older survivors that child survivors had been protected in the camps by older inmates, had been less likely to be forced to undertake heavy manual labour and had required less food to sustain their lives. Furthermore, there are questions about the precision of memory in the very young.

The theme of age affecting an individual survivor's place in a hierarchy is striking and consistently observed within oral history interviews. Pola Friend, a Polish Auschwitz survivor born in 1926, echoed her older husband's scepticism

⁶⁶⁸ See Chapter Two of this thesis for further discussion of the origin of the CSAGB.

⁶⁶⁹ Hasian Jr, 'Authenticity, Public Memories, and the Problematics of Post-Holocaust Remembrances', p. 238.

⁶⁷⁰ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 83.

⁶⁷¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hannah Zohn, 13 March, 2018.

towards her own experiences being recognised, as he had “seen more of life” before the war than she had.⁶⁷² He consistently invoked this disparity in experience, responding to her experiences as a teenager in Auschwitz as “you were only a little girl, what did you know?”⁶⁷³ Joanna Millan, whose birth name was Bella Rosenthal, reflected on the unwillingness of others to accept child victims as survivors:

And so often we get ‘what do you know, what do you recall, can you remember, what have you suffered?’. It’s nothing compared to ‘we the older ones’ have been through, and this lack of recognition has been a great problem until, I suppose, more recently maybe there’s been more tolerance. I wouldn’t necessarily say more acceptance; that they can’t understand that there’s different types of suffering. Different types of need.⁶⁷⁴

She went on to discuss the hierarchy of suffering, as it has become known in the survivor community. She framed her narrative within a discussion of how important recognition is for child survivors and how marginalised she felt amongst older survivors of camps. She cited a particular incident in the Holocaust Survivor Centre in Hendon as jarring, due to being met with responses of, “Oh you were too young, you don’t count. Not you, you’re not one of us”.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷² Rosalind Monnickendam, Interview with Pola Friend (13 October, 1994) Part 4. <https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors/021M-C0830X0005XX-0004V0> [Accessed 5 June, 2018]

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Sheila Melzack, Interview with Bella Rosenthal, *Wiener Library* (26 December, 2006 and 31 December, 2006).

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

My interview with Hannah Zohn was similarly replete with feelings of rejection, emphasising “this is what comes up time and time again, you were too young . . . It’s almost cruel to say that a child of that young age, we can’t remember things. You have to accept that we were young but there’s certain things we do remember”.⁶⁷⁶ She went on to emotively recount incidences of having her head shaved and being frightened of camp guards and their Alsatians.⁶⁷⁷ We can interpret this statement as discomposure as Zohn demonstrated considerable upset in the interview that her memories had been disregarded and not considered part of the community’s accepted narrative and origin story. Monica Porter writing for the *Jewish Chronicle* in 2010 echoed Zohn’s sentiment that this approach was cruel, reflecting on the “callous” dismissal of the child survivor experience.⁶⁷⁸ Dan Bar-On also concurs and refers to a “cruel stratification” that takes place “under a magnifying glass”.⁶⁷⁹ This enhances the argument of how much psychological damage these discourses can instigate in some survivors.

Hierarchy, the problems of definitions and acceptance were clearly marked issues for Margalit Judah. In both of the interviews I conducted with her, she raised the topic unbidden and framed her narrative within broad themes of acceptance and exclusion. For instance, she refers to similar stories of rejection, such as the ’45 Aid Society accepting the second generation before child survivors, but also that “we learnt very early on there’s no point talking to these people, because that’s always the response we get”.⁶⁸⁰ This statement would indicate that younger survivors feel the need to exclude themselves from the older group because of experiencing division in the past, which in turn makes them reluctant to try and integrate into the

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Monica Porter, ‘A Holocaust survivor hierarchy? How absurd’.

⁶⁷⁹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 22.

⁶⁸⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

group as they are viewed as “second class citizens”.⁶⁸¹ This contrasts with her earlier statement that “recently there’s been more tolerance”.

Furthermore, in the interviews undertaken for this project and particularly evident in interviews with younger survivors, Greenspan’s framework of the ‘unsaid’ becomes present, due to questions that may not be asked, a rapport or ‘chemistry’ between interviewer and interviewee, and the anonymity promised to individuals if they so choose. Therefore, within the interviews conducted for this research, which focused on community relations and development, hierarchy became an ‘unsaid’ topic that moved into a ‘said’ topic in the interview through the interviewees’ own decision-making.⁶⁸² However, as Greenspan has highlighted, the decision to interview a person ‘as a survivor’ foregrounds the conversation and therefore provides assumptions as to the person’s identity.⁶⁸³ This is particularly pertinent in discussions of hierarchy as some interviewees felt that they were not counted as a survivor in the same way as their peers and chose to speak out. In an interview context whereby the interviewer had expressed an interest in speaking to this individual ‘as a survivor’, interviewees felt comfortable talking about the difficulties of definitions, labels and tensions within their community.

Another topic that Margalit Judah raised repeatedly was gender. Judah is a member of the ’45 Aid Society (despite not feeling welcome there), having come to the UK with the group of 732 young survivors in 1945 from Theresienstadt/Terezin. She felt very strongly that the nickname of ‘The Boys’ for the Society members ignored/erased the experiences of the 70 girls and felt that this led to exclusion and denial of the experiences of the female children and young

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Henry Greenspan, ‘The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irretrievable’, *The Oral History Review*, Vol.41, No.2 (2014), p. 230.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

women.⁶⁸⁴ Other interviewees note this disparity between ‘The Boys’ and ‘The Girls’, often in a much more nonplussed manner, acknowledging that there were more boys than girls, with girls enjoying being seen as “one of the boys”.⁶⁸⁵

Additionally, some reverence appears to be attached to the survival of women in the camps, with Solly Irving stating, “It wasn’t easy for a girl to survive”.⁶⁸⁶ Indeed, Paul Mayer who worked with the young survivors known as the Windermere children in the early days of their arrival in England, felt that the Martin Gilbert volume entitled *The Boys* should have paid more attention to the story of ‘The Girls’ and acknowledged why there were so few female survivors.⁶⁸⁷ He also acknowledged that the girls adapted much faster to British life, with many quickly picking up the English language and losing their predominantly Eastern European accents.⁶⁸⁸ Gender, was, then acknowledged in a number of the interviews but was superseded by age as the main element of difference and tension.

Hierarchies of suffering could formulate among multiple and diverse lines that did not consider age and gender as central but rather experience. This could consist of being marked by a tattoo, how many relatives were lost or how much time was spent in a camp.⁶⁸⁹ Ruth Kluger, in her memoirs, recalled the freezing cold winter of 1944-5 and trying to share her memories with her husband, a German refugee who fled to America and became a paratrooper. Her husband appeared focused on the hardship he had suffered, and it took Kluger “a long time before I had the heart to tell him that I was cold, too, during those months, and that no army

⁶⁸⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Redbart, Interview with Solly Irving.

⁶⁸⁷ Lyn. E. Smith, Interview with Paul ‘Yogi’ Mayer (1997), Reels 6-7.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80016767> [Accessed 10 May, 2018]

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Jack Drescher, ‘Trauma and Psychoanalysis: Hierarchies of Suffering’, p. 65.

provided me with blankets”.⁶⁹⁰ Her husband’s reaction was palpable; he seemed shocked as if he had forgotten “that we lived in the same world, yet worlds apart”.⁶⁹¹ This conversation took place in the 1950s, when the Holocaust “hadn’t yet been enshrined” and it “was not proper to talk about it”.⁶⁹² This reflects the influence of chronology on the reception of Kluger’s story, where the centrality of the Holocaust emboldened her to raise these issues with her husband.

Nationality has been another way of categorising who suffered more. Gideon Jacoby emphasised “It was the Polish ones who went first [to the camps] you know”, and contrasted this with the experiences of Hungarian Holocaust victims, who were deported from May 1944.⁶⁹³ Carol Kidron notes that some survivors refer to the Hungarian Jewish experience as “a vacation” in comparison to the plight of the Polish Jews.⁶⁹⁴ Marie Paneth, an art teacher who worked with the Windermere children, suggested that “the striking type of the ‘survivor’ was more developed and distinctive” in the Polish young people of the group.⁶⁹⁵

There is perhaps more to be said here in a further study of the Polish response to the Holocaust amidst accusations of collaboration. There are three debates at play here: the issue of Polish collaboration itself, how Poland dealt with this, and Polish non-Jews claiming victim status.⁶⁹⁶ However, this is beyond the scope of this study, which focuses on British Holocaust survivor associations. Osher

⁶⁹⁰ Ruth Kluger, *Landscapes of Memory: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), p. 139.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹² Kluger, *Landscapes of Memory*, p. 139.

⁶⁹³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

⁶⁹⁴ Carol A. Kidron, ‘Embracing the Lived Memory of Genocide: Holocaust Survivor and Descendant Renegade Memory Work at the House of Being’, *American Ethnologist*, Vol.37, No.3 (August, 2010), p. 440.

⁶⁹⁵ Paneth, *Rock the Cradle*, p. 41.

⁶⁹⁶ See Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* for further debates on Polish collaboration, Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005) and Martin Winstone, *The Dark Heart of Hitler's Europe: Nazi Rule in Poland under the General Government* (London: Tauris, 2014).

Heller, a CSAGB member, acknowledges the complications that can arise when geography is introduced into an assessment of survivor suffering, noting the considerable disparity between the stories of Eastern and Western European nations.⁶⁹⁷ He suggested that the problem of a hierarchy failed to recognise this massive geographical difference in experiences, promoting the idea that understanding the context was crucial and that it was impossible to assess or divide suffering based on geographical location in terms of severity. The rest of this chapter aims to address these contexts: it will consider how geographical factors and location of suffering can influence a survivor's place within a hierarchical framework.

Whilst age is the most convincing factor in the interpretation of the survivor experience, the method, geography or location of suffering was also highly significant. For instance, whether a survivor was incarcerated in a camp or ghetto is viewed as important, in contrast to life as a refugee or in hiding which has been interpreted as a lesser example of suffering. Furthermore, the length of suffering is viewed as central, which can be closely linked to nationality in terms of when a country was occupied and when deportations began. These factors can influence inclusion or indeed exclusion from “legitimized survivors’ groups”, leading to what Svetlana Shklarov has deemed “hierarchical gradation of the extent of the experienced trauma”, what historians and survivors would refer to in shorthand as “the hierarchy of suffering”.⁶⁹⁸

Furthermore, the prioritisation of the camp experience reflects what has been explored earlier in this chapter as the traditional or conservative school of historiography, where camp survivors are marked as the only authentic or genuine

⁶⁹⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016.

⁶⁹⁸ Svetlana Shklarov, ‘Introduction: Holocaust Survivors from the Soviet Union’, p. 8.

Holocaust survivors. Perle Susman traced this in her narrative and discussed the adverse treatment of those who had not been in a camp.⁶⁹⁹ Whilst she acknowledges many people had different experiences, she placed high importance on the common themes that united these memories, which she deemed overall as “huge uprootedness”.⁷⁰⁰ In a more understated fashion to survivors such as Margalit Judah, Susman timidly remarked that “a few of us have to learn and understand that”.⁷⁰¹ Other interviewees did not necessarily view this as a problem, with Kindertransport child and AJR member Rachel Lubin stating matter-of-factly, “Well a camp was worse than a ghetto”.⁷⁰² She seemed shocked that this aspect was up for debate within the interview. Therefore, there is considerable disparity in experiences and perspectives on the issue and that these opinions can and should be expressed in order to open up debate.

The length of suffering is also a key factor in how survivor experiences are interpreted and ascribed a place within a hierarchy. Gideon Jacoby, in his narrative, reflected on a friend of his who had been in a ghetto before being deported to Auschwitz in 1944.⁷⁰³ He conceded that “ghettos were not nice”, but this contrasted with his assertion that he had already been in forced labour camps (including Plaszow) for two years by the time his friend arrived at his first camp.⁷⁰⁴ Thus, despite not explicitly utilising hierarchy as a symbol of experience or a benchmark, his meaning was clear. Ghettos are consistently ranked lower than camps by the survivor communities in a scale of suffering.⁷⁰⁵ In “the House of Being”, which acts as a Holocaust survivor geriatric centre, Carol Kidron notes that

⁶⁹⁹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid,

⁷⁰² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Rachel Lubin, 16 February, 2018.

⁷⁰³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Kidron, ‘Embracing the lived memory of genocide’, p. 440.

ghettos were marked as “the third grade” and closely resembling a vacation when compared to the camps.⁷⁰⁶ By contrast, those liberated from Auschwitz were considered “graduates”.⁷⁰⁷ Using educational progress as a comparative measure for marking suffering and attaining seniority is somewhat crude but conveys how these marked polarisations are used by some survivors to make sense of a “chaotic post-Holocaust world”.⁷⁰⁸

Competition, trauma or establishing a new status quo? Reasons for a hierarchy

It is difficult to ascertain precisely why there is a hierarchy amongst Holocaust survivors; many of my interviewees could only speculate as to why it was an observable phenomenon. In order to consider reasons for the formation of hierarchies in survivor associations we will look to theoretical frameworks in addition to contentions from survivors themselves. This is not a straightforward task as we are observing human behaviour in a subjective way and can only draw conclusions based on the opinions of these individuals. However, it is useful to consider theoretical methodology on memory in order to investigate how memory can become contested ground within these communities. Sharing memories is not always harmonious. Through a communicative memory structure and with the exchange of experiences within group identities, people work out who does and does not fit into their group, creating hierarchical ways of thinking through the recognition or rejection of experiences.

Additionally, suffering can be seen as competitive and treated as a finite resource, with survivors internally battling for their suffering to be prioritised and

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Spicer, ‘One sorrow or another’, p. 13.

recognised at the expense of others. This can be viewed as occupying a “moral high ground” or creating a new sense of order out of the chaos of Holocaust trauma with its psychological impact. Lastly, it must once again be reiterated that this study deals with individuals and their subjectivities, leading to this project producing highly divergent narratives. This does not indicate that these opinions are unfounded or wrong, merely the representation of individual attitudes and experiences.

Iwona Irwin-Zarecka wrote in 1994 that “a narrative of victimisation can serve to bolster group identity”.⁷⁰⁹ Consequently, the past is used “to various ends”, dependent on the needs of a group.⁷¹⁰ Indeed, the connection between community and memory cannot be understated. Maurice Halbwachs has indicated that memory depends on socialisation and communication; therefore, memory can be examined as a function of our social lives.⁷¹¹ Because of this function, living in communities strengthens shared values, with memory acting as an important fuel for identity and community cohesion.⁷¹² As this chapter conveys, this is not always the case, and memory can become a source of tension or contested ground. Christopher Browning refers to this phenomenon as part of his discussion of “communal memories”, where experiences are shared and discussed between survivors of the same towns and camps.⁷¹³ This is separate from outsiders as it is felt that extensive “dissemination” could be embarrassing or hurtful to the community.⁷¹⁴ Therefore, there are specific memories that are designed to remain within the private sphere of these communities rather than being bared before others.⁷¹⁵

⁷⁰⁹ Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance*, p. 18.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹¹ Assman, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', p. 109.

⁷¹² Ibid; See Introduction for definitions and discussions of community.

⁷¹³ Browning, 'Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp', p. 317.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Browning, 'Remembering Survival', p. 317.

Memories exist in constant interaction with the memories of others, but also with “outward symbols”.⁷¹⁶ This implies to a certain degree how memory within communities is made up of a series of individual memories that are shared and retained due to their relationship to a group identity. Therefore, memory within communities such as these can create “affective ties” which lend memories an extraordinary intensity, emphasising social obligation and sense of belonging.⁷¹⁷ This is particularly important within the context of Holocaust survivors and their communities due to the social obligation to speak which drives many survivors, as a duty not just to their community but to those who died. Dan Stone echoes this concept of social obligation, that after genocide, “when communities are devastated, often all that is left is memory”.⁷¹⁸ This provides a deeply ingrained desire to turn inwards, for survivors to focus on themselves, to repair their families and communities.⁷¹⁹ This is related to memory as there comes a later desire to “bring what happened to general notice” after a reparative stage.⁷²⁰

Communicative memory is based exclusively on everyday communications.⁷²¹ This relates to collective memory as a concept but relates to where these communications take place, for example a household, whereby individuals create memories that are both socially mediated but also relate to smaller groups.⁷²² As an individual can belong to multiple small groups such as families, neighbourhoods and political associations, they collect various self-images and memories in line with their loyalty to these various groups.⁷²³ Further comparisons

⁷¹⁶ Assman, ‘Communicative and Cultural Memory’, p. 111.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid, p.114.

⁷¹⁸ Dan Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory: Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 149.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory*, p. 149.

⁷²¹ Assmann and Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, pp. 126-7.

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Ibid.

can be drawn with the Holocaust in terms of group identity and “the store of knowledge” for particular social groups through what is deemed “identificatory determination” – through affirmations of positive and negative associations with a group identity and unity.⁷²⁴ This is exemplified in the different groups that survivors can belong to and how they can prioritise different aspects of their identity at varying times.

Krzysztof Malicki has examined Assmann and Czaplicki’s framework and referred to the “generational memory that accrues within the group, originating and disappearing with time or, to be more precise, with its carriers. Once those who embodied it have died, it gives way to a new memory”.⁷²⁵ Within communities, Assmann and Czaplicka argue that there is a limited temporal horizon for these types of communicative memories, for instance, three to four generations or eighty to one hundred years into the past.⁷²⁶ This generational limit on memory is owing to the death of those individuals that directly experienced events such as the Holocaust and the communities that they form. It can be credibly argued that we are close to reaching this point as a society, with many survivors no longer being alive in order to share their testimonies. Furthermore, temporally, we are approaching the 75th anniversary of the liberation of these survivors, which further drives a sense of urgency to record testimony and engage with survivors’ narratives.

In relation to the Holocaust and its survivors, communicative memory as a framework can be applied to survivor communities and their families through the limited temporal horizon of the sharing of intimate memories. This is what Assmann

⁷²⁴ Ibid, p.130.

⁷²⁵ Krzysztof Malicki, ‘Between Cultural Memory and Communicative Memory – The Dilemmas of Reconstruction of Annihilated Past of Polish Jews’, *Culture*, No.9 (2015), p. 66.

⁷²⁶ Assmann and Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, p. 127.

refers to as “everyday memory” in contrast to the “festival memory” he feels best applies to cultural memory, which communicates memory in grander gestures to the needs of larger groups.⁷²⁷ This becomes interesting when examining hierarchy as an issue within these survivor associations, as the everyday exchange of intimate memories becomes contested ground, providing the opposite of John Gillis’ assertion that the community is sustained by remembering.⁷²⁸ Can it be observed that communicative memory fosters hierarchical thinking? It is difficult to determine, as we are dealing with the private discourses in these communities and how individuals interpret it. However, it appears credible to suggest that communicative memory within these groups can be problematic as well as liberating. Memories exchanged may be nourishing and cathartic, but can often lead to comparisons being invoked, which can bring about discomposure.

The comparison of Holocaust experiences and ascribing significance or less relevance to some narratives reflects what can be considered to be a competitive model of suffering. AJR member Martha Blend lamented on the necessity of this, positing, “Must we find a scale, That will weigh one against the other?”⁷²⁹ In her view, this appears to be the quest of some individuals and manifests her frustrations regarding the debates unfolding in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ section of the *AJR Journal* in 2010.⁷³⁰ Hannah Zohn also reflected on this idea of competition and “feeling one better”, expressing discontent but also concern that some people could think in such a “cruel” way.⁷³¹ Notably, the struggle of definitions, as explored, really informs the hierarchical debate and fosters the idea of suffering as competitive. Ruth Kluger’s memoirs also emphasised this issue, that the aim was to either ‘outdo’ each

⁷²⁷ Malicki, ‘Between Cultural Memory and Communicative Memory’, p. 67.

⁷²⁸ Gillis, ‘Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship’, p. 3.

⁷²⁹ Blend, ‘A Hierarchy of Suffering?’

⁷³⁰ See section of this chapter on defining a survivor.

⁷³¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hannah Zohn, 13 March, 2018.

other with stories of suffering or to ignore their history altogether – with a middle ground appearing to be unrepresented.⁷³² This reflects the opposite to the generally assumed view that there should be “total solidarity” and recognition that these individuals are “bound together by a powerful factor which supersedes their differences”.⁷³³

Conclusion

As Dan Bar-On contends, “it is very difficult to address extremes of human pain and suffering without attaching to them comparative values and norms: more or less, better or worse”.⁷³⁴ In some ways, we as a society or even humanity can be guilty of trying to establish categories and definitions which can obscure nuance and overlap - in a quest to make things fit. But as Jordan Kutzik has emphasised, pigeonholing survivors into categories based on a hierarchy of suffering can be dehumanising.⁷³⁵ Moreover, by lending credibility to this way of thinking in terms of hierarchy, oral historians run the risk of creating extreme discomposure within our interview dynamics.

It is the job of the oral historian to ensure wherever possible that interviews run smoothly with minimal opportunities for distress and discomposure. This is not a perfect system; naturally discomposure will occur on occasion, but by paying heed to these categorisations and reinforcing hierarchy, we run the risk of severely impacting a survivor’s self-conception and psychological wellbeing. This is not always the case in interviews, but when it is considered that these individuals are victims and survivors, the oral historian makes a preconceived notion before the

⁷³² Kluger, *Landscapes of Memory*, p. 191.

⁷³³ Porter, ‘A Holocaust survivor hierarchy?’

⁷³⁴ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 22.

⁷³⁵ Kutzik, ‘Who counts as a Holocaust survivor?’

interview.⁷³⁶ Indeed, this dynamic may differ in interviews with perceived perpetrators, further fuelling the notion that each interview possesses its own intersubjectivities. However, it can be observed that it is not the job of the oral historian to judge and bring their own values to bear on the interview but to listen to the remarks of their interviewees and ask follow up questions with insight regardless of the victim/perpetrator status of the interviewee.

The notion of a hierarchy amongst survivors can prompt discomposure as some individuals do not feel fully recognised as victims of the Holocaust. The phrase, “somehow we were lesser” from my interview with Margalit Judah encapsulates the hierarchy of suffering as manifested in survivor associations. She was upset and frustrated at being “rejected” and treated as a “second class citizen”.⁷³⁷ She spent decades trying to validate her experiences as a child and then having found that sense of belonging was rejected by the community. Having experienced first-hand the horrors of the Holocaust, her trauma was then denied by those who were her experiential kin. Other survivors have also echoed that the failure of older survivors to recognise the validity of their trauma raked over past psychological scarring.⁷³⁸ Oral historians have noted the potential for discomposure in narratives that do not fit dominant discourses, and this can be reflected in the dominant discourse of the survivor community. In survivor circles, her wartime youthfulness precluded her from accessing the status that others who were older had bestowed upon themselves – in a move that Hannah Zohn has described as “cruel”.⁷³⁹

What is particularly evocative is the willingness for many survivors to bring up the problem of a hierarchy in the interview setting. All of the younger survivors

⁷³⁶ See Methodology Chapter for an introduction to intersubjectivity.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hannah Zohn, 13 March, 2018.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

raised the notion of a hierarchy without prompting and elaborated in extensive detail regarding its manifestations and how this made them feel.⁷⁴⁰ Given that they felt so marginalised, this is perhaps unsurprising.

By contrast, many of the older survivors did not utilise hierarchy as a frame of reference, and it was only through my subtle questioning that they reflected on it. I had made a conscious decision not to explicitly raise issues of hierarchy and press for answers on why there was this observable phenomenon – provoking discomposure and casting blame upon older survivors for hierarchy was a concern. What I was met with was often a tense and awkward denial of the problem – such as “I don’t think it comes into the discussion at all”, or an assertion that all suffering was respected equally, but at the same time of an awareness that “some camps were worse than others”.⁷⁴¹ Whilst it is not a deliberate move to deny or reduce the importance of the experience of some survivors, it is observable that these opinions can cause tension within the survivor community. At the same time, others denigrate their own suffering and minimise it by comparing it to other narratives of trauma and the Holocaust, which psychologically impacts the individual as they convince themselves they do not have a right to be traumatised or affected.⁷⁴²

Overall, there is a desire from survivor communities to mitigate the impact that these hierarchies can have on survivor composure and community cohesion. One example of this is the contention from Martha Blend that by “dividing our ranks”, “we hand to our tormentors the final cup of victory”.⁷⁴³ Edith Eger, who has written about

⁷⁴⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016; Ellis Spicer, Interviews with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016 and 12 January, 2018; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hannah Zohn, 13 March, 2018.

⁷⁴¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Rachel Lubin, 16 February, 2018.

⁷⁴² Eger, *The Choice*, p. 10.

⁷⁴³ Blend, ‘A Hierarchy of Suffering?’

hierarchy in her memoirs, has suggested, “If we discount our pain, or punish ourselves for feeling lost or isolated or scared about the challenges in our lives, however insignificant these challenges may seem to someone else, then we’re still choosing to be victims”.⁷⁴⁴ There is a duality here between Blend’s poetic claim that a hierarchy hands the Nazi regime a victory and Eger’s contention that victimhood is a state of mind more than a fact of history. This conveys how important the issue of hierarchy has been amongst survivor groups and the impact and challenges it has given to these organisations.

The working solution from individual survivors appears to be smaller groups focused on peer-to-peer support, which convey many people “split away” from bigger survivor groups owing to how “each group will not respect or recognise the other’s suffering”.⁷⁴⁵ These safe spaces have helped them to navigate the traumatic terrain of their memories. While younger child survivors have found this discourse productive in helping to shape their accounts, many of the older survivors have failed to acknowledge the exclusion that others have experienced. This is not to say that there is blame to be had, but rather a phenomenon to be observed and analysed, in order to respect the challenge that this issue presents to survivor communities. Far from being harmonious, familial like associations, these groups face their own challenges dependent on their interpretation of their past, consideration of who fits in the present and whose children are the future.

In sum, this chapter has aimed to construct an overall big picture and summary of the problem of a hierarchy within the survivor community. As noted, the reasons for this are hazy, with different individuals citing a multitude of reasons for its existence. But what is important is how it impacts these survivor communities

⁷⁴⁴ Eger, *The Choice*, p. 10.

⁷⁴⁵ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

and changes the dynamics of the oral history setting as some survivors grapple with their place in their groups and explore feelings of division and exclusion. The impact can be viewed in both practical and psychological ways, with the more emotional factors influencing practical concerns.

For instance, if younger survivors feel marginalised and excluded from bigger groups, experiencing feelings of resentment and a lack of recognition, this can lead to a practical solution of establishing a ‘breakaway’ group. This can be observed particularly within the origins of the CSAGB, beginning with a split from the Holocaust Survivor Centre in Hendon and continuing to feel like the second class citizens of the Holocaust survivor community. Finally, the relationship between defining a survivor and hierarchy cannot be underestimated, as the fluidity of defining a survivor has allowed for the individual to decide what a survivor is. This, in turn, influences the associations these survivors are members of and can lead to insular, exclusionary groups and feelings of discomposure from those who do not fit.

**Chapter Four – “We travelled many roads together”: Family, Friendship and
Belonging in Survivor Associations⁷⁴⁶**

A survivor will go to a party and feel alone.
A survivor appears quiet but is screaming within.
A survivor will make large weddings, with many guests,
but the ones she wants most will never arrive.
A survivor will go to a funeral and cry, not for the
deceased, but for the ones that were never buried.
A survivor will reach out to you but not let you get
close, for you remind her of what she could have been
but will never be.
A survivor is only at ease with other survivors.⁷⁴⁷

Cecilie Klein, Czechoslovakian Auschwitz survivor (1988)

This evocative poem, published in 1988 in the memoirs of the author, suggests that shared experiences provide a sense of composure, of ease, that can only be found in relationships with other survivors. It represents the isolation survivors can feel as a result of their experiences, in addition to a feeling of omnipresent loss. Weddings become reminders that some family members are absent, while funerals make evident that not everyone has a gravesite or a headstone to mark their resting place. This sense of loss can shape a survivor’s life and colour many life events which are supposed to be happy, as there is a constant fear of further bereavement, reliving the past and being unable to consider or enjoy the future. The poem’s reflection on the quiet exterior of many survivors is also striking, with the feeling of ‘putting on a front’ in order to look more composed than they feel. This suggests that there is an element of repression or psychological guarding in order to avoid the Holocaust past, but recognition that the impact will always be present.

⁷⁴⁶ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 180.

⁷⁴⁷ Cecilie Klein, *Sentenced to Live* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1988), p. 141.

The poem's final line: "survivors only feel at ease with other survivors" illustrates the significance of the survivor community and how they depend on each other.⁷⁴⁸ Accordingly, this chapter will examine the themes of family and friendship as they manifest in survivor associations. Family and friendship are crucial frameworks to unpack and examine as they emphasise the bonds that trauma can foster between individuals and lead to the creation of survivor groups. This chapter will consider whether the concepts of family and friendship have developed as the groups have evolved, or whether they represent a compartmentalisation of associates, friendships and identity that convey how these individuals cope with the trauma of the Holocaust and being considered a Holocaust survivor. Three periods of the lives of survivors will be examined in order to trace a broad change within these survivor associations with regards to the themes of family and friendship: the immediate postwar years, the marriage and raising families stage, followed by retirement and grandchildren. These three periods are significant because they cover around fifty years and coincide with the loss of intensity in survivor relationships with their experiential kin.

Charles Tilly affirmed in 1978 that "the family is a compelling object of historical study" as "families figure importantly in most of the majority transitions that people face in their lives".⁷⁴⁹ Therefore, the family are central in contributing to healthy or indeed unhealthy coping strategies in response to trauma, moving on and belonging. Linda McKie, Sarah Cunningham-Burley and John McKendrick summarise the importance of studying the family as thus:

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Charles Tilly, 'Foreword', in Tamara K. Hareven (ed.), *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p. xi.

The family remains a complex and dynamic concept, variably defined and experienced. Families take many different forms and these, together with changing expectations and anticipations of family life, provide crucial frames through which we engage in society. Experiences of families and relationships are critical to the development of personal and group identities as well as providing material and emotional resources as we proceed through the lifecourse.⁷⁵⁰

The family is represented here as “variably defined and experienced”, placing the paramount importance of the divergence in experiences from individual to individual and family to family.⁷⁵¹ The statement about how families can take different forms is also central to this thesis as survivor associations do not consist of blood relatives but some do consider the members of these group as their families. This highlights the importance of the framework of experiential kin, as through shared experiences and a sense of belonging, these groups and communities can feel like families.

The complexity and dynamic nature of the family make it a worthy concept to unpack with consideration to Holocaust survivor associations as they could be interpreted as a different example of kinship ties outside the household. The historiography of the family unit has begun to revise myths surrounding the generalizations that can occur with regards to how grand social processes impact the

⁷⁵⁰ Linda McKie, Sarah Cunningham-Burley and John H. McKendrick, ‘Introduction: Families and relationships: boundaries and bridges’, in Linda McKie and Sarah Cunningham-Burley (eds.), *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2005), p. 3.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

family unit.⁷⁵² This has roots in the “new social history” of the 1960s.⁷⁵³ Scholars have highlighted that we need to appreciate the “changing and diverse nature of the family” and how it develops in order to understand the influence of the family in “various contexts of change”.⁷⁵⁴

Therefore, ‘family’ does not necessarily need to be defined as a group of biologically-related individuals as this changing notion of the family must also include “kinship ties outside the household”.⁷⁵⁵ This is an area within which my work is broadly situated as Holocaust survivor associations convey affective ties of a family in places but are not blood-related, neither do they live communally. Therefore, family has become a more “flexible construct” in the twentieth century.⁷⁵⁶ Comparisons can be drawn here with definitions of community and its development that is examined in the Introduction of this thesis. With particular reference to the Holocaust, Judith Baumel has argued that it is only since the 1990s that “the examination of family and women’s culture” has become integrated into general Holocaust research due to the growing awareness of feminist and family history.⁷⁵⁷

In the immediate post-war period, the relationships and friendships that formed following liberation were intense, sibling-like and suffused with a desire for closeness and intimacy. Further themes include those who had family in England or abroad, with varying instances where these family members could not or would not understand their kin’s experiences. In some cases, this led to the families of

⁷⁵² Tamara Hareven, ‘The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol.96, No.1 (February, 1991), p. 95.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Hareven, ‘The History of the Family’, p. 95.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid, p.108.

⁷⁵⁶ Tamara K. Hareven, ‘Introduction: The Historical Study of the Life Course’, in Tamara K. Hareven (ed.), *Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p .2.

⁷⁵⁷ Judith Tydor Baumel, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998), p. 50.

survivors, either biological or adopted, denying or attempting to ignore or erase the experiences of survivors – this is especially true for young children. There is the potential here for discomposure as survivor children grow up with a part of their identity suppressed and a feeling that a piece of their history is missing.⁷⁵⁸ This can also be present in the second generation (the offspring of survivors), mainly when their parents were not forthcoming about sharing their experiences, an issue which will be explored in the next chapter of this thesis.

In the years that followed their liberation, the majority of survivors married and had families of their own. Marriage is an example of survivors moving on from their traumatic experiences and discovering intimacy with those outside the groups they formed in the immediate postwar context. Many survivors from the groups under study did not marry fellow survivors and found husbands and wives in the wider British-Jewish community. We shall consider the reasons that may be found for this phenomenon, such as the desire for assimilation and the idea of damage being shared. The fear of damage being shared amongst survivors indicates an awareness of the impact of their experiences, with survivors seeking friends who understood but a spouse who had not experienced such horror in order to create a healthy and stable family life. This chapter will also draw on the spousal experience of marrying a survivor in order to examine how these marriages affected the dynamics of these groups and the sense of composure and support survivors received from their (non-survivor) husbands and wives. This echoes the enduring emphasis in survivor narratives of the miracle of finding each other.⁷⁵⁹ This suggests that, in the eyes of

⁷⁵⁸ See Methodology Chapter of this thesis for definitions of discomposure; Joanna Beata Michlic, 'What does a child remember?' Recollections of the War and the Early Postwar Period among Child Survivors from Poland', in Joanna Beata Michlic (ed.), *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present: History, Representation, and Memory* (Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2017), pp. 167-8.

⁷⁵⁹ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 18.

some survivors, their spouses were their saviours and were represented in terms of fate and destiny.

