Exploring the psychological effects of the Holocaust on the second generation: a phenomenological inquiry with children of Holocaust survivors and children of parents who served the Third Reich.

Suzanne Brita Schecker
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE HOLOCAUST ON THE SECOND GENERATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY WITH CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND CHILDREN OF PARENTS WHO SERVED THE THIRD REICH

A Dissertation Presented

by

SUZANNE BRITA SHECKER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1996

School of Education
EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE HOLOCAUST ON THE SECOND GENERATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY WITH CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND CHILDREN OF PARENTS WHO SERVED THE THIRD REICH

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SUZANNE BRITA SCHECKER

Approved as to style and content by:

John W. Wideman, Chair

Theodore Slovin, Member

Marion Rhodes, Member

Bailey W. Jackson, Dean
School of Education
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I come to the end of what has been a long, difficult, sometimes exhilarating, and personally transformative process, I wish to thank the many people who have been there for me along the way.

First, I would like to thank my wonderful committee. Jack Wideman, my committee chair, with whom I've enjoyed many creative and inspiring conversations at the Newman Center, has been there for me throughout my studies at the University. He listens better than anybody else I know and has encouraged and supported me to write from my heart and stay close to what is important to me. Ted Slovin and Marion Rhodes have nurtured and supported my ideas and have provided me with valuable insights.

My deepest appreciation to the participants in this study for their courage and willingness to share their stories in such an honest and heart-felt way. I am honored and grateful to have been allowed this glimpse into their lives.

My thanks to my family and friends for their love and encouragement. Thank you, Karin, for always being willing to let me read a chapter to you, day or night, and my deepest thanks to my relatives in Germany; Traudel and Fritz, for showing me the cultural attractions of my birthplace, and Helma and Hans for embracing me as part of the family. Special thanks to my cousin Udo for his humor, his interest in my work, and for taking the time to help
fill in some of the missing pieces of my childhood. Thank you, Susan, Nancy, Alita, Anna, Roberta, and Molly, for your help and support throughout this process. Our growing friendships are very important to me.

Last, but certainly not least, my deepest gratitude to the members of One by One, Rosalie, Chooch, Karen, Alan, Joy, Lois, Anna, Natalie, Otto, Gertrude, Martina, and Helga, whose love and acceptance have given me the courage to bear witness to a painful heritage. Thanks also to Uta, all the new members of One by One, and the great friends we made at the Peace Convocation at Auschwitz, with whom I look forward to sharing this on-going sacred adventure of healing and reconciliation.
ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE HOLOCAUST ON THE SECOND GENERATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY WITH CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND CHILDREN OF PARENTS WHO SERVED THE THIRD REICH

MAY 1996

SUZANNE BRITA SCHECKER, A.A., SCHOOL FOR LIFE LONG LEARNING, UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

B.G.S., SCHOOL FOR LIFE LONG LEARNING, UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

M.Ed., UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

C.A.G.S., UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Jack Wideman

This dissertation presents the results of a study designed to explore the personal experience of being children of Holocaust survivors or children of parents who served the Third Reich. The clinical literature reveals some of the psychological problems reported by children of Holocaust survivors, but there is no information about the difficulties experienced by the children of perpetrators or by-standers of the Third Reich. Little is known about the strengths and resources used by this second generation to manage and make meaning out of this painful and difficult legacy.

This study included a review of the literature on the historical, sociological, and psychological context of Nazi atrocities as well as a glimpse into current thinking in Holocaust studies. Qualitative research was conducted with
eight participants, four children of Holocaust survivors, and four children of parents who served the Third Reich. Data from in-depth interviews were grouped into four themes that were common to all the participants; when and how the participants learned about the Holocaust, the effect of this legacy on their personal development during childhood, the impact of the legacy on the participants' chosen professions or work in the world, and the participants' current values and thoughts on spiritual and social issues.

Thematic analysis of each category further defined the experience of the participants and offered a data base for emerging implications. The implications include: the need for further study of the effects of war and genocide on the second generation, the need for greater education, and the inclusion of the second generation in treatment of psychological trauma, the need to provide opportunities for the descendants of both sides to speak and have their stories heard in a safe and non-judgmental environment, and the greater concern about the long-term psychological damage of wars, genocide, and group violence on future generations.
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Parents' Experience During the War
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Helga

Parents' Experience During the War
When and How Helga Learned About the Holocaust
Personal Development During Childhood
Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession
Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

5. THEMES WITHIN THEMES

Introduction
Profile Category #1: When and How the Participants Learned About the Holocaust
Themes

My parents told Holocaust stories as long as I can remember
I found out in school or from watching a TV movie
The Holocaust is a taboo subject/nobody ever talked about it
There were family secrets/I always sensed something was wrong

Profile Category #2: The Effect of This Legacy on the Personal Development of the Participants During Childhood
Themes

Feeling different/isolated
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Evil in the human psyche comes from a failure to bring together, to reconcile, the pieces of our experience. When we embrace all that we are, even the evil, the evil in us is transformed. When the diverse living energies of the human system are harmonized, the present bloody face of the world will be transformed into an image of the face of God. (Andrew Bard Schmookler, in Szeig and Abrams, 1991, p. 238)

The denial of experience, the projection of unmanageable feelings, and the refusal to accept things the way they are is at the core of most of the problems in the world today. Used by children as a primary line of ego defense, and by adults as the first step in the grieving process, denial also underlies all of our addictions and prevents us from being genuinely present in our lives. We live in difficult times and are confronted with the dark side of human nature on a daily basis. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by T.V. images of the shelling of civilian homes in Bosnia and Chechnya that accompanies our evening meals. It is also no wonder that we become numb in the face of photographs of starving African children, their bellies extended, their faces covered with flies, or that, horrified by reports of "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia and genocide in Rwanda, we despair that the lessons of history seem never to be learned.
Nevertheless, it is essential that we find the moral and spiritual strength to challenge the feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness these images engender. Joanna Macy (1991) states:

We have to learn to look at things the way they are, painful and overwhelming as that may be, for no healing can begin until we are fully present to our world, until we learn to sustain the gaze. (p. 4)

The work of therapy, in all its forms, is to help the client become whole, to own his or her feelings, thoughts, and sensations, and to reclaim the hidden power invested in warding off the negative aspects of the self that Carl Jung refers to as the shadow. Jung (1973) states:

Everybody carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. At all counts it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions. (p. 123)

In addition to the individual shadow created by our disowned feelings of rage, fear, guilt, and shame, we each have a psychological heritage, a shadow legacy which is passed on to us from our parents. This inheritance includes the taboos, insecurities, habits, values, prejudices, and dysfunctional behavior patterns of generations. It also includes the unfinished business, the unmet dreams, and the problems our parents were unable to solve in their own lives.
Background of the Problem

The psychological trauma of the Nazi Holocaust, one of the darkest and most evil chapters in human history, will reverberate in the lives of those who were touched by it for many generations. The children of parents who survived the Nazi death camps grew up with the burden of their parents traumatic past. They felt different from other children whose parents didn't wake up screaming in the night with recurring nightmares and they felt guilty and ashamed for wishing there was not so much darkness and suffering in their homes. Some survivors kept silent about their past, leaving huge, gaping holes for their children where family memories and stories would normally be. Other children of survivors grew up with parents who, needing to relieve the terror by speaking, told their stories incessantly, over and over again, unaware of the effect it had on the children. Helen Epstein (1979) states:

In school, when I had finished a test before time was up or was daydreaming on my way home, the safe world fell away and I saw things I knew no little girl should see. Blood and shattered glass. Piles of skeletons and blackened barbed wire with bits of flesh stuck to it the way flies stick to walls after they are swatted dead. Hills of suitcases, mountains of children's shoes. Whips, pistols, boots, knives, and needles. At night when my parents went out and my younger brother and I sat watching television, our room, our very lives seemed unsafe and unguarded. Burglars and murderers might enter our apartment at any time and catch us unprepared. (p. 9)

There have been many studies of the psychological effects of the Holocaust on children of survivors. In
their book, *Living After The Holocaust*, Steinitz and Szonyi (1975) review the early research conducted with children of Holocaust survivors. Trossman, in Steinitz and Szonyi (1975), suggests that survivor parents are sometimes excessively over-protective and in response the children either become phobic or they rebel. He also questions whether the telling of Holocaust memories is related to the depressive symptomatology found in children of survivors.

All of the survivors' children studied by Sigal and Rakoff in a pilot study cited in Steinitz and Szonyi (1975) shared symptoms of severe depression with some attempted suicide, school problems, and excessive quarreling among siblings.

The results of a study of guilt, hostility, and Jewish identification by Rustin and cited in Steinitz and Szonyi (1975), indicated that adolescent children of survivors scored somewhat higher on guilt, did not have greater difficulty expressing hostility than others, and had a much stronger Jewish identification than the control group.

Family life for children of survivors is dramatic and intense and Lucy Steinitz (1975) states they often struggle with issues of personal autonomy and independence. She describes her attempt at running away from the family legacy before realizing that her own identity as the child of survivors is irrevocably rooted in the long-term effects the Holocaust had on her parents' lives. Steinitz (1975) states:

> By focusing only on negative psychological effects, however, one overlooks the very essence
to which the survivor's continued existence attests - that he or she literally survived. From an abyss more horrible than any of us can imagine, the vast majority of survivors emerged as sincere, compassionate, and normally functioning individuals. (p. 3)

Steinitz (1975) continues:

We, the children of survivors, represent a reversal of the daily death and destruction our parents experienced for years. One effect is our heightened sensitivity to suffering. Many children of survivors draw from this the motivation to enter one of the helping professions, such as social work, medicine, or teaching. Thus, our parents' confrontation with death becomes our present impetus for improving life. (p. 3)

Whereas the early research focused on the pathological effects of the Holocaust on the second generation, more recent work has begun to look at the coping strategies used by children of survivors who had to grow up in the shadow of their parents' trauma. Helen Epstein (1979) was among the first writers to publish a book of conversations with sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors. She interviewed hundreds of people in the United States and Europe who were just beginning to explore the effect of their parents' painful past on their own lives. Herself the child of survivors, Ms. Epstein observed the formation of a community among the second generation as they began to gather in small support groups on campuses and in community centers throughout the country.

The descendants of the Third Reich, whose parents were perpetrators or bystanders in the face of Nazi atrocities, struggle with an inheritance of guilt and shame. They grew
up with fear and suspicion of what their fathers did during the War and for the most part their questions were met with deadly silence. The task of individuation, creating an identity and finding a place for oneself in the world is formidable under the best of circumstances. When children are raised by parents whose energy is consumed in an intensive defense against guilt, shame, and anxiety, they are deprived of a sense of safety and belonging in the world. When the inherent need of children to love and believe in the "goodness" of the parents they are dependent upon for nurturing and comfort is met with outside accounts of their evil deeds, these children find themselves in the midst of a profound identity crisis. Sichrovsky (1988) states that "not only are the children faced with the inability to right the wrongs of their parents, but they also lack the essential positive identification with their parents" (p. 13).

In a discussion of how "mass denial" prevented the German people from grieving the loss of the victims of the War, Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich (1975) stated:

Where there is guilt, we expect remorse and the need to make amends. Where loss has been suffered, mourning follows, and where an ideal has been tarnished, where face has been lost, the natural consequence is shame. (p. 25)

Due to widespread denial and the inability to deal with the consequences of the War, many German people have failed to integrate the psychological trauma they experienced and the necessary healing process has never
begun. In their description of this denial as originally adaptive and necessary, the Mitscherlich's (1975) write:

Germany's conquerors had experienced a reinforcement of their ego-ideal, while the Germans themselves had experienced a crushing humiliation. The victors could acknowledge reality without feelings of devaluation and could mourn for the victims of the war; the Germans on the other hand, had received a blow to the very core of their self esteem, and the most urgent task for their psychic apparatus was to ward off the experience of a melancholy impoverishment of the self. Thus the moral duty to share in the mourning for the victims of their ideological aims - which for the rest of the world was self evident - could at that time, be only of superficial psychic importance for most Germans.