The dynamic within these survivor associations, notably the '45 Aid Society, appeared to change as survivors aged and had children. As the lives of survivors stabilised over time, associational friendships lost their initial intensity. Reasons for this are hard to pinpoint, but can include survivors learning to cope alone, repressing their trauma and in some cases sharing the burden of their memories in group settings. Despite this, there was still a desire for closeness and the potential for a surrogate family through friendships so intense they felt like kin. However, there was a growing realisation that this type of family was not a replacement and in fact represented a more extended family dynamic. Comparisons have been drawn between adult siblings who live far away and do not see each other often, or “cousins at Christmas”, where there is a bond but not extensive, day-to-day contact. Whilst definitions of a traditional extended family cite the presence of multiple generations in the same household, we can see a glimpse here of non-biological extended families as survivors feel themselves to be members of a large kin or friendship group.⁷⁶⁰

Irrespectively, there was a need for support and understanding that organisations such as the '45 Aid Society and AJR fostered. Despite the intensity of the immediate postwar period being lost, these organisations continued to develop along a friendly and sometimes familial angle of intimacy as their own lives progressed and they nurtured their own families. The emphasis in these organisations in the late twentieth century further reflects this loss of intensity in survivor

⁷⁶⁰ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, ‘Definition: Extended Family’, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/extended%20family> [Accessed 14 February, 2019]; See Chapter Six of this thesis for discussion of ‘generations’ of survivors of similar ages.

relationships, but the continued warmth and intimacy that has endured since the formation of these groups. This is also reflected in how newer groups were set up, such as the Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain (CSAGB). Overall, there is a growing awareness on how survivors compartmentalise their lives and have "other friends", non-survivor friends away from these communities, showing that in terms of individual identity, being a survivor takes its place amongst broader roles and identities that the survivor can draw on at different times.⁷⁶¹ This further fuels the notion of an extended family with limited contact but warmth and contentment regardless. This confines survivor interactions to occasional association meetings or reunions rather than day-to-day or regular contact week to week.

This chapter, then, foregrounds the sense of belonging and validation that comes from being a member of these survivor groups that foster a close and intimate atmosphere. While acknowledging that there are instances of tension, as explored in Chapter Three, we consider here how support and understanding were vital to an evolving sense of family, friendship and belonging. As Edzia Warszawska notes, survivors have "travelled many roads together".⁷⁶² This is important for the overall theme within this thesis of validation, as survivors band together into these groups to seek community and the tacit acceptance of their experiences. Whilst this is not always achieved, it is a laudable goal that individuals seek. In sum, this chapter explores the great variety of relationships and definitions of what family meant and has come to mean within survivor communities, split into three stages across five decades as indicated above and using oral history, memoir and survivor association journal material to illustrate these chronological shifts.

⁷⁶¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁷⁶² Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 180.

The Immediate Post War Period: Community, Intensity and Recovery

The motivation to create survivor communities in the immediate post-war period is hardly surprising. Margarete Feinstein notes that there was a desire in this period for refugees to live communally.⁷⁶³ Young people living in a kibbutz particularly reflect this notion. The close familial bonds that this type of living encouraged represented a “need for family” that was essential for those who had few or no surviving relatives.⁷⁶⁴

Indicative of this need is through friendships that became as “deep and strong as sibling relationships”, a result of having faced similar hardships and a sense of understanding developing, further emphasising that survivors felt “bound by the same fate”.⁷⁶⁵ Overall, the immediate postwar period is characterised by the intensity of survivor peer-to-peer relationships. Marie Paneth reflected on the Windermere children having a deep need to “replace the loss they had suffered, were looking around greedily and would form intense personal relationships very easily, and would therefore suffer another loss very severely”.⁷⁶⁶ This is understandable and reflects Hannah Pollin-Galay’s assessment of the Yiddish concept “tsuzamen”.⁷⁶⁷ This concept reaches a critical level of application in the era of the Holocaust, where many individuals lost their entire families and through similar experiences developed close relationships. In a postwar life without many of their relatives, many survivors became dependent on each other and formed surrogate families based on their experiential kin.

⁷⁶³ Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, p. 165.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁷⁶⁵ Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, p. 171; Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 180.

⁷⁶⁶ Paneth, *Rock the Cradle*, p. 61.

⁷⁶⁷ Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, p. 77.

Despite Feinstein referring to kibbutzim as an example of intense survivor relationships in the immediate postwar period, the phenomenon of close, familial style bonds can also be observed elsewhere. Indeed, it has been argued that survivors seek each other out, with their shared trauma strengthening the “bonds of friendship” in a powerful way because of how an intimate understanding of each other’s experiences developed.⁷⁶⁸ The desire for such intimacy has been consistently noted in survivor recollections. Edzia Warszawska, an inmate of various concentration camps, remarked that she and her friend Rose Dajch “became like sisters” who were “bound by the same fate”.⁷⁶⁹ This notion of their destinies being entwined is particularly interesting as it shows how these relationships progressed from a wartime coping strategy to postwar context but retain its intensity, highlighting that, in the perspective of Edzia and Rose, it was their destiny to remain alive and support each other.

This can perhaps, in part, be explained by the often unlikely instances where friends survived the camps together, remarkable given the high death rates in many of the camps. As a consequence, the notion of destiny and having ‘survived for a reason’ becomes imbued within these types of friendships, making them feel intense and as if their survival had a larger meaning as a result. The idea of fate can also be considered as a way of avoiding survivor guilt as it introduces the concept that their survival was ‘meant to be’ and therefore not within their control. This allows survivors to make sense of their traumatic experiences. A further factor that can convey how survivors accept their survival and avoid survivor guilt is through speaking about their experiences and framing this within the lens of duty, which will be examined in the sixth chapter of this thesis along with how survivors speak in public outlets such as the media on current events.

⁷⁶⁸ Helmreich, ‘Against All Odds’, pp. 757-8.

⁷⁶⁹ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 180.

Whilst there were marked instances of close relations amongst survivors, the origins of such friendships were not always harmonious. Indeed, Harry Balsam's narration of first meeting a fellow inmate on a death march in 1945 illustrates how shared trauma and enmity could, in the present, become the subject of a poignant reflection that was later used with humour:

I suddenly noticed a boy a little bigger than me run to the verge of the road. He picked something up. I went over to him and asked for a piece. It was a beetroot. He told me to buzz off. I told him that if he did not give me a piece I would tell the others and they would take it all away from him and cut him up in pieces, because we were all starving by then, so he gave me a small piece. I ate it up in one second. When I went back for more he reluctantly gave me another piece. This boy is today my best friend.⁷⁷⁰

A friendship that began with competition over scarce resources, bullying and threats exemplifies the complexities of survivor relationships during the Holocaust and immediate postwar period. Harry Balsam's recollection conveyed this marked difference between the wartime and postwar experiences when it came to survivor friendships. Whilst in that particular context, the two boys could be seen as enemies, once the tension of hunger and competition had subsided, they could empathise with each other and understand how a person could be driven to behave in that way, through overwhelming hunger, threat of death and dehumanisation. Their shared

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 224.

experiences bound them together and became a foundation for trust: years later they started a business together after continuing their friendship as members of the '45 Aid Society.

Other interviews and testimony have exemplified how the immediate postwar period presented challenges to survivors as they attempted to adjust to feeling civilised and 'human' following their camp experiences.⁷⁷¹ Furthermore, the bond in common between survivors, particularly those who travelled to the UK together under the auspices of the Central British Fund in 1945 (going on to become the '45 Aid Society), led to a close-knit group with bonds so deep and intimate that it led to a suspicion of outsiders.⁷⁷² Those involved in the psychiatric treatment of patients from the Jewish community more generally reflect that the Holocaust has generally led to a Jewish suspicion of outsiders, particularly in Orthodox communities.⁷⁷³

In this way, the immediate postwar development of relationships between these individuals can be described as sibling-like due to the cohesive nature of shared memories, trauma and bonding.⁷⁷⁴ This familial connection is referred to by these survivors as "the framework and foundation on which we have built our lives".⁷⁷⁵ The idea of these relationships forming the basis of a new start is emotive, imparting a message of how these survivors were able to start again and develop successful careers and families from traumatic beginnings. These group dynamics were essential in fostering a new sense of stability in an uncertain world for these individuals.

⁷⁷¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

⁷⁷² Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 386.

⁷⁷³ See Elizabeth Sublette and Brian Trappier, 'Cultural Sensitivity Training in Mental Health: Treatment of Orthodox Jewish Psychiatric Inpatients', *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, Vol.46 (2000), pp. 122–134.

⁷⁷⁴ Lewkowicz, Interview with Minia Jay.

⁷⁷⁵ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 1.

The intense connection was not limited to older survivors within the groups that arrived in the UK but could also be glimpsed in the very youngest survivors. Joanna Millan, whose birth name was Bella Rosenthal born in 1942 therefore three in 1945, remarked upon the intense connection between herself and the other very young children with whom she came to the UK. A common bond had developed between them, instigated by their shared trauma of being the youngest to survive Theresienstadt/Terezin. Their survival is often viewed as miraculous, as their ages ranged from three years old to eight and they often were separated from their parents.

I definitely do feel very connected with the other children that came over. The 6 of us that were the youngest that came out of Terezin – we were very very close, we were a family, like not only brothers and sisters but we were our own parents and relatives and every – we were all that we knew! They were family. So I felt very close to them and when I was adopted it was a great wrench to be separated from them.⁷⁷⁶

Her anguish at being adopted and having to move away from the other children, whom she felt had become her family in lieu of her missing relatives, is palpable. Links can be drawn with psychological studies that found child survivors, particularly the youngest to survive, experienced fears of abandonment following their experiences.⁷⁷⁷ This theme is indicated in Joanna's anguish at being separated from the other children after developing such a bond. The way that she framed her narrative with notions of family is unsurprising. However, the way that she describes the

⁷⁷⁶ Melzack, Interview with Bella Rosenthal.

⁷⁷⁷ Steinberg, 'Holocaust Survivors and Their Children: A Review of the Clinical Literature', p. 29.

children as their “own parents” is as telling as it is powerful and emotive as these children were aged six and under at the time, testifying to a mutually dependent self-reliance. This evocative sentiment expresses the idea of childhood being abandoned very early on and being forced to mature due to the Holocaust robbing these children of their innocence.⁷⁷⁸ This context then meant that the children looked out for each other and assumed a protective role towards one another as older family members would have. The notion of the abandonment of childhood and innocence reflects how child survivors face particular challenges to psychological wellbeing and identity.

Young survivors could often feel as if they had lost their identities, which could cause a reduction in an individual’s quality of life. A key case study that illustrates this theme is the relationship between young survivors and their family members who had not experienced the same trauma. This can take place in a variety of contexts: such as survivor children who were adopted and those who were taken in by family members who did not understand their Holocaust experiences or were unwilling to empathise with their trauma. The reasons for this could differ between not wanting to confront traumatic experiences, not wanting those experiences to upset or traumatise other, younger family members or a belief that confronting those memories could be harmful. Kitty Hart Moxon wrote about this tension in her memoirs:

My uncle was waiting at Dover. The moment we got into his car he staggered us by saying firmly: ‘Before we go off to Birmingham there’s one thing I must make quite clear. On no account are you to talk about any of the

⁷⁷⁸ Esti Cohen, Rachel Dekel, Zahava Solomon, 'Long-Term Adjustment and the Role of Attachment Among Holocaust Child Survivors', *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol.33, No.2 (2002), pp. 299-310.

things that have happened to you. Not in my house. I don't want my girls upset. And I don't want to know'.⁷⁷⁹

This formative and jarring experience then shaped her reluctance to talk about the Holocaust after her arrival in the UK. Where others dwelled on their wartime experiences, Holocaust survivors were encouraged “not to embarrass anyone by saying a word”.⁷⁸⁰ The fact that Kitty framed her arrival in England in this way is striking, marking the negative impact that this had on her initial response to arriving in the UK. Her reaction conveys a struggle to feel accepted and therefore validated in a new country despite having relatives in the UK. Struggling to find this empathy within other relationships, we can see why many survivors felt they could only be understood by each other.

This is also echoed by other survivors: Henia Goldman for example reiterated with great torment that her relatives suggested “the rubbish survived”, so she soon “shut up” about trying to tell the story of her Holocaust experiences.⁷⁸¹ This poignant recollection illustrates that survivors desired to speak about their trauma but soon learned that people did not want to hear such narratives. Susan Kushner Resnick also found this in the male survivor she befriended in the US. She recounted stories told to her of his selfishness forming the main reason why he survived, endorsed by a Rabbi who stated categorically that survivors were “bad souls who did something immoral”.⁷⁸² This reflects a chronological change in the status of

⁷⁷⁹ Kitty Hart Moxon, *Return to Auschwitz* (London: Granada, 1981), p. 14.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Sharon Tyler, Interview with Henia Goldman, *Visual History Archive* (4 December, 1995).

⁷⁸² Susan Kushner Resnick, *You Saved Me Too: What a Holocaust Survivor Taught Me About Living, Dying, Fighting, Loving and Swearing in Yiddish* (Connecticut: Skirt!, 2013), p. 25.

survivors, where to be seen as a survivor implied collaboration or unworthiness rather than a display of strength in having endured such atrocity.

Kitty Hart Moxon, in her early recollections, wrote at length about how isolated she felt and how important building a family was to her, in order to prevent loneliness.⁷⁸³ In tandem with the narrative of her uncle's unwillingness to talk about her experiences, it is clear how family members who had not experienced the Holocaust were both incapable of empathising with such horrors and reluctant to in many instances. As a result, it would appear logical that survivors could find that empathy and understanding from each other after their families had perished in the ghettos and camps. This reflects Cecille Klein's assertion in her poem that "survivors only feel at ease with other survivors", reflecting the unspoken understanding that develops within these groups.⁷⁸⁴

A further example of family being unable or unwilling to comprehend or understand their relative's Holocaust experiences can be glimpsed within British families who adopted child survivors. Joanna Millan strongly related to this upheaval as she was adopted by a Jewish family, who changed her name and were not open with her about her history.⁷⁸⁵ She elaborated on the issue in a volume published in the 1980s:

Incidentally, they changed my name. They didn't want any reference made to my past. That always annoyed them. I remember deciding what my name was going to be in the car when they drove me away from Lingfield. They said,

⁷⁸³ Hart Moxon, *Return to Auschwitz*, p. 20.

⁷⁸⁴ Klein, *Sentenced to Live*, p. 141.

⁷⁸⁵ Moskowitz, *Love Despite Hate*, pp. 57-8.

‘Now we’re going to choose a name for you’ and we discussed it in the car. After that, I remembered changing it, but I never remembered what I was called before. I never remembered it being used.⁷⁸⁶

The actions of Millan’s adoptive parents led to a reticence in seeking to discover her past as she had been conditioned to distance herself from it and repress a desire to find out more. It also had the unfortunate side effect that surviving relatives on the continent were unable to trace her and led to their assumption that she had perished with her parents. This reflects the divergence of survivor experiences in the immediate post-war period, as many survivors were actively encouraged by adoptive or foster parents to explore their past and come to terms with what had happened to them, whilst others were compelled to forget or avoid the trauma of remembering.⁷⁸⁷ A further example of this is a young survivor who was adopted after spending time in a children’s home called Lingfield, whose adoptive parents requested that his former carers did not visit as they wanted him to forget his past.⁷⁸⁸ This represents a tension in ideas of moving on encouraged by social workers in the United States, which is explored by Margarete Feinstein.⁷⁸⁹

A similar theme is present within the UK, where those children considered as damaged or irreparably psychologically scarred found it difficult to find adoptive families.⁷⁹⁰ Feinstein notes that social workers often regarded a traumatised past as

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ 45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 127.

⁷⁸⁸ Moskovitz, *Love Despite Hate*, p. 73.

⁷⁸⁹ Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, pp. 174-5.

⁷⁹⁰ This arose in an interview, where the survivor asked not to be named. There was a group of children at a children’s home called ‘Bulldog’s Bank’, one of this group of children ended up needing psychiatric treatment as a result of her experiences, generally being described as spiteful and not suitable for adoption.

a significant barrier to the goal of finding foster families.⁷⁹¹ By refusing to allow survivor children space to process their experiences, “great damage” was done, leaving child survivors “frustrated and hurting”.⁷⁹²

Overall, the idea of moving on encouraged an atmosphere where memories were repressed in the immediate post-war period. The repression of memories had repercussions for survivor identity as they began to speak about their experiences many decades later, owing to needing to find crucial pieces of their history and the puzzle of their lives in order to find the strength and composure to speak as a survivor. This could be a very long process as survivors need to be confident and composed in who they are and what they have experienced before feeling confident enough to share these narratives with others. Adoptions can also lead to discomposure in the oral history setting, as there is an inability to reconcile the Holocaust past with the subsequent narrative of adoption and integrating into a new family that could not or would not understand their Holocaust experiences. As a result, these young survivors often felt a disconnect between their Holocaust history and the lives they came to lead in the UK.

Whilst the idea of moving on and repressing memories was encouraged in some climates and contexts, others demonstrated the need for community and remaining in touch with experiential kin. A case study where this is particularly prominent is that of the Primrose Club, set up in 1947 as a meeting place for the survivors who called themselves ‘The Boys’.⁷⁹³ The centrality and importance of food at the Primrose Club could not be underestimated following the periods of extreme hardship and starvation these survivors had endured in camps. Food became

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, pp. 174-5.

⁷⁹³ See Chapter Two of this thesis for the origins of the ’45 Aid Society and ‘The Boys’.

not only a way to entice members into joining and participating but also to bring about a sense of reminiscence and comfort through the “mother’s cooking” provided by Julie Mahrer, a “buxom” Austrian woman.⁷⁹⁴ In sum, food could become a window into a sense of home and belonging, providing survivors with a focus on positive memories of family cooking rather than family destruction.

The ready availability of food also provided a level of silent reassurance for the survivor attendees; it had taken them many months to adjust to not hoarding food and feeling anxious about starvation or deprivation. The Primrose Club most importantly allowed for the counteraction of loneliness and solitude, but the priority was maintaining the intense companionships the young survivors had fostered that originated in Theresienstadt and Windermere.⁷⁹⁵ Here, the importance of the survivors being able to mingle with people of the same background and experience was felt to be crucial, particularly within the new culture these individuals found themselves in.⁷⁹⁶ This reflected the desire for ‘The Boys’ to find their place within British society, but also to retain old traditions and feelings of home that they lost as their childhoods were cut short by the Holocaust. Therefore, there was a desire for continuation of culture but assimilation into a different society, consequently creating a blended identity that could only be understood within these communities.

The Primrose Club became, as Paul Mayer deemed it, “a substitute for a lost family”, providing comfort at times of readjustment and integrating into British society.⁷⁹⁷ Survivors in interviews and memoirs have fond memories of the Primrose Club, with the oft-repeated refrain that “I found my family” which was also echoed

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 379.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 388-9.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid, pp. 388-9.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 383.

in interviews conducted for this thesis.⁷⁹⁸ This is a touching example of composure within the oral history setting, where these collective experiences are remembered with fondness and become a crucial stabilising influence on a narrative that demonstrates many rises and falls of emotion across a variety of chronologies. Survivor relations in the immediate postwar period were universally intense. This is a logical reaction to the trauma of the Holocaust, so incomprehensible to survivors themselves, even more so those who had not experienced it. Survivor relations in the immediate postwar period convey a desire to support each other and convey how there were people who understood, a quality that was not often present in relationships outside of these survivor communities and groups.

Injured Pride, Moving On and Spousal Experience: The Survivor Marriage

A further instance within the oral history setting that provides composure for individual Holocaust survivors and a sense of structure to their narrative occurs around the theme of marriage. In the immediate years following their liberation, many survivors in their twenties married and started families. Those who form part of this study were generally younger and most married a number of years after the war's end, in the 1950s and sometimes 1960s. The three interviewees who were in their later teenage years (16 and 18 years old in 1945) did not marry straight away, however, and this challenges the historiographical assumption that survivors rushed into marriage in the immediate post-war period in order to recreate families of their own.⁷⁹⁹ This is not always the case, further reiterating that we are dealing with individual subjectivities and experiences, which are somewhat resistant to strict categorisations.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 391.

⁷⁹⁹ For a summary of the literature describing hasty survivor marriages as a phenomenon see Cheryl Koopman, 'Political Psychology as a Lens for Viewing Traumatic Events', *Political Psychology*, Vol.18, No.4 (December, 1997), pp. 831-847.

The older survivors I interviewed mentioned the loss of their adolescence in the camps and the desire to be young again, playing football and getting used to a new country whilst learning English, rather than rushing into marriage. A further contextual point to note is that many survivors within the larger group of 732 who went on to become the '45 Aid Society were 16 and above but pretended to be younger to be included in the transports to the UK, therefore were treated as children in the early days of their arrival. Therefore, the emphasis was on enjoying typical adolescent pursuits such as education, dating, friendships and sport that had long been foregone, rather than a preoccupation with the responsibilities of adulthood.

Marriage forms an important consideration for this chapter as it conveys an example of moving on with life and discovering intimacy outside of the familial bonds that had been fostered with other survivors. Mary Fulbrook has noted that “the rhythms of private lives did not correspond to those of public representations” and how priorities altered as survivors aged, conveying an initial desire to silence the past and focus on creating a normal and stable family life.⁸⁰⁰ A survivor born in Thessaloniki in Greece but incarcerated at Auschwitz highlighted that, as time passed, she spoke less and less about her camp experiences and wanted to focus on life, and other survivors also exemplify this.⁸⁰¹ In Martin Gilbert’s volume ‘The Boys’, the presence of female figures for the mostly male group and the marriages that followed receives extensive attention, particularly with reference to the Primrose Club.⁸⁰² It was felt that the young male survivors struggled to integrate with girls following their experiences of gendered segregation in camps.⁸⁰³ However, it had

⁸⁰⁰ Fulbrook, *Reckonings*, p. 384.

⁸⁰¹ Erika Myriam Kounio Amariglio, *From Thessaloniki to Auschwitz and Back: Memories of a Survivor from Thessaloniki* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), p. 143.

⁸⁰² Gilbert, *The Boys*, pp. 383 & 388.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

been observed that there were some problems with dating and marriage between elder members of the young survivor community and members of the British Jewish community, which suggests that some survivors hoped to settle down quickly.⁸⁰⁴

Arthur Poznanski emphasises this in his narrative as thus:

Their daughters could socialise or dance with us but, when it came to proposals of marriage, quite a few of us were rejected by a girl's parents. As well as the heartaches of broken romances, we suffered from injured pride and a resentment that we barely dared discuss amongst ourselves.⁸⁰⁵

The issue of resentment in this rejection is particularly striking as it challenges the promotion of the idea that the Primrose Club provided composure for survivors. This expression of upset can be considered as evidence of discomposure as there were barriers to integrating further into the community through marriage. Consequently, a challenge is presented to the narrative that survivors were warmly welcomed and accepted into the Anglo-Jewish community. It is important to note here that the above example represented survivors who were in their twenties in 1947 rather than the slightly younger cohort represented by my interview sample. This emotional theme regarding parental reluctance was observed in some of the oral history interviews that I conducted. When asked about survivors marrying and any tensions within the British-Jewish community, Margalit Judah, a former magistrate used to 'weighing up' both sides of an argument relatively, provided a counter argument:

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 388-9.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

And you can understand why the families might think, well do we really want this? They all had foreign accents, they had no resources and did they really want their daughters to marry someone in that situation? I don't think you can blame them entirely, if you look at it from their point of view. There was quite a resistance.⁸⁰⁶

Judah proceeded to talk in detail regarding the importance of marriage to survivors. She traced the priority for survivors to marry within the Jewish community and to continue with their faith in their family's memory, but also to become anglicised and part of the British Jewish community.⁸⁰⁷ Whilst she agrees that there was an initial reluctance in the earlier post-war years for this type of marriage, owing to the desire to maintain their existing cultures, she emphasised that this eventually became the norm.⁸⁰⁸ However, not all survivors valued the centrality of a Jewish marriage and maintaining a Jewish family. Gadi Jacobsen fervently emphasised, "But you're isolating yourself, marrying within the Jewish religion, living within the Jewish community. I find that that sets people up to have what you had in Germany".⁸⁰⁹ The alternative to survivors marrying members of the British Jewish community, therefore having non-survivor spouses, was to marry each other. This, however, has been referred to as problematic due to the "double jeopardy" of damage that can exist between two survivor spouses, which can provide an awkward and unstable upbringing for their children.⁸¹⁰ While there are exceptions, this often became the pattern in survivor-survivor marriages.

⁸⁰⁶ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Moskowitz, *Love Despite Hate*, p. 51.

⁸¹⁰ See Samuel Juni, 'Second-generation Holocaust survivors: Psychological, theological, and moral challenges', *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, Vol.17, No.1 (2016), pp. 97-111.

Many narratives prioritise marriage as an important endeavour for survivors to recover an eagerness to start life again and emphasising the “miracle” of finding each other and being able to create a future.⁸¹¹ There is an overall sense of “the resurrection of two families, coming from hell to meet and marry and to restart what was lost” when survivors married each other.⁸¹² However, many narratives do not pronounce survivor-survivor marriages as a trend, merely an occasional phenomenon.⁸¹³ In many instances, the familial type of relationship is emphasised to such a degree amongst survivors that the prospect of marriage is made to feel incestuous.⁸¹⁴ Furthermore, a recurring sub-theme that conveys the importance of marriage was the age at which one married, with the pattern emerging that survivors married young, often within displaced persons’ camps. Reasons for this differ on an individual basis, but a central tenet is the fact that many of these survivors “didn’t have anyone else”.⁸¹⁵

Individual survivors felt the need to attain roots, fill missing gaps and try to reformulate their lives without missing relatives. Getting married, having children and creating their own family was thus viewed as a central priority after the initial post-war focus on recovery.⁸¹⁶ By contrast, my interviewees, many of whom were in their teenage years during the years of the Holocaust and wished to have a chance to be children again before settling down and committing to adult life, did not marry quickly. The stabilisation of their lives, recovering a lost sense of childhood,

⁸¹¹ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 18.

⁸¹² *Ibid*, p. 76.

⁸¹³ Nomi Lackmaker, Interview with Elizabeth Abraham (October, 1998), Part 3. https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors?_ga=2.75182551.47992653.1528102322-1458656441.1506331961/021M-C0830X0045XX-0003V0 [Accessed 1 June, 2018]

⁸¹⁴ Lewkowicz, Interview with Minia Jay; Smith, Interview with Roman Halter.

⁸¹⁵ Bea Lewkowicz, Interview with Nora Danzig, *Visual History Archive* (13 August, 1996).

⁸¹⁶ Melzack, Interview with Bella Rosenthal.

enjoying leisure pursuits and becoming human again thus commanded a higher priority than forming their own families.

Survivors repeatedly reiterated how their spouses provided “great strength” and a “marvellous support” system.⁸¹⁷ This had not come easily: Sara Waksztok in her 1996 poem “Living With You” for the *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* illustrated the dedication but often the difficulty of being the spouse of a Holocaust survivor.⁸¹⁸ She discusses the difficulty of comprehending the facts of her husband’s past and how he continued to live with his memories, admiring him for “spreading cheer” in spite of all of his horror and trauma.⁸¹⁹

Jill Bamber has also written poetry with a similar sentiment for the *AJR Journal* in 1994, referring to her husband’s nightmares of the wartime years and desiring that she may relieve his burden by waking him up.⁸²⁰ However, she expressed doubt, as “my touch may break into his sleep like Kristallnacht, and shatter glass he has spent years repairing”.⁸²¹ This imagery connotes the fragility of survivor composure, in that it has taken years to repair but is still fragile. This reflects the interplay of vulnerability and resilience that survivors negotiated.⁸²² Both spousal poets reflect their desire to understand and share in the burden but also emphasise there are many things that they may never comprehend or be able to share in.

These poems convey spouses’ love and commitment towards survivors as well as the frustration that their Holocaust experiences separate them and have the

⁸¹⁷ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. v.

⁸¹⁸ Sara Waksztok, ‘Living With You: From the Spouse of a ‘45er’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1996), pp. 47-8.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

⁸²⁰ Jill Bamber, ‘Marrying Out’, *AJR Information*, Vol.49, No.7 (July, 1994), p. 7.

⁸²¹ Ibid.

⁸²² Kahana, Harel and Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants*, p. 139.

potential to cause them upset. The places that these spouses occupy within survivor communities point to their desire to try and understand. The means in which spouses get involved differs, such as becoming engaged with Holocaust remembrance work such as Mala Tribich's husband Maurice who joked that he "married into this extended family and have been better for it"⁸²³ or merely providing a calming and stable influence. This tranquil presence can often lead survivors away from talking about the Holocaust. Michael Honey's wife Eve declared that he was "a jollier person before this all started" and that she couldn't see any benefit in letting him "regurgitate the same old story" and bringing back memories "everybody wants to forget".⁸²⁴ However, by supporting their survivor spouses, these men and women provide a means for survivors to compartmentalise their identities, whereby they inhabit the role of husband or wife above that of Holocaust survivor within their marriages.

Support and Understanding: A Surrogate or Extended Family?

The importance of survivors staying together in groups and communities cannot be underestimated. Interviews with numerous individual survivors have highlighted the enrichment and support survivors can receive from each other.⁸²⁵ Hoffman argued that immigration itself increased isolation and loneliness, and when combined with Holocaust trauma, it became crucial for these individuals to band together and have common memories outside of their Holocaust experiences.⁸²⁶ This communal understanding and socialisation is not just important because of mutual trauma but

⁸²³ Maurice Tribich, 'Reflections on our Society by a member who 'Married In'', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1993), p. 3.

⁸²⁴ Susan Fransman, Interview with Michael Honey, *Visual History Archive* (23 January, 1997).

⁸²⁵ See Chapter Three for instances where these communities are not as harmonious and hierarchies form.

⁸²⁶ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 80.

also a shared culture that these members are no longer part of, with traditions that may seem strange to outsiders. Therefore, culturally, these individuals are blending these identities into a new whole.

Indeed, this notion of outsiders can become fraught within the survivor community, presenting the idea that “outsiders do not understand” and as a consequence, these groups are relied upon for friendships and in times of need.⁸²⁷ This can seem logical, as Aaron Hass has suggested, the comfort and attraction of close friendships is this unspoken and unexplained sense of understanding, which makes it unsurprising that survivors “gravitate towards one another”.⁸²⁸ This is not to suggest that survivors formed an entirely insular and unfriendly community, but were initially reluctant to integrate with others who could not comprehend their experiences. The initial mistrust can be viewed as a feature that decreases in prominence as the years passed, indicating that survivors required time to adjust to a new life, but also to trust in humanity again after their experiences.

The shared sense of support and understanding in these groups manifests itself within formal and informal assistance within the organisations that form the basis of this thesis. This is important to examine as a critical feature of familial units is the overall support of its members. Whilst there are formal structures of support, there are also informal modes of support that also reflect a family bond. Support structure within the AJR developed in a number of ways but began in the immediate postwar period with charitable contributions such as setting up a clothing collection in order to send clothes to displaced persons on the continent and supporting a search

⁸²⁷ Nancy Isserman, ‘Political Tolerance and Intolerance’, p. 38; See Methodology Chapter of this thesis for discussion of how the insider/outsider concepts influence the interview setting.

⁸²⁸ Aaron Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 86.

action to inform many refugees of the death of their relatives and friends.⁸²⁹ However, once the displaced person crisis had dissipated, the energy and dedication of the AJR turned to “the provision of suitable accommodation for the elderly” amongst members.⁸³⁰

We can observe here that whilst the AJR was a formal support structure, it took on responsibilities that younger members of a family would take towards older family members had they survived the war. The provision of elderly residential accommodation proved to work well alongside the reparations debate, as the AJR were able to obtain unclaimed restitution property “for social purposes” with help from the Central British Fund.⁸³¹ While the issue of retirement accommodation was a key one for the AJR, another pressing matter was the loneliness and ill-health amongst some of the refugees, particularly the elderly and those who had survived the concentration camps.⁸³² These individuals had lost most or all of their families in the war and therefore faced extreme isolation if they had been unable to recreate or attempt to substitute those bonds. Lucie Schachne in 1962 remarked how the Social Services Department of the AJR remained “in full swing” even after twenty-one years of its existence and the widespread naturalisation of refugees.⁸³³ Evidently, naturalisation was not the only solution to the problems of refugees and survivors in post-war Britain and further support was required.

The purview of the AJR Social Services Department seemed to be vast and has remained so, including an Employment Agency, accommodation provision and services, a staff of volunteers to spend time with lonely refugees, a lending library,

⁸²⁹ Unknown Author, ‘The First Five Years’, *AJR Information*, Vol.1, No.5 (May, 1946), p. 33.

⁸³⁰ Maier, ‘From Foundation to Maturity’, pp. 6-7.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

⁸³² Schachne, ‘Social Services at Fairfax Mansions’, p. 9.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

‘meals on wheels’ and home help.⁸³⁴ This broad remit is indicative of catering not only to the physical needs of the refugees but also emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. This aspect of the AJR’s support continued alongside the fluctuating need for legal support regarding reparations, naturalisation and citizenship, whereby demand ebbed and flowed in a manner different to the need for the support provided by the Social Services Department, which remained consistent.

This highlights the issue of loneliness and the need for company and community after traumatic experiences and the difficulties of adjusting to a new home nation. For those refugees and survivors who had nobody else, the bonds fostered in these contexts could become familial, and certainly supported them as a family might in times of struggle. However, whilst the familial and friendly bonds can be observed within the AJR, it must also be noted that this was a large and formal institution. Therefore, whilst it is essential to consider the ties fostered within the AJR membership, its support structure was formal, but nevertheless it assisted in facilitating this convivial atmosphere amongst its members.

Support as a theme echoes throughout the development of the ’45 Aid Society, similar to the AJR, from its beginnings in the immediate postwar to the present day, and can be split into the tripartite notion of support as psychological, social and financial. This interrelates with the theme of ‘keeping together’ and fostering a surrogate family dynamic in a more overt way and reflects a more informal structure of support than the AJR as a bigger organisation. A pivotal case study of this family dynamic in action is the founding of the Primrose Club for ‘The

⁸³⁴ Schachne, ‘Social Services at Fairfax Mansions’, p. 9; Maier, ‘From Foundation to Maturity’, pp. 6-7.

Boys' in 1947, many of whom felt lonely without the close relationships fostered in the hostels, necessitating the need for a meeting place.⁸³⁵

The importance of the Primrose Club could not be underestimated, with Polish survivor Arthur Poznanski remarking that "I could again mix with people from my own background", having found the Anglo-Jewish community reluctant to accept survivors socially, particularly in terms of romance with local girls.⁸³⁶ The club became a substitute for a lost family, with many marriages resulting from the socialising that took place there, particularly as more survivors outside of the 732 'Boys' found their place within the group and local Jewish girls began to attend, evening out the gender imbalance amongst the group.⁸³⁷ The Primrose Club as a social function of the '45 Aid Society allowed for space for the survivors to keep together and stay in touch. This promoted the idea that the members should support each other, a notion that endured in the years that followed. This support was not just social, but psychological, especially for those "few in long-term psychiatric hospitals", and financially for those who may have needed it, for example in terms of attending reunions and the provision of accommodation.⁸³⁸ This further emphasises the support structure that can stem from a close-knit group, which for some feels like an extended family.