(p. 24)

Fifty years have passed; the psychological emergency no longer exists; but few Germans have been able to look their history squarely in the face and own the unspeakable horror that was unleashed in their country not so long ago. The need to mourn the loss of millions of lives, to bear witness to the truth of what their parents did during the War, and to claim moral responsibility for a legacy of profound injustice has fallen to the next generation.

In contrast to the numerous studies of the psychological effects of the Holocaust on children of survivors, there has been very little inquiry into the effects of the Holocaust on the children of the Third Reich. Peter Sichrovsky (1988) writes that he met a young Munich physician who undertook a study of the psychological and psychiatric literature on this subject and she quickly gave up the project because there were no more than 20 papers written on the subject. Sichrovsky (1988) writes:
The psychologists who proliferated during the 1960's and 1970's valiantly labored to make the Germans happy and serene, and to help them forget their own history. From collective barbarism to collective amnesia. (p. 12)

The most valuable information we have about the effect of the Holocaust on the children of the Third Reich comes from interviews published by Posner (1991), Sichrovsky (1988), and Bar-On (1989). After conducting many interviews with the children of high-ranking Nazis, Dan Bar-On, an Israeli psychologist, continues to facilitate an on-going support group between children of Nazis and children of Holocaust survivors which he organized. Dan Bar-On describes some of the difficulties experienced by his interviewees:

The emotional isolation within the family and society, the victimization to which they were sometimes exposed, their own fear of some inherent "bad seed" of evil or abnormality, their conflicting feelings toward their fathers - all of these, like a heavy weight, held them in the past and interfered with their attempts to disentangle themselves and move forward into the future. There is a "working through" process that involves a gradual movement away from the euphemisms and distortions of the parents, which project a false reality, and toward an acknowledgment of what happened and what meaning those events have, especially for those who suffered. (p. 331)

**Statement of the Problem**

The children of Holocaust survivors and the children of the Third Reich have inherited a painful and difficult legacy from their parents. There has been considerable research of the effects of the Holocaust on the children of survivors. However, this has focused primarily on the
pathological sequela and, until recently, the strengths and coping strategies employed by the second generation have been largely overlooked. There has been little in the way of clinical research on how the children of the Third Reich were affected by their parents' role during the war. We have very little phenomenological information about the experience of either group of descendants who were born at the end of the War.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore what it was like to grow up with parents who are Holocaust survivors or parents who were perpetrators or by-standers during the Third Reich. As a phenomenological inquiry, the focus will be on the actual experience of the participants and the different ways they learned to cope and make meaning of the legacy handed down to them by their parents. While listening to their stories, I will be guided by the following questions:

1. When and in what way did the children learn of their parents' experiences during the War?

2. What effect did this information have on the children's developmental process, their sense of safety in the world, their ability to trust, to build self-esteem, to learn to socialize and interact with others? How did they manage adolescence and come to build a positive identity for themselves in the world?
3. How has this history affected their sense of social justice and their professional lives?

4. How has this heritage affected their ability to experience intimacy and connect deeply with other people?

5. How has this legacy affected them as parents? How much of the psychological trauma has been integrated and what will get passed on to yet another generation?

6. How does healing occur? How do descendants of such a terrifying history find the strength and courage to bear witness to their parents' suffering and come to live whole in their own lives?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it will add to the small but growing body of phenomenological literature on the psychological effects of the Holocaust on the second generation of both children of Holocaust survivors and children of the Third Reich. Although there has been widespread interest in traumatization since the return of Vietnam veterans and the introduction of the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the late 1970s, little attention has been paid to the long-term damage of war, genocide, torture, degradation, rape, and inhumanity that is passed on to future generations. Too often, the wounds of such horrible events remain unintegrated and unhealed and fester from generation to generation,
resulting in the bloody conflicts seen all over the world.

Judith Herman (1992) states:

The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud; this is the meaning of the word unspeakable: Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. Equally as powerful as the desire to deny atrocities is the conviction that denial doesn't work. Folk wisdom is filled with ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves until their stories are told. Murder will out. Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. (p. 1).

In addition to providing valuable information about the personal history of the participants and the psychological effects of the Holocaust on their lives, this study is significant in that it will provide a model for understanding the inter-generational transmission of hatred, violence, and prejudice for others who have similar inherited conflicts.

By striving to create a safe space within which the stories can be held and witnessed, the participants' experience of telling the story will be as important as the story itself. Jean Shinoda Bolen (1994) states:

It is no small matter to be a witness to another person's life story. By listening with compassion, we validate each others' lives, make suffering meaningful, and help the process of forgiving and healing take place. (p. 111)

Shinoda Bolen (1994) continues:

Any significant, soul-shaping event becomes more integrated into our consciousness, and more universal, when we can express the essence of the experience and have it received in depth by another. I am convinced that any human being who
can serve as witness for another at a soul level heals the separateness and isolation that we might otherwise feel. Witnessing is not a one-way experience; the witness is also affected by the encounter. To comprehend the truth of another person's experience, we must truly take it in and be affected. (p. 112)

The children of Holocaust survivors and the children of the Third Reich have had to struggle against feeling different, defective, and somehow outside of the human community, and in order to reclaim a feeling of belonging in the world, their stories must be told. They are connected by a terrible history and the task of bearing witness and attempting to heal the wounds left in the human psyche by the Holocaust has largely fallen to them. Because they are on intimate terms with the suffering caused by this history, they can put a human face on it and be a reminder to the world of the consequences of human hatred. It is hoped that this study will contribute in some small way to the transformation of this suffering into a greater recognition of the inherent equality, value, and inter-connectedness of all people.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter, the small but growing body of information we have about what it was like to grow up as children of Holocaust survivors or children of parents who served the Third Reich will be explored. Before it is, however, we must take a long honest look at what their parents went through. It is important to be informed about the actual event of the Holocaust and the historical, sociological, and psychological context within which it took place.

The Holocaust is the accepted term by which scholars and historians refer to the state-sponsored, systematic murder of six million Jews between 1941 and 1945. Despite its widespread usage, many people think it is an inappropriate word to describe the Nazi genocide. Michael Berebaum (1993) defines the term:

The word is Greek in origin. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, translates the word, olah as holokauston. The Hebrew literally means that which is offered up; it signifies a burnt offering-offered whole unto the Lord. The word itself softens and falsifies the event by giving it a religious significance. (p. 1)

The Jews, Gypsies, and others who were slaughtered by the Nazis did not offer themselves up to God as an act of human sacrifice and they were not willing victims. Their lives, which were every bit as vital and valuable as yours
and mine, were taken in an act of genocide. For most of us, it is painful and uncomfortable to think about the Holocaust. We struggle to find words that describe Nazi atrocities and the extreme cruelty with which they were perpetrated and end up using terms like unbelievable, unfathomable, undescrivable, and unreal, to name the unthinkable. Yet, as beyond comprehension as it may be, it is real, it did happen, and it was well documented. Over six million Jews and five million others; political opponents, Gypsies, the mentally ill and mentally retarded, were deemed unworthy to live and were exterminated in an orderly and systematic fashion in a cultured, educated, and Christian country barely 50 years ago.

There is probably no other event in recent history as well researched or as often written about as the Holocaust and still new books appear on the shelves almost weekly. It is well beyond the scope of this study to explore the many hundreds of articles and books written about the Holocaust. I would, however, like to share some of the material that was most interesting and useful to me in my study of this dark and terrible time in history.

My Holocaust education began in earnest in July, 1993, during a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. I came away with a deep sense of the personal tragedy of each of the millions of lives that perished during the Holocaust. In the Hall of Witnesses, there are hundreds of thousands of photographs; pictures of
smiling children; young women coming of age with their friends; couples posing on their wedding days; old couples united by decades of living side by side; and photographs of entire families, whose lives went up in smoke. All of the exhibits are painful and hard to bear, but it is here among the faces that speak the sorrows, hopes, and dreams of human lives that the enormity of the loss is felt most deeply.

I returned home with a copy of The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust As Told in the United States Holocaust Museum, by Michael Berenbaum (1993). This book contains photographs of many of the museum exhibits but it is much more than a museum catalogue. It is also a well-written, well-organized, easy-to-read account of the Nazi Assault, beginning in 1933 and ending with the liberation of the camps. Berenbaum describes the destruction, dehumanization, and devastation as follows:

Millions were murdered, worlds were shattered, cities were without Jews and soon even without the memory of Jews. The center of Jewish life had shifted from Europe to the United States and Israel. For those who speak a Jewish language, the language had changed from Yiddish to Hebrew. Jewish scholarship was written in English and no longer in German. And, throughout Europe, the ashes of the dead were all that remained of the past. The losses were overwhelming in number. . . two out of three European Jews were dead; nine out of ten in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Czechoslovakia. Behind each loss was a person whose life ended tragically and prematurely. And for those who survived, there were the burdens of memory, haunting memories, non-heroic memories of worlds shattered and destroyed, of defeat, and of life in its aftermath. (p. 220)

The destruction of the European Jews between 1933 and 1945 appears to us now as an unprecedented event in history. Indeed, in its dimensions and total configurations, nothing like it had ever happened before. As a result of an organized undertaking, five million people were killed in the short space of a few years. The operation was over before anyone could grasp its enormity, let alone its implications for the future. Yet, if we analyze this singularly massive upheaval, we discover that most of what happened in those twelve years had already happened before. The Nazi destruction process did not come out of a void; it was the culmination of a cyclical trend. We have observed the trend in the three successive goals of anti-Jewish administrators. The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live.

Martin Gilbert (1985) has written an eloquent and very readable history of the Holocaust, titled *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War*. He combines the cold hard facts with moving oral histories and the personal testimony of survivors.