Shirley Huberman in her *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* titled 'The Caring Society', recounted her husband Alfred being taken ill on a trip to Israel, where 'The Boys' prayed for him and ensured they were comfortable and cared for, reflecting what she deemed "the interest and tender loving care" leading to her

⁸³⁵ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 376.

⁸³⁶ Ibid, pp. 388-9.

⁸³⁷ Ibid, pp. 383 & 391.

⁸³⁸ Ibid, p. 388; Bernice Krantz, Interview with Steven Pearl, *Visual History Archive* (13 June, 1996).

being “enveloped in” love during the time of Alfred’s illness.⁸³⁹ It conveys how survivors desperately craved a sense of belonging that could be glimpsed in community and family. This was not always aligned with religion, but as seen in Huberman’s example of the group praying for her husband’s welfare, the Society remained a Jewish group, even if many were not Orthodox.

As the Primrose Club case study reveals, the general family bond that united the boys was particularly strong, with the society being formed to ‘keep together’ in a world without their kin,⁸⁴⁰ creating a “new-found family”, which allowed them to become “human” again.⁸⁴¹ But nonetheless, a sibling-type relationship has been emphasised, for all its positive and negative aspects. Although the survivors do not have the chance to see each other often, the bond they share is comparable to the love one feels for their siblings.⁸⁴² This can be glimpsed in Harry Balsam’s memory quilt square, where he includes pictures of his children, grandchildren and his survivor “brothers”.⁸⁴³ He places his fellow members of the Society alongside blood relatives:

⁸³⁹ Shirley Huberman, ‘The Caring Society’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (2006), p. 78.

⁸⁴⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016.

⁸⁴¹ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 270.

⁸⁴² Lewkowicz, Interview with Minia Jay.

⁸⁴³ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 6.

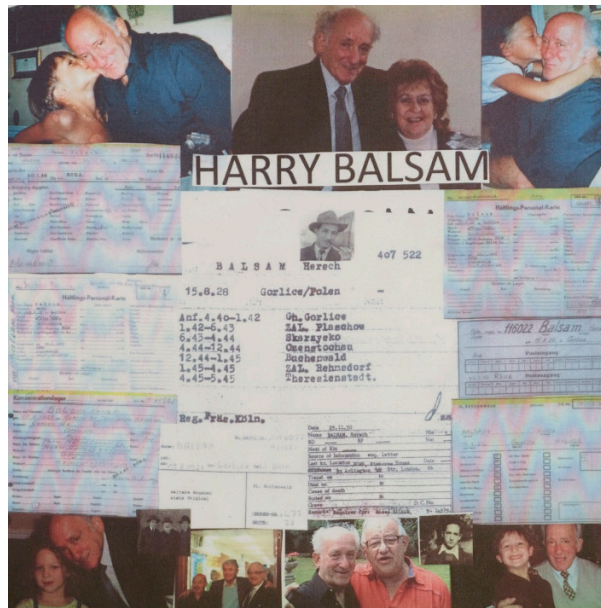


Figure 7: '45 Aid Society, Memory Quilt, p. 6.

The bonds, friendships and familial relationships that began with Windermere and the hostels were crucial to their recovery and attaining a long-abandoned sense of normalcy and stability, showing how much survivors needed each other.⁸⁴⁴ The '45 Aid Society Chairman, now President, Ben Helfgott indicates how vital support was for its members. This was more informal than the AJR, as many of the survivors who formed the group were adolescents and desperately required guidance and care following their trauma as their stability and independence had been “deplorably absent” during the war.⁸⁴⁵ This enforces the stability of a family unit, with examples including attending the weddings of fellow survivors in lieu of his lost parents, reflecting the blend of past grief and present optimism, which is also reflected in Cecille Klein’s poem.⁸⁴⁶ Furthermore, this informal level of support has been noted in the Child Survivors’ Association of Great Britain, where members rally around others in challenging times such as bereavement, illness or financial difficulty.⁸⁴⁷ However, in instances when more formal support is required,

⁸⁴⁴ Ben Helfgott, ‘Chairman’s Message’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1997), p. 1; '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 77.

⁸⁴⁵ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 187.

⁸⁴⁶ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 82.

⁸⁴⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

the Child Survivors' Association have utilised their relationship with the AJR in order to exercise more formal help for its members.⁸⁴⁸

Whether the support is provided in a formal or informal sense, these organisations foster a sense of shared belonging, companionship and sometimes familial-type relationships. There is consistent reference within survivor interviews, organisational literature and an overall consensus that these groups exist to benefit their members, provide a support structure and to help those in need.⁸⁴⁹ This reinforces the validation of survivor status, place in the community and identity as they feel part of a substantial group structure, accepted for who they are and what they have experienced and given the opportunity to restart their lives following their trauma.

The reference to family in a broad sense with relation to support, understanding and shared belonging through “uprootedness” can be glimpsed through a medium of ‘Jewishness’.⁸⁵⁰ This indicates not just a focus on the shared experiences but a joint culture of Jewish Holocaust survivors that cements a holistic understanding of each and every survivor. This can be reflected in Michael Freedland’s biography of Ben Helfgott, where he shared the story of his favourite Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur, which requires fasting.⁸⁵¹ It was remarked that for a Holocaust survivor, this was somewhat strange, but he went on to say:

It is my favourite day – because I had starved for the
earliest years of my life, never knowing if I would ever

⁸⁴⁸ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016.

⁸⁴⁹ Gilbert, *The Boys*, pp. 388-9; Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016; Michael Etkind, ‘The Reunion’, *Journal of the ‘45 Aid Society* (1977), p. 23.

⁸⁵⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

⁸⁵¹ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 73.

have something nourishing to eat again. On Yom Kippur, I know that that evening, I will be able to eat again – anything I want. And with my family.⁸⁵²

Michael Freedland went on to add that “Probably only another Holocaust survivor would understand that”, remarking on how something that may seem odd to many can be wholly understood without explanation within the survivor community. There are many things that people outside of the survivor community would not understand, and this unspoken element amongst survivors affects the intensity or endurance of survivor relationships. This is a quality that appears unchanging within survivor associations; that outsiders would not recognise or understand and provides a level of composure for survivors during their group meetings.

This unspoken quality is also reflected in how many survivor association meetings do not feel the need to keep recalling the details of their Holocaust past. The decision was made that enough had been said and understood and could provide tension if comparisons and challenges were made in response to individual narratives. However, as the third chapter of this thesis has conveyed, a sense of understanding within these associations is not always all-encompassing, whereby tensions and hierarchies are capable of arising to challenge this empathy with each other’s stories.

A consistent discussion within survivor associations that has surfaced in my interviews is how their dynamic has changed and whether comparisons can be made to a surrogate family. There appears to be a growing awareness that whilst there is a desire for closeness and community, this does not replace the families that these

⁸⁵² Ibid.

individuals had lost. Therefore, these relationships are presented as partially familial, replicating extended families. This suggests that relationships revolve around a dimension that is best compared to “cousins at Christmas” or long lost family, where there is a comfortable connection but not constant contact, with a sense of “picking up where they left off”.⁸⁵³ This is a theme echoed by other members of the Child Survivors’ Association, with Perle Susman emphasising the sense of community and connection representing an extended family dynamic but also the “right to belong”.⁸⁵⁴

The right to belong is of critical importance to survivors as is the sense of validation that comes from belonging. This is informed by the context that after the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, Jews were denied citizenship rights, were increasingly ostracised and were dehumanised (through a process of uniformed clothing, allocation of numbers, rollcalls, restrictive diet, slave labour and lack of medical provision) in the camps. The idea of companionship, understanding and the right to belong is markedly different from the intensity of immediate postwar relationships but represents an amiable stabilisation of survivors’ lives, where they were able to be independent without depending too heavily on their experiential kin day-to-day. This formed concurrently with starting their own families.

There is an overall sense of rehabilitation in this context, manifested through not re-traumatising each other by dwelling on the Holocaust years and leaning on each other too heavily after an initial period of intense peer to peer support glimpsed in the immediate post-war years. This is evidenced by individual discussions of personal Holocaust experiences ceasing to feature in Holocaust

⁸⁵³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016 and 12 January, 2018.

⁸⁵⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

survivor association meetings. Members have noted that they feel enough has been shared and discussed that the unspoken element of these groups re-emerges.

The way that family is represented in the '45 Aid Society is somewhat different to the Child Survivors' Association but in other ways has universal themes. For instance, there is consistent reference to the '45 Aid Society being “the rest of my family” and survivors being drawn to the Society for the comradeship it provided.⁸⁵⁵ The spirit of brotherhood is repeatedly emphasised from society members,⁸⁵⁶ with Michael Etkind going further in his poem ‘The Reunion’ to highlight that in his opinion, the relationship is greater than “brother to brother”, linked together in “a strange communion” by their experiences.⁸⁵⁷ This relates to the notion of survivors being “bound by the same fate”.⁸⁵⁸

However, despite this emphasis on a close, familial-like relationship, it is also emphasised that there are observable tensions and agreements despite a steady and robust bond.⁸⁵⁹ It could be suggested that this feature resembles many families, irrespective of biological connection and relation. Some interviewees from the '45 Aid Society have also indicated that they feel more comfortable with the presentation of the Society as an extended family rather than a close surrogate family.⁸⁶⁰ This may be explained by this particular survivor having spent time in a hostel in Glasgow therefore separate from the close community of survivors that developed within North London. *AJR Information*, the association's journal, reflected on this centrality of North West London and indicated their desire in 1994 for more regional groups

⁸⁵⁵ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 372.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.452.

⁸⁵⁷ Etkind, ‘The Reunion’.

⁸⁵⁸ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 180.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.442.

⁸⁶⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hershel Orenstein, 4 August, 2018.

away from this geographical focus.⁸⁶¹ Thus, these survivor associations were experienced as both surrogate families or extended families. Either description is dependent on varying contexts as reflected in the individual opinions of its members. As a consequence, some members feel more integrated into the group by geography, time spent together and the strength of emotions fostered by these contexts.

“I have other friends”⁸⁶²: The compartmentalisation of the survivor identity

The emphasis in these survivor organisations in the late twentieth century simultaneously on companionship and a certain distance further reflects this loss of intensity in survivor relationships. Despite this, warmth and intimacy have endured since the formation of these groups. This is also highlighted in how new groups were set up such as the Child Survivors’ Association. Many survivors found it difficult to form bonds with non-survivors and make friends, especially child survivors as they felt crucial parts of their identity formation and self-conception were missing.

Overall, there is a growing awareness on how survivors compartmentalise their lives and have “other friends”, showing that in terms of individual identity, being a survivor takes its place amongst broader roles and identities that the survivor can draw on at different times.⁸⁶³ Additionally, some survivors were separate from the close pocket of survivors that formed in the region of North London. As a consequence, survivors who were sent to hostels in the North of England or Scotland did not interact as often with fellow survivors so often had little choice but to integrate into broader communities away from the survivor community. This can also be glimpsed within the South London survivor community, owing to the amount

⁸⁶¹ Unknown Author, ‘Not in N W London?’ *AJR Information*, Vol.49, No.9 (September, 1994), p. 9.

⁸⁶² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*

of time needed to travel to the North London-based Primrose Club, which conflicted with working patterns and hostel curfews, resulting in non-attendance and limited engagement despite being relatively geographically close.

The identity of Holocaust survivors is undoubtedly shaped by their interaction with fellow survivors, informed by their desire to feel accepted into the group and to belong. However, this is but one aspect of the rich and full lives the survivors have led. This links in well with the notion of survivor communities as a surrogate family as it provides a challenge to a linear argument that is based on constant contact, sharing of memories and strong familial relationships. Margalit Judah summarises this by reiterating, “I have another group of friends”, distancing her social group from her involvement with the CSAGB.⁸⁶⁴ She elaborated further to convey the uneasiness she sometimes felt with her friends that was not a feature of her CSAGB acquaintances:

Well that’s why the organisation formed, they understand where we’re coming from, whereas our other friends, we have to, we’re still, in a way putting on an act. And we’re living in a different world with them. So the whole purpose of these groups is that you could feel comfortable, you could talk about anything, not that we do talk about our experiences but it’s a bond in common. It’s like a long lost cousin that you haven’t seen for years and then you see them again and it’s like we have a connection and we feel comfortable with each other. So the child survivors meet every couple of

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

months and we just have a cup of tea and chat, and just be together, and we all enjoy that.⁸⁶⁵

Judah's response is indicative of the two separate aspects of her identity and how they can sometimes interact to provide awkwardness. When her friends were reminiscing about being evacuated during the war at a recent dinner party, she recalled that her response to their question resulted in embarrassed or awkward silence. She called it her "showstopper" moment.⁸⁶⁶ Her accent also featured in this story, as she noted an accent along with a survivor's age prompts more questions being asked about "where they were during the war".⁸⁶⁷ However, as she had an English accent with no traces of her Eastern European heritage, this situation was mostly avoided. By having survivor associations as a "safe place", as explored by Osher Heller, survivors can discuss problems based on their experiences with people who understand and to escape pretences with other friends.⁸⁶⁸ This allows the survivor to compartmentalise different aspects of their identity within the realms of their social groups or if they speak in public about their experiences.

Additionally, accent can become a threat to the compartmentalized identity of some survivors as it can lead people to ask more questions about their wartime pasts, which results in awkward silences, a reluctant telling of their stories to acquaintances or to an intentional distancing from their own memories. Osher Heller highlighted feeling "figured out" when his co-workers found out about his status as a Holocaust survivor.⁸⁶⁹ This in itself can provide a sense of discomposure as it brings repressed traumatic memories to the forefront and indicates a blurring of

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁸ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

survivor identity. This blurring of identity is particularly striking as it conveys a survivor's desire to remain in the background, providing education through their testimony but not artificially elevated by societal perceptions and expectations. There is, then, a tension between the survivor's desire to educate and the attention they receive as a result; we shall explore this further in Chapter Six.

The importance of a survivor having a self-identity outside of their Holocaust survivor label has appeared to be crucial for accepting their traumatic experiences. This works in tandem with the focus on their pre-war Jewish life, as seen in the example of Maurice Vegh, who in 1991 took his wife to his hometown in the Carpathians, to emphasise that "I came from somewhere. I was somebody before I was a Holocaust survivor. I once had a home, a family, a mother, a father, a sister, uncles and aunts, friends, religion: I was somebody."⁸⁷⁰

By compartmentalising their lives in this manner, there is an awareness of 'moving on' from their experiences and attaining composure by not dwelling on the past for psychological reasons.⁸⁷¹ Lawrence Langer is sceptical of this perspective, and argued that "Life goes on, but in two temporal directions at once, the future unable to escape the grip of a memory laden with grief".⁸⁷² Langer's argument presents the past as a looming spectre in the present, but this shows minimal congruence with my interviews. Indeed, each of my interviewees reflected on their children and grandchildren as forming a significant part of their identity, unburdened by their Holocaust past. Saul Hoffman, in particular, drew on his family and the notion of moving forward, "We accepted, you've got to accept that life is about getting on,

⁸⁷⁰ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 458.

⁸⁷¹ Hass, *The Aftermath*, p. 75.

⁸⁷² Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, p. 34.

you've got to get on with your life, you can't live with things in the past what happened, you can't live with it because if you do, you destroy your life".⁸⁷³

Hoffman's notion of the importance of the second generation in simulating acceptance and the idea of "getting on" with life is highly indicative of the survivor association's change to focus on the future rather than living in the past. Saul's response also indicates the belief that positive things can come out of negative situations and frames this as being alone in a foreign country after trauma, settling down and creating a family without guidance from his parents, who had perished.⁸⁷⁴ Gideon Jacoby also suggested this: "why would I get married and have a family if I wasn't an optimist?"⁸⁷⁵ This suggests the opposite of Langer's example of a survivor suggesting "I can't take full satisfaction in the achievements of my children today because part of my present life is my remembrance".⁸⁷⁶

A possible explanation for these modes of difference in the interviews conducted by Langer and myself is the chronological sphere. Langer, conducting his interviews in the 1980s and 1990s, took place in a period where many of the third generation or grandchildren of survivors had not been born. As the fifth chapter of this thesis will convey, the birth of children and grandchildren enriches survivor lives with a new sense of calm and composure which severely impacts a survivor's view of their life course and their traumatic memories.

Whilst children, grandchildren and subsequent generations can provide composure for survivors, they can also find composure in other settings. Perle Susman drew on the notion of her work and how that provided meaning and identity for her,

⁸⁷³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016.

⁸⁷⁴ Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, p. 34.

⁸⁷⁵ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

emphasising the importance of “getting back on their feet” when she and her husband moved to England.⁸⁷⁷ She also framed her narrative on formative experiences outside of survivor associations that helped her come to terms with her past, help others and make friends outside of the survivor community. A key example given by Susman is her role with the Samaritans before she retired:

No one introduced me to the Samaritans, I happened to see an advertisement and I thought, is that for me? I needed to go find out. It sounded so inclusive, finally, doing something worthwhile. I applied and umm, I was accepted and I did it for many many years. I learnt a lot, I learnt a lot. Hopefully I’ve given something by being there and listening, but it gave me a lot of things learning about other people and you know, I had a vacant head. I learnt about other people’s lives and umm, and having been placed in that role of offering help, it was just amazing. I started feeling good about myself. And so umm, that was a wonderful thing, that was my therapy, with the Samaritans, was my therapy, I did it for many many years and it was good, good. That was a kind of attachment to a group, you know, yeah.⁸⁷⁸

Susman’s narrative regarding the Samaritans did not deal with her identity as a Holocaust survivor at all. Similar themes are explored by other interviewees under this broad heading, whereby they emphasise the work they have done to help people and individuals they have met over the course of their lives, completely separate

⁸⁷⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

from their lives as Holocaust survivors and how they have other friends and aspects of their identities. This suggests a desire to move away from this image and towards a more nuanced view of these individuals that is separate from their somewhat hagiographical elevation as survivors. As Perle Susman notes “you don’t really want the attention focused on you anymore”.⁸⁷⁹ Overall, a discussion of interpersonal relationships between survivors and their families cannot occur without consideration of how they relate to people externally outside of these groups. As a result, survivors compartmentalise their identities in order to attain composure around their Holocaust experiences and ensure that their lives are not reduced to the polarising categories of ‘survivor’ and ‘not survivor’.

“As we look around, how the family has grown!”⁸⁸⁰: The Second and Third Generation

The existence of second and third generations reveal how survivors have obtained overall life composure and a sense of equilibrium as their children and grandchildren convey that their lives moved on and attained further meaning. This meaning can be symbolised by a tree and has been used on Mendel Beale’s memory quilt square, to represent “continuous and growing life”.⁸⁸¹

⁸⁷⁹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

⁸⁸⁰ Waksztok, ‘Living With You’, p. 48.

⁸⁸¹ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 8.

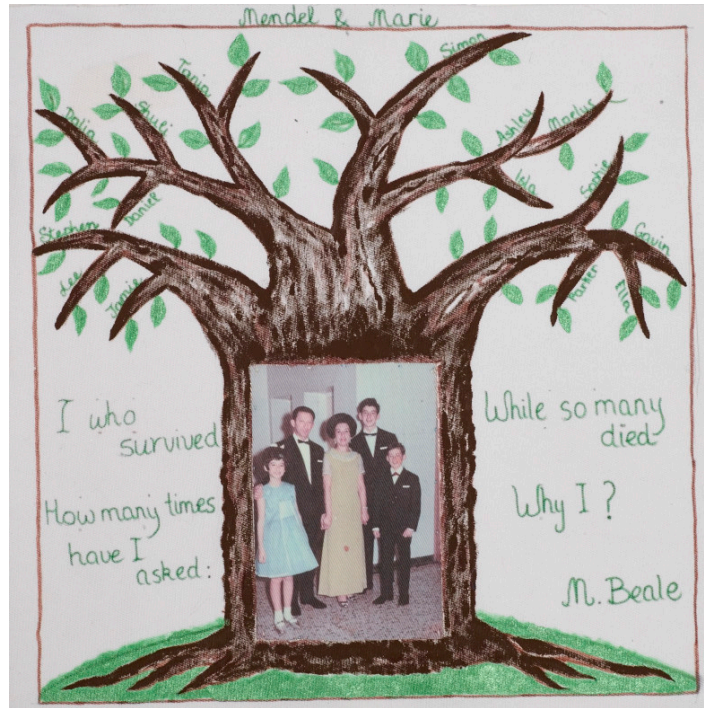


Figure 8: '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 8.

The notion of memory quilts and a tangible representation of survivor experiences was a particular project of the '45 Aid Society second generation members, who wanted to celebrate life through the quilts as well as honour their pasts.⁸⁸² The second and third generation then becomes a source of pride in what survivors had managed to develop since coming to the UK, passing on values and an atmosphere of love and serenity in a solid biological family unit.⁸⁸³ Mendel Beale's quilt square is grounded in continuous and growing life but also presents him questioning his survival.⁸⁸⁴ This can relate to the idea of fate and countering survival guilt, where survivors can use destiny as a framework to answer the question of "Why I?"⁸⁸⁵ Therefore, the notion of moving on and creating a stable family can provide a framework for explaining why they have survived and how they find purpose in their lives.

⁸⁸² Ibid, p. i.

⁸⁸³ Gilbert, *The Boys*, pp. 452-3.

⁸⁸⁴ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 8.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

The formation of their own families occurred without the support from blood relatives as they had perished in the camps and ghettos. That they created these families on their own and raised them successfully without help from their parents and other family members is a source of great pride. This represents a more literal meaning of a family as a group connected by genetics rather than experiences such as the Holocaust, which reflects the Yiddish idea of “tsuzamen”, where circumstance binds people together and shared camp experiences become a new criterion for bonding.⁸⁸⁶ The topic of the second and third generation is an expansive one and will be extensively discussed further in the next chapter as they play a significant role in their parents’ composure and transmission of Holocaust memory. They also provide a delay to their parents’ reminiscence or resurfacing of the Holocaust years as they demonstrated a shift in priorities – family was important, reliving Holocaust memories was not.⁸⁸⁷

The theme of family and children was extensively present in my interviews. This underscores the intersubjective nature of the interviewer/interviewee relationship. My age was emphasised in every interview and likened to the age of their grandchildren. The “act of storytelling” and the interaction fostered between older and younger generations can itself provide composure for survivors.⁸⁸⁸ This is a common trope within Holocaust Studies more broadly due to the significant generational gap between researchers and interviewees, exemplified in my research as a female academic in her mid-twenties at the time of interviewing.⁸⁸⁹ In short, this places the interaction of the individual subjectivities of the interviewer and interviewee as paramount to the formation of rapport and what themes are

⁸⁸⁶ Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, p. 77.

⁸⁸⁷ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 73.

⁸⁸⁸ Weinstein, ‘Holocaust Testimony: A Therapeutic Activity for Older Adult Holocaust Survivors’, p. 28.

⁸⁸⁹ See Methodology Chapter for further insight into intersubjectivity and the interviews I conducted.

emphasised within a narrative. As phrased by Lynn Abrams, “a different interviewer would solicit different words, perhaps even a very different story or version of it”.⁸⁹⁰ Each party plays a role that is based on their own assumptions and past experiences, presenting a certain self that reflects “appropriate performances”.⁸⁹¹ When the interview takes place, factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and appearance of the interviewer can also influence the memory that is produced during the interview process.⁸⁹² Oral history that examines the Holocaust relies on the intersubjective dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee in order to establish rapport, which leads to a more open conversation about experiences that are of a sensitive nature.

Therefore, while I barely touched on the issue of family in my questions, what stemmed from all of my interviews was an extensive discussion of the generational differences in families. The discussion of how survivors’ had raised their families without help from their parents or other close family, and the success of their children and grandchildren, provided a close to their traumatic memories and a sense of composure through beginning life anew. However, the intersubjectivity of interviews cannot be ignored, as the narrative was framed with comparisons of age, revolving around the theme of children, grandchildren and the overall family unit without prompting.⁸⁹³

Conclusion

Overall, there are different family structures represented within survivor associations that indicate just how fluid and multitudinous the family can be as a concept. As

⁸⁹⁰ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 54

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*

⁸⁹³ For further discussion of examples of Intersubjectivity in my interviews please see the Methodology Chapter of this thesis.

Tamara Hareven has noted, we cannot ignore kinship ties outside the household and the changing notion of what can be considered a family.⁸⁹⁴ This chapter has contributed to our understanding of how survivor associations reflect multiple definitions of what can be considered a family. The Yiddish notion of “tsuzamen” is particularly evocative; non-familial relationships based on shared experience were as binding as blood ties.⁸⁹⁵ As Roman Halter worded it in the ‘Journal of the ’45 Aid Society’, “whether you agree with my definition, or whether you call it a Family [sic] or a fine friendship matters not; we are imbued with a feeling towards one another and for one another which is warm and true”.⁸⁹⁶ He went on to note that the “bondship” between society members lay somewhere between “close friendship and kinship”.⁸⁹⁷ Reuven Sherman, who joined the Society through his marriage to a survivor, highlights that these bonds were “reinforced by the shared experience of being strangers in a strange land with a strange language and culture, and finally sealed by the fact that you had all somehow survived”.⁸⁹⁸ This places Pollin-Galay’s “tsuzamen” as present within these communities.

This chapter has considered the different chronologies that make up the development of these organisations as an alternative family structure. Overall, the immediate postwar period reflects the highs and lows of a survivor’s liberation and immigration, beginning to start their lives again. Whilst it was a huge sense of relief to survive the camps, liberation was not the solution to all survivor problems as the impact of their experiences resonated. This is particularly powerful within the context of families, both biological and adopted, that refused to accept or understand

⁸⁹⁴ Hareven, ‘The History of the Family’, p. 108.

⁸⁹⁵ Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, p. 77.

⁸⁹⁶ Roman Halter: ‘Here and Now: In Praise of our Boys from Israel’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (1976), pp. 6-8.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁸ Reuven Sherman, Past and Present: The ’45 Aid Society and the Bonds of Intimacy’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (2004), p. 5.

the survivor experience. This allowed for a negative perspective on what was seen as a joyous occasion of having once again acquired their freedom.

Irrespectively, despite this consideration, the intensity of survivor relations in the immediate postwar reflected that there were people willing to listen and who could empathise as they had shared experiences, and this embodies why survivors felt that only fellow survivors could understand. This then fuels how survivors band together, a significant phenomena throughout the rest of the twentieth century. Whilst survivor groups are amiable and relaxed and formed friendships, this did not lead to many marriages between survivor. The reason for this is unclear, but explanations can include a desire for assimilation into the wider Jewish community in Britain, a reluctance to marry a fellow survivor for fear of too much damage being shared and, in many cases, survivors felt their experiential kin were family, and therefore not suitable to marry.

Whilst survivor relations in the postwar period begin with an intense process of sibling-like bonds and the idea of surrogacy, this soon became an amiable group of friends with an extended family dynamic and a common bond. There is an overall awareness that these groups do not replace survivors' lost families but present survivors with experiential kin who understand their experiences and anxieties without explanation, something which cannot be offered by 'other friends'. In spite of this, the 'other friends' are essential, as well as having different interests as they are indicative of survivors compartmentalising their identities and roles. This ensures that a Holocaust survivor is not the entirety of whom they are, reflecting that they are all individuals with different roles that they can draw on at differing and appropriate times.

This does not mean that they are irreparably damaged by their experiences, merely that they do not desire their traumatic past to become the sum of who they are. This then becomes important for the self-concept of the survivor and the way they relate to others. Overall, survivor associations in their early years reflected an attempt at establishing a surrogate family, but as time passed and their lives moved on, survivors prioritised forming marriages and children and constructing their own blood kin. Whilst the idea of these groups as a close family is not as prevalent, the framework of an extended family endures, with a strong connection still emphasised. Therefore, the structure of these organisations evolves from a surrogate family to an extended family or close friendship with a focus on belonging, shared experiences and having people around who understand. Consequently, this cements who belongs and does not belong and fosters a sense of validation for these individuals.

**Chapter Five – “The greatest pride of all”: The Second and Third Generation
of Holocaust Survivors**⁸⁹⁹

Literary scholar Efraim Sicher calls the second generation “the sons and daughters of silence”.⁹⁰⁰ These individuals do not have a personal memory of the Holocaust, having been born in the years following their parents’ trauma. Yet despite not having first-hand experience of those horrors, these children, born and brought up in the aftermath, can face psychological challenges, as they were not only raised by Holocaust survivors but also grew up “already bereaved” of most of their families.⁹⁰¹ Mary Fulbrook has noted that for the second generation the Holocaust is “the eternal presence of an absence”, emphasising the omnipresence of a traumatic history that the second generation themselves had not experienced.⁹⁰² This perpetual absence is echoed by the coping strategies of the Holocaust survivors themselves and how this impacted their children, in addition to how the second generation developed a concerned quasi-parental role towards their own parents.⁹⁰³ Howard Cooper has summarised the effect of the Holocaust on its survivors and the generational impact as so:

For survivors, the *Shoah* severed the links in a complex filigree of belonging and identification embracing extended families, local communities, and the Jewish people itself, threads of ‘connectedness’ and continuity which also stretched in time through the generations.⁹⁰⁴

⁸⁹⁹ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. v.

⁹⁰⁰ Efraim Sicher, ‘The Burden of Memory: The Writing of the Post-Holocaust Generation’, in Efraim Sicher (ed.), *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 24.

⁹⁰¹ Sicher, ‘The Burden of Memory’, p. 26.

⁹⁰² Fulbrook, *Reckonings*, p. 468

⁹⁰³ Hass, *The Aftermath*, p. 8.

⁹⁰⁴ Howard Cooper, ‘The Second Generation ‘Syndrome’’, *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol.4, No.2 (1995) p. 132.

Cooper has written of a second generation ‘syndrome’, highlighting that to syndromise the second generation or to pathologise them can be a comfort or a relief, with a “diagnosis” that in itself brings a sense of belonging and identity, soothing “fears of meaninglessness”.⁹⁰⁵

The Holocaust is seen to be inherited as an “irreducible part” of the identity of the second generation.⁹⁰⁶ The children of survivors straddle both their Holocaust inheritance and the cultures in which they were raised, which leads to a hyphenation of identities such as British-Jewish. This “hyphenated identity” conveys the different layers that can be applied to the identity of the children of Holocaust survivors.⁹⁰⁷ Inheritance has been defined as “something, as a quality, characteristic, or other immaterial possession, received from progenitors or predecessors as if by succession”.⁹⁰⁸ The concept of inheritance as it relates to this theme of the second generation can be viewed as problematic but coincides with the field of epigenetics, defined as so:

Epigenetics is the study of how external forces, such as your environment and life experiences, trigger on-off mechanisms on the genetic switchboard. Epigenetic scientists are examining the mechanisms by which genes become expressed or silenced with the goal of understanding how we can influence their activity and change our genetic health outcomes.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 134-135.

⁹⁰⁶ Alan L. Berger, *Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 1.

⁹⁰⁷ Fulbrook, *Reckonings*, p. 470.

⁹⁰⁸ Dictionary.com, ‘Definition: Inheritance’, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/inheritance> [Accessed 23 April, 2019]

⁹⁰⁹ Psychology Today, ‘Epigenetics’, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/epigenetics> [Accessed 2 December, 2019]

As epigenetics places emphasis on life experience triggering genetic changes, it becomes an important scientific framework for examining how trauma can impact biology. Furthermore, epigenetics in relation to the Holocaust aims to unwrap how the trauma of parents and grandparents can be transferred to subsequent generations.⁹¹⁰ Second generation writer Elizabeth Rosner has reflected on the field of epigenetics, concluding that it is difficult to measure or quantify: adding that to suggest that trauma can be inherited as if through “a mother’s milk” poses problems such as the transmission of trauma through DNA rather than culture or upbringing.⁹¹¹ This controversial field is in its infancy and there is still much scientific and psychological research needed on the traumas ‘inherited’ by the second and third generation.

Dual reactions of parental and grandparental memories can be observed within subsequent generations, such as inherited trauma and an embracing of family history. There is an overall reluctance to adhere to such strict labels of survivor offspring ‘damage’ without considering alternative reactions and processes. For instance, Eva Hoffman, the daughter of survivors, acknowledged her need to keep her Holocaust history in the shadows, while simultaneously unable to ignore its presence as a critical aspect of her identity.⁹¹² The presentation of ‘need’ is interesting in this regard, prioritising the importance of being seen as a person rather than ‘just’ the daughter of Holocaust survivors. A critical aspect to note here is that this is also present in Holocaust survivors themselves, where survivors seek to be seen as more than their Holocaust survivor identity and consequently compartmentalise their identities to perform/exhibit at differing points in their lives.

⁹¹⁰ Rosner, *Survivor Café*, p. 6.

⁹¹¹ Ibid.

⁹¹² Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 27.

There have been many debates as to whether or not trauma can be transmitted.⁹¹³ Many studies of the second generation focusing on intergenerational trauma assume psychopathology, implying psychological damage to subsequent generations in a generalised lens that reflects how the second generation has become a “growth-industry” for psychologists and psychotherapists.⁹¹⁴ Consequently, it is a methodological necessity to engage with how this assumption has emerged.⁹¹⁵ Despite potential inherited trauma, many of the second generation desire to pick up the mantle of Holocaust education and commemoration from their parents, encouraging them to speak whilst honouring their past and heritage. This suggests that those that immediately follow trauma are a “hinge generation”, holding responsibility for whether the past is “transmuted into history or into myth”.⁹¹⁶ Therefore, the activities of the second generation are vital for communicating Holocaust memory as a future generation, acting as ambassadors. But is this holding of responsibility a good thing, or indicative of too much responsibility, duty and pressure being piled on to the second generation?

As we will explore in this chapter, many of the second generation feel a strong sense of duty. Their parents have entrusted them to continue their Holocaust legacy; a promise to never forget what had occurred. But it is also pressure they apply to themselves. The impact that a Holocaust legacy can leave on the second generation may be as overt as psychological difficulties but may also exhibit itself in career choice and the extent of their involvement within survivor associations and other Holocaust commemorative and educational projects. Barbara Bennett, a

⁹¹³ See Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, Chapter 4, pp. 69-94 for a summary of debates surrounding trauma transmission to the second generation.

⁹¹⁴ Cooper, ‘The Second Generation ‘Syndrome’’, p. 133.

⁹¹⁵ See Methodology Chapter of this thesis for further information.

⁹¹⁶ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 198.

woman who worked extensively with ‘The Boys’ of the ’45 Aid Society and who kept in touch with them after they had left the hostels through the Primrose Club, deemed the second generation their parents’ “greatest pride of all”.⁹¹⁷

Consequently, survivor association groups place key emphasis on the importance of family and the second generation, which informs the broader theme within this thesis of validation and composure, where the second generation provide this sense of reassurance for the future by their very existence. The importance of the families of survivors and indeed the Jewish community continuing cannot be underestimated. This reassures survivors that they are not the last surviving members of their previously large families. In the literature stemming from these groups, family is presented as the “number one” priority, from which pride is derived.⁹¹⁸ The ’45 Aid Society, for example, initiated a memory quilt project in 2015 in order to create a piece of living history that could be touched and handled, in order to engage with students in schools about the Holocaust.⁹¹⁹ Each survivor was allotted one individual square in which they were to depict their lives in the postwar years. Unsurprisingly, ninety per cent of the survivors who produced a quilt square focused on their families and their awe at the younger generations, engaging with them in order to create the design of their individual squares.⁹²⁰ The memory quilt squares provide a visually striking and tangible representation of the lived Holocaust experience and, in their emphasis on the theme of family, they illustrate postwar composure. This, in turn, fuels the idea that the existence of the second and third generation, plus their active roles in these survivor associations, illustrates an enduring sense of belonging and validation.

⁹¹⁷ See Chapter Two of this thesis for an overview of the origins of the ’45 Aid Society and the Primrose Club.

⁹¹⁸ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, pp. 24, 34, 69 & 125.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. i. Please refer to the Methodology chapter of this thesis for further discussion of the use of the memory quilts.

⁹²⁰ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 25.

Dan Bar-On, in his book *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of Holocaust Survivors* focused extensively on the intergenerational relationships between survivors and their offspring. He worked within the hypothesis that the second and third generations had a predictable movement through five basic stages in working through the experiences of their parents and grandparents. It is worth quoting these at length:

(1) Knowledge: an awareness of what happened during the Holocaust, and, if their family was involved, what happened to them during that time, (2) Understanding: the ability to place knowledge of the facts within a meaningful human, historical, social, or moral frame of reference, (3) Emotional response: the emotional reaction to this knowledge and understanding; in Israel typically anger (usually toward ‘the world that stood aside’), fear (‘it could happen again’), shame (resulting from ‘the degradation, the fact that people did such things’) and pride (‘for remaining humans’, ‘for fighting back’), (4) Attitude: the attitude toward what happened based on this knowledge, understanding, and emotional response and their implications for the present and the future, (5) Behaviour: the effect of knowledge, understanding, emotional response, and attitude on specific behaviour patterns in relation to the past, the present, and the future.⁹²¹

⁹²¹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, pp. 18-19.

Bar-On's hypothesis indicates that there is space for the second and third generation to react on an individual level rather than being confined to black and white assumptions that attempt to universalise their experiences. This is a crucial point that the chapter will note – these experiences are far from universal, and every family possesses unique characteristics and coping mechanisms to deal with traumatic pasts. Whilst these can be grouped into specific categories, there will be an emphasis on difference and the individual nature of familial relationships and subjectivities, as unpacked in the Methodology chapter of this thesis.

This chapter will draw on archived oral histories, new interviews that I have conducted, analysis of photographic images from the memory quilts, published and unpublished memoirs, association journals and survivor poetry in order to examine the second and third generation of survivors. The historiographical framework for this chapter will stem from oral history discussions of composure. Composure becomes vital as a conceptual framework as the knowledge that the second generation is committed to keeping the remembrance of the Holocaust alive allows for a sense of equilibrium that their trauma will not be forgotten. This balance or psychic well-being can assist in fostering the validation of a survivor's sense of self and identity as they feel secure in not only their status as survivors but the future of their memories. Furthermore, the very existence of the second generation assists with composure as survivors were able to create families out of the ashes of their pasts achieving a sense of belonging and validation that their family trees would continue to flourish. The overlap between psychology, memory and intergenerational familial relationships in these contexts is also pertinent to this discussion.

Holocaust survivors as parents and the experience of raising the second generation is a vital aspect to engage with. There has been a modest body of literature surrounding the parental experience of survivors, which focuses on both positive and

negative aspects of how they raised their children. Positive aspects can include an emphasis on education and stability due to the lack of these qualities in the Holocaust years, but can also be accompanied by negative aspects such as survivors making their children feel guilty, emotional blackmail and invoking many “macabre bedtime stories” of their trauma to their children at an unsuitably young age.⁹²²

However, it is too simplistic to argue that each individual survivor falls into positive parenting or negative parenting as a result of their experiences, with many survivors reflecting a complex variation of both themes.⁹²³ That this duality can be present within individuals often goes unexplored in the literature, in part explained by the polarising categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parenting. There is also a wide diversion in how survivors raise their children in terms of religion. This can vary between strict, lax or non-existent adherence to religion in the upbringing of the second generation. The role of religion in the lives of the second generation becomes dependent on how individual parents interpret their trauma and how this influences their relationship with Judaism. Therefore, there are a multitude of factors to consider in how Holocaust survivors raise their children, including expectation, sociality and religion.

The interaction of the second generation with their parents is an important factor in how they were raised and how they came into contact with their family histories. This can vary between families, but the extremes of the spectrum can be viewed as silence, where no memories are exchanged intergenerationally and oversaturation, where memories of the Holocaust years are overshared with their children at ages perceived to be inappropriate. Here, survivors can straddle instances of avoidance or tackling the issue of the Holocaust too directly with their children,

⁹²² Juni, ‘Second-generation Holocaust survivors’, p. 104.

⁹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

and both approaches can be seen as having psychological impacts on the second generation child.

Once a member of the second generation reaches adulthood and has interacted with the stories of their parents and their peers, it is prudent to examine the impact of their upbringing and Holocaust history. This is echoed in a poem by survivor Witold Gutt, “They may be proud or resentful it varies”.⁹²⁴ The impact of their family history can produce discomposure and psychological difficulty for the second generation, or it can lead to these individuals embracing their heritage. This can take place on a number of different levels, such as formal involvement in survivor associations, projects, committees and employment and career paths which demonstrate caring for others, campaigning and justice. Irrespectively, there is a growing movement based on the responsibility of the second generation to take the stories of their parents’ forward and create a legacy. This has led to the second generation speaking in schools about their parents’ experiences and generally working within Holocaust education. This represents the formal ways in which the second generation can become involved in survivor organisations.

More recent work has looked to the third generation as a further point of analysis. Natan Kellermann has remarked on the difficulty in studying the third generation of Holocaust survivors in terms of being impacted by their families’ history due to the chronological distance.⁹²⁵ However, by being another generation removed from the atrocities, they enjoy a closer, less intense relationship with their survivor grandparents. It has often been noted in interviews that survivors feel more at ease talking to their grandchildren than their own children about their Holocaust pasts.

⁹²⁴ Witold Gutt, ‘Second/Third Generation’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (2001), p. 37.

⁹²⁵ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 97.

The dedication that survivors have to their grandchildren suggests that they are creating a legacy, with the third generation as inheritors. This is not just in terms of the Holocaust and involvement in survivor associations but also in terms of religion: the second generation can be seen as participating out of a sense of duty, whereas the third generation view faith and tradition as a part of their families' heritage and history, embracing and practising Judaism without pressure of the duty of doing so. Similarly to the second generation, many within the third generation have become involved in Holocaust education by speaking in schools and increasingly participating in these groups and movements.

Another important aspect of the second and third generation and their relationship with survivors is the role they play in the legacy of the Holocaust. It is important to reflect on where the expectation of subsequent generations to take this mantle forwards originates from, and whether it has been viewed as a burden. Broader issues at play here include the effect of psychological trauma on parenting and the impact of a traumatic history. Whilst the second generation had not experienced the Holocaust, they had experienced being raised by survivor parents, which in turn presented its own challenges. Whilst this undoubtedly provided some of the subsequent generations with psychological challenges, many of the children of survivors passionately defended their parents and emphatically conveyed the sense of justice and morals instilled in them which consequently has shaped their lives in a multitude of ways, in terms of their career, morals, religious practice and general worldview.

“The new generation - a witness of your persistence”: Composure, the continuation of life and the family tree⁹²⁶

Sara Waksztok, the spouse of survivor Menachem Waksztok, expressed in her 1996 poem “Living With You” for the *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* that her husband’s desire to “vanquish the past” and “broach a new life” astounded her.⁹²⁷ However, she went on to talk about his tenacity in doing so, and marked the “new generation” as a “witness” to his persistence and “an answer to the dread”.⁹²⁸ Towards the end of the poem, she reflected on how the family had grown from such tiny beginnings to “happiness abounds”.⁹²⁹ This sentiment is striking, placing emphasis on the triumph for survivors in producing a family largely alone, without their perished families to help in raising them.⁹³⁰

This emotion is one that endures through many survivor-produced texts, and illuminates Aaron Hass’ contention that “replenishing their family and the Jewish people served as justification for beating the odds”.⁹³¹ This is a recurring theme within interviews with survivors, that survivor guilt provided a multitude of reactions but primarily a sense of purpose in replenishment and a feeling of having survived for a reason or being destined to do so. Hass goes on to use the example of Esther Flamm, who got married four months after being liberated and quickly started a family, crediting her new family for “replacing a lot”.⁹³² Kitty Hart Moxon also wrote in her memoirs of this need to make another family, in light of her “earlier family” being destroyed, so she would never have to walk the streets “utterly alone” as she

⁹²⁶ Waksztok, ‘Living With You’, pp. 47-8.

⁹²⁷ Ibid.

⁹²⁸ Ibid, p. 48.

⁹²⁹ Ibid.

⁹³⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016.

⁹³¹ Hass, *The Aftermath*, p. 31.

⁹³² Ibid, p. 44.

did in her first years resident in Britain.⁹³³ Indeed, family and children are continually represented as the “essence” of the longevity and happiness of these survivors.⁹³⁴ As well as the specific motive of not being alone, there is a broader project of contributing to the replenishment of the Jewish community and enforcing that they and their families will continue and have outlived the Nazi regime and its anti-Semitic leaders.

The sense of composure that survivors feel stemming from the love of their families cannot be underestimated. Menek and Gela Drucker have emphasised this in their memory quilt square, emphatically expressing that “in spite of the horrors they had undergone, they succeeded in creating a happy, secure and loving home” for their children.⁹³⁵



Figure 9: '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 92.

⁹³³ Hart Moxon, *Return to Auschwitz*, p. 20.

⁹³⁴ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 92.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 30.

The Druckers highlight their smiling faces as a measure of success in their role as parents, their narrative becoming infused with ideas of composure.⁹³⁶ This is an underlying concept that endures within the broader theme of survivor associations in the postwar period as survivors see their families, children and grandchildren as the reason for their endurance, longevity and the smiles on their faces. The majority of the squares within the memory quilt depict, unsurprisingly, happy events, such as family holidays, weddings and the birth of new generations.⁹³⁷ Mick Zwirek’s children focused on the theme of continuing life and the “indomitable spirit and courage” that emerged from the Holocaust, choosing to reflect this through photographs of the first and second generation.⁹³⁸



Figure 10: '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 150.

The above image emphasises the happiness and smiling faces stemming from the union of Mick and Ida and the family they created. In tandem with the writing that

⁹³⁶ For a definition of composure and further discussion please see Introduction and Methodology chapter.

⁹³⁷ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, pp. 16 & 51.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 150

accompanied this quilt square, postwar composure and contentment are reflected in the images chosen for the square. Here there is no mention of the Holocaust past directly, but a focus on the history of Mick meeting his wife and having children. This illustrates how the very existence of the second generation can provide a sense of composure, allowing the past and present to align and “coexist”, which can enable the survivor parents to become more at peace with their traumatic experiences.⁹³⁹

The symbol that often becomes synonymous with the continuation of life is that of a tree. The use of the tree symbol has multiple meanings, such as the strong roots of the past despite trauma, being grounded in firm foundations and nurtured by rich nutritious soil. It has become associated with enduring life cycles and strength as many trees reflect longevity, some lasting hundreds of years and possessing “the ability to seed new life”.⁹⁴⁰ The “tree of life” is also referred to in the Old Testament, containing the knowledge of good and evil.⁹⁴¹ Furthermore, there is the symbolism of the tree of faith, a Pauline tradition borrowed by Lutheran printers, where the tree represents the Christian faith being attended to by apostolic gardeners.⁹⁴² The knowledge of good and evil as contained within the tree is palpable, where survivors can feel the resonance of their experiences all contained in one figurative image. It is this symbolism that is most common within the '45 Aid Society memory quilt squares as survivors begin to reflect on the families they have created and their new family trees, which began from fragile, weak decimated roots. Janek Goldberger's square focuses on the motif of a tree, with his children emphasising in their accompanying description, “all of the members of our family are on this quilt as

⁹³⁹ Kounio Amariglio, *From Thessaloniki to Auschwitz and Back*, p. 150.

⁹⁴⁰ Ellis Spicer, 'Illustrating Composure: The Memory Quilts of the '45 Aid Society, *British Association for Holocaust Studies Blog* (2 December, 2019) <https://britishassociationforholocauststudies.wordpress.com/2019/12/02/illustrating-composure-the-memory-quilts-of-the-45-aid-society/> [Accessed 2 December, 2019]

⁹⁴¹ Genesis 2: 9.

⁹⁴² Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 222.

leaves on a tree, illustrating how the family has grown and blossomed with our parents at the centre.”⁹⁴³



Figure 11: '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 47.

The memory quilt square shown above of Janek Goldberger and his family also place significance on the doorway to their family home represented at the bottom left of the square near the base of the tree.⁹⁴⁴ This is an evocative piece of imagery, representing a sense of home, belonging and the notion of setting down roots in an area and continuing the family tree once more. Other squares also echo this recurring motif, with similar justifications of enduring, continuing life and the notion of blossoming.⁹⁴⁵ The tree can also serve as an interesting contrast, as can be seen in Issaak Pomeranc's square, where his family contrasts the family tree growing on the surface amidst the traumatic foundations of his incarceration in concentration camps.⁹⁴⁶

⁹⁴³ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 47.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁵ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 61.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 109.

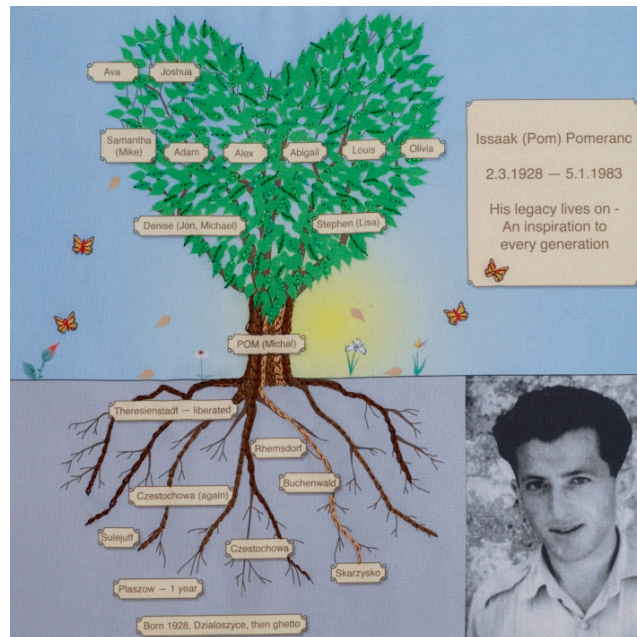


Figure 12: '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 109.

The tree then becomes an even more powerful symbol of enduring life from supremely difficult beginnings, with the suggestion that legacy can “live on” as the tree grows.⁹⁴⁷ Closely related to the idea of a tree representing the continuation of life, the symbolism of a garden was also drawn upon by some survivors and their families. The biblical connotations and links to the Garden of Eden cannot be avoided, attempting to create the closest thing to paradise through earthly gardens.⁹⁴⁸ Mala Tribich expresses it as thus, “My panel shows foliage and flowers on my roof garden....and is both a memorial to my parents and sister Lusia and also a celebration of the younger generations and the season renewal of life”.⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁸ Clare Hickman, *Therapeutic Landscapes: A History of English Hospital Gardens Since 1800* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 14.

⁹⁴⁹ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 136.



Figure 13: '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 136.

Here Mala contrasts greenery and flora as both a memorial endeavour and as optimism for the future, which emphasises the duality of symbols found in nature such as the tree, plants and flowers. Whilst many of this imagery becomes associated with mourning and memory of lost loved ones, the symbolism of trees, plants and gardens largely reflect positive connotations in these contexts. The usage of symbols found in nature is unsurprising with a sense of resilience and renewal after trauma being promoted in many of the memory quilt squares. This acts in contrast to the perceived unnaturalness of the Holocaust and “going against ideas of nature, harmony and balance”.⁹⁵⁰ The emphasis on nature is indicative of an attempt to “rebalance and find optimism in the endurance of survivors and their families”.⁹⁵¹ It provides powerful illustrative symbolism of resilience and growth, highlighting what Edward Wilson has referred to as biophilia, “the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes”.⁹⁵² Therefore, the powerful resonance of the imagery contained

⁹⁵⁰ Spicer, ‘Illustrating Composure’.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid.

⁹⁵² Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 1.

within the memory quilts meets the '45 Aid Society's central aim of celebrating contemporary life rather than focusing on the past, sadness and mourning.

The endurance of the family tree is closely interlinked to the pride that many survivors have in their children and grandchildren. This can reflect a notion of 'getting back at Hitler' or "Triumph Over Adversity", which became the title of a documentary about the experiences of the members of the '45 Aid Society.⁹⁵³ The theme of retaliation can take a variety of forms. It can be as explicit as invoking that very phrase – as survivor Monty Graham was often heard saying in reference to his children and grandchildren.⁹⁵⁴ It can be more subtle, reflecting on how the birth of subsequent generations showed survivors to be "succeeding where the Nazis had failed", and by the process of survivors outliving a regime that sought to murder them.⁹⁵⁵ Saul Hoffman's narrative confirms to this perspective, whereby he discusses his mother "throwing me out of the house" so that "at least one member of the family should survive" in a climate where many Jews in the town of Piotrkow were being deported to Treblinka.⁹⁵⁶ When asked how he felt about this sad tale of having to leave his family behind to take his chances at surviving, Saul reflected: "I look on my family as her victory – and my victory over what the Nazi's [sic] failed to do".⁹⁵⁷

This can also be reflected in the name a survivor gives their children, such as Regina Steinitz naming her son Amichai, which means "my people lives", highlighting and reiterating that "the Shoah had not been able to annihilate the Jewish people".⁹⁵⁸ Choosing a predominantly Hebrew name is also telling, affirming

⁹⁵³ '45 Aid Society, *Triumph Over Adversity*, <https://45aid.org/product/the-boys-triumph-over-adversity/> [Accessed 26 November, 2018]

⁹⁵⁴ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 49.

⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 19 & 141.

⁹⁵⁶ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 435.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁹⁵⁸ Steinitz and Scheer, *A Childhood and Youth Destroyed*, p. 108.

membership to the Jewish people and emphasising that they had survived. The recurrent motif that is represented is one of continuation and flourishing, and the contrast between this and the Nazi regime's aims of eradication. This theme resonates well with the symbolism of nature and endurance, as the Third Reich did not endure, whilst survivors and their families did in spite of the trauma they had experienced.

“Are they like all other people, or do they only pretend”: Holocaust survivors as parents⁹⁵⁹

Survivor Michael Etkind, long hailed as the '45 Aid Society's poet by former '45 Aid Society President and historian Martin Gilbert, speculated in 2003 on how survivors endured their trauma.⁹⁶⁰ He posed the question of “Are they like all other people, or do they only pretend”, indicating the proclivity for referring to survivors as the ‘other’ rather than highlighting their ‘normality’.⁹⁶¹ A stereotypical presentation of survivors as shells of humanity is suggestive of an impact on how they raise their children, and this has often been reflected in psychological literature. However, less has been done to suggest the view that their experiences made survivors devoted, non-pathological parents – indicative of individual experiences that can transcend both aspects at different points in time. It is too simplistic to suggest individual families and survivor parents fall into either extreme, and it is prudent to address this seemingly unbalanced historiography by demonstrating that whilst psychological stereotypes of survivors were not without basis, many second generation children have not viewed their upbringing as negative or overshadowed by the Holocaust.

⁹⁵⁹ Michael Etkind, ‘How Do “Survivors” Survive’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (2003), p. 55.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

However, what appears to be a universally agreed point is that survivors had high expectations for their children, in terms of education and other positive aspects such as professional career, marriage and family but they also carry the pressure to be a “memorial candle” or to live vicariously for their parents and deceased relatives.⁹⁶² Psychologist Natan Kellermann refers to a woman whose father had experienced losing a child during the Holocaust.⁹⁶³ Once he had explained his loss, she “understood why her father had always looked at her with some amount of sadness and why she herself had felt a kind of unexplainable grief throughout her life”.⁹⁶⁴ These silences can often factor into the sensation of something missing for the second generation, as this chapter will go on to explore.

Sicher notes the past as a “trace” in the present that haunts the second generation, and suggests that the inherent trauma stemming from the Holocaust to its survivors also has application to their offspring.⁹⁶⁵ Whilst the mental health concerns of survivors were directly linked to their past experiences and trauma, this was not the case for the second generation, who grew up in an atmosphere that Chodoff argued was “poisoned” by the “scarring” of their parents’ past.⁹⁶⁶ However, this view is far from universal: Yael Danieli’s examination of the situational context of intergenerational processes revealed four different ways that survivors and their families categorised themselves: victim families, fighter families, numb families, and families of those who survived.⁹⁶⁷ These differing approaches can be more fluid than simply varying types of family; families can adhere to different categorisations

⁹⁶² See Dina Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust*, trans. Naomi Goldblum (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁹⁶³ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 79.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹⁶⁶ Chodoff, ‘The Holocaust and Its Effects on Survivors: An Overview’, p. 155.

⁹⁶⁷ Yael Danieli, ‘Differing Adaptational Styles in Families of Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust’, *Children Today*, No.10 (1987), p. 7.

at varying times or concomitantly. This reflects the variety of interpretations a survivor can have of their experiences and how this can be transferred into their familial atmosphere and the way they raise their children. Notably, there are dualities and perceived contradictions or inconsistencies present.

Furthermore, survivors decide whether their children's upbringing is religious or secular, indicating the importance of how survivors interpret their trauma and their relationship with God and Judaism as a consequence. Joanna Millan, for example, discussed having a "strong religious feeling" at eighteen and wishing to maintain links with Judaism as a conscious effort to feel continuity with her fractured past.⁹⁶⁸ Whilst religion can be passed on to the second and indeed the third generation, writers such as Elizabeth Rosner and Marianne Hirsch have suggested that trauma can also be passed on through the upbringing of the second generation.⁹⁶⁹ This can lead to members of the second generation feeling that there is "something missing"⁹⁷⁰ or that they acquired their parents' traumatic pasts "almost by osmosis".⁹⁷¹ Rather than grounding the Holocaust past in behaviour and socialisation, 'osmosis' indicates a scientific process and response, suggesting that there is a genetically inherited response to trauma, a field referred to as epigenetics.⁹⁷² Therefore, there is a contrast between ideas of inherited trauma and the idea of trauma transmission through upbringing and socialisation.

The way that survivors raised their children as a response to their experiences reflects the impact of concentration camp life and survivorship on parental style. Miri Scharf and Ofra Maysel provide examples of how Holocaust

⁹⁶⁸ Moskowitz, *Love Despite Hate*, p. 61.

⁹⁶⁹ See Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Post Memory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) and Rosner, *Survivor Café*.

⁹⁷⁰ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 53.

⁹⁷¹ Ellis Spicer, Email Correspondence with Beth Joffe.

⁹⁷² See Elizabeth Rosner, *Survivor Café*.

survivor parents feared for the survival of their children, which in turn affected their parenting.⁹⁷³ The major underlying theme that Scharf and Mayselless found was parental overprotection due to fear for the child's wellbeing and survival, which prevented the second generation acting autonomously.⁹⁷⁴ Linked to this theme was preparing for potential catastrophe and the paranoia that was omnipresent in survivors as they raised their families.⁹⁷⁵ Examples of this included being frugal with savings, emphasising the importance of food and maintaining a proper diet, whereby being a healthy weight could prepare for the dangers of starvation, and encouraging preparation "for probable catastrophe by studying".⁹⁷⁶

Tzipke Belinsky, a second generation interviewee for Dan Bar-On's *Fear and Hope* study, underscored the emphasis on food by lamenting, "They shovelled food into us!" and poignantly reflected that in every family photo she was holding a piece of food.⁹⁷⁷ Primo Levi provided the survivor rationale for this obsession with food and a reluctance to hear complaints about hunger and retorted "What do you know about it? You should have gone through what we did".⁹⁷⁸ Kurt Klappholz was also animated in interview by his wife's wastage of food and recalled sifting ("fishing") through the rubbish to retrieve edible items.⁹⁷⁹ These behaviours reflect the neuroses surrounding food for survivors and the desire from these parents to instil "survivor assets" into their children due to the fear of future threat.⁹⁸⁰ The concept of future threat and the fear of recurrence will be addressed further in the sixth chapter of this thesis alongside how survivors interpret and process current events.

⁹⁷³ Miri Scharf and Ofra Mayselless, 'Disorganizing Experiences in Second- and Third-Generation Holocaust Survivors', *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol.21, No.11 (2011), p. 1543.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁵ Scharf and Mayselless, 'Disorganising Experiences', p. 1544.

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 1544-1545.

⁹⁷⁷ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 68.

⁹⁷⁸ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 69.

⁹⁷⁹ Joan Ryan, Interview with Kurt Klappholz, *Imperial War Museum* (October, 1986), Reels 25-28.

⁹⁸⁰ Scharf and Mayselless, 'Disorganising Experiences', p. 1545.

Parental desire for “normalisation” could often become dysfunctional, as Dan Bar-On has shown.⁹⁸¹ This dysfunctionality originated with the lack of a mourning process for perished families and the acceptance of “abnormal and extreme life events”.⁹⁸² Scharf and Maysel concur with the notion that parents had good intentions but that these could manifest in dysfunctionality, and argued that survivor parents achieved the opposite of their aims; the second generation were left feeling “fearful and helpless”, with their upbringing causing “disorganising” effects.⁹⁸³

Angela Cohen, the daughter of survivor Morris Malenicky, summarised this succinctly: “As a result of my father being damaged and not knowing he was damaged, he damaged his children”.⁹⁸⁴ Many survivors did not perceive their memories to be central to their current behaviour or worldview. Alfred Garwood noted: “My traumatised parents could barely look after themselves”, and he assumed the parental role.⁹⁸⁵ This accords with Aaron Hass’ assertion that “to understand the children of Holocaust survivors, we must first become familiar with their parents’ responses to their own experiences”.⁹⁸⁶ Without empathizing and attempting to understand how survivors’ interpreted their own experiences on an individual basis, it is difficult to assess the role they played as parents to their children.

However, methodologically, it has been noted that stereotypes of survivors and the second generation as psychologically damaged have been informed by clinical psychology, which based its findings on those who presented themselves for

⁹⁸¹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 26.

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ Scharf and Maysel, ‘Disorganising Experiences’, p. 1545.

⁹⁸⁴ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 173.

⁹⁸⁵ Child Survivors Association of Great Britain - AJR, *We Remember*, p. 75.

⁹⁸⁶ Hass, *In The Shadow of the Holocaust*, p. 7.

treatment as a “clinical population”.⁹⁸⁷ As a result, generalisations and “naïve assumptions” were made of a wider group, with the failure to recognise that proportionally, the numbers of survivors and their children that demonstrated this type of pathology were small.⁹⁸⁸ Eva Hoffman when reflecting on her parents’ battle for reparations, noted the “flat” and “curt” nature of the reports categorizing her parents as pathologically traumatised, reducing them to “oddly narrow, or at least impersonal, formulae”.⁹⁸⁹

The objective and perceived impersonal limitations of scientific methods clashes with the subjective experiences of individuals that can be unravelled in life documents and oral histories. Therefore, we should be cautious of adhering too firmly to psychological discourses surrounding survivors and consider that “reality looked nothing like the textbook”.⁹⁹⁰ Noting this, Arlene Steinberg remarks that there are still tendencies to “syndromize” survivors and their offspring.⁹⁹¹ Using a mixed methodology is paramount in order to respect scientific study but also presents the subjective individual experience and how these experiences are resistant to polarising categorisations.

Whilst psychological studies assumed pathology as a general feature of the survivor community, many second generation children spoke fondly of their upbringings and did not suggest that their parents’ experiences had a negative impact on their parenting. A common sentiment is that articulated by one of Dan Bar-On’s second generation interviewees: “All in all, they were wonderful parents, but they

⁹⁸⁷ Berger, *Children of Job*, p. 13.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁹ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 55.

⁹⁹⁰ Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Putnam, 1979), p. 101.

⁹⁹¹ Steinberg, ‘Holocaust Survivors and Their Children’, p. 32.

worried too much”.⁹⁹² Stephen Goldberg, son of Moniek Goldberg, refuted the idea that his father’s experiences had affected his parental style, emphasising that he was “very consistent” and he had “no memories” of his father being depressed or haunted by the past.⁹⁹³ This is a common sentiment that survivor trauma did not become imprinted on their parenting, along with emphatic assertions from the second generation that they had been raised with a surplus of love and affection.⁹⁹⁴

The above contentions from the second generation exist in a climate that seemingly aimed to prove pathology or represent the negative aspects of being raised by a Holocaust survivor; Sue Rutherford in a letter to the editor for the *AJR Journal* complaining of a BBC4 documentary in 2008 that was “cleverly edited” in order to “include only negative narrative”.⁹⁹⁵ She felt, along with many others, that this documentary did not consider her positive views of her caring upbringing that she communicated to the programme’s researchers, who did not use her comments.⁹⁹⁶ However, she also acknowledged that her upbringing may have been more protective than most.⁹⁹⁷ In their father Harry’s obituary, Stephen and Colin Balsam highlighted his dedication to his family. They focused on how he protected, guided and provided for them through hard work so they would not need to experience the hardships he had suffered.⁹⁹⁸ Therefore, whilst his parenting style was affected by his Holocaust trauma, his children viewed this as a more positive feature and an “inspiration”.⁹⁹⁹ The idea of the second generation finding their parents an “inspiration” is poignant,

⁹⁹² Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 71.

⁹⁹³ Stephen Goldberg, ‘Second Generation – Advice from Father to Son’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (1997), p. 63.

⁹⁹⁴ Thea Valman, ‘Letter to the Editor: Second Generation TV Programme ‘Negative’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.8, No.10 (October, 2008), p. 6.

⁹⁹⁵ Sue Rutherford, ‘Letter to the Editor: Second Generation’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.8, No.8 (August, 2008), p. 7.

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁸ Stephen and Colin Balsam, ‘Obituaries: Harry Balsam - Our Dad - Our Hero’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (2004), p. 66.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

as this counters suggestions that the children of survivors remained somewhat resentful of their parents throughout their lives. The perspective of survivors on whether their parenting was affected by their experiences is not present as it would necessitate a level of self-criticism challenging to attain. Despite this, Josef Perl in his 1998 interview admitted he was uncertain whether his experiences had affected his parenting, but he “counts his blessings” and encourages his children to be themselves without feeling the need to prove something to him.¹⁰⁰⁰

Despite Perl’s emphasis that his children did not have anything to prove to him, it becomes clear that survivors had high expectations for their children. This could have positive implications, such as assisting and motivating their children into the educational opportunities that they themselves were not able to access.¹⁰⁰¹ Barbara Bregman highlighted this in her narrative by discussing how education was such a high priority for her that “everything else is irrelevant” as it is “something which stays with you for life”, and she indicated that this was something she desired to give her children “as a basis for their future”.¹⁰⁰² It is an important contextual feature to note that a survivor losing their chance at education informs the emphasis that they placed on schooling to their children. Karl Kleiman also indicated the importance of his children’s education and highlighted that he accomplished this by sending them to “good schools”.¹⁰⁰³ This importance of education appears universal amongst survivors as a wistful reminder of what they have lost and the importance of knowledge. This is unsurprising given the fervour with which many young survivors approached their lessons upon arrival in the UK in 1945, eager to rectify

¹⁰⁰⁰ Lyn E. Smith, Interview with Josef Perl (15 January, 1998), Reels 6-9.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80017095> [Accessed 22 May, 2018]

¹⁰⁰¹ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. v.

¹⁰⁰² Lesley Nathan, Interview with Barbara Bregman, *Visual History Archive* (16 January, 1997).

¹⁰⁰³ Rosalyn Livishin, Interview with Karl Kleiman (July, 1990), Part 18.

<https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors/021M-C0410X0097XX-0018V0> [Accessed 5 June, 2018]

missed knowledge and educational opportunities. However, enthusiasm for learning was later replaced by the pragmatic need to learn a trade and earn a living rather than continuing in further education

This emphasis on education that survivors provided their children with explains Helen Epstein's contention that the children of survivors "were an extremely well-educated group in each of the countries to which their parents had emigrated".¹⁰⁰⁴ And this becomes a source of pride for survivor parents, whose education was severely disrupted by the Holocaust; therefore, reverence was attached to knowledge and education.¹⁰⁰⁵ For instance, a 2015 study of Turkish immigrant communities in Sweden found an overall larger emphasis on education amongst these families, where parents monitored their children's homework and emphasised the importance of education in comparison to the native control group.¹⁰⁰⁶ However, it has been noted that this reverence for learning was not accompanied by "coaching ability" or the knowledge to teach their children themselves: second generation children often relied on their teachers educational opportunities but it was their parents who promoted this engagement within the home, encouraging them to complete homework on time.¹⁰⁰⁷ In addition, whilst desiring and expecting this from their children, education was something that immigrant families and Holocaust survivors strove for themselves. Arthur Poznanski for example placed emphasis on his desire to keep learning and "pursue the subjects that command my attention".¹⁰⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰⁴ Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, p. 219.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 431.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Alireza Behtoui, 'Educational achievement', in Charles Westin (ed.), *The Integration of Descendants of Migrants from Turkey in Stockholm: The TIES Study in Sweden* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), pp. 52 & 54.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Patricia Fernández-Kelly, 'The Back Pocket Map: Social Class and Cultural Capital as Transferable Assets in the Advancement of Second-Generation Immigrants', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.620 (November, 2008), p. 131.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 434.