The Perpetrators

According to German journalist Heinz Hohne (1969), who wrote the definitive history of Hitler's SS, *The Order of the Death's Head*, the Schutzstaffel considered themselves a "new form of religious sect with its own rites and
customs." Hohne defines the power held by the members of this secret society:

Their uniform was black and they were the terror of a nation. Their badge was the death's head and they swore eternal allegiance to the Fuhrer. Their flash was the runic double-S and they murdered men in the millions. Hardly an aspect of the nation's life seemed safe from their interference; they were in charge of the police and the secret service; they provided the sentries on the Reich Chancellery and the guards in the concentration camps; they occupied key positions in agriculture, the health service, racial policy, and scientific affairs; they crushed their way into traditional diplomatic festivities and had their watchdogs among the ministerial bureaucrats. (p. 1)

The Good Old Days, edited by Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess (1988), is a compilation of photographs, official documents, and private diaries and letters in which SS men describe for their wives and friends their exploits and willing participation in the massacres of the Jews. It is a horrible book to read and is full of gruesome details about the cruelty of the perpetrators and the sheer delight sometimes seen on the faces of by-standers who observed the massacre of the Jews. It is written:

The most horrible photographs, and some of the most horrible narratives record the first massacres, especially those in the Baltic states that were carried out in public. In Kaunas, Lithuania, where Einsatzkommando 3 operated, the Jews were clubbed to death with crowbars, before cheering crowds, mothers holding up their children to see the fun, and German soldiers clustered round like spectators at a football match. At the end, while the streets ran with blood, the chief murderer stood on the pile of
corpses as a triumphant hero and played the Lithuanian national anthem on the accordion. (p. 3)

The information for this book was not gathered from the testimony of survivors but from the notes, photographs, and letters of the perpetrators themselves. First published in Germany, this book was written by German historians and educators who gathered this material to provide new evidence in response to revisionist historians who doubt the truth of the Holocaust. Klee, et al. (1993) have written in the preface of the German Edition:

Horrifying and instructive, this book carries a bitter message. It will not allow us to forget that there have been times in Germany when Jewish citizens could be beaten to death with iron bars in the street in broad daylight without anyone intervening to protect them. (p. vii)

Ordinary Men, by Christopher R. Browning (1992), is also a study of perpetrators. The author was able to study the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101, through records of interrogations of them that he found at the Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen (The Federal Republic of Germany's office for coordinating the investigation of Nazi crimes), near Stuttgart. Browning describes these men:

They were middle-aged family men of working and lower-middle class background from the city of Hamburg. Considered too old to be of use to the German Army, they had been drafted instead into the order police. Most were raw recruits with no experience in German occupied territory. They had arrived in Poland less than three weeks earlier. (p. 2)

Browning attempts to understand the psychological transformation that took place that ultimately enabled
these "ordinary men" to participate in the cold-blooded shooting of Jewish men, women, and children. There are statements made by members of this Battalion that fly in the face of commonly held beliefs that these men would have been killed by their superiors if they refused to obey orders and do the shooting. One of the men reported:

In no case can I remember that anyone was forced to continue participating in the executions when he declared that he was no longer able to. As far as group and platoon actions were concerned, here I must honestly admit that with these smaller executions there were always some comrades who found it easier to shoot Jews than others, so that the respective commando leaders never had difficulty finding suitable shooters. (p. 129)

There are numerous biographies of Nazi war criminals that attempt to understand what went on in the mind of the perpetrators. The three that are most memorable to me are Eichmann in Jerusalem, Hannah Arendt (1963), Into That Darkness, Gitta Sereny (1974), and Rudolf Hess, Wulf Schwarzwaller (1988). Hannah Arendt was a reporter for the New Yorker in 1960 when she covered the Eichmann trial and her book became a classic, sometimes controversial, account of what went on in the courtroom and in the mind of Adolf Eichmann. On the final page of his biography of Rudolf Hess, Wulf Schwarzwaller writes:

The chapter on Rudolf Hess is complete. It is no page of glory in the book of history. It reports a man who refused to understand that he had served an unjust cause and had burdened himself with guilt; a man who considered himself a victim but who had been a criminal. It also speaks of people who had denied him the right of leniency and thereby also did him wrong. Rudolf Hess's crimes were not, like those of his idol, murder
and genocide; but they were a species of unconscious aiding and abetting springing from his blind idealism and blind obedience. (p. 228)

Gitta Sereny (1974) interviewed Franz Stangl, the Kommandant of Treblinka, for over 80 hours in a prison in Dusseldorf. She also interviewed his wife, his friends, and anyone else she could find who knew him. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on December 22, 1970, for co-responsibility of the murder of 900,000 people during his tenure as Kommandant of Treblinka. Over time, a relationship developed between the two and a profound and moving examination of the conscience of Franz Stangl emerges. The following exchange took place at their last interview, about 19 hours before Franz Stangl died:

"My conscience is clear about what I did, myself," he said, in the same stiffly spoken word she had used countless times at his trial, and in the past weeks, when we had always come back to this subject, over and over again. But this time I said nothing. He paused and waited but the room remained silent. "I have never intentionally hurt anyone, myself," he said, with a different, less incisive emphasis, and waited again—for a long time. For the first time in all these many days, I had given him no help. There was no more time.

He gripped the table with both hands as if he were holding on to it. "But I was there," he said then, in a curiously dry and tired tone of resignation. These few sentences had taken almost half an hour to pronounce. "So yes," he said finally, very quietly, "in reality I share the guilt . . . because my guilt . . . my guilt . . . only now in these talks . . . now that I have talked about it all for the first time . . ." He stopped. He had pronounced the words "my guilt"; but more than the words, the finality of it was in the sagging of his body and on his face. After more than a minute he started again, a half-hearted attempt in a dull voice. "My guilt," he said, "is that I am still here.
is my guilt. I should have died. That was my guilt." (pp. 364-365)

The Survivors

When the images of Auschwitz forced themselves into her memory, years after she and her sister had settled in Baltimore, Maryland, Isabella Leitner (1978) wrote them down in pencil on little scraps of paper. In time, the words took form and she wrote a very moving memoir, Isabella: From Auschwitz to Freedom. Her book begins with the poem in Figure 1.

Of the many books written by survivors, Night (Elie Wiesel, 1960) and Man's Search for Meaning (Victor Frankl, 1959), stand out as powerful testimonies to the capacity of the human spirit to endure in spite of great suffering. Winner of a Nobel Peace Prize and author of more than 20 books, Elie Wiesel has become the national spokesman for those who perished. He reminds us that the greatest indignity we can inflict on people who suffered the most excruciating pain and loss is to tell them that their pain and loss isn't real or that we don't want to hear about it. He reminds us that we give meaning to their suffering through remembrance.
A half century ago Hitler said I must be gassed or burned alive in the crematoriums of Auschwitz. I was brought there in a sealed cattle car and was greeted by a doctor whose business was murder, not healing. His name was Dr. Josef Mengele. With a slight whistling sound, and a flick of his finger, he ordered me to live for a while in the annihilation camp-Lager C..gateway to skeletonship and ashes. Strange how his outer appearance resembled that of a man. Do beasts wear elegant uniforms? I alighted from the traveling coffin: chaos and shrieks were everywhere. .. desperate sounds of Mama, Papa, Papa, Mama, Pa-pa, Ma-ma, Cipi, Aaron, Eva, Samuel, Ma-ma! commingled with sounds of barking dogs and barking SS ordering us rotten Jews not to panic but to behave like human beings.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, the last day of a beauteous month called May. Children's deafening, bloodcurdling cries soared heavenward from the hell pits of fire, where macabre flames danced in the foul-smelling stench of spring air, for the crematoriums alone could not accommodate the huge cargo of humans who must be burned that afternoon. My eyes turned skyward in search of a patch of sky, but all I could see was a kingdom of hell bathed in the darkest of swirling, charcoal gray smoke, and my nostrils were saturated with the scent of burning flesh, and the scent was that of my mother, my sister, and each passenger's kin, and half a century later, I am unable to inhale air only, for the scent of singed human flesh is permanently lodged in my nostrils. I do not look different from other people, but tread gently as you pass me by, for my skull is inhabited by phantoms in the dark of night and sights and sounds in the light of day that are different from those that live in souls who were not in Auschwitz a half century ago. (Isabella Leitner, 1978, p. 9)

Figure 1. Leitner Poem
Victor Frankl (1959) reminds us that even in the concentration camps there was a choice of action; that no matter how bad things were or how many things you took away from a person, they could still choose their own attitude in any given set of circumstances. Frankl elaborates:

If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete. The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity, even under the most difficult circumstances, to add a deeper meaning in his life. It may become brave, dignified, unselfish. Or, in the bitter fight for self-preservation, he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. (p. 76)

Memory and Remembrance

Memory is a theme that runs through all attempts to document and understand the Holocaust. Lawrence Langer explores the different forms and functions of memory in written and oral testimonies in his book, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory (1991). In his most recent book, Admitting the Holocaust, Langer (1995) discusses the recent proliferation of books with titles that focus on memory:

second stage of Holocaust response, moving from what we know of the event (the province of historians), to how to remember it, which shifts the responsibility to our own imaginations and what we are prepared to admit there. (p. 13)

There is a strong commitment among survivors and those who care about their suffering to bear witness to and to never forget the Holocaust. Many survivors report fighting to stay alive against great odds in order to let the world know what happened to them in the concentration camps. We are exhorted throughout Holocaust literature to honor those who have perished by keeping their memory alive. Primo Levi (1988) writes that the prisoners were often told by the SS that even if any of them managed to survive and tried to tell the world about the camps, nobody would believe them. He continues:

This thought, "even if we were to tell it we would not be believed" arose in the form of nocturnal dreams produced by the prisoner's despair. Almost all the survivors, orally or in their written memoirs, remember a dream which frequently recurred during the nights of imprisonment, varied in its detail but uniform in its substance; they had returned home and with passion and relief were describing their past sufferings, addressing themselves to a loved one, and were not believed, indeed were not even listened to. In the most typical and cruelest form the interlocutor turned and left in silence. (p. 12)

Primo Levi became increasingly convinced, toward the end of his life, that the lessons of the Holocaust would never be learned and that it would ultimately be remembered as just one more event in the history of human atrocities.

Judith Miller (1990) traveled to six countries: Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, France, The Soviet
Union, and the United States, to discover how people remember and describe the Holocaust. In the preface to her book, One By One By One, Miller (1990) states:

This book is about the discomfort, about the struggle within each of us between the very human desire to repress memories of that era and the need not to forget it. I have tried to explore the way different people have tried to distort, to justify, to erase memories of the Holocaust, and how some have tried to use them to rationalize the past. This book is also about the obligations of memory, about what we owe those who survived and those who did not. (p. 10)

Whereas remembrance is a commitment to the dead, almost a religious obligation, for the Jews, especially the survivors, there is the hope among some Germans that a day will come when they can put the Holocaust behind them; when the very word "German" does not conjure up an immediate image of Nazis. Many Germans carry a deep sense of shame and guilt about the Holocaust that they don't know what to do with. In a recent article in Common Boundary (1996), Marc Fisher writes:

Whenever I meet young students, I ask how they describe themselves to foreigners. Almost invariably they steer clear of the word "German." "I would never say that I am from Germany," says teenager Marina Sprick. "It just reminds people of Hitler." Classmate Katrin Sobczynski adds, "People hear 'Germany' and automatically think, Nazi. There's nothing we can do about it, so we just say we're from Europe." The girls' sad, pained words are accompanied by shrugs and uncertain smiles. The attitudes they describe are no surprise to teenagers who have lived with them all their lives, it's just how it is. (p. 25)

In his book, After the Wall (1995), Marc Fisher examines his own attitude about Germany and the Germans
before he decided to spend four years there as a foreign correspondent:

My parents and teachers had strong views about the Germans. What I heard about Germany and the Germans as I grew up in New York City in the 1960's and 70's ran the emotional and political gamut from A to B. Germany was the Holocaust and the Nazis. Somewhere along the line I had settled down as a German agnostic. Any place that could elicit such overwhelming condemnation deserved a closer look, I figured. But I had not felt compelled to take that look. Before I moved to Bonn, I had managed, without quite realizing it, to visit most of Europe without setting foot in Germany. A map of my travels would have shown pins sticking out almost in a circle around Germany. Surely, I told myself, that was unintentional. I was not one of those Americans who declared Germany off limits because of its history. I later learned that fully 29 percent of Americans tell researchers they would never set foot in Germany. (p. 13)

Although Marc Fisher claims to have developed an open mind, he writes about Germany's struggle to integrate the past with harsh and judgmental words, as if, perhaps, there were some law against considering Germans with compassion. He writes:

The new Germany, finally free to write its own story, is learning that concrete walls are easier to remove than the yoke of history. Two generations have not accomplished the purging of this century's excesses that so many seek. Neither affluence nor democracy sufficed. It is neither fair nor simple, but honest Germans have learned it is inescapably true; to grow toward normalcy, Germans, like all of us, must deal with the realities of their parents' and their grandparents' world. They must accept the burdens of the past as their own. (p. 13)

Not all Germans attempt to escape the past. There are those who try to strike a balance between wearing a blanket of guilt for crimes they did not themselves commit, while
still taking responsibility for their history. In a speech to the federal Parliament, Richard Von Weizsaeker, President of West Germany, gave this message:

We Germans need and we have the strength to look truth straight in the eye, without embellishment and without distortion. In our country, a new generation has grown up to assume political responsibility. Our young people are not responsible for what happened forty years ago. But they are responsible for the historical consequences. We in the older generation owe to the young people not the fulfillment of dreams, but honesty. We must help the younger people understand why it is vital to keep memories alive.

Before continuing, he quoted the Jewish adage, "Seeking to forget makes exile all the longer; the secret of redemption lies in remembrance."

Today, we mourn all the dead of the war and the tyranny. In particular, we commemorate the six million Jews who were murdered in German concentration camps. We commemorate all nations who suffered in the war, especially the countless citizens of the Soviet Union and Poland who lost their lives. There is no such thing as the guilt or the innocence of an entire nation. Guilt is, like innocence, not collective but personal. The vast majority of today's population were either children then or had not been born. They cannot profess a guilt of their own for crimes they did not commit. No discerning person can expect them to wear a penitential robe simply because they are Germans. But their forefathers have left them a grave legacy. All of us, guilty or not, old or young, must accept the past. We are affected by its consequences and are liable for it. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection. (in Waterford, 1987, pp. 165-166)

Alfons Heck (1988) writes a courageous and honest book about what it was like to be a high-ranking member of the Hitler Youth. Although he admits to having been a fanatic who was devoted to Hitler, Mr. Heck also considers himself
a victim, because his love for Germany was misused. He states that:

All children are defenseless receptacles, waiting to be filled with wisdom or venom by their parents and educators. We who were born into Nazism never had a chance unless our parents were brave enough to resist the tide and transmit their opposition to their children. There were few of those. The majority of Germans lined up solidly behind Hitler, once he had proven he could indeed wreak fundamental change. (p. 44)

Alfons Heck, in his youth a loyal follower of Hitler, and Helen Waterford, an Auschwitz survivor, have been sitting side by side and giving public lectures together for over seven years. In her book, *Commitment to the Dead* (1987), Waterford quotes the following words from a speech given by Rabbi Manfred E. Swarsensky at an address at the University of Wisconsin in 1980:

The horror of the Holocaust era does not prove that Jews were wrong in their aspiration for civic equality. It only proves that Fascism is dead wrong. Democracy is still mankind's and the Jew's last and only hope. Am I saying that the time has come to forget the Holocaust? Never. To forget would be a sin, a sin against memory, a sin against history, and a sin against the dead. Shall we forgive? The only ones who could forgive, if this were possible, are the six million murdered. But I can and will stretch out my hand and grasp the hand stretched out to me in reconciliation, in this and other situations. Hatred, unending hatred, is not the seed bed from which redemption can grow. I do not wish my children and the world's children to live forever by hatred. The chief task before mankind is still unfinished: Human beings must, at long last, become humane. (p. 167)

There are a handful of memoirs written by Germans who, haunted by the memory of growing up in Nazi Germany, needed to speak about what it was like living in the storm of that
time. Friedrich Percyval Reck Malleczewen's *Diary of a Man in Despair* (1966) is the story of a Prussian aristocrat who clearly saw the coming of his country's plunge into madness. He writes about the origins and psychology of what he called "mass man" and predicted many of the horrors that were to come, including his own arrest and murder in October of 1944. The following is his description of the streets of Munich and the condition of his country shortly before he was captured by the SS:

There are no telephone lines still in working order, and there is no service window without its lines of people waiting for hours alongside; nor is there a store with anything for sale, or a roof into which the rain does not come. And through it all this herd of troglodytes goes on, brainless and animal, morning and evening charging into the restaurants after ration-free food like the apes at the zoo after they have been kept waiting for the noon feeding. They gulp down their chemical beer, believe every bit of propaganda larded out to them, and are basically responsible for the fact that twelve years could pass during which we have been ruled by a maniac. Is it not the absolute height of tragedy, simply inconceivable shame, that just those Germans who are left of the best of them, who have been prisoners of this herd of evil-tempered apes for twelve years, should wish and pray for the defeat of their own country, for the sake of that same country? (p. 204)

Sigrid McPherson's *The Refiners Fire: Memoirs of a German Girlhood* (1992), Wily Schuman's *Being Present: Growing Up in Hitler's Germany* (1991), and Nora Wain's *The Approaching Storm* (1939), also offer fascinating accounts of what it was like to live in Germany during the Third Reich. In addition, there are two recent novels that are set in Germany during the war that I found deeply moving: Ursula
Hegi's *Stones From the River* (1994) and Peter Broner's *Night of the Broken Glass* (1991). Besides being exquisitely written and guaranteed to break your heart, both books were a reminder for me that there are and were all kinds of Germans. They did not all respond in the same way to the Nazi takeover of their country. Many managed to remain human in the face of tremendous odds, although many more apparently did not. Their stories also need to be told and remembered.

Last, but certainly not least in this discussion of memory, is the recent interest in the rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust. Even before Thomas Keneally's novel *Schindler's List* (1982) became a blockbuster, academy award winning, Steven Spielberg movie, Eva Fogelman was questioning why some people help, even in the face of great personal danger, while others turn away. She writes in the introduction to her book, *Conscience and Courage* (1994):

> I enrolled in a doctoral program in social and personality psychology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). There I was fortunate to study with Stanley Milgram whose landmark experiments led to his groundbreaking book, *Obedience to Authority*. Dr. Milgram's work promulgated the idea that most people surrender personal responsibility for their actions if those actions are dictated by an authority figure. Milgram's was the first psychological explanation of how . . . and why, good, decent people could carry out horrendous deeds. What caught my attention, however, were not those who obeyed authority, but those who did not. (p. 6)

Anton Gill's *An Honorable Defeat: A History of German Resistance to Hitler* (1994) is an interesting and well-written documentation and tribute to those Germans who gave
their lives because they would not live with or accept the Nazi Dictatorship. Gill writes in his preface:

There are not many survivors of the struggle within Germany against Hitler. After the failure of the famous assassination attempt by Graf Stauffenberg at Rastenburg on July 20, 1944, the Gestapo and the Security Service launched an enormous operation (known as Thunderstorm) in the course of which about 7000 people were arrested, of whom 4500 were executed. In their last orgy of summary justice and killing, the Nazis brought in many thousands who were innocent of any plot to kill the dictator, but who had long been under suspicion, however slight, of disloyalty to the regime. The authorities also found themselves with an excuse to execute many more dissidents who had been in prison or the concentration camps since before the July 20th attempt. Virtually all the leading players in the Germany resistance died at that time. (p. 6)

The Psychological Origins of Violence

The need to understand what it is that allows human beings to kill and brutalize one another is stronger now than ever given the technological tools we have to do it with such panache. Robert Jay Lifton and Erik Markusen's The Genocidal Mentality (1990) and Robert Jay Lifton's The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide (1968) are important explorations of the psychological mechanisms that protect people from feeling the harmful effects of their actions on others. Lifton (1990) explains:

These mechanisms, all of which blunt human feelings, include dissociation or splitting, psychic numbing, brutalization, and doubling. "Dissociation" or "splitting" is the separation of a portion of the mind from the whole, so that each portion may act in some degree separately from the other. "Psychic numbing" is a form of
dissociation characterized by the diminished capacity or inclination to feel, and usually includes separation of thought from feeling. "Doubling" carries the dissociative process still further with the formation of a functional second self, related to but more or less autonomous from the prior self. When numbing or doubling enables one, with relatively little psychological cost, to engage in sustained actions that cause harm to others, we may speak of "brutalization." (p. 13)

In *The Roots of Evil*, Ervin Staub (1989) posits that under certain circumstances, "human beings have the capacity to come to experience killing other people as nothing extraordinary" (p. 13). His conception of the origins of genocide includes certain cultural characteristics and the existence of difficult life circumstances. Staub elaborates:

Difficult life conditions give rise to powerful needs and goals demanding satisfaction. Hard times make people feel threatened and frustrated. Threats to the physical self are important, but so are threats to the psychological self. All human beings strive for a coherent and positive self-concept, a self-definition that provides continuity and guides one's life. Difficult conditions threaten the self concept as people cannot care for themselves and their families or control the circumstances of their lives. There is a need both to protect self-esteem and to protect values and traditions. There is also a need to elevate a diminished self. (p. 15)

In his discussion of the preconditions for the Holocaust in German culture, Staub (1989) considers certain characteristics that helped to make the German people susceptible to Hitler and Nazi Ideology. In addition to widespread anti-Semitism, Staub credits the German tendency to think of themselves as a superior people with a superior culture as pre-disposing them to Hitler's
idea of being a "master race." This tendency contributes to the extreme devaluation of the Jews over a continuum of time. Also of importance to consider is the German characteristic of obedience to authority at the time. Staub states:

Both obedience to authority and giving oneself over to a leader had positive value in German culture. Influential German thinkers stressed the role of the state not as a servant of the people but as an entity to which citizens owed unquestioning obedience. Martin Luther was one outstanding spokesman for the special status and special rights of the state. It viewed it as an organic entity superior to any individual. Citizens owed unquestioning obedience to all constituted authorities. (p. 109)

Eric Fromm (1965) and Alice Miller (1983) speak to the difficulty of people who have been raised in an authoritarian culture, to assume responsibility for their own lives. Fromm identified a desire for submission, an escape from freedom, and the willingness to give personal power to a leader during difficult times, as a German characteristic. Alice Miller believes that children who grow up in punitive, authoritarian homes are incapable of developing a separate and independent sense of identity.

Alice Miller's For Your Own Good (1983), one of the most important books ever written about child-rearing, places the root cause of violence squarely in the authoritarian way that German children were raised. Miller characterizes the prevalent attitude about child-rearing practices as follows:

The scorn and abuse directed at the helpless child as well as the suppression of vitality,
creativity, and feeling in the child and in oneself permeate so many areas of our life that we hardly notice it anymore. Almost everywhere we find the effort, marked by varying degrees of intensity and by the use of various coercive measures, to rid ourselves as quickly as possible of the child within us . . . i.e., the weak, helpless, dependent creature . . . in order to become an independent, competent adult deserving of respect. When we re-encounter this creature in our children, we persecute it with the same measures once used on ourselves. And this is what we are accustomed to call child-rearing. (p. 58)

In what she calls "poisonous pedagogy," Alice Miller (1983) summarizes the specific teachings of this childrearing philosophy:

1. Adults are the masters (not the servants) of the dependent child.
2. They determine in Godlike fashion what is right and what is wrong.
3. The child is held responsible for his/her anger.
4. The parents must always be shielded.
5. The child's life-affirming feelings pose a threat to the autocratic adult.
6. The child's will must be broken as soon as possible.
7. All this must happen at a very early age, so the child won't notice and will thereafter not be able to expose the adults.