Whilst the expectation of the second generation in terms of education is perhaps a reasonable, positive and understandable phenomenon, this concept can possess a negative connotation. Helen Epstein referred to a second generation member named Ruth, who expressed how “my parents had expectations of me that I could never fill”, highlighting that they did not have specific paths set for her but general assumptions of happiness that were difficult to meet.¹⁰⁰⁹ Susan Kushner Resnick also reflected on this problem of the expectation of happiness in her recollections of her friendship with a retired, unnamed survivor in the United States, and highlights that survivor parents found it difficult to let their children be “normal kids” due to consistently pursuing happiness in tandem with protection and safety.¹⁰¹⁰ This is sometimes a problematic notion for a survivor to accept, as Resnick highlights, indicating that his reaction was to disagree and not discuss the issue further.¹⁰¹¹ This can be interpreted as an example of discomposure within the one-on-one discussions this survivor had with Resnick, where he could not resign this view with his experiences or indeed worldview.

The theme of expectation also has an aspect that imbues the second generation with “yearning” and the ability to “undo the losses” and to “repair the humiliations wrought by the abusers”.¹⁰¹² This is part of Dina Wardi’s discussion of the second generation as “memorial candles”, where they become a walking memorial to their deceased relatives and are felt to be the bridge between past and present.¹⁰¹³ This imbues the second generation with the ghosts of the past and a high level of expectation to bring about healing by their very existence. This acts as a

¹⁰⁰⁹ Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, pp. 195-6.

¹⁰¹⁰ Kushner Resnick, *You Saved Me Too*, p. 29.

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹² Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 64.

¹⁰¹³ See Dina Wardi, *Memorial Candles*.

counter to Erika Kounio Amariglio's assertion that the birth of her children allowed the past and present to coexist.¹⁰¹⁴

It is natural for parents to have expectations, hopes and dreams for their children. As a consequence, the issue of parental expectation is difficult to raise with survivors. They would argue they are the same as any other parent with hopes and dreams for their children, emphasising the normalcy of this behaviour. What can be glimpsed is a deep-seated desire for their children to imbue meaning into their lives and accomplish things that the survivor parents could not. Ben Helfgott was very open about the hopes of the second generation "rejecting hatred and revenge, to reach out with tolerance, to live with integrity and to give of oneself to the community and society".¹⁰¹⁵ However, certain expectations are difficult to fill and therefore provide a vast amount of pressure on the second generation, which have consequences for their self-worth and identity. Overall, it is too simplistic to divide survivors into having 'good' and 'bad' parenting styles; what is needed is an appreciation of how Holocaust trauma affects parenting without expectations of positive and negative influences, enrichment or damage for their children.

"I searched for words to share": The interaction of the Second Generation with their parents' stories¹⁰¹⁶

The introduction of the second generation to their family's history is an important factor in how they were raised and how they interpreted this traumatic history. This can vary between families, but the extremes of the spectrum can be viewed as silence, where no memories are exchanged intergenerationally, and oversaturation, where

¹⁰¹⁴ Kounio Amariglio, *From Thessaloniki to Auschwitz*, p. 150.

¹⁰¹⁵ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 1.

¹⁰¹⁶ Michael Etkind, 'I Searched For Words', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (2017), p. 10.

memories of the Holocaust years are overshared with their children at inappropriate ages. Both silence and oversaturation can leave the second generation child feeling as if the Holocaust is omnipresent or a sense that there is something missing from their overall family narrative. There are many instances within the second generation that survivors talked too much about their experiences, “forcing” children to relive their parents’ trauma on an almost daily basis. Indeed the opposite can also be true where survivor parents utilise silence and do not speak, and, in instances where a child has two survivor parents, one parent can internalise while the other experiences anger and resentment, leading to what Samuel Juni deems “double jeopardy” for the second generation.¹⁰¹⁷ Juni also notes that these two stances are not mutually exclusive and can be present in shades of grey within the individual survivor, further confusing the second generation child.¹⁰¹⁸

There are different ways for the survivor parent to approach the Holocaust with their children, and this is indeed a very subjective process. This can vary from waiting until the child directly asks, adopting a strategy of silence or one of avoidance until a point deemed age-appropriate or when the parent themselves feels ready to share. However, there are instances where there is an oversaturation and preoccupation with the Holocaust past in the daily experiences of survivors and their children. However, this is not always the case; it must be affirmed that there are many survivors who refused to share their pasts with their children. As a final note, survivors do not need to be polarised between silence or oversaturation; they may adopt different strategies at different chronological points, according to their individual needs and their feelings about the propriety of recounting the Holocaust to their children at a young age.

¹⁰¹⁷ Juni, ‘Second-generation Holocaust survivors’, pp. 101 & 104.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The recollection of when their survivor parents first told them about the Holocaust is a very vivid memory for most of the second generation. Helen Epstein noted that by sitting down with her parents and taping an interview, she was able to gain a chronologically coherent and stable record of their experiences.¹⁰¹⁹ These remarkable beginning-to-end parental recollections were, after all, gained by asking, as an adult. Indeed, CSAGB member Osher Heller emphasised an unspoken quality that “second generation kids know whether or not they can ask”, which indicates the offspring of survivors do pick up knowledge, albeit limited, about their parents’ wartime experiences.¹⁰²⁰ Mary Fulbrook refers to this as “stylised fragments” that “did not form a coherent narrative”.¹⁰²¹ Stephen Goldberg emphasised how this could change with age, that as children they knew not to broach the subject, but as young adults, they would ask, and suggested that his father was very open when asked.¹⁰²² David Goldberg reflected on not feeling able to ask in his article for the ’45 Aid Society’s journal and highlighted that “they would not discuss the ghetto or camp years in our presence and we would not dare to ask them any questions. We knew there was too much pain there for us to be probing”.¹⁰²³ This topic of children having an awareness of survivor trauma and wanting to avoid causing their parents’ pain by “probing” reflects the idea that, in some instances, the second generation were very protective and parented their own parents.¹⁰²⁴

The theme of approaching survivor parents for information about the past can also be glimpsed in Art Spiegelmann’s graphic novel *Maus*, whereby the reader

¹⁰¹⁹ Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, p. 334.

¹⁰²⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April 2016.

¹⁰²¹ Fulbrook, *Reckonings*, p. 463.

¹⁰²² Stephen Goldberg, ‘Second Generation – Advice from Father to Son’, p. 63.

¹⁰²³ David N. Goldberg, ‘Lessons in Faith’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (1993), pp. 18-9.

¹⁰²⁴ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, p. 82.

can follow Artie's journey of discovering his parent's "unspoken history".¹⁰²⁵ Hamida Bosmajian examines "the orphaned voice" within *Maus*, and highlights, "Even the request to hear about his parents' experiences in the Holocaust is a horror version of a child's wish to hear a story about the 'olden days'".¹⁰²⁶ Bosmajian goes further to invoke comparisons with "infantile attitudes" that Artie adopts as he struggles to encourage his father to tell his story.¹⁰²⁷

Epstein also suggests that it was difficult to approach her parents about their pasts, but their parents had failed to recognise "how much a child gleans from the absence of explanation", further fuelled by old photographs and documents kept in the house.¹⁰²⁸ This, in turn, can fuel the second generation child's imagination through a sense of absence, where it can be noted that their imaginations produced tales viewed as more perturbed than the reality.¹⁰²⁹ Overall, it was felt that the second generation could sense the past in their parents' silences.¹⁰³⁰ Indeed, there have been numerous cases where the second generation have pushed their parents for more information, emphasising how little they know about their parents' histories and presenting this situation as one to be rectified.¹⁰³¹ Here, there is a sense of weighing up the pain recounting may cause their parents against the need the second generation children have for information about their families' past.

Since the 1990s, there has been a sense of urgency for dialogue to take place in a group therapy setting between the first generation, which is getting older and

¹⁰²⁵ Hamida Bosmajian, 'The Orphaned Voice in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*', in Deborah R. Geis (ed.), *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivor's Tale" of the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), pp. 27-8.

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid, p.30.

¹⁰²⁷ Bosmajian, 'The Orphaned Voice', p. 30.

¹⁰²⁸ Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, p. 334.

¹⁰²⁹ Unknown Author, 'Why can't we talk about it - even now?', *AJR Information*, Vol.49, No.7 (July, 1994), p. 7.

¹⁰³⁰ Steinitz, *A Childhood and Youth Destroyed*, p. 113.

¹⁰³¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Rachel Lubin, 16 February, 2018; Sharon Tyler, Interview with Fred Knoller, *Visual History Archive* (14 November, 1995).

frailer, and the second. Arlene Steinberg has noted the popularity of group therapy for the second generation and how these dialogues were helpful for the sharing of experiences.¹⁰³² Many AJR-sponsored gatherings aimed to address “the inevitable consequence of unresolved pain” that emanated from silence.¹⁰³³ A key priority for these gatherings was to ensure the third and fourth generation would not carry the same burden as the second, where communication could take a variety of forms.¹⁰³⁴ For example, one group based in Swiss Cottage preferred for family members across different generations to attend group meetings together, but initially participating in separate break-out groups.¹⁰³⁵ It was noted by the *AJR Journal* that this restriction did not remain in force for long, as “once the ice was broken”, members gained in confidence.¹⁰³⁶ This suggests that there is a desire for intergenerational interaction and sharing of experience once an initial uneasiness was overcome.

In many cases for survivors, remaining silent about their experiences was a form of protection, not just for themselves but for their children. The family of Leon Manders endorsed this view and highlighted that he did not speak as he did not want to burden his family with “the great pain, loss and hardship of his youth”.¹⁰³⁷ The notion of burden is a key aspect to consider within the interactions the second generation have with their parents, as survivors did not want their children to grow up with “nerves”¹⁰³⁸ or “hangups” as a result of overexposure to Holocaust memories.¹⁰³⁹ However, this form of protection can lead to regret: Josef Perl utilises

¹⁰³² Steinberg, ‘Holocaust Survivors and Their Children’, p. 40.

¹⁰³³ Unknown Author, ‘Mi Dor L’Dor: From Generation to Generation’, *AJR Information*, Vol.45, No.10 (October, 1990), p. 16.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁵ Unknown Author, ‘Why can’t we talk about it - even now?’, p. 7.

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³⁷ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 89.

¹⁰³⁸ Lyn E. Smith, Interview with Barbara Stimler (25 May, 1997), Reels 4 and 5.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80017162> [Accessed 18 May, 2018]

¹⁰³⁹ Smith, Interview with Josef Perl.

the example of a visit to Yad Vashem with his family, where he had not prepared them for it, resulting in further silence and not discussing events further.¹⁰⁴⁰

Despite this case, many narratives suggest that silence surrounding the Holocaust was concerned with the propriety of these stories for various age groups due to instances of murder and violence. Freda Wineman was noted as speaking to her grandchildren “a little bit”, but was full of concerns at how much detail they could cope with at a young age, choosing to tell her eldest grandchild more.¹⁰⁴¹ The consideration of age when sharing their experiences with the second generation is reasonably common amongst survivors; one second generation member recalls feeling that her father was different but not knowing exactly how until the age of eighteen.¹⁰⁴²

The question of age appropriateness varies between individual families. Survivor Sabrina van der Linden-Wolanski emphasising how her children were “well into adulthood” before she told them about her wartime experiences because she had seen the adverse side effects too much information could produce in survivor offspring.¹⁰⁴³ And this seems very natural as a parental instinct to protect their children: ‘Shira’ in an open letter to her father wrote down her feelings as it was too ‘hard to say face to face because I know I would get too upset’.¹⁰⁴⁴ When considering her father’s reaction to her distress, it is perhaps not surprising that many survivors chose to remain silent for decades in order to protect their children from distress. There are also further dimensions to consider here: Bella Rosenthal mentioned not

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴¹ Sharon Tyler, Interview with Freda Wineman, *Visual History Archive* (28 February, 1996).

¹⁰⁴² Ellis Spicer, Email Correspondence with Beth Joffe.

¹⁰⁴³ Sabrina van der Linden-Wolanski and Diana Bagnall, *Destined to Live: One Woman’s War, Life, Loves Remembered* (Berlin: Leonore Martin and Uwe Neumärker Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2016), pp. 179-80.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Shira, ‘Letter to Pa’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (1995), p. 47.

telling her children of her Holocaust history as she feared it would change their relationship with their non-biological grandparents.¹⁰⁴⁵ Therefore, there are many complex factors in why survivors chose not to tell their children about their past.

Whilst survivor parents frequently utilised silence when their children were young, there were cases where survivors talked too openly about their experiences, compelling children to relive their parents' trauma on an almost daily basis.¹⁰⁴⁶ However, this theme is comparatively rare, evident in 'word of mouth' recollections from survivors but not directly within the data I myself have collected. Dan Bar-On credited that some members of the second and third generation do have trouble with their survivor relatives talking about their experiences too frequently, with one third generation child remarking "I wanted to leave" as her grandmother began to recount her past.¹⁰⁴⁷ Other interviewees in Bar-On's study made similar comments: "There is no reason to go backward, to bring it up all the time".¹⁰⁴⁸ It can be felt by some second and third generation members that it can be tiring to hear these stories, with an awareness that "we need to be reminded so that we don't forget, but beyond that, nothing will help".¹⁰⁴⁹ Some second and third generation members go further and encourage their parents to "forget all that, it's so long ago", but this is a relatively rare phenomenon as they collectively feel a sense of duty to Holocaust remembrance.¹⁰⁵⁰ A further influence to note here is the fear of recurrence that enters the minds of both survivors and their offspring, which will be further examined in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Moskowitz, *Love Despite Hate*, pp. 54-5.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Sicher, 'The Burden of Memory', p. 25.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, p. 247.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 85-6.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Bar-On, *Fear and Hope*, pp. 85-6.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Lewkowicz, Interview with Nora Danzig.

It is important to note that survivors do not always conform to the binary notions of overexposure or silence and that there are ways for survivors to accomplish a middle ground of slowly introducing their children to their wartime stories of trauma. Despite feeling traumatised and desiring to bury her memories, Fela Bernstein mentioned in her interview for the British Library that her children would see Holocaust documentaries and she would tell them she had been there but did not provide extensive detail.¹⁰⁵¹

The medium of memoir also becomes a powerful way for the survivor parent to indirectly engage with their offspring about their experiences if they do not feel ready to do this in person. The daughter of Erika Myriam Kounio Amariglio, who translated her mother's memoirs, remarked that despite growing up in the shadow of the Holocaust, it was only when reading the account that she "understood the magnitude of her trauma and the anxiety that years of bottling it up had caused her".¹⁰⁵² Despite many survivors not feeling ready to speak to their children face to face, reading material around the topic and memoirs proved to be a fruitful interlude. Joseph Carver recollected presenting his daughters with a copy of the Martin Gilbert volume on the '45 Aid Society so they could empathise with and begin to understand what survivors had been through.¹⁰⁵³

In addition, many survivors struggled to balance informing their children about the Holocaust but not making it omnipresent. Etta Lerner in a 2006 interview emphasised how her children pushed for answers as to why they had no grandparents – Etta responded with how they had been killed by the Germans a long time ago, but

¹⁰⁵¹ Robert Wiseman, Interview with Fela Bernstein (15 December, 1988), Parts 15-16. <https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors/021M-C0410X0005XX-1600V0> [Accessed 5 June, 2018]

¹⁰⁵² Kounio Amariglio, *From Thessaloniki to Auschwitz and Back*, Preface, no page given.

¹⁰⁵³ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 19.

“now we are living in England, it is wonderful”, as she did not want them to feel anxious or in danger when hearing about their family’s history.¹⁰⁵⁴ England as a place of safety is reflected in a number of survivor-produced texts such as memoirs, articles and poetry, but as we shall see in the sixth chapter of this thesis, there are many issues within Britain since the end of the Second World War that fill survivors with anxiety.

And indeed many other survivors feel this pressure to educate their children about their deceased relatives, their religion and other elements of the family history but also to protect them from distress.¹⁰⁵⁵ The sense of family history is vital for survivors as they feel like they are beginning their families afresh and therefore want them to identify with their history as much as possible. Furthermore, sharing stories of the Holocaust years need not become infused with trauma: Harry Balsam’s children noted that he raised them with stories of his childhood experiences of fending for himself and selling items to try and help his family, but this did not lead to macabre tales and overexposure.¹⁰⁵⁶ Instead, his children felt that he had told his story with pride and dignity, harbouring no hatred for those responsible for his suffering, which gave his children a sense of inspiration.¹⁰⁵⁷

Overall, survivors have interpreted the importance of speaking to their children about their experiences in a number of ways. Each family with a survivor parent becomes unique within their own contexts. A key example of this is the ‘correct’ time at which to impart their Holocaust past to their children, if at all. However, this is not always informed by when the second generation are at the right

¹⁰⁵⁴ Katherine Klinger, Interview with Etta Lerner, *Wiener Library* (2006).

¹⁰⁵⁵ L. Engelhard, ‘Letters to the Editor: A Chance To Talk It Over’, *AJR Information*, Vol.44, No.7 (July, 1989), p. 10.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Balsam, ‘Obituaries: Harry Balsam - Our Dad - Our Hero’, p. 66.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

age, but if the survivor feels ready and a sense of equilibrium where they are comfortable bringing up the past. This reflects Hass' contention that survivor interpretation of their memories plays a vital role in how they raise their children, becoming entirely individualised and context-bound.¹⁰⁵⁸

“They may be proud or resentful it varies”: The role of the Second Generation and the impact of their family histories¹⁰⁵⁹

Ex-Dachau prisoner Witold Gutt introduced his 2001 poem on the second and third generation with “They may be proud or resentful it varies”.¹⁰⁶⁰ The divergence in the experiences of the second and third generation is captured in this single line. Most of the second generation upon reaching adulthood had heard the detailed stories of their parents and their peers, and this often triggered a response which ranged from positively embracing their heritage and taking pride in their history, to psychological difficulties, discomposure and the pressures of duty in carrying the Holocaust legacy forward. There is a growing movement revolving around the responsibility of the second generation to take their parents' stories forwards and become Holocaust ‘ambassadors’, which can manifest itself as formal involvement in survivor organisations, speaking in schools and generally working within Holocaust educational initiatives. However, there can be less grandiose instances of this phenomenon, with their parents' stories impacting the second generation via routes such as adopting career paths which demonstrate caring for others, campaigning and justice.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Hass, *In The Shadow of the Holocaust*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Gutt, ‘Second/Third Generation’, p. 37.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

It is often assumed that the second generation inherit trauma, and this can cause psychological burdens and the need for therapy.¹⁰⁶¹ There has been a large volume of work that has examined the second generation and the effects they face as a result of their parents' private and individual memories, and whether this can give the second generation some memories in their own right. Marianne Hirsch has coined the concept of post-memory, whereby 'memories' are communicated transgenerationally.¹⁰⁶² Hirsch traces the importance of family life and the "shared archive of stories and images that inflect the broader transfer and availability of individual and familial remembrance".¹⁰⁶³ This, in conjunction with a psychological approach to inherited trauma, gives credence to the idea that it is not so much "inheriting memory", but a shared narrative and sense of history and identity that becomes damaged by the experiences of the Holocaust survivor parent.

Efraim Sicher has also examined this idea of "absent memory" under the broad rubric of post-memory, and discusses how the stories of their parents could initiate "an imagined but empty memory" which can be reflected in their formulation of a Jewish identity in response to "the violent eradication of a past culture...where invention replaces recall".¹⁰⁶⁴ This implies that the second generation respond to their parents' past trauma through the medium of fantasy if their parents do not give them information about their histories, and this can lead to imagining scenarios worse than reality.¹⁰⁶⁵

Gary Weissman, a critic of post-memory, argues that "no degree of monumentality can transform one person's lived memories into another's".¹⁰⁶⁶ And

¹⁰⁶¹ See earlier discussion of the value of the term 'inheritance' to this chapter.

¹⁰⁶² Hirsch, *The Generation of Post Memory*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Sicher, 'The Future of the Past', p. 64.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Unknown Author, 'Why can't we talk about it - even now?', p. 7.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hirsch, 'The Generation of Post Memory', p. 109.

indeed Marianne Hirsch, an advocate of post-memory, agrees and that there are crucial differences between memory and post-memory.¹⁰⁶⁷ Overall, the main concern with post-memory is the (mis)interpretation that people can ‘inherit’ precise and vivid memories, with many historians and theorists being unable to comprehend the accuracy of this phenomenon on a literal scale. Eva Hoffman, daughter of a Holocaust survivor, suggests that there “is a deeply internalised but strangely unknown past” that they do not have memories of, and even with their knowledge of the events of the Shoah, they could not form memories of it or take on their parents’ experiences as their own.¹⁰⁶⁸

Despite disagreements surrounding the vivid or literal nature of post-memory, many survivors often feel a sense of guilt in having passed on a silent history and trauma to their children and this transmission can reflect a form of inheritance surrounding the Holocaust. Regina Steinitz reflected that she and her survivor friends felt that their memories had been passed on to their children “often without words”.¹⁰⁶⁹ The silent communication of memories and history that impacts the second generation child’s behaviour is a recurring theme, with survivors providing numerous anecdotes about strange things their children did that could be influenced by the past.

For instance, Edith Eger recounted at length an incident where her daughter had a friend to stay at age ten, where she responded to sirens by making her friend dive under the bed with her.¹⁰⁷⁰ Eger found it difficult to accept: “Without meaning to, without any conscious awareness, I had taught her that”.¹⁰⁷¹ This can also

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ibid, p.31.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 108.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Steinitz, *A Childhood and Youth Destroyed*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Eger, *The Choice*, p. 200.

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibid.

manifest in members of the second generation who experience mental illness, with one second generation member expressing how her brother was petrified of going into the shower, and how nobody could understand why apart from her that this was reminiscent of gas chambers.¹⁰⁷² This reflects Kellermann's description of the cognitive impact of the Holocaust on the second generation, where there is a preoccupation with death and the linkage of everyday harmless events with the Holocaust and the potential for harm.¹⁰⁷³

However, many of the second generation insecurities are thought to have come from parental silence, with the acknowledgement that their imaginations could create scenarios worse than reality, and this can be glimpsed in oral history interviews.¹⁰⁷⁴ Etta Lerner, when being interviewed, drew on a story of her son wanting to decorate his room a specific colour.¹⁰⁷⁵ When she challenged him about having a black room and suggested he wait until he was sixteen, he cried that she would be dead.¹⁰⁷⁶ It was then that Etta realised her son had interpreted a lack of grandparents as a standard feature of life – that parents died when their children grew up.¹⁰⁷⁷ These examples reflect that the silences in the upbringings of the second generation could often produce neuroses within these children in a similar fashion to being oversaturated with Holocaust memories. Whether the second generation can inherit trauma and memories or not, there has been a vast literature that presents the second generation as traumatised. Deborah Lipstadt presents the psychological challenges for the second generation as thus:

¹⁰⁷² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Georgia Mandel, 15 February 2018.

¹⁰⁷³ Kellermann, *Holocaust Trauma*, pp. 73-4.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Unknown Author, 'Why can't we talk about it - even now?', p. 7.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Klinger, Interview with Etta Lerner.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Issues are (1) separation from frequently overprotective families, (2) the phenomenon of the impossible comparison, (that is the feeling that their own problems have less meaning than their parents'), (3) a need to be superachievers and thereby somehow undo the trauma of the Shoah, (4) a feeling of loss in terms of a diminished family circle, (5) seeking to find a personal mode to express their thoughts about the Holocaust and to ensure continuity with the family's past.¹⁰⁷⁸

The manifestation of trauma in the second generation can vary but focuses on strong emotions such as guilt and overidentification with their parents which can prove extremely problematic.¹⁰⁷⁹ There is also an overall sense of insecurity that is communicated by the second generation and their parents.¹⁰⁸⁰ Nadine Fresco in a 1984 article made comparisons to the “phantom pain” experienced by amputees but in respect to the memory of the second generation, where it is like they have had “a hand amputated that they never had. It is a phantom pain, in which amnesia takes the place of memory”.¹⁰⁸¹ Whilst it cannot be disregarded that some second generation children faced the challenge of their parents' difficult histories, it must also be re-emphasised, as discussed earlier in this chapter, that there was a tendency to “pathologize” them.¹⁰⁸² This stemmed from what Alan Berger deemed a series of conceptual and methodological flaws that generalized based on the “clinical

¹⁰⁷⁸ Deborah Lipstadt, ‘Children of Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust: The Evolution of A New-Found Consciousness’, *Encyclopedia Judaica Year Book 1988/89* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1989), p. 148.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Hass, *The Aftermath*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Suzanne Rosenfeld, Interview with Heidi Fischer (26 May, 1990), Part 6. <https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors/021M-C0410X0088XX-0006V0> [Accessed 4 June, 2018]

¹⁰⁸¹ Nadine Fresco, ‘Remembering the Unknown’, *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol.11, No.4 (1984), p. 419.

¹⁰⁸² Berger, *Children of Job*, p. 13.

population that presented itself for treatment”.¹⁰⁸³ William Helmreich has emphasised how very few studies have been based on random samples, further advancing Berger’s view that there are significant methodological flaws in this field.¹⁰⁸⁴

The ‘bigger picture’ proves to be infinitely more complicated, and as John Sigal and Morton Weinfeld found in the 1980s, much evidence exists to the contrary of “clinical and anecdotal reports”; that the second generation were no more prone to mental health concerns than their control group for the study.¹⁰⁸⁵ Whilst medical literature was rapid in labelling the second generation as “damaged” and in need of psychological help, some survivors also questioned whether this was the case. Witold Gutt suggested in 1997 that the Claims Conference should consider the needs of the second generation when making their monetary allocations.¹⁰⁸⁶ This can be considered problematic, as this chapter will consider, the question of reparations becomes enmeshed with whether the second generation can be viewed as Holocaust victims deserving of compensation.

In a later article in 2001, Gutt suggested that both the first and second generation were embarrassed about showing weakness and this provided additional problems.¹⁰⁸⁷ He contrasted this with the ’45 Aid Society’s mantra of “Triumph Over Adversity”, remarking that these two aspects remained largely incompatible and further complicated intergenerational relationships.¹⁰⁸⁸ Other survivors have emphasised the psychological impact of their stories on their children with an air of

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Helmreich, ‘Against All Odds’, p. 757.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Sigal and Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Witold Gutt, ‘The Damage To The Second Generation’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (1997), pp. 53-54.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Witold Gutt, ‘Second Generation and Living with Survivors’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (2001), p. 25.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ibid.

regret – such as Clare Parker recalling her daughter could not go to work for days as she was so affected and “crying all the time”.¹⁰⁸⁹ As remarked previously, this can cause guilt within the survivor parent for bringing about this pain in their children through sharing this experience. ‘Shira’, for example, remarked to her father in an open letter that “I know I would get too upset” if she expressed her feelings about his past in person.¹⁰⁹⁰ This represents the burden of legacy for the second generation, and the pressures that can result from feeling this sense of duty towards the ‘future’ of Holocaust memory and education.¹⁰⁹¹ This can perhaps explain why many survivors were reticent about sharing their stories with their children, following ‘word of mouth’ stories from other survivors where this has caused upset.

Despite this, these views are rare within the survivor community; indeed, many survivors and their children refute the idea that the second generation view themselves as ‘victims’. Maurice Helfgott, son of multiple concentration camp survivor Ben, remained outspoken on this issue and expressed that it was “unhelpful” for the second generation to think of themselves in this way.¹⁰⁹² However, Helfgott’s family did note that they were spared the “psychological effects so many have endured” because they had never been “shielded from the facts of his life”.¹⁰⁹³ Whilst openness was the key for the Helfgott family and processing their father’s Holocaust past, this does not work for all. Once again, this is indicative of the disparity and unique nature of how families interpret these events: one size did not fit all and what works for one family in this respect may prove disastrous for another.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Katherine Klinger, Interview with Clare Parker, *Wiener Library* (25 June, 2007).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Shira, ‘Letter to Pa’.

¹⁰⁹¹ Eva Urbach, ‘The Second Generation debate’, *AJR Information*, Vol.52, No.12 (December, 1997), p. 2.

¹⁰⁹² Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 156.

There is also a geographic contrast to consider: whereby private discourses within survivor and second generation communities are more forthright in considering the psychological toll on the offspring of survivors. Despite this, many UK-based survivors brush this off with retorts such as, “I don’t think many of our second generation here in this country need to go for therapy, its more America, but in America everybody goes to therapy, for one thing or another”.¹⁰⁹⁴ An unwillingness to accept that the second generation might be in need of psychological assistance or therapy is interesting, contrasting this with a perceived ‘therapy culture’ originating in the US.

Survivor Anita Lasker Wallfisch reflected on this in a 2019 Holocaust Memorial Day documentary for the BBC entitled *The Last Survivors*, where she remarked that as long as you had a roof over your head and food to eat, you were fine as a second generation child.¹⁰⁹⁵ Other survivors have dwelled on this image and indicated that they are mostly frustrated with the second generation presenting themselves as traumatised. One survivor for example noted: “I’m not sure, to me they wouldn’t necessarily warrant having psychological problems. But any more than having a drunk mother or...but they are using the Holocaust as a way to explain their issues”.¹⁰⁹⁶ Many survivors and members of the second generation have come under fire for presenting this view, causing some upset within these communities.¹⁰⁹⁷

The idea of the second generation commemorating their past and heritage as a means of coping with their parents’ traumatic memories adds nuance to a subject that can become saturated with assumptions of pathology. Geoffrey Hartman has noted, “to honour their parents meant also to honour the experiences of their parents,

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hershel Orenstein, 4 August, 2018.

¹⁰⁹⁵ BBC, *The Last Survivors* (27 January, 2019).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 157.

however grim and burdensome it was”.¹⁰⁹⁸ However, this was not always a healthy practice. Sicher has highlighted how some members of the second generation have developed an “unhealthy obsession” with the past that was not always conducive to psychological healing or indeed their general mental health.¹⁰⁹⁹ Berger concurs with this perspective and credits the close family relationship and “fierce loyalty” between survivors and their children as driving “a compulsive need to learn about the Holocaust” as the second generation felt this was a way of supporting and connecting with their parents.¹¹⁰⁰

Despite this, Sigal and Weinfeld’s study indicates that whilst the second generation seemed to be more knowledgeable about concentration camps, they did not appear to be more likely to read Holocaust books or attend Holocaust-related events than the study control group.¹¹⁰¹ This appears somewhat surprising, but is indicative of how the second generation do not always develop obsessions towards the Holocaust and voluntarily upset themselves by dwelling on it. Many documentaries and media products seem to focus on the negative aspects of being a second generation child. Numerous AJR articles regarding the 2008 BBC4 programme *Jews* noted that there was not a balanced consideration of the multiple aspects of being the child of a survivor.¹¹⁰²

Another way, albeit a subtle one, that their parents’ narratives can affect the second generation child is through career paths that the second generation take. This

¹⁰⁹⁸ Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Sicher, ‘The Burden of Memory’, p. 29.

¹¹⁰⁰ Berger, *Children of Job*, p. 3; Also see: Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger, ‘Family Ties - The Search For Roots: Introduction’ in Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger (eds.), *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), p. 15.

¹¹⁰¹ Sigal and Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth*, p. 166.

¹¹⁰² Barbara Dressner Dorrity, ‘Television: Burdens of the Second Generation’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.8, No.8 (August, 2008), p. 10.

can be formulated around the caring professions, campaigning and justice.¹¹⁰³ Career paths for the second generation were informed by a number of contexts: Eva Hoffman credits the Holocaust inspiring a “feeling for justice” and compassionate political views¹¹⁰⁴. Aaron Hass concurs, asserting that the children of survivors often “frequently identify with and feel compassion towards other groups who have been discriminated against because they too are seen as being out of the mainstream”.¹¹⁰⁵ The emphasis on caring professions has also been noted, with William Helmreich indicating that, with reference to America, survivors’ children attained the same sort of educational success as their Jewish American peers, only differing in their career paths by tending to gravitate more towards the caring professions.¹¹⁰⁶ Survivor Gideon Jacoby during an interview also noted this, with reference to his children who were born and raised in the UK:

GJ: And we have three children, and I don’t know whether this has had any effect on them. My son is a psychotherapist, he went into this and he was, uhh, went to school, and all that, in a sort of caring profession. My daughter is a, umm, she’s a, how do I say it? Forgot, uhh, she works with again with families that are, dysfunctional families.

ES: A social worker?

GJ: A social worker! So I don’t know if there was any connection because of me, you know, the stories I told

¹¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁴ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 253.

¹¹⁰⁵ Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust*, p. 116.

¹¹⁰⁶ Helmreich, ‘Against All Odds’, p. 757.

them, if they went into the caring business, well professions if you like.¹¹⁰⁷

That Jacoby brought up the impact of his Holocaust experiences on his three children in terms of career reveals a hope that the way he raised them had influenced the career paths they had taken in a positive way. This is a common theme amongst survivors: the belief that they had raised good citizens without help, who take an active part in the community and who contribute to society. This is a less obvious manifestation of the direct route whereby the second generation speak about the Holocaust, showing a more subtle emphasis of an ingrained sense of justice and helping those less fortunate. It may, of course, be purely coincidental that all of his children entered caring professions, as some people will have gravitated to these professions due to personality and opportunity as much as the influence of family history and parental experience.

In addition to the careers that the second generation pursue as a result of their parents' experiences, they also get involved in the work of survivor associations and in Holocaust education more broadly. The formal organisation of the second generation appears to have surfaced in the late 1990s and early parts of the twenty-first century as survivors grew older and frailer. There now exists a "Second Generation Pledge" where individuals can swear they would do "all they could to ensure they would always remember what had happened during the Second World War and to do all they could to prevent it ever happening again".¹¹⁰⁸ This developed concurrently with organisations such as the Second Generation Network being set

¹¹⁰⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

¹¹⁰⁸ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 164.

up, which aimed to initiate discussion groups, conferences and events with a speaker to allow for a second generation community to blossom.¹¹⁰⁹

The importance of community to this thesis cannot be underestimated: the Introduction chapter of this thesis has clearly defined a community as it relates to Holocaust survivor organisations. Numerous articles in the AJR and '45 Aid Society journals have promoted the image of the second generation going into schools and acting as deputies for their parents, with many articles advertising training sessions for individuals to be able to do so.¹¹¹⁰ However, many survivors have concerns about this and have expressed it in their interview narratives. For instance, Osher Heller timidly remarked that he had reservations about the second generation “taking over”, but he wanted to see how the situation developed.¹¹¹¹ However, other survivors have become more outspoken on the issue, such as Margalit Judah who was yet to meet a second generation speaker that managed to communicate the same powerful message a survivor did, remarking that there was no real monitoring of the messages being communicated.¹¹¹²

In conclusion, whilst there has been discussion of pathologising the second generation and largely generalising, it cannot be ignored that there are psychological burdens and consequences for the second generation. This may not be as overt as the second generation presenting themselves as victims but can manifest in a feeling of obsession towards and ownership of the Holocaust. Whilst many of the second

¹¹⁰⁹ Barbara Dorrity, 'Second Generation Voices: Ten years on', *AJR Journal*, Vol.5, No.12 (December, 2005), p. 2

¹¹¹⁰ Sue Bermange, 'Second Generation working with the Holocaust Educational Trust on an Education Programme', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (2009), pp. 80-81; Louise Forman, 'Second Generation and the Holocaust Educational Trust – Taking Testimonies to Schools', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (2011), pp. 62-63; Geraldine Jackson, 'Holocaust Education - Training Sessions for Second/Third Generation Speakers', *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (2017), p. 81.

¹¹¹¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Osher Heller, 13 April, 2016.

¹¹¹² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

generation embrace their heritage and the past of their parents’, this can form an extensive part of their self-concept, leading to an inability to focus on the present due to being preoccupied with the past. The professions that the second generation enter can represent a more nuanced investigation into the impact of their parents’ histories, however, this is hard to assess as many people divert to specific career paths due to chance, opportunity and personality as well as other factors such as Holocaust trauma.

“Their memory still remains”: The third generation as the enduring legacy of the Holocaust¹¹¹³

More recent work has looked to the third generation as a further point of analysis. By being one more generation removed from the atrocities, the third generation enjoy a closer, less complex relationship with their survivor grandparents and as a result, they are able to discuss the Holocaust more openly.¹¹¹⁴ Eva Hoffman has described it as thus: “perhaps there is less danger, from the greater generational distance, that the fraught cargo of guilt, fear, and sorrow will be transferred directly into the listener’s psyche”.¹¹¹⁵ This is indicative of the memory still remaining, in line with the third generation poem from which this section draws its title, but gaining a valuable sense of distance. Relationships with the third generation can be particularly intense, with one member of the second generation expressing that his father became “confidante, friend and soulmate” to his children.¹¹¹⁶ This further emphasises how the generational distance between the first and third generation allows them to enjoy a closer relationship, once their survivor grandparents had the chance to process their

¹¹¹³ Karen H. Winogrodzki, ‘Countless Tragedies’, *Journal of the ‘45 Aid Society* (1979), p. 17.

¹¹¹⁴ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 185.

¹¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹⁶ Balsam, ‘Obituaries: Harry Balsam - Our Dad - Our Hero’, p. 66.

memories as they age. The first generation feel a marked sense of pride at the achievements of the third and take a keen interest in those whom they love most in the world and feel a very close bond with".¹¹¹⁷ The children of Yisroel Rudzinski remarked:

Who would find a grandfather who knew exactly what each of his grandsons was learning in cheder?! Where would one find a grandfather who would seriously review each one of his grand-daughter's tests – and reward them accordingly?! Indeed Zeidy was a grandfather who lived for his grandchildren.¹¹¹⁸

Discussions for this general phenomenon of a closer relationship between the first and third generations are somewhat hazy, but it can be argued that the addition of a grandchild soothes the anxieties of survivors and gives them reassurance of their family enduring through multiple generations.¹¹¹⁹ Overall, survivors take a keen interest in their grandchildren's upbringing, conveying a marked dedication to future generations and fuelling the idea of legacy. With each generation that is born, it can be argued that survivor equilibrium and contentment increases as they become extensively assured their family's legacy and experiences will endure.

The notion of legacy is omnipresent in the third generation, as they are aware of the responsibility they carry for the future in educating others about what happened to their grandparents. Witold Gutt echoes this preoccupation in his 2001 poem about the second and third generation and recounts a story of his granddaughter

¹¹¹⁷ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 3.

¹¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 120.

¹¹¹⁹ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 185.

telling his story in school, feeling pride for not feeling ashamed and that it “lessens the pain” that he feels.¹¹²⁰ He directly traces a line between his granddaughter’s commitment to his history and memories composed that another generation will carry his message and experiences forth. The third generation have conveyed an earlier start to their awareness of the issue compared to the second generation, with many of the survivor’s young grandchildren assisting with the design of the squares for the ’45 Aid Society memory quilts.¹¹²¹

Often, the third generation are capable of gestures towards their survivor grandparents that the second generation had not considered. Zigi Shipper, a survivor of the Lodz ghetto and Auschwitz, recalled his grandson’s Bar Mitzvah. Due to being in the ghetto on his thirteenth birthday, he was unable to mark the monumental occasion.¹¹²² The significance of this cannot be underestimated, as his grandson chose to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah with his grandfather, making what should be a solitary event into a blending of past and present. A clear source of emotion for Shipper, who marked it as a “joyous occasion” that he was able to share with his survivor family as well as his postwar family.¹¹²³

Indeed, religion is a critical strand that unites the first and third generation together, with the second generation raising their offspring to continue a Jewish legacy. In this way, the third generation are seen to be “transcending” memory with religious connotations, maintaining or intensifying their adherence to religious doctrine in order to make or retain a link with the past.¹¹²⁴ This can also be glimpsed

¹¹²⁰ Witold Gutt, ‘Second/Third Generation’, p. 37.

¹¹²¹ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, pp. 7, 49, 115 & 128.

¹¹²² Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 436.

¹¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁴ Uta Larkey, ‘Transcending Memory in Holocaust Survivors’ Families’ in Joanna Beata Michlic (ed.), *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present: History, Representation, and Memory* (Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2017), p. 224.

within the second generation, but more through a lens of duty and necessity rather than active and conscious choice. This is reflected in Henia Goldman's narrative where she refers to her gratitude that her daughter-in-law converted and raised her children to be Jewish, integrating them into the Jewish community that meant so much to Goldman as a survivor.¹¹²⁵ She went further and highlighted that she would find life "very unbearable" if her grandchildren were not raised as part of the Jewish community, which further emphasises the significance of religion and community to survivors even if they are not Orthodox Jews.¹¹²⁶ Indeed, it can be suggested that Goldman hints at discomposure towards the prospect of her grandchildren not being raised as Jewish.

Therefore, the sense of community, identity and culture becomes more significant over time than doctrine and belief. David Goldberg echoed this sentiment in his narrative and said he takes "great pride and find[s] strength in the wisdom of our heritage and teachings but struggle[s] with the question of faith in God".¹¹²⁷ Despite this, he highlighted how he felt a duty to "remain quiet" about these doubts and continue to "affirm faith in the Jewish people, our traditions, and irrepressible humanity", and hope that his children will do the same.¹¹²⁸ This appears to be visible in the third generation, who take a renewed interest in religion not as duty but as expressing one's history, linking this with the Holocaust as part of their self-concept in a way that embraces both without becoming obsessive in many of the ways the second generation struggled with.

In a similar fashion to the second generation, the third generation are beginning to become more involved in speaking in schools and at Committee level

¹¹²⁵ Tyler, Interview with Henia Goldman.

¹¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹¹²⁷ Goldberg, 'Lessons in Faith', pp. 18-9.

¹¹²⁸ Ibid.

of survivor and refugee organisations Hannah Goldstone in a 2010 article for the *AJR Journal* emphatically addressed the third generation and the importance of the next generations to “show their commitment to continuing the memory of what these men and women experienced”, reflecting that compared to suffering of the first generation, their task was “easy”.¹¹²⁹ This is a common theme amongst the discourses of the second and third generation, that because they did not live through the experiences, they have an easier task of just sharing the story of their parents’ and grandparents’ trauma. This conveys how the third generation are promoting themselves as part of that legacy; it is difficult to say to what extent the first generation are also fuelling this.

Yet in many discussions amongst the first generation, there is this enduring notion of a legacy that stems from the second generation and continues into the third.¹¹³⁰ Mayer Cornell in his quilt square summary for the ’45 Aid Society expanded upon this idea of the importance of subsequent generations. He marked the marriage of his granddaughter and how it represented “the promise of another generation to add to the family that was so nearly extinguished in the flames of the Shoah”.¹¹³¹ This evocative sentiment sets the scene for the future generations carrying an importance Holocaust legacy.

Conclusion

The first generation have collectively tasked the second and third generations with keeping alive “knowledge of what the Nazi machine attempted to do, how far it went,

¹¹²⁹ Hannah Goldstone, ‘A Call to the Third Generation’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.11 (November, 2010), p. 3.

¹¹³⁰ Eve Kugler, ‘Letter to the Editor: Call to the Third Generation’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.11, No.1 (January, 2011), p. 6.

¹¹³¹ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 95.

¹¹³¹ ’45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 21.

the atrocities that were committed that took six draining years by the Allies to extinguish”.¹¹³² As acknowledged by Barbara Bennett, who helped to look after these survivors when they first arrived, “it is a heavy commitment”.¹¹³³ Survivors remark that the second and subsequent generations leave them feeling “surrounded by love”.¹¹³⁴ This striking statement shows the composure that subsequent generations have generated for survivors and the legacies that have been created. This cements validation and a sense of belonging for these survivor groups and the individual survivors that form their membership because they attain composure and are able to focus on the positive features of their lives. Not only do they belong to a survivor family of sorts as discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, but they also succeeded in creating families of their own. This allows the past and the present to coexist, with survivors attaining multiple types and levels of belonging in a way that resembled their pre-war families and relationships, representing a sense of wholeness. Naturally, this does not mean that survivors forget their traumatic experiences but attain a level of composure about their history.

This chapter has addressed the second and third generations’ upbringings. Whilst second generation members and historians suggest that they share in this state of victimhood, this is not a largely accepted phenomenon. Many feel a sense of history and pride in their heritage that results from their parents’ stories. Eva Hoffman has acknowledged:

The inheritance, whether we would or not, is being placed
in our hands, perhaps in our trust. Like many of my peers,
I have balked at the very idea of trusteeship. Why should I

¹¹³² Ibid, p. v.

¹¹³³ 45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. v.

¹¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 149.

accept the burden of this heaviest of pasts, why continue to carry it within myself, or assume any responsibility for what had happened to others long ago? And of course there is no binding obligation to do so, no duty to pick up the wand, or accept the inheritance. And yet, I do not know of many who entirely escape it, who do not, in their adult lives, look around or look back and find they have come to terms with the Holocaust not only as intimate heritage but as a broader concern or a subject. In one way or another, the Shoah pursues us and demands something from us. It ambushes us, as a friend recently said, even when we thought we were done with it. It is, after all, our past.¹¹³⁵

Hoffman's assertion reflects that the second generation do have a choice in whether they take up this mantle, and whether they feel ready for the responsibility or burden of Holocaust education and becoming "vicarious witnesses".¹¹³⁶ There are myriad reactions to the Holocaust survivor parent and grandparent experience, and there is space for individual subjectivities and reactions. This makes oral history and a more interpretive approach to this thesis valuable, as the emphasis is not on categorisations but patterns that can be observed amongst these individuals that form a community. The thoughts, feelings and emotions that come forth from studies such as these enrich the history of these groups and the postwar study of survivors.

In sum, the existing literature on the second and third generation has a tendency to focus on psychopathology, that these people are vicariously traumatised and bear a heavy psychological burden. What emerges is far more complex, and

¹¹³⁵ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 187.

¹¹³⁶ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 159.

awareness needs to be made of the individual nature of many families and how survivors interpret their memories, which in turn can affect the way these survivors raise their children. The individual experiences of each survivor-headed family must be acknowledged, with further recognition needed as to how the impact on the second and third generations can shift with time. Whilst there are cases of these children and adults developing an extensive preoccupation or indeed obsession about the Holocaust, many of the second and third generations have been able to get involved with survivor associations if they choose, or Holocaust education more broadly. There are some pressures of duty present, but this appears to be more internalised through the identity of the second generation rather than dictated to by their parents directly.

Overall, discussions of the second generation and indeed the third enhances the sense of belonging that survivors gain by the existence of their children and grandchildren. Validation as an overarching thesis becomes more forthright, as survivors can mark subsequent generations as their success, a reason why they survived. This works in tandem with their experiential kin to foster a different kind of validation, and it is a broader validation in their futures as bright and less hampered by their Holocaust pasts.

**Chapter Six – “Putting a needle through my heart”: Current Events and
Personal Memories**¹¹³⁷

Little did we know that in our lifetime we would witness more wars, new racial hostilities, and an awakening of Nazism on all five continents.¹¹³⁸

Elie Wiesel.

Many survivors view watching the news with dread, feeling that every new atrocity or genocide reported was comparable to “putting a needle through my heart”.¹¹³⁹ These individuals noted the emotional turmoil of seeing these events unfold in media discourses, and concern that the notion of ‘never again’ was an impossibility. The individual experiences of survivors facilitated empathy with these events and those affected, which has the potential to lead to survivor retraumatisation, with emerging anxieties that the Holocaust could recur and was happening again throughout the world. This chapter explores the outspokenness of survivors on current issues such as modern-day genocide and racism, considering conscience, duty and fear of Holocaust recurrence as prompts. However, survivors are not just vocal on issues of modern atrocity and genocide but how the Holocaust is taught and commemorated in wider society, and this chapter will consider how these views are communicated and represented.

It is important to examine the ways in which the ascribed status of ‘Holocaust survivor’ empowers individuals to speak out politically, their experiences engendering a certain “moral gravitas” that provides credibility and respect to their

¹¹³⁷ Ortiz, ‘Local holocaust survivor calls Charlottesville attack a wake-up call’.

¹¹³⁸ Irving Abrahamson (ed.), *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel Vol.3* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1985), p. 254.

¹¹³⁹ Ortiz, ‘Local holocaust survivor calls Charlottesville attack a wake-up call’.

views.¹¹⁴⁰ This can assist with the validation of survivor experiences because if their status as a survivor is accepted and their views acknowledged, they feel as if society values their opinion and the weight of their traumatic experiences. This is an example of validation that occurs outside of the survivor community and in broader societal discourses, illustrating the various ways in which the trope of validation can manifest itself – in terms of belonging and not belonging, family relations, friendships and the second and third generation.

Historiographically, the connection of the Holocaust to current events links with the issue of ‘never again’ and the idea of lessons, as this framework informs the survivors’ desire to speak out on modern-day issues. Survivors have often felt the pressure of supposed “prophetic ability”,¹¹⁴¹ feeling they have been marked out for surviving as we saw in Chapter Four. That their warnings are listened to can be viewed as a form of validation. Nevertheless, it can also make survivors feel that they are presented hagiographically as saint-like “tragic heroes”.¹¹⁴² This becomes a problem for survivors as they feel they are elevated and given extensive attention purely for surviving trauma, albeit unprecedented, decades ago: many, who ascribed their survival to luck not fate, felt this status was undeserved.¹¹⁴³

Eminent survivor and spokesperson Elie Wiesel commented in 1979 that current affairs had begun to encroach on survivor dialogues.¹¹⁴⁴ The late 1970s has been observed as a time when societal awareness of the Shoah began to advance, with the release of the TV programme *Holocaust* in 1978 marked as significant to

¹¹⁴⁰ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 156; Talia Lavin, ‘Who is a Holocaust survivor’.

¹¹⁴¹ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 66.

¹¹⁴² Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, p. 9.

¹¹⁴³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

¹¹⁴⁴ Wiesel, *A Jew Today*, p. 20.

the development of such a consciousness.¹¹⁴⁵ But it has been observed that current events and politics have become “the crucial realm of ideas”, where so much is felt to be at stake.¹¹⁴⁶ After all, many survivors as a community view the world through “glasses influenced by a historical memory of centuries of persecution and pogroms” as Jews, but their views become further affected by Second World War trauma.¹¹⁴⁷ This, in turn, affects the survivor perception of threat and “a generalized feeling of anxiety that their community, group, or way of life is still threatened by the same forces that attacked them” during the war.¹¹⁴⁸ This perception of danger is echoed in interviews with survivors conducted by social scientists John Sigal and Morton Weinfeld, where interviewees compared the view of the current world to their past and expressed their alarm towards increasing anti-Semitism, placing current anxieties within “the framework of the Holocaust”.¹¹⁴⁹ This conveys the traumatic resonance of the Holocaust and how this infiltrates a survivor’s reaction to and perception of current events.

However, in addition to the fears that can play out in survivor recollections, there is a change in the position of survivors and the “general attitude towards them”, which can enhance the self-confidence of survivors and encourage them to be vocal on issues of modern atrocity.¹¹⁵⁰ This conveys Zoë Waxman’s assessment that “the role of the witness has expanded to incorporate not only commentary on the human condition but also to offer warnings against future cases of ethnic cleansing and genocide”.¹¹⁵¹ While survivors may not be the prophets expected by society, their

¹¹⁴⁵ See Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p.83 for discussion of the origins of societal Holocaust awareness.

¹¹⁴⁶ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 247.

¹¹⁴⁷ Nancy Isserman, ‘Political Tolerance and Intolerance’, pp. 25-6.

¹¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁹ Isserman, ‘Political Tolerance and Intolerance’, p. 32.

¹¹⁵⁰ Leo Eitinger, ‘Holocaust Survivors in Past and Present’, in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (eds.), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 774.

¹¹⁵¹ Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust*, p. 152.

views are ones that hold a certain weight and respect due to their traumatic experiences. Therefore, survivors are represented as an authority. This emphasises Waxman's contention that the role of a witness has diversified to include modern examples that share similarities with Holocaust experiences, rather than the survivor just being confined to recounting their testimonies with no broader context. However, this can put Holocaust survivors in an awkward position, where they are expected to predict future events and compare recent occurrences with their own experiences. This can lead to survivors being asked by media outlets to comment on differing international contexts and atrocities that they may not have an extensive pre-knowledge of.

There are numerous ways that survivors utilise their experiences in order to highlight issues within British society and to exact pressure on the Government. The news item that has generated the most intervention of survivors has been, perhaps unsurprisingly, the plight of unaccompanied child refugees from Syria. This has produced pleas for assistance and governmental lobbying not just from survivors of camps and ghettos but Kindertransport children, who felt themselves to be in a comparable situation in 1938/9 with Kristallnacht, evolving violence towards the Jewish people and the outbreak of war.¹¹⁵²

Aside from the "moral gravitas" attached to survivors, the reason they get involved can be seen more as an example of conscience, sense of justice and a general understanding of historical suffering, which some survivors have argued is present to a greater extent in all of those of Jewish descent.¹¹⁵³ Irrespective of this, it

¹¹⁵² Lord Alf Dubs, 'Syrian refugee children deserve the same welcome I was given in 1939' *The Guardian* (25 March, 2016)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/25/syrian-refugee-children-kindertransport-1939> [Accessed 17 May, 2019]

¹¹⁵³ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

can be observed that survivors and their children are more prone to this phenomenon, owing to the presence of historical trauma and its impact on their world views.¹¹⁵⁴

The notion of survivors as public figures within Britain is a relatively recent phenomenon, and there has been a general transformation of their public image.¹¹⁵⁵ Whilst some survivors do feel the need to become active in speaking about current events and forming opinions about them within the public sphere, this is often not without consequence. When survivors reflect upon current events, it may encourage remnants of their Holocaust experiences to come to the fore. Whilst many in society are horrified by recent examples of genocides, massacres and the rise of racism and hatred, it is understandable that survivors would be more visibly affected.

It is within this context that survivors can become outspoken in the media on these kinds of issues, drawing comparisons between that and their Holocaust trauma. Whilst there have been debates as to whether comparison is an accepted practice or not in terms of the Holocaust, survivors exercise a right to use their experiences as a grounding or forewarning for others and in the present day. This can manifest in a variety of ways but in educational settings tends to become a promotion of tolerance among young people.

UK-based survivors have taken an active stance on the politics of Holocaust memorials and education. This includes discussion of the place of memorials to commemorate the Holocaust and whether the money used for memorials is better diverted elsewhere, such as to more direct teaching and educational initiatives. Some survivors generally view memorials pessimistically as political ploys motivated by

¹¹⁵⁴ See Chapter Five on the second and third generation for further discussion.

¹¹⁵⁵ Fulbrook, *Reckonings*, p. 369.

the self-interest of politicians.¹¹⁵⁶ The literature on memorials in relation to the Holocaust has reflected on the ‘un-Jewish’ or “goyisch” nature of this type of commemoration.¹¹⁵⁷ This exists amidst concern that memorials become a sign of memory fading into the background, where people are required to make less effort to remember the events and traumas that these memorials commemorate. This is because memorials ‘hide’ in plain sight, are easy to walk past and can be easy to ignore. The connection between memorials and education cannot be underestimated, but has there become more focus on memorials as a solution to Holocaust education rather than the two working directly together?

This chapter will consider the views that survivors have expressed, both publicly and privately, surrounding the value of memorials and whether Holocaust education in the UK is adequate. However, it will also consider memorials and education as an exercise in validation for survivors. This is because they are consulted, their experiences marked as belonging to ‘Holocaust experiences’, and consequently, this leads to individuals feeling validated in their identity as survivors.

Validation can also be glimpsed directly when survivors speak in schools and receive letters from the children they address, a number of which are published in survivor association journals.¹¹⁵⁸ The gratitude expressed by schoolchildren and other members of audiences for these talks further encourage the self-assurance of survivors. After beginning as nervous speakers, many survivors that I have interviewed commented on how they grow in confidence with each talk, fuelled by

¹¹⁵⁶ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

¹¹⁵⁷ Goldberg, *Why Should Jews Survive?*, p. 54.

¹¹⁵⁸ Janelle Johnston, ‘Letter to Alec Ward’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1993), p. 48; Rebecca Cresswell, ‘Letter to Mr Zylbrzac and Mr Zwirek’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1993), pp. 47-8; Patrick Moriarty, ‘Letter to Leon Rosenberg’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (1999), p. 25.

the positive feedback they receive. In this way, by speaking they are challenging Holocaust denial and directly educating their audiences to become better citizens.

This chapter will conclude with survivors' hopes for the future of Holocaust remembrance. Whilst for some this has degrees of optimism, for many, it exemplifies their anxieties regarding the world today and what may happen in the future. Survivors often frame their testimonies in such a way that they try to advise younger generations of what to be wary of and how to behave to ensure a peaceful, tolerant future. The fear of recurrence can be glimpsed in the way that survivors bear witness to the Holocaust and link it to current events and modern-day issues. But in addition to this, it is essential to consider whether survivors gain the validation of their experiences by speaking out in this way. This chapter will consider whether justifying their survival and 'survivor's guilt' by seeking to highlight injustice and using their traumatic experiences from the Holocaust as a way to make people listen. Despite the discomfort and emotions that these recollections can trigger, survivors feel it is important to speak publicly.

This chapter will argue that the development of a platform to discuss current events is not a typical coping mechanism among the survivor community, and whilst survivors can gain validation in their survivor status and experiences by bearing witness in this way, this is not something they deliberately seek to do. What is far more important is the feeling of duty to the dead, justifying their survival by attempting to be vocal on these issues and ensure 'never again' is a fact rather than an idealistic promise. Therefore discussion will formulate around three critical case studies: survivors' responses to modern atrocities and political events, Holocaust memorials and Holocaust education. In differing ways, these themes will illustrate the varying types of validation a survivor can gain from becoming actively outspoken on these issues.

“Mankind must be freed from anger and hate”: Modern atrocities and survivor outrage¹¹⁵⁹

Polish Holocaust survivor Mayer Hack asserted that watching Albanian refugees flee Kosovo brought back “indescribable” memories of the horrors he had seen.¹¹⁶⁰ Samantha Power’s contention that “Holocaust survivors with no particular policy agenda often describe the pain of reliving their own experiences when they are confronted by contemporary horrors” is palpable.¹¹⁶¹ The qualifier “no particular policy agenda” is paramount, reflecting that survivors do not insert their narratives into their existing political beliefs, more that they present their views as humanitarian concerns, which are apolitical.¹¹⁶² This is an understandable phenomenon; while historians are often divided on the unique nature of the Holocaust, many current atrocities and genocides provide survivors with an uncertainty that the idea that the Holocaust would not recur.

The question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust and what this means for survivors is paramount. For instance, survivor Ruth Kluger posited that many survivors felt haunted, “and so we insist that their [families’] deaths were unique and must not be compared to any other losses or atrocities”, for fear that “they [the ghosts] may leave the camps”.¹¹⁶³ She goes on to add that “the same thing doesn’t happen twice anyway” and that we would be “condemned to be isolated nomads if we didn’t compare and generalize”.¹¹⁶⁴ Therefore, Kluger was sceptical that the Holocaust could recur in the same way and highlighted the human nature of comparison, conveying an understanding as to how comparison can occur rather than

¹¹⁵⁹ Etkind, ‘England’, p. 55.

¹¹⁶⁰ Power, ‘To Suffer by Comparison?’, p. 45.

¹¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁶² Power, ‘To Suffer by Comparison?’, p. 45.

¹¹⁶³ Kluger, *Landscapes of Memory*, p. 68.

¹¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 69.

condemning it. These debates have the potential to cause rifts in survivor and refugee communities, with some arguing that “the Holocaust and all genocides belong to the whole of humanity” rather than singly Jews,¹¹⁶⁵ whereas others exclaim that a view such as this “smacks of revisionism”.¹¹⁶⁶ Therefore we can glimpse the controversies surrounding these debates not just amongst historians and scholars but the broader survivor and refugee community.

A 2017 article from the Kansas newspaper *The Wichita Eagle* highlighted the numerous genocides occurring worldwide and survivor Rachel Goldman Miller’s concern that “It’s in front of our eyes and we stand by”.¹¹⁶⁷ This is an evocative sentiment, charging humanity with inaction towards the assertion of no recurrence in a post-Holocaust world and consequently making the comparisons between the Holocaust and other atrocities and genocidal acts. Comparisons can be drawn here to a perceived bystander mentality in Europe in the wake of growing Nazi aggression and anti-Semitism.

Many survivors cannot help but feel their trauma resurface when confronted with atrocities occurring in this day and age, leading to a situation where reading newspapers leads to “recalling those nearest and dearest to me who were killed so young”.¹¹⁶⁸ These contexts allow for a survivor’s traumatic memories to resurface and can threaten composure.¹¹⁶⁹ This places the importance in this thesis of

¹¹⁶⁵ Ruth Barnett, ‘Letter to the Editor: Holocaust and other Genocides’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.2 (February, 2010), p. 6.

¹¹⁶⁶ Rubin Katz, ‘Letter to the Editor: Holocaust and other Genocides’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.10, No.3 (March, 2010), p. 6.

¹¹⁶⁷ Katherine Burgess, “We said it would never happen again”: Holocaust survivor speaks of past, present’, *The Wichita Eagle* (28 April, 2017) <http://www.kansas.com/living/religion/article147372159.html> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

¹¹⁶⁸ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 466.

¹¹⁶⁹ See Methodology Chapter for discussions of the definition of composure and discomposure and its implications for this thesis.

considering the impact of present-day events on the survivor and how they interpret this in the form of public media.

Other articles have gone further to emphasise the impact these types of news stories and events can have on survivors and directly used the term “traumatized” in relation to consuming pictures of death and atrocity.¹¹⁷⁰ This “direct connection between past and present” is an easy parallel to draw, in genocides, ethnic cleansing and “blood-shed” which has led to a general overview from the survivor community that “You achieve nothing through war”.¹¹⁷¹

It is necessary to examine a series of events in the twentieth century as case studies and mark the prevalent survivor response to them in media outlets in order to trace how survivor narratives and interviews have been used in media settings. This chapter will examine the UK survivor response to events such as child refugees in Syria, issues of extreme right-wing hatred, alleged cases of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party and European issues which received survivor media attention.

A pivotal case study within the British Holocaust survivor and continental refugee community is the plight of Syrian refugees. Originating in 2011 with an armed uprising by pro-democracy protesters and subsequent civil war between rebel brigades and government forces, the conflict has led to a massive humanitarian crisis resulting in the displacement, starvation and ultimately death of a large proportion of its people.¹¹⁷² This has been described by some Jewish figures, such as former

¹¹⁷⁰ Oren Liebermann, ‘Holocaust survivors demand Israel help refugees’, *CNN* (10 September, 2015).

¹¹⁷¹ Mark Donnelly, ‘We Should Do Something for the Fiftieth’: Remembering Auschwitz, Belsen and the Holocaust in Britain in 1995’, in Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (eds.), *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 182.

¹¹⁷² Unknown Author, ‘Syria: The Story of the Conflict’, *BBC News* (11 March, 2016) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26116868> [Accessed 19 January, 2019]

Israeli Chief Rabbi and child survivor Yisrael Meir Lau, as a “Shoah of the Syrian people”.¹¹⁷³ Therefore, prominent international Jewish figures have initiated a direct comparison between the Holocaust and the suffering experienced by Syrians.

A controversial debate is hence introduced as to whether the Holocaust is unique and whether it is appropriate to compare it to other atrocities. Michael Rothberg has argued that “while it is essential to understand the specificity of the Nazi genocide (as of all events) separating it off from other histories of collective violence – and even from history as such – is intellectually and politically dangerous”.¹¹⁷⁴ Omer Bartov concurs and highlights that the idea of ‘uniqueness’ is unproductive and has lost its emphasis amongst scholars as more atrocities and genocides became known worldwide.¹¹⁷⁵ It is within this context that survivors speaking out on other genocides becomes prevalent as they too acknowledge that whilst the Holocaust possessed unique attributes, as all genocides do, there were lessons that humanity had not learned from past horrors. The notion of Holocaust ‘lessons’ and ‘never again’ are two problematic concepts which will be unpacked further in this chapter.

Whilst the UK government had pledged to accept unaccompanied child refugees from Syria, there has been evolving controversy around the exact ages of these children, many of whom were found to be adults.¹¹⁷⁶ Camp and ghetto survivors, Kindertransport children and other refugees from the Nazi regime have

¹¹⁷³ Ruth Eglash, ‘Israel’s former chief rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau says Syrian civil war is a Holocaust’, *The Independent* (6 April, 2017)

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-israel-former-chief-rabbi-yisrael-meir-lau-civil-war-holocaust-assad-a7670531.html> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

¹¹⁷⁴ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁷⁵ Omer Bartov, ‘Introduction’, in Omer Bartov (ed.), *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 3.

¹¹⁷⁶ Peter Walker, ‘Two thirds of disputed Calais ‘child’ refugees are adults, Home Office figures reveal’, *The Independent* (19 October, 2016)

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-refugees-migrants-two-thirds-home-office-dental-teeth-david-davies-a7369186.html> [Accessed 19 January, 2019]

maintained a continuous media presence on this issue, the most prominent being former Kindertransportee Lord Dubs and his bill amendment to the 2016 Immigration Act to facilitate the arrival of unaccompanied Syrian child refugees.¹¹⁷⁷ In an article for *The Guardian* for Holocaust Memorial Day in 2017, Lord Dubs linked the two tragedies and discussed “frightening” parallels between the US ban on Muslim immigration with specific reference to Syrian refugees and the pre-Holocaust years.¹¹⁷⁸ He also highlights how the actions of Sir Nicholas Winton, who facilitated a Kindertransport from Prague which allowed Lord Dubs as a small child to come to the UK, emphasised that “we can do more” in a world where “many countries are closing their doors to refugees”.¹¹⁷⁹ This is a crucial example of individuals affected by the Holocaust speaking out on present-day issues and using their experiences as inspiration and motivation for doing so.

Survivor Margalit Judah has referred to a general tradition of the Jewish people “campaigning for human rights” and “fighting for the underdog” through a historical lens of understanding what it means to be persecuted.¹¹⁸⁰ She goes further to illustrate that in terms of Syria, the Kindertransport are the leading voice of lobbying and action due to their transportation to the UK as unaccompanied child refugees.¹¹⁸¹ However, the children brought over in 1945 as part of the 732 young people who went on to form the ’45 Aid Society can also be described as having an experience that allows them to identify with the plight of Syrian refugees. A further contextual point to note is that many survivors from this group shared characteristics with some Syrian refugees in the present, having lied about their age in order to join

¹¹⁷⁷ Lord Alf Dubs, ‘On Holocaust Memorial Day, let us remember our duty to child refugees’, *The Guardian* (27 January, 2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/27/holocaust-memorial-day-child-refugees-kindertransport> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

¹¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁹ Lord Alf Dubs, ‘On Holocaust Memorial Day’.

¹¹⁸⁰ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

¹¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

child transports to the UK.¹¹⁸² There is minimal recognition of this link between past and present, with MPs being recorded as stating, “these do not look like children to me”.¹¹⁸³ Many of the cases referred to were male refugees, who due to their facial hair and height were not considered adolescents or children.

While many survivors have not directly campaigned on the issue of Syrian refugees, several hold strong opinions on the issue which they articulated without prompting in the oral history interviews I conducted. A vital response was solidarity with the refugee experience, with survivor Margalit Judah drawing a direct line comparing the experiences of the Kindertransport with the child refugees allowed entrance to Britain via the Dubs amendment to the 2016 Immigration Act.¹¹⁸⁴ Vera Schiff, in addition noted how much she cried in response to the scenes unfolding in the Syrian city of Aleppo, adding that she felt it was her duty to speak up to “prevent further atrocities against innocent civilians”.¹¹⁸⁵

Overall, the case study of Syria reflects a desire from survivors to actively reflect on current events that are unfolding and the effect it has on them, highlighting that they feel duty-bound to speak out against injustices and violence. This reflects Elie Wiesel’s contention that survivors wanted to transmit a message “having gained an insight into man that will remain forever unequalled, they tried to share their knowledge with you, their contemporaries”.¹¹⁸⁶ These messages predominantly revolve around the importance of tolerance and against hatred and further atrocity

¹¹⁸² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

¹¹⁸³ Unknown Author, ‘How do you verify the age of child asylum seekers?’ *BBC News* (19 October, 2016) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37687916> [Accessed 30 January, 2019]

¹¹⁸⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

¹¹⁸⁵ Charlotte England, ‘Holocaust survivors call for perpetrators of Syrian atrocities to be indicted’, *The Independent* (23 December, 2016) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/holocaust-survivors-call-on-world-to-indict-those-responsible-for-atrocities-in-syria-a7492836.html> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

¹¹⁸⁶ Wiesel, *A Jew Today*, p. 233.

based on ethnic or racial lines. Whilst there appears to be significant respect attached to the opinions of survivors, they would perhaps argue that the world has not been listening due to atrocities and hatred that continues to occur such as varying genocides and acts of violence.

A further case study which illustrates Wiesel's above point about survivors wishing to transmit a message is that of the perceived rise of racism in British politics. This becomes more marked in the twenty-first century as survivors develop self-confidence in order to tackle controversial events in public. A vital example of this is the rise and subsequent fall of the British National Party (BNP) and the emergence of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). This led to the concern from survivors that the "false brandishments" these parties provided would lead to a rise of hatred and that they should be stopped "no matter what they promise".¹¹⁸⁷ The headline of the *Daily Mirror* article ended with "Survivors BNP warning", following Gisela Feldman's quote of "I saw Holocaust horror...don't ever let hate win".¹¹⁸⁸ Feldman's identity and a position as a survivor was used in order to supply her with "moral gravitas" and to enable her to draw comparisons with the early stages of persecution or discrimination and what could follow.¹¹⁸⁹ Feldman's status as a survivor lends credibility to the argument that enriches an article which could have otherwise been interpreted as a left-wing newspaper's attack on a far-right-wing organisation.