Miller (1983) states,

the methods that can be used to suppress vital spontaneity in the child are: laying traps, lying, duplicity, subterfuge, manipulation, scare tactics, withdrawal of love, isolation, distrust, humiliating and disgracing the child, scorn, ridicule, and coercion even to the point of torture. (p. 59)
Alice Miller describes and lists a number of false beliefs that are passed on from one generation to the next which are usually dutifully accepted by the young:

1. A feeling of duty produces love.
2. Hatred can be done away with by forbidding it.
3. Parents deserve respect simply because they are parents.
4. Children are unworthy of respect simply because they are children.
5. Obedience makes a child strong.
6. A high degree of self-esteem is harmful.
7. A low degree of self-esteem makes a person altruistic.
8. Tenderness (doting) is harmful.
9. Responding to a child's needs is wrong.
10. Severity and coldness are a good preparation for life.
11. A pretense of gratitude is better than honest ingratitude.
12. The way you behave is more important than the way you really are.
13. Neither parents nor God would survive being offended.
14. The body is something dirty and disgusting.
15. Strong feelings are harmful.
16. Parents are creatures free of drives and guilt.
17. Parents are always right.
The Second Generation

Helen Epstein (1979) expresses concern about the way survivors were portrayed in her review of the professional literature. She describes hundreds of psychiatric articles that focused primarily on describing Dr. Niederland's "Survivor Syndrome," a label which over the years stuck to survivors as a group. Epstein states:

"Survivor Syndrome" ignored the strengths that I and other children of survivors had observed in our parents. What was most disturbing to me was that the term set Holocaust survivors apart from other, "normal people," including the psychiatrists themselves, some of whom had barely escaped concentration camps and shared the problems of displacement, discontinuity and unresolved mourning. "Survivor Syndrome," it seemed to me, was an extremely narrow and negative term which did not take into account historical, cultural, and social considerations. (p. 202)

Although the majority of children of Holocaust survivors grew up with parents who suffered symptoms of traumatization to one degree or another, the situation was far more complex. Helen Epstein (1979) describes being "acutely aware of how her parents were driven by an impetus to life as well as death." When she began to look for psychiatric literature on children of survivors she found that there was very little to look at. What was there focused primarily on psychopathology and offered very little in-depth information about the experience of growing up with parents who had survived the Holocaust.
In referring to the impact of the Holocaust on the offspring of Holocaust survivors, Lucy Steinitz (1975) reports that some clinicians had begun speaking of a "Child of Survivor Syndrome." She states that, although the form of this syndrome varies, the following themes are fairly common:

Many children of survivors feel guilty that their parents suffered, and fearful that another Holocaust will bring further suffering. Because their family life is so intense, they often struggle with issues of personal autonomy and independence. (p. 3)

Steinitz lists the long-term effects of the Holocaust that many survivors experienced, that was named "The Survivor Syndrome" by Dr. William G. Niederland:

- Chronic and severe depressions, coupled with apathy, emotional withdrawal and disturbances in memory and cognition;
- feelings of guilt (about their own survival while others died), marked by anxiety, fear, agitation, hallucinations, and sleep disturbances; and
- syndromes of pain, muscle tension, headaches, psychological disease, and occasional personality changes. (p. 2)

Although children of survivors were not as damaged by their parents' trauma as some of the early psychiatric literature seemed to indicate, they nevertheless were faced with greater difficulties than children should have to bear. In her essay, "The Weight of the Past: Reminiscences of a Child of Survivors," Toby Mostysser (1975) writes:

My parents could not give me their history, because it had been brutally ripped away from them and was no longer theirs to give. Instead they presented me with a great hole, a great
emptiness enclosed by my father's hard and bitter silences and my mother's spoken longing and rage. That hole, I was to fill. Sometimes, when I didn't want to listen to my mother's diatribes about the war or about anything else that may have been troubling her, she would say to me, needing and hurt, "But you're my mother to me, and my sister." And though I wanted to turn away, I was held by guilt until, over the years, I merged with the roles I had been assigned, and learned to be more comfortable listening than speaking, at least with my parents. I didn't know to ask: if I was my mother's mother, who was mine? (In Steinitz & Szonyi, 1975, p. 10)

Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jacovy, members of the Group for the Psychoanalytic Study of the Effect of the Holocaust on the Second Generation are the editors of Generations of the Holocaust (1982), a compilation of articles researched and written by members of the group. The result is an in-depth investigation of how the trauma inflicted on victims of the Holocaust could be transmitted from one generation to the next. They also offer an excellent review of the earlier psychiatric literature on children of survivors. Rakoff (1966, 1969) discovered some of the following symptomatology while treating adolescent children from survivor families:

They had an excessive need to curb the normal aggression and rebellion common in adolescence, and seemed to be struggling with conflicts arising out of a need to fulfill expectations their parents had for them. These missions for redemption, they anticipated, would magically undo, or at least partially compensate for, the unendurable losses of the parents' generation. Many of these children became obedient achievers, but many broke under the strain. (Bergmann & Jacovy, 1983, p. 19)
In his work with children of survivors, Trossman (1968) found overprotective parents whose behavior often resulted in phobic responses from their children. He also encountered children who felt guilty and depressed after being exposed to continued verbal assaults while being used as an audience for their parents' terrifying experiences. The difficulty of deciding which was more damaging, the endless account of tribulations suffered by their parents or the "pact of silence" practiced by some survivors in an effort to spare their children, is also discussed by Trossman.

Maleta Pilcze (1975) complains that there is little recognition of the strengths and coping skills developed by survivors during the Holocaust. Like Helen Epstein (1979), she is concerned that the literature perpetuates viewing survivor families from a damaged, traumatized, defective vantage point. Pilcze states:

In recent years, children of Holocaust survivors have come together to explore the influence and meaning of the Nazi Holocaust on the lives of their families and themselves. They are recognizing that while the legacy of the Holocaust is filled with intense emotion, pain, horror, and brutality beyond conception, it is also filled with extraordinary strength and coping capacity, and is a testimony to the tenacity of the human spirit and the will to survive. (in Steinitz & Szonyi, 1975, p. 157)
The Children of the Third Reich

Unlike the children of survivors, who have been subjected to a considerable amount of research, even if it is primarily focused on the psychopathological effects of the Holocaust, there has been little interest in discovering the effect of their parents' past on the children of the Third Reich. There have been a handful of books written that focus on interviews with the children of high-ranking Nazis; Gerald Posner's *Hitler's Children* (1991), Peter Sichrovsky's *Born Guilty* (1988), and Dan Bar-on's *Legacy of Silence* (1989). Of these Dan Bar-on's work is the most sensitive and insightful.

Speaking to the problem of continued silence and denial, Peter Sichrovsky states:

> The generation of the perpetrators treated their children to lies, silence, and dishonesty. "If my mother even once had said to me that she was a participant," a woman told me in the course of an interview, "that she had made a terrible mistake, that she hoped I, her daughter, would learn from it, I could have become reconciled to her, even if it turned out that she had been a concentration camp guard." (p. 14)

The children of the Third Reich also experience a hole, an empty silence, where family stories that connect them to the past would normally be. They are left without roots because of their parents' silence and denial. Heidi Salm (1993) explains:

> Since Auschwitz there is no longer any narrative tradition, and hardly any parents or grandparents are left who will take the children on their lap and tell them about their lives in the old days. Children need fairy tales, but it is just as essential that they have parents who tell them
about their own lives, so they can establish a relationship to the past. Nowadays, however, the parents' and grandparents' repertoire of stories is no longer made up of simple war and adventure stories, but rather of questionable, shameful, even dangerous and horrible stories, which can drive you insane. Too many fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers would rather tell their children nothing of the experiences that were decisive for them. What is erased reappears in the children, who are our patients today, as emptiness, identity, diffusion, bewilderment, and confusion.

(In Heimannsberg & Schmidt, Eds., 1993, p. 67)

Barbara Heimannsberg and Christopher J. Schmidt's The Collective Silence: German Identity and the Legacy of Shame (1993) is a fascinating exploration by German psychotherapists of the ways in which a legacy of guilt and shame has affected Germans of the perpetrators' generation and their children. The first book of its kind, it is a hopeful sign that some Germans are able to break through the silence and begin to heal the emotional wounds caused by the Holocaust and that some therapists are ready to help them do so.

Sabine Reichel (1989) begins her book, What Did You Do in the War, Daddy? with the following witty, but painful statement about the legacy given to her by her parents:

It still isn't fun to be German. It's a bit like having a genetic disease for which a cure hasn't been found. History is a mean slasher. It hurts and haunts, leaving invisible scars. But sooner or later they burst open. A Nazi war criminal is caught; a photo of vile men in riding pants shoving children into cattle cars is printed somewhere . . . and I feel personally accused.

(p. 3)
CHAPTER 3

METHODS & PROCEDURES

Design of the Study

This study has been designed as a phenomenological inquiry about the experience of being a descendant of parents who survived the Nazi Holocaust or of parents who were perpetrators or by-standers during the Third Reich.

A review of the literature which informs us about this experience acknowledges that this is a painful and difficult legacy for both groups. Whereas the early research conducted with children of survivors is focused primarily on the occurrence of psychopathology and trauma, more recent interviews tell us something of the strengths and coping strategies employed by this population to make sense of their heritage. There has been little in the way of formal research conducted with children of perpetrators and by-standers concerning the psychological effects of this heritage. There has, however, been a growing popular interest in how second and third generation Germans deal with their past and several books of interviews, often with children of high-ranking Nazis, have been published over the last ten years.

This study sets out to add to the information we have using an exploratory, phenomenological process in order to learn more fully from the direct experience of the participants. Taylor and Bodgan (1984) state:
The phenomenologist views human behavior, what people say and do, as a product of how people define their world. The task of phenomenological research is to capture the process of interpretation or meaning making from the point of view of the participant. (p. 9)

In-depth interviewing was chosen as the best method for learning how the participants came to understand and make meaning of their heritage. It allowed them to share their feelings, memories, and insights in their own way, and within the context of their own lives. In describing what this research method means to him, Seidman (1991) states:

I interview because I am interested in other people's stories. Most simply put, stories are a way of knowing. Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness, reflect on them, and give them order, thereby making sense of the experience. (p. 1)

Seidman (1991) states:

Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. (p. 4)

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview with broad, open-ended questions was used to tap into the inner and outer meaning given by the participants to the experience of being children of parents who survived the Holocaust or parents
who served the Third Reich (see Appendix A). Seidman (1991) states:

An open-ended question, unlike a leading question, establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants. It does not presume an answer. (p. 62)

In addition to demographic information, the participants were guided to speak about their parents' experience during the war, to address when they first learned about the Holocaust and what they remember from that experience, and to think about what it was like in their homes when they were growing up. The participants were also asked how this legacy may have affected their choice of career or work in the world and what, if any, influence it had on their relationships with other people. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked to reflect on what it was like to participate in this study.

Participants in the Study

Eight participants, four children of survivors of the Holocaust and four descendants of the Third Reich, were chosen for this study. The children of survivors had at least one parent who survived a Nazi concentration camp or a forced labor camp. The children of the Third Reich had at least one parent who was a member of the Nazi Party, the SS, the Waffen SS, and who worked for and believed in the ideological goals of Nazi Germany.
The participants are all members of a joint group of children of survivors and children of the Third Reich or they were recommended by members of such a group. They are all actively engaged in a process of healing from this heritage and were chosen because they can provide the greatest degree of insight available. Each has a need and a commitment to own the truth of their heritage and to bear witness to the reality of the Holocaust.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with a friend who meets the above-mentioned criteria to determine the effectiveness of the interview guide, to help establish how long the interviews would take, and to explore the best ways to help the participants tell their story.

Procedure

The interviews were between an hour and an hour and a half long and usually took place in the home of the participant or in the home of a friend of the participant. All of the questions in the Interview Guide were included in each interview but not always in the order given above. All the interviews were tape recorded with the participant's permission and transcribed to provide the data for further analysis.

Each interview began with a brief description of the study and the participants were encouraged to communicate
in whatever way made them feel most comfortable. It was explained that the questions were meant to be a guide only and that they should feel free to answer them or not, depending on their usefulness. Participants were familiarized with the tape recorder and sometimes helped to make sure it was working properly. The issue of anonymity was discussed; each participant was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) to choose a first name, if they didn't want to use their real name, to represent them in the Profiles.