The sentiment of stopping hatred reverberates in Michael Etkind's 2003 poem "England" for the *45 Aid Society Journal*: "Mankind must be freed from anger

¹¹⁸⁷ Matt Blake, 'I saw Holocaust horror.. don't ever let hate win: Survivors BNP warning', *Daily Mirror* (28 May, 2009), p. 33.

¹¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁹ Ibid; Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 156.

and hate”.¹¹⁹⁰ The timing of this poem is apt, as 2003 coincided with an evolving war in the Middle East with Iraq and Afghanistan, charging Britain not to “let injustice raise its head and spread to terrorise the world”.¹¹⁹¹ In more recent years, survivor discourses and recollections have become more focused on the issue of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party and the uneasiness surrounding the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. In an interview I conducted with survivor Hershel Orenstein in August 2018, he reflected on the rise of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party and connected this with denial of the Holocaust and the right of Israel to exist.¹¹⁹²

Other survivors have become outspoken on the issue, with survivor Susan Pollack speaking at political party conferences in 2018 in response to these issues, challenging Corbyn’s assertion that he had done “all he could” to address the problem.¹¹⁹³ These two issues convey the rise of hatred and racism on both sides of the political spectrum and the natural concern this provokes from survivors, which further motivates them to speak out as a sense of duty for their survivor community and Holocaust memory more generally.

The rise of hatred and anti-Semitism that provokes survivors to become outspoken politically on these issues is not isolated to UK politics and discourses but also demonstrates a more European dimension. A particular example where this can be noted is in the conflicts surrounding the annexation of the Crimea by Russia in 2014.¹¹⁹⁴ In the weeks following, newspapers reported on increasing anti-Semitism

¹¹⁹⁰ Etkind, ‘England’.

¹¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁹² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Hershel Orenstein, 4 August, 2018.

¹¹⁹³ Ella Wills, ‘Holocaust survivor calls for leadership on anti-Semitism from Jeremy Corbyn’, *Evening Standard* (26 September, 2018) <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/holocaust-survivor-calls-for-leadership-on-antisemitism-from-jeremy-corbyn-in-poignant-warning-over-a3945821.html> [Accessed 19 January, 2019]

¹¹⁹⁴ Unknown Author, ‘Crimea Profile’, *BBC News* (17 January, 2018) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18287223> [Accessed 19 January, 2019]

within the Ukraine by pro-Russian insurgents, including intimidation and the distribution of anti-Semitic leaflets.¹¹⁹⁵ This led to both the *Daily Star* and the *Sunday Express* publishing articles quoting UK-based survivor Sam Pivnik. He asserted that Jews should “flee Ukraine” in light of these anti-Semitic developments as they echoed the early persecution of Jews under the Nazi regime.¹¹⁹⁶ This example illustrates how UK-based survivors are active not only on British issues of hatred and anti-Semitism but are sensitive to this happening on a more international scale. When considering the context of Ukrainian suffering in the Holocaust from local collaborators in addition to officers of the Nazi regime as referred to in the *Daily Star* article, this link becomes more pronounced.¹¹⁹⁷

By way of comparison, there are some case studies that American-resident survivors have marked as crisis points and identified as key barriers to their continued composure. A particularly relevant example of Holocaust survivors in the US speaking out about political issues revolves around the administration of President Donald Trump and in the case of Charlottesville, where a riot broke out following a white supremacist ‘Unite the Right’ rally in 2017.¹¹⁹⁸ Many communities were vocal in their condemnation, but none were as emotive as the US Holocaust survivor community. Many survivors spoke out in the media about their fears of an increase in hatred in American society and the comparisons that they could draw with 1930s Germany.¹¹⁹⁹ A typical message was to emphasise that Nazism did not start with killing but rather with hatred and the increasing popularity of far-right

¹¹⁹⁵ Matthew Young, ‘Ukraine Jews ready to flee to Israel’, *The Daily Star* (21 April, 2014), p. 2

¹¹⁹⁶ Ibid; Marco Giannangeli, ‘Flee Ukraine, says Holocaust survivor’, *Sunday Express* (20 April, 2014), pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁹⁷ Young, ‘Ukraine Jews ready to flee to Israel’.

¹¹⁹⁸ Joel Gunter, ‘A reckoning in Charlottesville’ *BBC News* (13 August, 2017)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-40914748> [Accessed 19 January, 2019]

¹¹⁹⁹ Brenda Gazzar, ‘Holocaust survivor talks Charlottesville, hate and his defiance of Nazis past and present’, *Los Angeles Daily News* (23 August, 2017)

<http://www.dailynews.com/2017/08/23/holocaust-survivor-talks-charlottesville-hate-and-his-defiance-of-nazis-past-and-present/> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

organisations, drawing a direct line between this and events at Charlottesville following the rally.¹²⁰⁰

Comparisons were also evoked in the UK Parliament, with Andrew Percy MP describing the rally as “Nazi-esque torch-lit parades”.¹²⁰¹ The Holocaust, in this instance, becomes a shorthand for comparing violence to a series of events and a point in history that is almost universally understood. US-resident survivor Samuel Harris noted that “every Jewish person will interpret the hatred expressed at the Charlottesville rally in his or her own way”, but could not separate his own perspective from his background as a survivor.¹²⁰² This is a theme commonly echoed by other survivors that their view is understandably and undoubtedly affected by their experiences, and that unfolding events such as this provide a new urgency to the need to share their stories.¹²⁰³ In sum, Sidney Zoltak’s simple statement echoes the perspective of many Holocaust survivors when they see today a swastika in discourses of hatred: “Many people don’t know and understand like a Holocaust survivor does, what the swastika was”.¹²⁰⁴

Survivors have identified multiple reasons for why they speak out publicly on these issues, ranging from a matter of conscience, fear of recurrence and because

¹²⁰⁰ Ortiz, ‘Local holocaust survivor calls Charlottesville attack a wake-up call’.

¹²⁰¹ House of Commons, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (18 January, 2018, Vol.634, col. 1130)

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-01-18/debates/74DD6E76-8A7C-4522-80CB-853EA6B69745/HolocaustMemorialDay> [Accessed 21 March, 2018]

¹²⁰² Eric Peterson, ‘Jewish leaders address rise of anti-Semitism as Yom Kippur arrives’, *Chicago Daily Herald* (29 September, 2017)

<http://www.dailyherald.com/news/20170929/jewish-leaders-address-rise-of-anti-semitism-as-yom-kippur-arrives> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

¹²⁰³ Caitlin Andrews, ‘N.H. Holocaust survivor tells story, discusses how it resonates today’, *Concord Monitor* (23 April, 2017) <http://www.concordmonitor.com/Kati-Preston-talks-about-her-experience-as-a-Holocaust-survivor-9362395> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

¹²⁰⁴ Unknown Author, ‘A fear that enters your bone marrow’: Holocaust survivors share their stories’, *CTV News Montreal* (27 August, 2017) <http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/a-fear-that-enters-your-bone-marrow-holocaust-survivors-share-their-stories-1.3563860> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

they feel their experiences give them a unique perspective that may ‘reach’ people. This is a more pronounced phenomenon than one of validation; however, it must be noted that survivors having their views presented on a media platform in this way reassures them that their experiences give them the right to a ‘valid’ opinion that is listened to. This appears to be a recent phenomenon as Holocaust survivors grow in confidence as they continue to speak in schools and receive positive feedback on the value of their testimonies and views. Their growing self-assurance is also echoed in how survivors are consulted regarding public initiatives that relate to Holocaust education such as memorials and how they can become rather outspoken on the practicalities of such projects and the motivations behind them.

“Memorials can take different forms”: Holocaust survivors and their role in British commemorative culture

In her letter to the editor of the *AJR Journal* in 2008, Hana Hermut, an Association member, wrote that “Memorials can take different forms”.¹²⁰⁵ Her own “private” Holocaust memorial was that of a clothes hanger that had belonged to her great aunt and uncle, who had perished. A differing type of memorial is indicated here, one which is a private domestic form of commemoration and reflection rather than a public spectacle. The debate surrounding Holocaust memorials has the potential to both divide and unite Holocaust survivors within their organisations. These opinions can form on an individual basis around the political ideology and views of a survivor as well as from their Holocaust experiences, but recognise that these are often linked. Whilst Michael Goldberg reflects on the notion of memorials as being “goyisch” (‘un-Jewish’) and adopting Christian traditions of commemorating the dead rather

¹²⁰⁵ Hana Hermut, ‘Letter to the Editor: My Private Holocaust Memorial’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.8, No.4 (March, 2008), p. 6.

than Jewish ones,¹²⁰⁶ expressions from survivors can reflect a pessimism on whether memorials have value for remembrance – with some feeling that they can be abused, neglected or used as political ploys.¹²⁰⁷ This balance of optimism and pessimism with regards to Holocaust memorials is a complex theme and one that requires consideration, as it is often assumed that survivors view them in a mostly positive manner.

Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory: Sites of Mourning*, which focuses on the experiences and landscapes of the Great War, is pertinent to this thesis. For instance, he argues that war memorials are sites of mourning based on an individual and collective memory, as a reminder of the horrors of war.¹²⁰⁸ Winter places commemoration as an act of citizenship, affirming the idea of community but excluding values seen to place moral character under threat.¹²⁰⁹ This is a theme that has resonance with Holocaust memorials as they convey a commitment to a set of values utterly opposed to Nazi ideology and the horrors it produced. This is even more explicit in Holocaust survivor communities as it conveys a respect for their experiences and a commitment to not repeating such atrocities. Furthermore, Winter's assessment of commemorative ritual and memorials as being "expressed" within the language of sacrifice "which must never be allowed to happen again" resonates with the discourses surrounding the Holocaust of 'never again'.¹²¹⁰ Holocaust memorial sites such as concentration camps and monuments, such as the 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' in Berlin (pictured below) can be seen as an example of memory in action.¹²¹¹

¹²⁰⁶ Goldberg, *Why Should Jews Survive?*, p. 54.

¹²⁰⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016 and 12 January, 2018.

¹²⁰⁸ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, pp. 78-9.

¹²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.80.

¹²¹⁰ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 95.

¹²¹¹ <https://www.berlin-welcomecard.de/en/poi/memorial-murdered-jews-europe> [Accessed 23 January, 2021]



Despite this, memory has been labelled a “notoriously slippery term” for historians, as individual memories, whilst being structured to make sense of our past and present lives, do not exist in a vacuum and are driven by time, place, history, politics, culture and economy.¹²¹² In general, memory as an idea reverberates through public life at “high voltage”, generating numerous debates but also indicating how the contemporary “presentness” of memory cannot be underestimated, “forging the past to serve present interests”.¹²¹³ This furthers Wulf Kansteiner’s notion of how collective memory “privileges the interests of the contemporary” rather than prioritising the past.¹²¹⁴ This is also reflected in Efraim Sicher’s assessment that no historical event can be recorded “devoid of interpretive perspectives of after”, highlighting the importance of the present in terms of memory.¹²¹⁵

There has been some concern as to how memory can reflect ‘an egocentric obsession with the past-in-the-present in the guise of preparing for a “better” future’.¹²¹⁶ The Holocaust highlights this problematic theme as present-day issues

¹²¹² Noakes and Pattinson, ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’, p. 3.

¹²¹³ Radstone and Schwarz, ‘Introduction: Mapping Memory’, p. 1

¹²¹⁴ Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, p. 180.

¹²¹⁵ Sicher, ‘The Future of the Past’, p. 81; Johnson and Dawson, ‘Popular memory: Theory, Politics, Method – Popular Memory Group’, pp. 78-9.

¹²¹⁶ Chamberlin, ‘Doing Memory’, p. 74.

become intertwined with our understanding of the Holocaust and general education surrounding the theme conveys the desire to prevent a future laden with atrocity. Memorials can also reinforce the “mantle of moral gravitas” echoed in the injunctions to ‘remember’ or ‘never forget’ that these memorials and commemorative activities can encourage.¹²¹⁷ This theme extends to the status often assigned to survivors within the media.¹²¹⁸ The idea of moral gravitas linking memorials and survivor status within the media can be interpreted as an example of *zachor*, which literally translates as “remember” and acts as an imperative.¹²¹⁹ This can be viewed as a constant and somewhat static concept, whereas memory itself is a more dynamic and fluid concept, as reflected through the omnipresent, ever-expanding medium of Holocaust monuments and memorial sites.¹²²⁰

James E. Young has reflected on the impossibility of ‘keeping track’ of the sheer volume of memorials, indicating that, “any simple survey of these memorial sites would soon become obsolete”.¹²²¹ Political and religious ends, as well as the interests that shape the form of Holocaust memorials both locally and nationally, make memorials an intriguing case study from which to examine how survivors can be outspoken on contemporary issues not just of modern violence and atrocity but also on issues such as memorials, commemorative activity and education. Whilst survivors may not feel a direct duty to reflect publicly on these issues as they would about hatred, racism and violence, it is a nuanced example of survivor validation and the presentation of survivor views on these issues as ‘valid’ and worthy of consideration.

¹²¹⁷ Ibid.

¹²¹⁸ Talia Lavin, ‘Who is a Holocaust survivor’.

¹²¹⁹ Zachor Foundation, <https://www.zachorfoundation.org/> [Accessed 26 February, 2019]

¹²²⁰ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. x

¹²²¹ Ibid.

Despite the national identities and contexts that inform memorials internationally, Young refers to the criticism from some that the “memory of events so grave might be reduced to exhibitions of public craftsmanship or cheap pathos”.¹²²² There is a fear that memorials “seal off” memory from public awareness and the public rely on memorials to ‘do our memory work for us’, leading to a displacement of memory and societal forgetfulness.¹²²³ Primo Levi considered memorials as “stylisation” of memory rather than commemoration but admitted that “a certain dose of rhetoric” through the means of “ceremonies and celebrations, monuments and flags” was not necessarily a deplorable thing but warned that one must be aware of “excessive simplifications”.¹²²⁴ Therefore, it can be summarised that even sceptical survivors can, in part, see the value of memorials historically.

Although survivors can see the value of memorials generally, they do not remain uncritical of such endeavours. A recent project regarding a new Holocaust Memorial and education centre to be built in Victoria Tower Gardens next to the Houses of Parliament has utilised an extensive consultation process with survivors. This proposal was extensively discussed in Parliament and the ‘Prime Minister’s Holocaust Commission’, with the report concluding:

The Commission found widespread dissatisfaction with the existing Holocaust memorial in Hyde Park, which was felt to be hidden out of sight and offer no context, information or opportunity to learn more. The strength of feeling on this

¹²²² Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p. 360.

¹²²³ *Ibid*, p. 360.

¹²²⁴ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp. 8-9.

was very clear, particularly from many of Britain's Holocaust survivors.¹²²⁵

In this instance, the Prime Minister referred to the support from Holocaust survivors, conveying their extensive role in the process and decisions to be made. However, the memorial plans were not consistently praised throughout the survivor and refugee community. Writing for the *AJR Journal*, Anthony Grenville referred to “vaguely phrased intentions” and a hope that the memorial did not become a “pallid replica” of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. and Yad Vashem.¹²²⁶ Other discourses from the *AJR Journal* referred to the 38 statues in Westminster (185 if you “slightly enlarged the area” to include Whitehall, the Embankment, Charing Cross, St James’ Park and Millbank), of individuals and events “quickly forgotten”.¹²²⁷ The author went on to quote James E. Young in the idea that memorials make it easier to forget and “divest ourselves of the obligation to remember”, and that “those who gained refuge in the UK and those who perished deserve better”.¹²²⁸

Margalit Judah also echoed a general pessimism about the Victoria Tower Gardens memorial plans extensively in her narrative by lamenting, “Totally know why, because David Cameron wants his name on the building, you know, to say his government did it”.¹²²⁹ She also expressed dismay that memorial statues such as the one commemorating the Kindertransport in Liverpool Street had been tragically

¹²²⁵ House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (27 January, 2015, Vol.591, col. 20WS); <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2015-01-27/debates/15012754000012/HolocaustCommission?highlight=Holocaust#contribution-15012754000038> [Accessed 21 March, 2018]

¹²²⁶ Anthony Grenville, ‘The UK Holocaust Memorial’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.16, No.4 (April, 2016), pp. 1-2.

¹²²⁷ Arthur Oppenheimer, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.16, No.4 (April, 2016), p. 7.

¹²²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²²⁹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

ignored, with people sitting on it, discarding their litter and not thinking about the experiences it sought to represent.¹²³⁰ Therefore, we can see the pessimism from some survivors regarding the details and practicalities of memorials, despite agreeing with the value of exhibitions more broadly.

Judah's example of the Kindertransport memorial in Liverpool Street station conveys how memorials become part of the urban landscape, and as a consequence, can become overlooked as people conduct their busy everyday lives and do not take in their surroundings. As a result, the exhortation to never forget is broken and the bond of the imperative to remember (*zachor*) is diminished, which can lead to a sense of discomposure for survivors. This concern suggests that despite the efforts from nations to memorialise events, memorials do not always contribute to collective memory or enforce a sense of identity.¹²³¹ Instead, it can be argued that memory is ossified "whilst giving the impression of preserving it".¹²³² This can also be broadly applied to the materiality of "relics" from these sites, where their physicality is presented as "evidence" – which Tim Cole is wary of too much emphasis upon as it can lead to a scenario where "authentic relics are required to do our remembering for us".¹²³³ This lies concomitant with Esther Jilovsky's notion that memory becomes fixed and fossilised through the lens of memorials because it invites people to stop thinking, relying on sites and objects to do so for them.¹²³⁴

Although there is some pessimism on how memorials can become an illusion and allow for people to forget the events they commemorate, the plans for an

¹²³⁰ Ibid.

¹²³¹ Young, 'The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History', p. 360.

¹²³² Esther Jilovsky, *Remembering the Holocaust: Generations, Witnessing and Place* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 4.

¹²³³ Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler; How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (London, Routledge, 2017), p. 113.

¹²³⁴ Jilovsky, *Remembering the Holocaust*, p. 4.

extensive Holocaust memorial and education centre in a prime location next to the Houses of Parliament conveys the marked attention dedicated to the Holocaust in political circles and societal commemoration. Those who experienced years of Nazi persecution were consulted and involved in the process of the project, which reassured many survivors that their views were valid, respected and taken on board. But this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Memorialisation of the Holocaust (before it was known as such) appeared to begin in small Jewish communities in the 1950s, such as the erection of a small memorial in a Liberal Jewish Cemetery in London, emphasising that in the absence of graves, “a memorial of this kind thus helps to keep their memories alive”.¹²³⁵ This example conveys the initial drive for memorialisation stemming from the Jewish community in isolation with no governmental involvement or centrality of location such as Westminster. This tradition has continued, with many synagogues and Jewish cemeteries containing their own small memorials or memorial gardens.¹²³⁶

In December 1979, discussions were taking place on erecting a memorial to the total eleven million victims of the Third Reich, to include six million Jews, in Whitehall opposite the Cenotaph.¹²³⁷ Discussions with Michael Heseltine, Minister of the Environment at the time, led to the decision that the monument should be “simple and restrained”, and that no public funds would be involved for the erection of a Holocaust memorial.¹²³⁸ Therefore it was concluded three months later in March 1980 that unless enough private support was attracted the memorial project would

¹²³⁵ Unknown Author, ‘From My Diary: Consecration of Memorial’, *AJR Information*, Vol.11, No.11 (November, 1957), p. 9.

¹²³⁶ Susie Barnett, ‘A dream come true’: Holocaust Memorial Garden opened at Waltham Abbey Cemetery’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.15, No.12 (December, 2015), p. 3.

¹²³⁷ Unknown Author, ‘Holocaust Memorial for Whitehall’, *AJR Information*, Vol.34, No.12 (December, 1979), p. 2.

¹²³⁸ *Ibid.*

not be able to go ahead and it was consequently shelved.¹²³⁹ This example illustrates a contrast with the more recent Governmental and Parliamentary commitment to Holocaust commemoration, emphasising the centrality of the Holocaust and how it has developed since the late 1970s.

Overall, the historical imperative to remember drives discourses surrounding the Holocaust and its commemorative aspects. However, this relationship is not always a harmonious one, due to the argument that the public relies on memorials to do their remembering for them, leading to a type of amnesia within the hearts and minds of the public more generally. The opposing view is that memorials bring together art, history and audience into sites of historical meaning in order to provide a bridge between the past and the present, shaping public memory and retrospective private thought.

The role of survivors in the memorial process shows an evolution in their consultation, reflecting on how their opinions on the issues are valid and worthy of consideration. This gives survivors a sense of reassurance that the events of the Holocaust are present in the minds of politicians and policymakers. However, some remain pessimistic about the overall value of memorials and note that the money would be better spent on improving Holocaust education nationwide rather than memorials for show in the nation's capital. Therefore, it is prudent to examine and discuss the evolving views of survivors on the centrality of Holocaust education and the role that they can play within this framework as witnesses.

¹²³⁹ Unknown Author, 'The Whitehall Holocaust Memorial', *AJR Information*, Vol.35, No.3 (March, 1980), p. 3.

“Differentiate between commemoration and study”: Holocaust Education¹²⁴⁰

In an article for the *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* in 1989, Jeffrey Tribich reported on the Yad Vashem Summer Institute and the problems many teachers faced when teaching the Holocaust.¹²⁴¹ He marked a clear line between commemoration and study, which he maintained were linked but emphasised that “commemoration involves ceremony and spiritual exaltation differentiated from everyday experience”, whereas study involved “rational thematic methods”.¹²⁴² Therefore, there is a necessary disconnect and an importance of keeping those two endeavours separate. Tribich overall emphasised the importance of Holocaust education in encouraging students about “the need to think and not to abrogate responsibility”.¹²⁴³ As a result, Holocaust education is designed to encourage active citizenship in young people, where tolerance is promoted and hatred is challenged.

And there is an important place for the testimony of Holocaust survivors within the topic of Holocaust education more broadly. The literature on Holocaust education has reflected on the dwindling numbers of survivors as a “vanishing resource”, leading to anxiety within the survivor community that the Holocaust will not endure in public memory.¹²⁴⁴ Extensive discussion has taken place throughout the survivor community and in political circles as to whether Holocaust education and knowledge is lacking, and to propose possible solutions to address this perceived dearth. This section of the chapter aims to assess what survivors gain from speaking in schools and how the pressure of modern-day hatred, racism and violence can

¹²⁴⁰ Tribich, ‘The Yad Vashem Summer Institute’, p. 24.

¹²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴² *Ibid.*

¹²⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁴ Kathleen C. Martin, ‘Teaching the Shoah: Four Approaches That Draw Students In’, *The History Teacher*, Vol.40, No.4 (August, 2007), p. 496; Donald Schwartz, ‘Who Will Tell Them After We’re Gone? Reflections on Teaching the Holocaust’, *The History Teacher*, Vol.23, No.2 (February, 1990), p. 95.

present itself in their narratives in schools and other public contexts. Overall, survivors gain a sense of being an active educator rather than a passive victim, which has implications for their identity and composure that they are able to do something to further the cause of Holocaust commemoration and education. This links with the overall thesis theme of validation as survivors receive letters of thanks after speaking in these schools, reassuring them that they have opinions that are valid and worth listening to that make an impact on the people with whom they speak.

It has been argued by Catherine Merridale that “personal memory is only part of the social process of remembering” and can become “irrelevant” or “subversive” to national projects of commemoration.¹²⁴⁵ The case study of Britain and how it remembers the Holocaust as a collective mark an intriguing diversion as part of a broader Second World War Blitz narrative. Holocaust survivor Kitty Hart Moxon recorded in her memoir that her experience in Britain led her to remain silent about her Holocaust trauma.¹²⁴⁶ This silence existed in contrast to repeated dialogues of the British experience of the Blitz for years after hostilities ceased.¹²⁴⁷ Fellow survivor Gena Turgel also echoed this confusion that British people were so preoccupied with their own wartime suffering that they could not provide “shared empathy” with those who had survived the Holocaust, which existed as a “parallel narrative” to the Blitz.¹²⁴⁸

The preoccupation with British Blitz suffering reflects what Dan Stone and Aimee Bunting have suggested is a drawing of the Holocaust within the “reassuring

¹²⁴⁵ Catherine Merridale, ‘War, Death and Remembrance in Soviet Russia’, in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 61.

¹²⁴⁶ Tony Kushner, ‘Loose Connections? Britain and the ‘Final Solution’ in Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (eds.), *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 54.

¹²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁸ Kushner, ‘Loose Connections?’, p. 55.

parameters” of British national narratives, “creating an active link between themselves and the destruction process”.¹²⁴⁹ Therefore, while the emphasis on comparing the Holocaust to the suffering of the Blitz was formulated to try and facilitate empathy and a relationship between events happening concurrently, such endeavours had the opposite effect. The modern link between the Holocaust and British memory culture was often questioned, particularly in the 1990s ahead of the first Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001.¹²⁵⁰

Despite historian Yehuda Bauer lamenting in 1979 that “nothing at all has been done to mark the Holocaust”, the 1990s appeared to show a trend towards educating about the horrors that occurred, beginning with the introduction of the Holocaust into the National Curriculum in 1991.¹²⁵¹ The last twenty to thirty years have conveyed a marked change in the way the Holocaust has been represented and commemorated in British society. Reasons for this change cited by historians include cultural productions such as *Schindler’s List* (1993) and events such as the David Irving libel trial against the author of *Denying the Holocaust*, Jewish Professor Deborah Lipstadt, (1996-2000), invoking not just interest in the Holocaust but a sense that Britain should be doing more to commemorate it.¹²⁵²

Writing in 1977, Elie Wiesel traced the importance of Holocaust education and its urgency as survivors grew “old, tired and anguished”.¹²⁵³ However, there was a gap of over a decade between this emphatic statement and the introduction of the

¹²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 60. Also see Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It: Britain and the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004).

¹²⁵⁰ Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen, ‘Introduction’, in Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (eds.), *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 2.

¹²⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 4-5.

¹²⁵² Sharples and Jensen, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

¹²⁵³ Abrahamson (ed.), *Against Silence*, p. 293.

Holocaust to the National Curriculum in 1991.¹²⁵⁴ However in 2015, the ‘Prime Minister’s Holocaust Commission’ Report found that whilst the Holocaust was a permanent part of the National Curriculum, “the majority of our young people do not know some of the most fundamental facts that explain how and why the Holocaust happened, even after studying it at school”.¹²⁵⁵ This was used as a rationale for the Victoria Tower Gardens Holocaust memorial and education centre after a period of consultation.¹²⁵⁶ Despite there being a vast body of academic work, testimony and literature on the Holocaust, there is a growing recognition that many have retained little knowledge about these events.¹²⁵⁷ Museums play a vital role alongside the more direct example of education in schools, with the Imperial War Museum’s permanent Holocaust exhibition being cited as a crucial component to link classroom teaching with observing objects and narratives in an interactive museum space.¹²⁵⁸

Whilst a significant majority of those who express opinions on this subject are in favour of more Holocaust education and promoting its importance, there are some sceptics, highlighted and introduced in a 1997 *AJR Journal* article as consisting of two schools, the “pragmatic” and the “philosophical”.¹²⁵⁹ The pragmatic school were concerned with the psychological impact of teaching the Holocaust to children, particularly those of Jewish origin, whereas the “philosophical” school were sceptical of the power of Holocaust lessons to affect the idea of ‘never again’, remarking that many of the Third Reich perpetrators were highly educated.¹²⁶⁰ Perle

¹²⁵⁴ Sharples and Jensen, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

¹²⁵⁵ David Cameron, ‘Written Statement - Holocaust Commission’.

¹²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁷ Unknown Author, ‘Teaching the Holocaust’, *AJR Journal*, Vol.15, No.1 (January, 2015), p. 11.

¹²⁵⁸ Ben Helfgott, ‘Chairman’s Notes’, *Journal of the ’45 Aid Society* (1995), pp. 1-2.

¹²⁵⁹ Unknown Author, ‘Teaching the Holocaust’, *AJR Information*, Vol.52, No.1 (January, 1997), p. 1.

¹²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Susman also iterated this in her narrative by suggesting that “education, civilisation is no protection for sinking to such a barbarian state, the belief, and action”.¹²⁶¹ This is a reasoning that few survivors endorse, but Albin Ossowski mentions in his narrative that he is sceptical towards education being the answer because of the high attainment levels of the ministers of the Nazi regime.¹²⁶²

Whilst the role of survivors speaking in schools and giving testimony is essential, only a small percentage of the survivor community are active speakers, and have been referred to as professional survivors. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki in their 2013 article have examined the concept of “the professional survivor”, a minority group of survivors who actively speak to a variety of audiences regarding their experiences.¹²⁶³ However, it is important to note that the term ‘professional’, when applied to survivors in this context, does not reflect a paid aspect to the survivor role; instead, it is a voluntary “labour of love”.¹²⁶⁴ The term professional here implies individuals seeing their roles in talking about the Holocaust as a job, and receiving support in how to carry out that role which can be considered training. The notion of a professional survivor has significant implications for survivor identity, as it leads to a regular contemplation of their stances on “big questions” such as “hierarchies of suffering, comparability, the connection between the personal and the political, blame and forgiveness”.¹²⁶⁵

These professional survivors also tend to be the focus of research; ethical considerations for oral history projects naturally prioritise the confident survivor

¹²⁶¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

¹²⁶² October Films, Interview with Albin ‘Alex’ Ossowski (1999), Reel 3.
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80018249> [Accessed 15 May, 2018]

¹²⁶³ Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, ‘Professionalising Survival: The Politics of Public Memory Among Holocaust Survivor-Educators in Montreal’, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, Vol 12, No.2 (July, 2013), p. 210.

¹²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 211.

¹²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 210.

speaker who has already attained composure regarding their experiences and is unlikely to feel discomposure at many lines of questioning due to the wide range of questions they have been asked in the past.¹²⁶⁶ This has implications for this project and its methodology as many ‘professional’ survivors who actively speak and live out their survival in public spaces can be found within survivor associations.¹²⁶⁷

In line with Novick’s discussions of the market demand for testimony and educational talks from survivors,¹²⁶⁸ Sheftel and Zembryzycki have reflected on the broadening role of the survivor and how they are expected to discuss current events and genocides; it is no longer permissible for the professional survivor to solely recount their experiences to an audience.¹²⁶⁹ This also reflects the growing confidence of survivors in this ‘professional’ context as they tailor their responses to the audience and the ‘lessons’ that they feel need to be enforced to differing audiences.¹²⁷⁰ For instance, Elie Wiesel in 1995 at a ceremony at Auschwitz traced a “direct connection between past and present” by “referring to the ‘blood-shed’ that was happening in Bosnia, Rwanda and Chechnya”.¹²⁷¹

Overall, the notion of the “professional survivor” gives us a framework through which to understand survivor confidence when giving testimony and how they have attained composure. As a result, they utilise that composure and use it to connect with others, to multiple audiences and contexts, to “navigate” and engage with a variety of topics, to also draw on their experiences and convictions, but also to emphasise “how their survival has taught them to understand the world around

¹²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 211; See Methodology Chapter of this thesis for consideration of ethics and how interviewees were chosen.

¹²⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁶⁸ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 83.

¹²⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 210.

¹²⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 212.

¹²⁷¹ Donnelly, ‘We Should Do Something for the Fiftieth’, pp. 181-2.

them”.¹²⁷² This is a critical historiographical discussion for this chapter as it considers the expectation that survivors will bring their experiences into a modern context and make comparisons, emphasising Levi’s concern that many thought survivors possessed “prophetic ability”.¹²⁷³ There is an added pressure from this expectation as previously discussed, where survivors may not feel comfortable commenting on other international examples of atrocity of which they have limited knowledge.

By sharing their stories through public speaking and education, survivors can maintain good mental health and wellbeing in old age and demonstrate strength and resilience by honouring their past memories.¹²⁷⁴ Weinstein has argued that “those who participate in Holocaust-related activities such as public speaking, writing books, memoirs, and engaging in educational missions’ benefit from their involvement”.¹²⁷⁵ The main impetus for the determination to leave a record and involvement in education appears to be an active awareness of advancing age and the absence of time – although societal interest in the Holocaust can also be seen as a factor due to Novick’s concept of “market consideration” and demand for Holocaust testimony from survivors.¹²⁷⁶

It can be argued that survivors have evolved to “show a unique drive to overcome that natural resistance to reliving the pain” of their Holocaust memories by giving some sort of order to a painful and chaotic past.¹²⁷⁷ And indeed using current events which students may be familiar with can provide a touchstone or point

¹²⁷² Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 222.

¹²⁷³ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 66.

¹²⁷⁴ Weinstein, ‘Holocaust Testimony’, p. 31.

¹²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁶ Rosenbloom, ‘Bearing Witness by Holocaust Survivors’, p. 328.

Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 83.

¹²⁷⁷ Rosenbloom, ‘Bearing Witness by Holocaust Survivors’, p. 348.

of comparison that can enforce a survivor's message. Director of the Holocaust Educational Trust Karen Pollock emphasised in 2006 that she felt it was "possible to discuss other genocides and racism in the context of the Holocaust", but it was vital to avoid "inappropriate comparisons" that may "diminish the magnitude of the Holocaust".¹²⁷⁸ Margalit Judah echoed this theme and discussed her desire to situate the Holocaust within current events:

This is what I would like, to make it relevant, current, umm and, not to lessen the Holocaust. I mean 'lessens' is a strange word, but they can make parallels, but there's always an element of each in every genocide. Even though they're unique there's certain elements, so umm, that's really what I feel.¹²⁷⁹

Judah's perspective could be seen as controversial to some within the survivor community amidst debates on comparisons to the Holocaust and its uniqueness but reflects Sheftel and Zembrzycki's assessment that survivors feel pressured to make their testimonies "relevant".¹²⁸⁰ However, many survivors would not present this issue in terms of the pressure that is applied externally, but a more internal shift towards using their Holocaust survivor experiences as a platform to promote a more tolerant society, which has remnants of 'never again' in their dialogues.¹²⁸¹ Therefore, the value of education to survivors entwines with this message and the concerns that some survivors have with regards to our modern society and the rise of extreme political views and racial hatred (as this chapter has previously

¹²⁷⁸ Ronald Channing, 'Around and About: Learning the lessons of the Holocaust', *AJR Journal*, Vol.6, No.12 (December, 2006), p. 16.