Analysis

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed in order to capture and preserve the participant's story. A profile was then constructed for each participant. In addition to a biographical sketch, including demographic data, the profiles present a summary of the participants' story that is drawn, as much as possible, in his or her own words. Seidman (1991) provides a rationale for crafting profiles:

A profile in the words of the participant is the research product that I think is most consistent with the process of interviewing. We interview in order to come to know the experience of the participants through their stories. We learn from hearing and studying what the participants say. Although the interviewer can never be absent from the process, by crafting a profile in the participant's own words, the interviewer allows those words to reflect the person's consciousness. (p. 91)
Each of the profiles was reviewed and the data grouped to identify major themes and patterns and to allow underlying similarities and typologies to emerge.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study is designed to be a preliminary investigation that will help us understand the effect of the Holocaust on the second generation and hopefully lead to further research. It will be limited in scope by several factors:

1. The number of participants is small in order to permit a more in-depth analysis and is in no way representative of all of the people who have this heritage.

2. The participants who were selected for this study are already engaged in an on-going process of healing and have a desire to own and take responsibility for their heritage. They were chosen for this research because their long-term struggle to make sense of this history provides the highest level of insight available. No attempt has been made to include people who were born with this heritage who chose to deny or ignore it and generalization is not a desired outcome of this study. The emphasis is on uncovering the meaning made by a select group of participants who may serve as a model for further investigation.
3. Every attempt has been made to get an equal number of men and women participants, but it proved to be very difficult to find enough men to meet this criteria. Therefore, the participants are predominantly women, with only one male descendant of survivors and one male descendant of the Third Reich.

4. All of the participants speak English fluently, but English is a second language for the participants of German descent and this places them at a disadvantage because they are not able to express themselves in their native tongue.
CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

In this chapter, the participant's stories will be told within the framework of four major categories that emerged during the reading, rereading, and grouping of the interview material. Since each participant's story is rooted in the legacy handed down to him or her by his or her parents, the profiles begin with a brief biographical introduction, which is followed by a description of the parents' experience during the War. The impact of this inheritance will then be explored, totally in the words of the participants, within the following categories:

1. When and how the participants learned about the Holocaust and became aware of their parents' experience as survivors, perpetrators, or by-standers, during the Third Reich.

2. The effect of this legacy on the personal development of the participants during childhood.

3. The impact of this legacy on participants' chosen profession and current work in the world.

4. The participants' values and thoughts on spiritual and social issues.

These four categories are similar to the original questions asked during the interviews and provide the data base for comparisons and further analysis. Additional
themes that emerged within these categories will be discussed in the following chapter.

Each of the eight participants in this study is loving, generous, and courageous. They have important and meaningful stories to tell and I am honored and deeply grateful to them for having allowed me this extraordinary glimpse into their lives.

Anna

Anna is a gifted playwright, actor, and High School theater teacher, who lives with her second husband and their three teenagers in a charming, historical New England town on the North Shore of Massachusetts. She is an outspoken, funny, and somewhat irreverent woman, who, at 47, says she is finally getting comfortable with herself and her life. We have tea in her favorite room, which is furnished in antiques and is home to treasured books, paintings, and family memories. The late afternoon sun provides soft, nostalgic lighting and we set up the tape recorder and settle in on the green velvet sofa. Anna begins to tell the story of how her parents survived Auschwitz.

Parents' Experience During the War

My mother was 13 or so and lived in Salsnavicz, Poland, and she was rounded up during the Krakow ... Salsnavitz roundup which is the roundup in "Schindler's
"List," which lasted two days and two nights. She apparently hid or escaped during that time and saw her family being carted away. She has very vivid memories and recounted the roundup quite often, which became a major theme in my play, later, this roundup.

So her story is that she was hiding in the third floor of the attic of her apartment and she asked her neighbor, who was her very best friend, named Inga, to hide her and her family on the day that the deportations were about to begin. Everybody was supposed to go to the train station and if they didn't come, they came and looked for them. And Inga wouldn't open the door and became a whole different species of person. Instead of her best friend, she became her worst enemy. And said horrible things to her through the door, which my mother repeated to me hundreds of times, obsessively, like, "You Jews are dirty and filthy pigs and bad news. And my mother said to stay away from you. You're just lying and it's good if they take you away." She just became vulgarly anti-Semitic quickly, because she had never said anything like that to her all those years they had been childhood friends.

They lived above each other and below each other in an apartment building, and they shared toys and colored pencils. They were blood sisters and they made things together and went to school together and so forth. They were separated when the edict came that Jewish kids couldn't come to school or the theater or skating rinks and
stuff like that. But until then they were inseparable. Her name was Inga. Now that's a very important part of the story because of all the things my mother told me, including the murders and the gas chambers and all the things she saw, this was, to her, the most profound loss, the loss of this friend and the betrayal of this friend.

So, apparently, her grandmother and her managed to hide and to escape, and they ran all night and hid under a bridge in a body of water near those towns that I cannot remember and wish I had written down. And, of course, during the escape there are SS men walking over the bridge and German Shepherd dogs sniffing and close calls and the water is icy. She feels like she's going to get pneumonia and she catches scarlet fever, which she ultimately died from a few years ago.

And she hid in a convent and met up with 15 or so other young Jewish women and they lasted there for several months before an informer, someone who worked there, told the Gestapo. The Gestapo came to the convent . . . found every women that didn't have any papers. It was when she was deported to a camp called Freiwalda . . . that was her first . . . which means free field. After that she was shipped to Buchenwald. That's where she met my father. He was a cook in the concentration camp. He was the cook there for the SS.

They ended up at Auschwitz at the same time later and were at Buchenwald, same time. So they came across each
other a couple of times because she worked in the offices, secretarial sorts of things. Nasty jobs like taking numbers down and so forth while people went into the gas chambers. And he ordered food through the office and he would see her. And she could get information for him. He was trying to find out if his wife was alive. He was married to somebody else. And she discovered that she had been gassed at some point and sent him that note. So that was their first communication.

And she was kind of attractive. Meanwhile, she's like 15 and he's about 23, 24. It's just her first infatuation with a handsome man. She was a looker, too, so they noticed each other even though they both had bald heads and were kind of obnoxious looking. They were skinny. They were cute. So that's the story of the two of them . . . a lot went on, of course, but they got out alive.

I was born in 1947 in a DP camp near Munich. I was born there and we stayed until we got out in 1952 and took a boat from Bremenhaven to Ellis Island and were some of the last few families that went through Ellis Island. And then we got to Kentucky where a Jewish agency was looking for a kosher butcher for the state of Kentucky, because the whole state lacked one. And he was hired in 1952 to open a kosher butcher shop. And that's how we started our life in America.
When and How Anna Learned About the Holocaust

I was around six. Yeah, at night, my mother would come in the bed and tell me she had a bad dream and tell me about it and scare me to death and then leave (laughs) and go back to bed and I'd stay awake thinking that the Nazis were down the street or under the bed or in the closet. And my imagination created Nazis as very large people (laughs) and tall, seven to nine feet. They didn't have teeth, they had fangs and they drooled. After they ate a Jew, they drooled and burped (laughs). And little swastikas in their eyeballs. Really, I clearly . . . I'm a little kid and anybody who could do the things she . . . and she didn't hold back any descriptions, anybody who could do that to another human being had to look like that, had to have fangs and drool. Some kind of science fiction human.

I had to just try and make sense of this nightmare story that I kept hearing again and again. How she got the blue numbers and how Dad got the blue numbers. She goes, "they didn't paint them on, you know, they burned them on . . . they use an iron like they do for cows . . . they burned my skin and you could smell it."

And here I had to go to bed at night thinking about German Shepherds biting my mother in the ass. It's one of her big famous happy stories. And my grandmother burning in an oven and my little cousins. Typical story . . . she said, "You know your cousins . . . they walked into an oven
and they handed them Hershey bars, and that's why they walked into the oven. They closed the door. They burned them."

And why did they do that? Well, her answer was "because I'm Jewish. 'Cause we're Jewish." "Why?" "Oh, because we're Jewish." "But what did you do?" "Nothing. We're Jewish." "You must have done something." "No, no, no. I don't think so. We're Jewish." "Well, what . . . people don't like Jews?" "No, they don't like Jews. They hate Jews. Germans hated the Jews. That's what you have to remember. Know that, okay? Okay, good-night. Sleep well."

**Personal Development During Childhood**

Oh, God, she was having a mini nervous breakdown weekly. Whenever she was in really bad shape, I'd hear the stories in the middle of the night. She didn't have very many good days. When she had her bad nights of not sleeping and wake up crying and Dad didn't comfort her . . . so she came to me. He couldn't do it. He had his own nightmares. That's the worst thing about survivors being with survivors . . . it's like don't tell me your troubles, I've got my own. And if you're not coping well maybe I'm not either.

My brother has been in and out of mental hospitals. His most recent was Johns Hopkins, where he was treated for manic depression. He was given 14 electric shock
treatments. He believes that he is in the Holocaust, still . . . that he is the survivor, not my father. He so closely identified with my parents that he needs four different medications to control his delusions and depression. My sister takes care of him since my mother died. I don't see much of either of them.

I definitely felt isolated growing up. I had a difficult time relating to other kids because I felt like I knew something or experienced something they couldn't begin to understand in their lily white, padded lives of wholesome Wonder bread and Captain Kangaroo and Rice Crispy breakfast. Life seemed so simple to my non-Jewish friends. They had so little to worry about . . . and here I go to bed thinking about my mother hiding from the Nazis in icy water under a bridge.

I had survivor friends who weren't talking. We never talked about what happened to our parents and very likely their parents didn't tell them. Then I had American Jewish friends who came from a place of their parents feeling a lot of shame and guilt of not doing much during the Holocaust. So we weren't invited to their houses. There was the sense that I was an immigrant and they were Americans, and so they didn't become my good friends, just acquaintances. My Dad was a butcher and their Dads were lawyers and there was this class problem. I was a low-class European immigrant and they were, you know, American, three generations different.
So my best friends became non-Jews. They were just so removed from all of it that it felt good to me. Safe and comfortable. I didn't have to go into it. I could just be Anna and be accepted for what I do which is music and the arts, and kind of bypass the Holocaust in a way and have a life with them. I can still conjure up that feeling, to get up, get dressed as fast as possible, go catch the bus. Stand out in the freezing cold just to avoid being in the kitchen with my mother, to avoid her completely. I would stand outside and wait for the bus twenty minutes early to avoid her. Then get on the bus frozen to death and get to school. And be there really early and see my friends at the lockers. That was life. I lived for school. Not academics, the social life. My happiest times, even to this day, are in school, any school. That's probably why I teach today. The hallways are a salvation (laughs). They were so brightly lit and took me out of my house.

Once in a while, I brought friends home, but it was risky. I was very tense in my house because I never knew what to expect from my mother. And so I was careful who I brought home because of the rumors they might spread about my mother, how she behaved. She behaved fairly sociopathically. She was rude and insulting and invasive to them. Asking very personal and embarrassing questions. Clearly, something was wrong with my mother and everybody knew it. She was beautiful but very disturbed. I was embarrassed, you know. It's really hard to keep friends
when you've got a cuckoo Mom. So, I had kind of two lives, two separate lives. The weird one at home that was nightmarish and scary and dark and lonely, and the one at school which was like . . . I just remember thinking it was so nice.

**Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession**

I always felt that I had more to say than most of my friends, or more need to say something, to be heard, to be understood and to be . . . my whole raison d'être was to get people to recognize my parents' suffering and care about that, because they didn't. Their parents, their family, the world . . . through the forties, didn't care, didn't help, didn't save them until it was too late. And that sense of tragedy is what I dedicated my life to, to kind of undo or try to turn around by saying, "Look, this happened."

I always knew I was going to write this play and I was going to say something that large amounts of people could hear, in large groups. I could reach more than two or three. Maybe thousands could hear this message that they screwed up. That by ignoring the suffering of my grandparents and all my people in Europe, that it was a world injustice, a world crime, not just a crime of the German people, but it was the whole world that had let down the Jews, to me. And so, anyway, I got that in school and
I was thinking those kinds of thoughts at ten, eleven, twelve.

When I was sixteen, I found out about the theater club in school. And the teacher's name was Gene Stickler, that was the teacher's name. And the person in the club that was my idol at the time was Diane Sawyer. She was beautiful and bright and could talk good. I was just, you know, a little frumpy Jewish natty haired round girl and I wanted to be blond and beautiful like her and be in drama. And so I joined the club, and she was one reason and he was the other, mostly because he was so unconditionally accepting of all the kids. And I, I . . . he was just my savior basically.

So every morning my junior and senior year, I went to his home room to chat with him, read plays, hear about drama, join the club, get into "The Pajama Game," my first show. He gave me a major part. The ovations, the applause, positive feedback. I got to sing, which I do well, and I got to dance and do things and wear costumes. It was phenomenal. I'd never known anything so joyous. So much reward in doing theater. Never left it. Never left it from the time I was . . . the first day I stepped into that room, went back stage, I have been on stage, near a stage, teaching theater at some school or at some community theater since 1964.

I used to teach at the University of Maryland. It was a good, easy job. This is a lot harder, at the high school
level, because it's in some cases, turning lives around. But perhaps I'm doing it because that's when my life turned around. And I certainly have been to my students, in some cases, what Mr. Stickler was to me. I think . . . I believe kids have gotten out of their funks and their drug habits, their desire to do nothing and be nothing and go nowhere by joining the theater. And they have turned that around to be positive stuff and that feels great.

I was getting a master's degree in theater and I chose to write a play about the Holocaust, about Terezinstadt, which I researched by interviewing survivors and using the story of my mother and father. I put the play away for about 15 years and recently somebody asked me to see it. It was brought out and produced and it won a television award. Suddenly people said it might work as Holocaust education material. Last year, I realized a dream for myself. I was able to produce Terezin at Terezin camp for the survivors of Terezin. We went to Slovakia, Budapest, Terezin, and Prague and performed for the Jewish communities of those towns. In Slovakia, there's not one Jew left in Bradaslava, so they had to import some from Budapest so we could have a Jewish audience. That's the pathetic statement of Slovakia.
Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

Basically, I guess my whole life has been based on the fact that I don't think people care enough. And those are my dreams and that is my angst. I have dreams where I'm screaming at people and telling them that something terrible has happened and everybody just keeps walking and not looking back and not listening. Their ears are covered in the dreams I've had. And now this Oklahoma City thing. What does it take for people to take notice of the violence, the potential violence and danger of a hate group? What does it take? If they just came and killed you and me, it wouldn't be enough. It has to be a major explosion of a building. It's got to involve a couple of hundred people and then maybe they'll take notice.

I felt it took six million Jews for the state of Israel to come into being. It cost that many lives in order for something to happen. . . . in order to secure the safety of the Jews for the rest of the world, for the rest of time. Because I believe that if there weren't a state of Israel, Jews would still be very vulnerable, that Jews would be very vulnerable all over the world. That's one thought I had being in Israel. So, I think we have to educate future generations about the Holocaust, about what happened then, and about what continues to happen everywhere in terms of racism and hatred. I belong to a wonderful group . . . of children of survivors and children of Nazis and what I see as the particular purpose of this
group is showing that children of natural enemies can meet face to face, heart to heart, soul to soul, and speak the truth and only in that way can there be any healing for our planet.

Beatrix

Beatrix is the 42-year-old pastor of a Protestant church in Berlin, Germany. She heard about my research through a mutual friend who had recently attended a Peace Convocation at Auschwitz commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the camp. She was very excited about taking part in this project. Beatrix is a warm and friendly person who spoke English well and with a charming accent. We met for about two hours on a damp, grey, mid-December afternoon at the home of a friend who owns a large and wonderful house in one of the more elegant and historical neighborhoods in Berlin. Armed with a pot of strong Colombian coffee and a box of dark German chocolates to ward off any encroaching sleepiness, we put up our feet and settled into our comfortable high-backed chairs.

Parents' Experience During the War

I was born in 1952, in a village . . . a very small town in Bavaria . . . north Bavaria. I'm the youngest of three children. My parents moved to this village in 1946 after the war. Since my mother died about 10 years ago, my
father is living in Munich. My father was a member of the SA party, that was before the SS. He studied medicine in Munich during the thirties . . . at the end of the thirties . . . and he made his examination in 1944. And I just know that he, he once told me that he had to write three dissertations in that time and he felt like being the victim, yeah? He was the victim for himself. So, the first dissertation burned down during the bombing; the second one he had to throw in the toilet; and the third one he wrote after the war in 1946.

So, the interesting part is the second one that went down the toilet. As far as I know, his doctor father (doctoral committee chairman) was one of the doctors that made medical experiments in Kiev; no one on the Crimean Islands. He used malaria; infected people and made experiments. And my father wrote his dissertation as far as I know on these experiments. And he himself became infected with malaria and had to go back to Munich. In 1944, he worked as a doctor in a hospital very close to Dachau. And the SS took the hospital over at the end of 1944 and so he found himself working in a prisoners' camp in 1945 with SS members but he refused to stay there.

He told me that he never joined the SS party, but I heard from relatives later that he joined the SA. They were the original party surrounding Hitler in the early days. My father wrote me a letter once and spoke about wanting to join the SS. He never wrote it down properly,
but, behind the lines, you could read it. He wanted to join the SS but his parents didn't allow it. So they told him if you join the SS you will never be able to come back in our house. So he didn't, but he chose the SA. It's not so big a difference.

So, I guess about 10 years ago, I asked him to come with me to two cemeteries, and it was for him, it was the first time that he went to the two Jewish cemeteries in his village where he used to live. And there it was for the first time that he told me about his work, but very little. I asked him about what he has known about the medical experiments. When I went to Dachau or to different places, former concentration camps, I always had the fear and the feeling I would find my father's name there. That he was involved in medical experiments, yes? It was a deep feeling inside. My thoughts were about that, but I had no idea, so finally, I asked him what he has known about medical experiments. He looked at me and he said, "I knew everything." That's all that he would say.

My mother, she had a very different background. My grandfather, her father, refused to join the party but he was a civil servant at the post office. So the post office officials forced him to leave the town where he used to work. And so he felt sick from 1933 to 1935 and so then he lost his job. And my mother had to leave school and go to work to support the family. Yeah, my grandfather was a passive anti-Hitler person. They were very Catholic and
very conservative. I think my mother influenced my father a lot.

When and How Beatrix Learned About the Holocaust

When I was a child, my favorite playground was a cemetery about a mile from the village. But it was a silent and very exotic place. No one visited it. Kind of a forgotten place. And there was something curious or something special about it. And ... the houses in the village were, some of them anyway, named after Jewish families. So, I found out about some of them later but at the same time, it was very interesting. I felt drawn to that place but didn't really understand why. When I was 14 years old, I watched a movie about Auschwitz, a documentation, no it was in school. But I think they were students who showed us the movie. I can't remember any teacher and I think it was just a private film.

It was terrible ... I just remember dead bodies everywhere. I especially remember the dead bodies of the children. I promised myself then I would never have children. (Cries) I think it was some older people or people at the school that tried to show us what happened to the Jews. And I still think I ... I can't bear children to a society that did that. I can't pass that on.
Personal Development During Childhood

I think it was unconscious but I always felt something was wrong . . . there were secrets in my family . . . so much that nobody ever talked about. After I saw the film about the Holocaust, I started to become very much involved in the civil rights movement . . . and reading about Martin Luther King and so on. I think I was very much American oriented at that time. So I tried to become friends with all the people my father hated, for example. By the time I was 14, I was revolting in a way. Not completely or not very openly, but inside. I was not very close to my parents. I didn't hate my father . . . I didn't hate them but I didn't love them as much as I always dreamed children would love their parents. From when I was a very young child, I wanted not to be my parents' child. I wanted to escape, to get away from them. I think it was at the age of 14, the first time that I ran away from home. But, I came back at night because I was afraid to be alone in the forest. At 17, I left home for good.

Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession

I didn't think about it for some years, but then I went to England for four months and there for the first time I met Jewish people. One, he was a survivor and he wanted to talk with Germans. He spoke Yiddish and he asked me what I knew about the Holocaust . . . and so, I noticed in England that I'm German. There, I realized my identity,
yes, that I can't get rid of being a German. And I was a physiotherapist at the time and some people refused to be treated from me. And so I had some difficulty . . . it was very difficult to be the only German among Jewish people. And some relatives of the woman I stayed with refused to come to Pesach because they invited a German.

I think I have experienced different levels of dealing with this . . . they are . . . it's like a mourning process. At first, I felt shame and then responsible for it all . . . and I'm going through this whole process and there are different feelings and it changes. For me, it is very interesting that I came to know the people. About three years ago I went to Cleveland, Ohio, and got in touch with some of the inhabitants from my home village who left and they asked me to talk about my life in Germany. So, I've learned to know the name of the families who were deported to Treblinka or to Auschwitz from my town.

I was a student of one of the Zen masters and the building we meet in is called the Saint Benedict. It's from the Benedict Monastery . . . and I was there about two weeks for a meeting on death and dying. One evening, we had a service, a mourning service and we were asked to write down the name of the people we are mourning about. And I wrote down the names of the two families who were deported from my home village. And, after the service, I felt restless in a way. I knew that the Jewish families were collected . . . in a way before they were forced to go
to the railroad station. And the thing was that the gathering point was in the garden of St. Benedict. It was like being in my center, yes? And I was very restless until I prayed the Kaddish. Really, I didn't know. I was so nervous and I felt so bad . . . it was to me like my duty to pray the Kaddish.

And so there are so many signs or seeming accidents in my life that made me want to be a pastor. It's my life. It's not something outside or something I'm thinking about and feeling responsible for anymore. It's inside . . . it's my center. Where I am, there is the Holocaust in a way. I can't run away from it. And it's not that I'm mourning about the dead . . . it's, it's that sometimes I have a picture of being . . . of having part of myself destroyed by the Holocaust.

Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

Part of the healing is to help other people to work for peace in the world. To me, it's a calling from God. Otherwise, why do I have the opportunity to meet Jewish friends and to learn how to mourn for what happened to them? There are a lot of special women I meet who want to share their feelings about this . . . it was such a long process for myself . . . but I want to pass it on to other people if it will help. But not everybody is interested. My brother and sister don't care at all about the
Holocaust. We are three children who are completely different.

My sister, she asks me, "Why can't the Jews just forget it?" She makes comments like this and my father, he's still awful. He asks me, "What are you doing with the Juden? What's wrong with you that you are always doing something with the Juden?" He will never change, but there are some people who will . . . and they need help to speak from what is in their heart.

The last time I spoke to my sister, she forced me to call my father in Munich and he said such crazy things. He said, "Oh, here in Germany, we have too many foreigners. You can't go to a German restaurant, only Italian or Chinese or something else. They have too many foreigners here." Oh, God . . . (laughs) he's horrible and it's sometimes funny . . . but I worry about how many Germans believe like he does and just don't say it.