¹²⁷⁹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 8 April, 2016.

¹²⁸⁰ Sheftel and Zembrzycki, 'Professionalising Survival', p. 210.

¹²⁸¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

explored).¹²⁸² This subtly changes the way that survivors perceive their survival, from a passive victim to an empowered witness seeking to educate.¹²⁸³

Survivors can gain further empowerment and validation through speaking in schools, and this is exemplified in the letters they receive from schoolchildren and teachers following their talks. This emphasises the reaction to their stories and the impact that their narratives have. Survivor Perle Susman stated, “I’ve never had one experience where I would say this has been unpleasant” and emphasised the students’ “hunger for knowledge”, their “heartfelt sympathy” and the engagement received from the classes she spoke to.¹²⁸⁴ She presented these reactions as deeply reassuring to her, that these students were so engaged with her testimony and captivated, uplifting her with a “kind of recognition in my head that we live in a different world now, people want to know”.¹²⁸⁵

And these stories have the power to reach students that teachers deem unreachable. Saul Hoffman recollected being told about a student in Tower Hamlets that was too “troublesome” to attend his talk. He interceded, arguing that his story was for everyone. The fifteen year-old boy was well-behaved during the talk and wrote him a very moving letter afterwards.¹²⁸⁶ Other survivors have also echoed the message that “all children should be let in”, arguing that “those children who the teachers want to exclude are often the most interested”.¹²⁸⁷

Some speakers have taken a pessimistic view on the phenomenon of students writing letters, arguing, “I think the teachers told them what to write” because the

¹²⁸² Armour, ‘Meaning Making in Survivorship’, p. 462.

¹²⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁴ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁶ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016.

¹²⁸⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Margalit Judah, 12 January, 2018.

letters were “all pretty much saying the same thing”.¹²⁸⁸ However, this is a reasonably isolated view, with many survivors feeling content with receiving written feedback and gratitude. This, in turn, fosters their sense of validation: their testimony was listened to, respected and motivated children to write to them. Each letter emphasises how moving the testimony was, and how it reduced many of the children to silence, no external speaker or staff member ever being able to command such attention and respect.¹²⁸⁹

Additionally, messages of tolerance and current events were emphasised, which gave many schoolchildren a chance to reflect on humanity, the news and the way they behave towards others and to challenge their own unconscious biases.¹²⁹⁰ This is an important notion, with the idea that a survivor speaking to schoolchildren about the Holocaust makes them “more responsible, more mature human beings”.¹²⁹¹ This is a key reward that survivors can gain from speaking in schools, that they are somehow playing a role in helping these young people become more aware of the hatred that can surround them and becoming active citizens.¹²⁹²

Despite Jeffrey Tribich’s warning that commemoration and study are different things, many survivors seem to place more value on education rather than memorials in order to benefit knowledge and remembrance surrounding the Holocaust.¹²⁹³ Irrespective of which holds more value to the cause, there has been an increased effort since the early 1990s to educate and commemorate the Holocaust, with survivors at the forefront of consultation, action and implementation. This, in

¹²⁸⁸ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Rachel Lubin, 16 February, 2018.

¹²⁸⁹ Moriarty, ‘Letter to Leon Rosenberg’, Cresswell, ‘Letter to Mr Zylbrszac and Mr Zwirek’ and Johnston, ‘Letter to Alec Ward’.

¹²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹¹ Tribich, ‘The Yad Vashem Summer Institute’, p. 24.

¹²⁹² Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

¹²⁹³ *Ibid.*

turn, contributes to a feeling of validation – they are figureheads who are respected, approached for advice and listened to. This is not what many survivors seek out or aim for, but a secondary phenomenon which reassures them about the ‘future’ of the Holocaust, its memory and lessons. However, as we shall soon explore, the notions of future, lessons and the promise of there never being another Holocaust are problematic.

“Splintering of social cohesion”: Is ‘never again’ a realistic promise?¹²⁹⁴

To reiterate, there is a demonstrative general oversaturation and societal preoccupation with the Holocaust, with historians such as Geoffrey Hartman warning that there is the danger of “fetishizing, or erecting a cult of the dead” as a result.¹²⁹⁵ The prominence of the Holocaust within societal discourse has given birth to the notion of invaluable ‘lessons’, where society seeks to prevent future comparable genocides. This reinforces the mantra of ‘never again’ that has become a cliché in Holocaust discourse.¹²⁹⁶ This becomes suffused with notions of Holocaust survivors and their perceived “prophetic abilities”.¹²⁹⁷ Primo Levi emphasised this and added, “prophets, to our good fortune, we are not, but something can be said”.¹²⁹⁸ This highlights how survivors feel a duty to speak out and express their worries about modern-day society, attempting to highlight the need for ‘lessons’ to a society where things are “not as rosy as I would like it to be”.¹²⁹⁹ There is a general consensus from

¹²⁹⁴ Harriet Sherwood, ‘UK’s ‘social splintering’ risks repeating past, say Holocaust survivors’, *The Guardian* (1 August, 2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/01/holocaust-survivors-uk-social-cohesion-splintering-warning-memorial> [Accessed 3 October, 2017]

¹²⁹⁵ Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, p. 1.

¹²⁹⁶ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 156.

¹²⁹⁷ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 66.

¹²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹⁹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016.

survivors that “It happened before. It may happen again”, arguing that “Our history is there to prove it”.¹³⁰⁰

Tim Cole refers to a “misplaced optimism” that “engaging with the past will make us better citizens” and links this more broadly to the notion of ‘dark tourism’ and a voyeuristic interest in places such as Auschwitz.¹³⁰¹ The general notion of Holocaust ‘lessons’ is somewhat problematic as it can provide “false comfort” where hopes are pinned on a Holocaust myth rather than reality, conveying the confusion “between the myth of the Holocaust and the historical event itself”.¹³⁰² Some survivors do feel a certain optimism that “we live in a much better world today”, and “we have learned”,¹³⁰³ but many feel frightened about international developments and feel that maybe ‘never again’ is not a promise that can be kept easily, if at all. In terms of survivors from the UK and their concerns, they convey anxieties about a “splintering of social cohesion” that they interpret as a prelude to hatred, discrimination and persecution. This has led survivor Joan Salter to declare:

[It is] comforting to assume that civilisation is a one-way street, when in fact experience teaches us that it is but a thin veneer, very easily torn away. Germany yesterday could so easily become Britain tomorrow. In recent times, we have seen the splintering of social cohesion, the growing willingness to express extreme views, the ability of some to act out their intolerance with violent acts, the lack of

¹³⁰⁰ Sharon Tyler, Interview with Ludwig Weller, *Visual History Archive* (30 April, 1996).

¹³⁰¹ Cole, *Selling the Holocaust*, p. 184.

¹³⁰² *Ibid*, p. 185.

¹³⁰³ Herman Hirschberger, Interview with Ernest Levy, *Visual History Archive* (29 December, 1996).

respect for those of different cultures. We live in dangerous times.¹³⁰⁴

Salter's assessment of current events within the UK and internationally as dangerous is palpable, expressing fear at what could happen. This fright is also expressed in many survivor interactions with the media.¹³⁰⁵ Whether this is an example of validation, it is difficult to say – it may be an accidental attainment, not initially sought out but a by-product of the public presence of survivors due to their conscience and fear of Holocaust recurrence. This feeling of uncertainty can provoke discomposure within the interview setting; this can be seen in Perle Susman's interview, where in response to a question about the future, she heavily sighed and said, "I can't envisage what the future holds for any of us. We're not living in a very peaceful time now".¹³⁰⁶ This level of discomposure can be regarded as somewhat understated, but there are further examples of more prominent distress. For instance, when I interviewed Saul Hoffman and asked him whether he had any hopes or fears for the future, he exclaimed at length and rapidly:

It's only 70/80 years since the atrocity happened, but it's happening the same in a different part of the world. I remember when I came over here after the war and I remember politicians all over the world, from all parties, Conservative, Liberal, Labour, they all, I still remember they said when they talked about the Holocaust, we must make sure never never again, it should never never happen again. Unfortunately I see it in front of my eyes, it is happening just

¹³⁰⁴ Sherwood, 'UK's 'social splintering' risks repeating past, say Holocaust survivors'.

¹³⁰⁵ Burgess, 'We said it would never happen again'.

¹³⁰⁶ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Perle Susman, 1 April, 2016.

in different formats, people accusing each other for different reasons. Now it's not the Jews but different races, but basically it's the same thing, innocent people get killed and suffer. Umm, for the future, it's not as rosy as I would like it to be. But you youngsters, you've got a long journey, to make it clear that people should and can live together with different views and respect them, but don't kill them for it.¹³⁰⁷

The way that many survivors grounded their responses to these sorts of questions in recent events and evolving hatred and atrocity is particularly striking. Hoffman's link between past and present is particularly evocative, tracing the initial promises of 'never again' in the immediate postwar period through to the present day.¹³⁰⁸ Intriguingly, fear of recurrence and discussions of "can it happen here?" were beginning to formulate in the late 1940s, with a 1948 *AJR Journal* article claiming that whilst "history never repeats itself in minute detail", there was a high amount of British people who considered themselves "Jew-conscious", provoking worries that pre-conditions of the Holocaust would begin to evolve through the lens of this hatred.¹³⁰⁹ This anxiety is particularly present within the case study of alleged Labour Party anti-Semitism under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. This reached a crucial crux when the interviews for this study were conducted between 2016 and 2018.

The use of the Holocaust as a benchmark or as an analogy stems from its societal prevalence and the preoccupation with lessons needing to be learned. Omer Bartov refers to the Holocaust as a "measuring rod" for all other atrocities and

¹³⁰⁷ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Saul Hoffman, 26 April, 2016.

¹³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁹ G. Warburg, 'Can it happen here?', *AJR Information*, Vol.3, No.1 (January, 1948), p. 3.

reflects upon the “trivializing and relativizing” effect this has had on our perceptions of the Holocaust.¹³¹⁰ This indicates the concerns Director of the Holocaust Educational Trust Karen Pollock expressed in 2006 that using the Holocaust as a benchmark or making ill-thought out comparisons was akin to trivialising and diminishing the importance of such a monumental event.¹³¹¹

Bartov also suggests that the Holocaust has become extensively mobilised to create “an image of victimhood so horrific that all other suffering must be diminished in comparison or inflated to fit its standards”.¹³¹² He overall finds this invocation and perception of the Holocaust “a dangerous prism through which to view the world”, because “victims are produced by enemies”, and polarising people into these two categories “eventually makes for more victims”.¹³¹³ This extensively relates to my broader thesis of survivor associations and the identity of survivors themselves as many remain “trapped within the very conditions of their own victimhood”.¹³¹⁴ Additionally, owing to a misuse of the Holocaust as analogy, we become immersed in a desensitised culture where invocations of the Holocaust “carry less shock value’ or “set an unreasonably high standard of horror”.¹³¹⁵

Overall, the idea of Holocaust lessons becomes problematic due to the lack of resonance of the Holocaust in everyday life – that “lessons for dealing with the sorts of issues that confront us in ordinary life, public or private, are not likely to be found in this most extraordinary of events”.¹³¹⁶ Although the term ‘lessons’ can be viewed as problematic, it can also be seen as a lens through which the Holocaust is

¹³¹⁰ Bartov, ‘Defining Enemies, Making Victims’, p. 809.

¹³¹¹ Channing, ‘Around and About: Learning the lessons of the Holocaust’, p. 16.

¹³¹² Bartov, ‘Defining Enemies, Making Victims’, p. 809.

¹³¹³ *Ibid*, p. 811.

¹³¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 815.

¹³¹⁵ Power, ‘To Suffer by Comparison?’, p. 32.

¹³¹⁶ Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, p. 13.

made accessible to a broader, non-academic audience,¹³¹⁷ invoking Tim Cole's assessment that "representing the complexity of the past to a public audience inevitably opens oneself up to charges of simplification at best".¹³¹⁸ Overall, survivors seem wary of the idea that society has not learnt anything from the Holocaust tragedies and still allow hatred and intolerance to continue. It is this concern that can provoke them into speaking publicly about current day events and their worries. Whilst this is not a "prophetic ability" that Primo Levi argues is expected from survivors, it is an exercise in the survivor's conscience and interpretation of their experiences through a modern lens of atrocity which show an advance or evolution in hatred and violence. It is this fear that can provoke survivors to speak openly and publicly about their concerns, with the validation of their experiences and opinions a secondary phenomenon.

Conclusion

Human beings are products of their experiences. This is explicit with those who are labelled as survivors. It is understandable for them to hope for a better world and to be optimistic that nations will not become bystanders to further hatred. They are often left disappointed and instances of cultural or racial violence depicted in the media can provoke retraumatisation for survivors as their composure is challenged. This composure is attained through the belief that the world is becoming more tolerant, therefore it becomes threatened by modern atrocities and genocide. Consequently, there is inevitable discomposure in many instances, where survivors can develop a sense of disequilibrium in the interview setting in response to the realisation that perhaps it is unrealistic to believe in a world without genocide.

¹³¹⁷ Power, 'To Suffer by Comparison?', p. 44.

¹³¹⁸ Tim Cole, 'Representing the Holocaust in America: Mixed Motives or Abuse?', *The Public Historian*, Vol.24, No.4 (Fall, 2002), pp. 129-30.

Many feel the pressures of duty to speak in schools and reflect publicly on these issues. Not all survivors, however, are active speakers. Survivors often feel that by recording their testimonies and speaking in schools, they signal to future generations to “use their own thoughts for the mankind and goodness of the world” and to “stay away from hate”.¹³¹⁹

It can be observed that survivors are becoming more self-confident and assured in their identity and status as a survivor. This indicates that the attainment of validation and composure about identity stemming from Holocaust experiences has only been a recent phenomenon, whereby survivors navigate their communities in search of this feeling, but can also find this sense of validity outside of the community in media discourse. Irrespective of whether survivors are quoted in the media or not, fears and concerns on similar topics are privately shared in survivor association groups, friendships and also in the oral history interview too. These interactions take place in a more private sphere but nevertheless reflect the same fears and pressures of duty for the future.

The concept of validation, the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis would appear to be less pronounced here. In the instances discussed in this chapter, validation is a secondary reward rather than a primary motivation. Duty and conscience would appear to prompt survivors to speak publicly. The respect paid to survivors in most media discourses contributes to the feeling that they are figures of responsibility who are listened to. This reinforces the validity of their identities and suggests that, through their experiences, they are qualified to express their concerns and that their opinions hold weight. This is a type of validation that occurs outside

¹³¹⁹ Bernice Krantz, Interview with Leon Greenman, *Visual History Archive* (1 December, 1995).

of the private survivor community discourses previously examined. It is a much more understated phenomenon where society and the media perceive survivors as having valid experiences rather than survivors seeking this themselves.

Conclusion – “And Yet....We Must”¹³²⁰

In his foreword for survivor and '45 Aid Society Chairman and President Ben Helfgott's biography, former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks noted how “survivors became my heroes”.¹³²¹ Whilst this thesis has aimed to move past a hagiographical focus on survivors as heroic and otherworldly figures, it has been a privilege and an inspiration to work alongside these individuals and their organisations. As Ben Helfgott himself has highlighted, “we are a living memorial of what can happen to a people when civilisation breaks down for we are the youngest survivors of the Holocaust and thus the end of a line”.¹³²² He emphasised the elevation of survivors from “the abyss of destruction to the pinnacle of reconstruction and respectability”.¹³²³ This sentiment traces the resilience of survivors from horrifying beginnings to a process of recovery and settling down in Britain, showing a marked strength in doing so. And there is a sense of survivors desiring to live their lives for those who died, embodied in Ben Helfgott's statement that as an Olympic weightlifting athlete, who captained the team in the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympics, he felt “as if I was representing all the Holocaust victims whose talents had not been allowed to come to fruition”.¹³²⁴ This illustrates the historical weight that can rest on the shoulders of these individuals.

As previously explored, Kahana, Harel and Kahana have presented five key examples of the strength and resilience of Holocaust survivors: firstly, creating a nurturing family life, secondly professional success, thirdly, setting up survivor

¹³²⁰ Michael Etkind, ‘And Yet....We Must’, *Journal of the '45 Aid Society* (2015), p. 40.

¹³²¹ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. xiii.

¹³²² *Ibid*, p. 190.

¹³²³ *Ibid*.

¹³²⁴ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 134.

associations and honouring their past memories, fourthly humanitarian and religious pursuits, and finally ensuring the Jewish community survived.¹³²⁵

Indeed, “despite evidence indicating their specific vulnerability”, survivors have revealed their strength, with psychological studies confirming their resilience in cognitive and daily functioning, physical health and managing stress.¹³²⁶ This ascribes to the “inoculation perspective”, where survivors feel their trauma has made them stronger to other psychological complications and a sense of triumph at their survival into old age, contributing to the maintenance of Jewish culture, a culture that Nazi policy attempted to eradicate.¹³²⁷ This influence has been present throughout this thesis, where survivors compose accounts of their contemporary or current lives which in itself facilitates composure. They emphasise the families they had created and how the Jewish community continues to flourish. This can be as outright as Monty Graham’s frequent evocation that through his children and grandchildren, he was “getting back at Hitler” (as seen in Chapter Five).¹³²⁸ Or there can be more subtle instances of this phenomenon, where survivors reflect on their children and grandchildren as a source of pride, using the lens of religion to indicate their gratitude that their children decided to be observant and raise their children to mark Jewish holidays.¹³²⁹

Lord Sacks’ foreword to Ben Helfgott’s biography highlights the centrality of how individual survivors could interpret their experiences, with some choosing silence for the rest of their lives and others choosing to share their testimonies and experiences after they had built a life for themselves and attained composure.¹³³⁰

¹³²⁵ Kahana, Harel and Kahana, *Holocaust Survivors and Immigrants*, p. 9.

¹³²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁸ '45 Aid Society, *Memory Quilt*, p. 49.

¹³²⁹ Tyler, Interview with Henia Goldman.

¹³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

This sentiment is one that underpins this thesis – the experience of individuals is resistant to strict categorisation, and many survivors adopt different coping strategies at different stages of their lives. This thesis has shown that, whilst there are particular views and reactions that are shared amongst the survivor community, individuals can vary in their interpretation of their memories, current events and the raising of their children. Themes of subjectivity, individual reaction and how survivors cope with their memories, and how this translates into a group setting, have been a vital aim of this thesis. The importance of balancing the experiences of the individual with the organisations that they have formed cannot be underestimated. Whilst to a certain extent, this thesis has examined institutions, it has also focused on the individuals that make up the membership of these groups and what they gain from these ties with their fellow survivors such as an unspoken comfort of shared experiences and not having to explain their trauma.

This thesis has drawn primarily on sources produced by survivors including oral histories, memoirs, poetry, material culture and journal articles in order to illustrate a detailed picture of survivor associations in postwar Britain and the ways in which they instil a sense of belonging and foster validation. These sources also permit an understanding of the challenges survivors face. The interview setting allows space for the survivor to process their histories in a postwar setting and reflect on how their lives have changed. The subjectivity of oral history, artwork, poetry and memoir enriches this study with the emotions and perspectives of how survivors coped with their memories and places where they draw their strength, such as each other, their children, grandchildren and the small communities found in survivor associations.

It is not easy for the historian to approach such narratives, as whilst studies such as these focus on the postwar recovery of survivors upon arriving in England,

it does not disregard the traumatic history suffusing each narrative. Whether a survivor chooses to recount their entire Holocaust experiences and trauma in interviews such as my own or to focus only on the postwar period is their decision.

However, even if they choose not to recount these memories, recollections of their postwar lives are undoubtedly impregnated with their past trauma. I found in many interviews I conducted, survivors were happy to begin with the process of coming to the UK in 1945, but their narratives soon became embedded with a reflection on life without their families who perished. However, some found composure in recounting their pre-war Holocaust lives before moving through the trauma in detail and then coming to focus on the postwar period. This conveys how all reactions are valid, and there is not one accepted way for a survivor to attain composure in the interview setting.

Furthermore, the intersubjective relationship I was able to foster with these individuals in the interview setting has been vital to this study. Beginning as an outsider to these communities, through the use of gatekeepers and creating rapport in the interview setting, I came to be considered an insider. This was exemplified by my invitation to the '45 Aid Society's annual reunion in May 2019, where it was suggested in speeches that all those invited as friends of the Society were 'part of the family' and were welcomed as such.

Chapter Two of this thesis suggested that "Life did not end in 1945, it began". This assessment by one of my interviewees was striking.¹³³¹ By marking coming to the UK as starting a new life, survivors could separate their lives into distinct phases, enabling them to compartmentalise and, to a certain extent, leave

¹³³¹ Ellis Spicer, Interview with Gideon Jacoby, 24 January, 2018.

their trauma behind. The statement that their lives started in 1945 firmly places this thesis within a postwar context, a feature of the lives of Holocaust survivors often missing from archived oral history interviews and in Holocaust Studies more broadly. This can lead to the postwar period being treated as an afterthought or a fantasy ‘happily ever after’ narrative that obscures the nuances of the lives of survivors since the Holocaust, arguably an event which shapes their lives and identities.¹³³² Regina Steinitz, a young survivor from Berlin, traced this in her narrative:

I could end my story of survival at this point. We had arrived. Germany and the years of persecution lay behind us. A new, entirely different life stood before us, and we were young and healthy enough to devote ourselves to it entirely. But everything that has since happened has had to do with our experiences during the persecution.¹³³³

The above statement emphasises Steinitz’s willingness and fervour to discuss her post-Holocaust life in her memoir, conveying how her past trauma continued to resonate but there was an overall desire to “devote” herself to building a new life.¹³³⁴ These statements highlight the importance for survivors to view their lives in new countries as a new or fresh start, but recognise that the past would never truly disappear. This sentiment is also present in Lord Sacks’ assessment of survivor reactions to their memories, of silence or sharing stories and how this can vary over a survivor’s life course.¹³³⁵ Whilst coming to countries such as the UK was the start

¹³³² See Introduction for more discussions of the postwar period and its importance for this study.

¹³³³ Steinitz and Scheer, *A Childhood and Youth Destroyed*, p. 98.

¹³³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³³⁵ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. xiii.

of a new life, the remnants of the old were still present. We can see this echo across this thesis, where problems of definitions of survivors, not wanting to *replace* their perished families with any surrogates in survivor associations, the impact of such a history on their children and the retraumatisation that can stem from current events become prevalent issues for these survivor communities.

The current political climate within the UK has been a prominent influence on the interviews conducted for this thesis. As we have seen, interviewees reflected on their assumptions of my political views and asked me directly for my opinions on these issues. The problem of alleged anti-Semitism within politics and a perceived rise of such behaviour in the general population has further encouraged a Holocaust prevalence in politics and culture as a way of countering expressions of anti-Semitic, anti-Israel views and Holocaust denial. Debates within Parliament have emphasised the problem of anti-Semitism from a minority of the British population and condemned attacks on events such as Holocaust Memorial Day, subject to being marked by a Parliamentary debate each year.¹³³⁶

The thesis has examined the broader context of how survivors engage with topics such as these in media discourses, and also investigated how survivors interpret atrocities, violence and genocide in the twenty-first century and the potential this has to impact the composure they have attained about their past trauma. Through my research, I have found that these events do have the potential to seriously affect survivors, if not through an overt process such as retraumatisation, through the production of anxiety about the potential for an event like the Holocaust to recur. '45 Aid Society poet Michael Etkind has focused on this in some of his

¹³³⁶ House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (18 January, 2018, Vol.634, col. 1130).

work, stating “the seeds are there, the climate and the fertile soil”.¹³³⁷ Elsewhere, he highlights, “Never again, so long as we remember”, in reference to not just society at large but to individual survivors who feel the duty to share their experiences and memories in order to ensure that the Holocaust does not recur.¹³³⁸

Duty is a phenomenon that survivors frequently feel the pressure of. This can become enmeshed in reasons *why* survivors survived, to bear witness and testify to the horrors of the Holocaust.¹³³⁹ However, the duty of survivors to speak comes with its own set of challenges, which Elie Wiesel reflects on as the lack of a framework, tools or procedures, leading to the questions of:

Should one say it all or hold it all back? Should one shout or whisper? Place the emphasis on those who were gone or on their heirs? How does one describe the indescribable? How does one use restraint in recreating the fall of mankind and the eclipse of the gods? And then, how can one be sure that the words, once uttered, will not betray, distort the message they bear?¹³⁴⁰

Wiesel’s statement presents the challenges to survivors as they first start to speak, but as this thesis has shown, these hesitations and questions are not as prominent for many survivors in the present day. Whilst recalling memories of the Holocaust is an undoubtedly pain-ridden experience, survivors feel that there is “no alternative”.¹³⁴¹ This can also be reflected in tandem with the lives of survivors reaching “their

¹³³⁷ Michael Etkind, ‘Will History Repeat Itself?’ *Journal of the ‘45 Aid Society* (1985), p. 7.

¹³³⁸ Michael Etkind, ‘Never Again’, *Journal of the ‘45 Aid Society* (1994), p. 19.

¹³³⁹ Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 63.

¹³⁴⁰ Wiesel, *A Jew Today*, p. 18.

¹³⁴¹ Freedland, *Ben Helfgott*, p. 192.

natural conclusion”, leading to an urge to give testimony to ensure that the Holocaust does not repeat.¹³⁴²

The self-confidence of survivors in their capacity to testify regarding their experiences and report on current events with perceived “prophetic ability” has been noted and examined within this thesis and how it contributes to the phenomenon of validation. Whilst speaking in public and reflecting in the media about present-day events, survivors do not outwardly gain or seek validation of their memories. Rather, the confidence to participate in public Holocaust life in education and the media is reflective of these survivors having attained validation and feeling secure in their survivor status. This can be fuelled by a number of factors such as general societal interest in the Holocaust, respect towards survivors and their experiences and the feeling of belonging within these survivor groups.

Identity is a key concept that influences the sense of belonging within these groups, and what is important to note is how accepted definitions of what a survivor is plays a role in not just survivor identity but their confidence and composure. There are many cases reflected upon in this thesis where survivors want to be considered as *more* than a survivor, as multi-dimensional individuals with myriad aspects that make up their life course, rather than being exclusively defined by one, albeit sizeable, traumatic life event. Maurice Vegh highlighted the importance of this in a visit to his hometown in the Carpathians, wanting to emphasise to his wife that “I came from somewhere, I was somebody before I was a Holocaust survivor”.¹³⁴³ This shows a desire for survivors to be viewed as individuals rather than a sole identity based on traumatic experiences and the impact of such a history. Whilst the Holocaust undoubtedly shapes the lives of these survivors, they had other identities

¹³⁴² van der Linden-Wolanski and Bagnall, *Destined to Live*, p. 181.

¹³⁴³ Gilbert, *The Boys*, p. 458.

before that event and developed other aspects afterwards as spouse, parent, friend and worker. The desire to be seen as “not just a Holocaust survivor” initiates a desire for survivors to seek friendships outside of survivor groups. By having social circles and employment spheres separate to the Holocaust, these survivors could attach further meaning to their lives outside of their trauma. The issue of identity is also raised within the interruption of identity within child survivors, which leaves them craving community and acceptance in order to bridge a fundamental gap in their identity formation process that was interrupted by trauma.

Identity is also a central factor in the eyes of the second generation for the same reason; they would prefer to be seen as ‘whole’ individuals rather than the children of Holocaust survivors impacted by a past that they did not themselves experience.¹³⁴⁴ It is “not always the foreground problem in my mind, or the main parameter of my ‘identity’”, noted Eva Hoffman.¹³⁴⁵ She desired to be a “free agent” rather than the child of Holocaust survivors.¹³⁴⁶ Indeed, this can be reflected in the second generation more broadly as some can embrace their heritage and actively contribute to the legacy of their parents’ experiences, others feel the need to distance themselves from both Judaism and the Holocaust in order to be seen as more than the son or daughter of a survivor. This factor further influences the dynamics within survivors’ biological families and the difference in bonds between this type of family and the type of extended or surrogate family that can be fostered in survivor associations.

Tsuzamen is a key concept where shared experience creates close and intense bonds. This is a fundamental principle amongst Holocaust survivors due to

¹³⁴⁴ See Chapter Five of this thesis for further discussion of the second generation.

¹³⁴⁵ Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, p. 104.

¹³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 128.

the relationship encouraged by shared trauma. There was a feeling that survivors could only be at ease with other survivors due to the Holocaust being so traumatic that it remained almost impossible for others to empathise with their experiences.¹³⁴⁷ Writing for the Child Survivors' Association book *We Remember*, Martin Stern asserts, "I am proud of and grateful for the friendship of other holocaust [sic] survivors. It often seems to me that for us, other people can be divided into those to whom we can't explain, and those to whom there is no need to explain".¹³⁴⁸ It is this unspoken quality which is vital in survivor groups, with a further dimension that it was not necessary to continually share the details of their stories in group settings. For these groups, being together was enough, and there was not a need to share their experiences and relive traumas but to simply be around those who had an awareness of the degree of horror experienced as young people.

The idea of survivors bonding over their experiences does not consider temporal changes amongst these survivor associations. This research has examined a broad chronology in order to contextualise the origins of these associations and trace themes throughout the twentieth century, and examining the resonance and impact into the twenty-first century. The idea of tsuzamen, where intense and close relationships are formed by shared experiences, can be consistently applied, with the qualifier that a certain intensity present in the immediate postwar in survivor relationships does not endure. This can be attributed to survivors attaining composure, or influenced by the birth of survivors' children and the creation of biological families.

Furthermore, some issues, as discussed in this thesis, have demonstrated a later development in the chronology of this research. For instance, the issue of

¹³⁴⁷ Klein, *Sentenced to Live*, p. 141.

¹³⁴⁸ Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain - AJR, *We Remember*, p. 230.

survivor definition and hierarchy is a concern that is becoming more prevalently discussed. This is not to say that this problem had not existed in previous decades; many child survivors felt that they were excluded, but it is within the past two decades or so that these individuals have presented these tensions in interview settings. The formation of the Child Survivors' Association as a result of these concerns about hierarchy is illustrative of the response to an older problem. Naturally, this thesis is weighted towards the opinions of child survivors, with all of the interviewees apart from two being under the age of sixteen in 1945. This is to be expected from a study taking place in 2019, as it is mostly only those who were children in 1945 that are still alive.

The endurance of these groups cannot be overstated, the eldest of which is approaching the eightieth anniversary of its creation. The support they have provided for these individuals has led to fairly complete and content lives for survivors, and the opportunity to spend time with experiential kin, those who are part of their tsuzamen family, bound together by their experiences. The importance of belonging to a group and feeling a valid member of that cohort is paramount; what matters less is if these communities are based on familial, friendly relations or a middle ground between the two.

What is important is survivors feel they belong, have the right to belong and are accepted; this is crucial for their self-concept and validation. Whilst this is not always the case and hierarchies can form in response to disagreements over defining a survivor, there is space for people to form different, smaller groups and share opinions on these issues, which they perceive as negative and exclusionary. Validation of a basic survivor identity extensively depends on definitions and who fits, and this naturally affects their group relationships. Belonging is vital for survivors as people who have suffered such grief, and they crave close relationships

and strong friendships more than a surrogate family. The individual nature of these survivors and their perceptions of their relationships means there has been a variety of assessments as to whether these bonds are friendly, familial or both. What is needed is a sensitivity to how individuals can change their opinion over a specific chronology and the shades of grey that can be present within the definitions of 'family' and 'friends' and how there can be a significant overlap with multiple gradations.

Validation also manifests itself in the second generation, their very existence reassuring survivors that they will leave a legacy. This is a different type of validation to being seen as a survivor and conforming to a definition but indicates the validity of their very survival. By surviving, they could contribute to the recovery and reinvigoration of the Jewish community and provide meaning making to their survival. This gives survivors a sense of composure and an explanation for why they survived, challenging the survivor guilt that often formed in the immediate postwar. Another example of validation is not so much a contributor to the attainment of validation but rather a product of individuals feeling secure in their identities and status as a survivor. By speaking out in public, they show themselves to be confident in their identities and committed to preventing a recurrence, where current events fuel fears that the Holocaust could happen again.

While outside the parameters of this thesis, a wider project examining survivor associations in Israel and America would provide an important comparative history and further explore the issue of validation. This would involve differing cultures or 'ecologies' as Hannah Pollin-Galay deems them and certainly poses a linguistic challenge as the predominant language spoken in Israel is Hebrew, with

documents also being entirely in that language.¹³⁴⁹ Further comparison with other Holocaust victim groups could provide further conclusions as to whether the relationship between ‘Jewishness’ and victimhood unites the Holocaust survivor groups discussed in this thesis, or whether similar bonds are seen in victim groups that have less in common such as a disease, an ideology or a sexual orientation.

Potential further study on topics such as these becomes complicated, as survivors are predominantly in their nineties and will not be available for interviews owing to their lives coming to a natural close. Soon, the only opportunity to interview these individuals and investigate their communities will be through archived interviews, of which there are advantages and disadvantages. A key disadvantage is that we will lose the ability to ask detailed follow-up questions or to seek clarification. A further means of comparison in response to this dearth could be expanding the scope of comparison to include survivors of other atrocities such as Rwanda, Cambodia and Sudan, to glimpse whether they have formed communities such as those found in the Jewish Holocaust survivor communities.

To close, Richard Grunberger in his poem ‘Deluge’ for *AJR Information* in 1990, noted how survivors drift “on Shoah’s ark” which they “boarded one by one”.¹³⁵⁰ He suggests that there is a darkness that “will not lift” because “the rain has doused the sun”.¹³⁵¹ Whilst some survivors do feel this way, there is a multitude of ways for survivors to respond to their experiences, and space for multiple reactions to be present within the same individual. This also applies to survivor communities, where there are different approaches and opinions to how effective these groups are and what group best suits the needs of the individual. This thesis has shown, in sum,

¹³⁴⁹ Pollin-Galay, *Ecologies of Witnessing*, p. 13.

¹³⁵⁰ Richard Grunberger, ‘Deluge’, *AJR Information*, Vol.45, No.5 (May, 1990), p. 13.

¹³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

that survivor communities have a lot to offer the individuals who make up their membership, but there are tensions and further contexts which need to be observed. These groups illustrate the importance of belonging and validation, they are experiential kin and many of them feel close ties as a result of their experiences. This validation manifests in a myriad of ways but becomes most important in the fundamental validation of their identities as survivors. Therefore, a sense of belonging is paramount within these groups, and discomposure occurs if individuals feel excluded. Ultimately, this study has served as a reminder that communities of shared experience are not always harmonious spaces and are subject to tensions and issues of inclusion or exclusion in a way that mimics many human relationships in group dynamics.

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