Zelda

Zelda is the 48-year-old mother of two grown children with whom she lives in a Boston suburb. She recently ended a 26-year-old marriage, which she described as limiting and abusive, and is embarking on a courageous personal and spiritual journey. Needing to support herself and her daughter, who is in college, Zelda works at an insurance company in customer service and sales. Her heart, however, is in the theater and Zelda maintains membership in all
three theatrical unions, AFTRA, SAG, and Actor's Equity. Zelda's face lights up when she talks about the work she's done on stage and in films, including directing children's plays and community theater and she makes it clear that she doesn't want her career as a professional actress to be over.

Zelda and I met at a Joint Meeting of children of Holocaust survivors and children of the Third Reich that took place in Neuenberg, Germany, in February 1993, and have kept in touch and become good friends. The interview took place at my house on a Saturday afternoon in August with my rather large black cat, Norman, spread out on the couch between us. Later, we got caught up with events in each other's lives, took a walk along the Connecticut River, and ate a late lunch at the Taste of Northampton.

Parents' Experience During the War

My mother is from Vilna, Poland. She was 19 years old when the Germans occupied Poland. And when they came into Vilna they sectioned off a section of the city which they called the Vilna ghetto. My mother's mother and her sister and brother and about 75 members of the family were forced into the ghetto. The German soldiers went from house to house and how they found out the Jews lived in the houses. . . . my understanding is that they paid some of the Polish peasants extra sugar or rations or promised them, you know, food, whatever, so they would tell them where the Jews
were. Of course, they had no way of knowing who was Jewish and who wasn't otherwise.

Some of the family members thought there might be problems and several cousins were going to Russia. They said to my grandmother, "Why don't you come to Russia?" And she said, "No, no, no. They're not going to harm us. What do they want with us?" So they stayed and she didn't go to Russia. She heard that people were starving in Russia and here at least, "We'll have a roof over our heads." So, when she heard the first knock on the door and there were two German soldiers standing on the other side, my mother told me that her heart started to beat really, really fast, and she knew that something was out of the ordinary. And they said to her, "Where are all the men?" and my mother told them "here's only one boy that's living in the house," her brother, "and he's only 16." He said, "Bring him in." My mother remembers them saying, "Do not be afraid. If you cooperate, just have him pack a small bag. We're going to take him on a work detail." And her brother left and that was the last time she ever saw him.

From witness accounts, there were apparently peasants who were going out into the woods, right outside of Vilna, and hearing gunshots. And they came back into the town and people would hear them, you know, tell the story of how young boys, naked, forced to take all their clothes off, give their jewelry, their money, whatever they had, to the German soldiers. And then, the next thing they knew, they
were forced to dig holes, their own graveyard, whatever, the holes. And then they were shot. And the people were in disbelief. Nobody believed those stories. That can't be. That just can't be, you know? No, they said they were taking them, the boys, on a work detail. So, of course, in time, everybody realized that their sons or their brothers weren't coming back.

So, this was one of the first ghettos, where instead of taking people and putting them on trains and sending them to camps, they rounded them up and shot them. My mother and her sister were very lucky; they had been given work papers. And her mother also had work papers and had this job in the hospital and a friend there who worked in the kitchen. This friend was kind enough to smuggle soup to her so when she went back to the apartment, she had something to feed the family. Otherwise, they might have starved because there was nothing . . . by that time, there was absolutely nothing. No way to access any kind of food ration at all.

After the ghetto was liquidated, everybody was rounded up to go to a deportation site; this is where they did separate people. Where there was a Gestapo chief sitting and pointing. Right. Left. Right. Left. My mother's mother and her great grandmother, Sara, the aunts, the cousins, all of the women, all of those women were directed to the left line, which was the line that designated death. And it turned out they were all taken to the woods . . .
and they were shot. My mother followed her mother and she was actually directed to the left line even though she was only 19. The night prior to the roundup, they had spent the night in this ravine. And there was very heavy rain and in the morning her face had mud caked all over it and she looked like an old woman. Her sister was pointed to the right with her best friend, Goldie, and they tried to get her attention. They tell her, "You've got to get out of this line; you're in the wrong line."

My mother said something just came over her and she removed the scarf from her head and left her mother and all her family and ran to the end of the right line, and she was never found out. So that's how she saved her life. And then, they were deported. Then they were shipped to the labor camps. They were very fortunate, they never went to any of the death camps. At that time, I guess they were youthful enough looking. They needed people to work in the factories to help in the war machine, I guess. So they survived the labor camps but they actually almost died in a march from their last camp.

The men in charge of that camp heard that the Russians were nearby and rather than just running away, they took all of the people with them on this long march. It was snowing out. It was bitter cold, below zero. And, all they were allowed, all they were able to take with them were their blankets. Many of them didn't have proper shoes, anything to protect them from the elements. My
mother almost died on this march, just from the weather. She fell asleep in the snow and my sister didn't discover her for a while. When she realized my mother wasn't beside her, marching with her, she immediately turned back and went to look for her. She found her sleeping in a pile of snow. My mother said the group leaders led them to this town where the Russians were heavily present, and they ran and just left them there. So, they ended up in a refugee camp and my mother met my father there. He was working at the potato stand, just giving away some of the food. And my mother came to get potatoes and there he was. And they got married there.

My father was a Polish cavalry soldier in the Polish army. He was older, he was about 28. He had been an upholsterer in Bialystok, Poland, right near the Russian border and I guess he joined the army. At the very beginning of the war, in 1939, he was riding his horse with a comrade. And they were in some field riding, and the next thing they knew, there were planes above them, German planes, shooting at them. And they shot his comrade and his comrade's horse. My father just got off his horse and decided to try to walk to a safer place. Ultimately, he was captured. And when he was captured, he was put in a prisoner-of-war camp and he stayed there for about 15 months. The treatment wasn't great. Certainly, when he compares it today to the concentration camps, it was "heaven on earth."
And, according to Hitler's plan, he went in to all of the prisoner-of-war camps and all the Jews had to be removed and sent to concentration camps. And my father was taken out and he was shipped to Auschwitz at the time. And he got a number at Auschwitz. He got a number on his left arm. And he claims that he was just one of the lucky ones, because he was shipped to 13 different camps for a period of . . . since 1939 until the war ended . . . six years. So he was in many death camps, many labor camps, and was just, I guess, a strong man and he worked. And, whenever he was sent to a death camp, he was always picked to be one of the workers. And, oftentimes, the Gestapo chief took a liking to him. So he survived and has many stories that he tells of the miraculous things that saved him time and again.

When and How Zelda Learned About the Holocaust

I heard my father's stories almost on a daily basis when I was growing up. It was the way I connected with my father. We didn't sit and talk about how's the weather. We didn't go out and throw a ball in the back yard. You know, we didn't go on biking trips. We didn't go to the ocean together. We didn't do any of that. We, we developed a relationship by sitting and my being the listener and him being the story teller. From as long as I can remember. And asking questions if I didn't understand
something, or if I loved a particular story that really moved me.

There's one with shoes, the one with the shoes that I will never forget. That I often say to him, "Can you tell me that story with the shoes again?" My father was chosen again in the camp to be a laborer. And they needed 10, 12 men, something like that, to take the place of horses, to move these barrels. But, they didn't have horses to pull the carts with these barrels, so they used humans instead. And my father was one of them. And they needed strong, sturdy men for this detail. And they would be moving the food, the potatoes, whatever they used, from camp to camp. There were several camps nearby in one cluster. So my father was chosen as one of the men.

The Gestapo leader, whoever he was . . . he took . . . these men were his prize possession. He treated them very special. He gave them extra rations. If they were going to do this kind of work, he was going to feed them well, okay . . . so they wouldn't be weak. And he took care of them, and he treated them with respect. And my father at one point had clogs on that were not going to do it. He sent him to the, I guess a lot of camps had places where they kept, where somebody was in charge of the shoes, like a cobbler or whatever. And he sent him to this particular place to get a new pair of shoes. And when he arrived there, there was this very mean man in charge, who happened to be a German prisoner. But he was a criminal and that's
why he was in this camp. And he apparently didn't like the Jews.

So, he handed him two shoes and my father said, "but you gave me two left shoes." So this man came over and kicked my father in the groin and he was in excruciating pain. He could barely crawl back with the two left shoes to his leader. And he said, "What happened to you? What did he do to you?" And my father said, "Look, he gave me two left shoes." The leader said, "We'll take care of him." He went back with him and he threatened him. But he said, "you will never treat one of my men like this, ever. And you give him a right and a left shoe and make sure they fit perfect." So my father got a good pair of shoes.

He has a lot of survivor stories, unbelievable, there's just so many. I have written most of them down. That's my roots, these stories. It's like I know my roots only go back, you know, to the camps and how they survived. It's so important to me to have these stories of how they survived and it's becoming important to my children, too. I'm very honored to have these stories because I know many children that don't have any stories.

Personal Development During Childhood

At some point, I realized that my only real connection with my father, for instance, was through the Holocaust. You know, that's kind of sad, in a way, too. You know, because I didn't have a normal father. So, yeah, there
were times that I felt very sad. I didn't have an easy
time growing up. We lived in Israel, right outside Tel
Aviv, until I was eight years old. My father wanted to be
where his people were at the end of the war, but my
mother's sister got married and settled in America, in
Massachusetts. So she kept writing and telling my mother
that she misses her and didn't want their families to be so
far apart and so on. So, ultimately, six years after being
in Israel, we did end up in America with my aunt. In
Worcester, Massachusetts.

There was a strong survivors' group there and a lot of
the children I hung around with were also children of
survivors. And a lot of my mother's friends were
survivors. So, in the community I lived in, there were
enough other children like myself so I didn't feel so
different. We lived there until I was twelve and then we
moved to Boston. My father couldn't really get a decent
job as an upholsterer in Worcester, and had many
opportunities in Boston. That's when things began to get
hard for me, the struggle . . . I don't know. I think
maybe a lot of the Holocaust stuff came up for me at that
time.

The hardest part was the weight that sat on my heart,
I think . . . the losses. That's how I was burdened by it
more than anything else. Being reminded of it all the time
because my father kept constantly telling stories. So, I
was constantly reminded of what he left behind, of what he
lost. My mother was very controlling. She was afraid of the outside world and she wanted to keep us safe in the house. So when we went out she was always afraid. I always made sure to come home early so she shouldn't worry. Because I knew how she'd get when she worried. Or, if, when my brother was younger, he would cut himself and she would see blood and we wouldn't have time to fix his cut because she'd be too busy fainting. She couldn't handle anything where there was the risk that somebody was gonna be hurt. They were both pretty traumatized and over-reacted, probably, to a lot of things like that.

My father was filled with rage. When my brother started to present some problems and get in with the wrong crowd, instead of just talking to him he would hit him, or he would get enraged. And my brother would often run away. One time, my brother ended up at the police station. They called my father down. They found him, I guess, drinking or smoking behind the school yard with a bunch of the bad guys. So, instead of trying to listen to him or trying to understand what happened, my father's first reaction was to take his hand and smack my brother across the face. It was the only way he knew how . . . It was like some dark . . . all that rage that he really wanted to smack the Nazis, but we were his only targets.

For a long time, I wanted to escape my house. I guess there came a point where something was definitely missing that I lacked, and that is a certain kind of nurturing that
children get. I, like I did the nurturing. I wanted to make sure that everybody . . . So, I didn't feel that I got what I needed, validation. My mother had terrible low self esteem, terribly afraid to take risks, of losing things, anything. And risk would mean loss, the unknown element. Anything unknown was scary to her. And she passed that on to me and my sister. And we developed really very low self esteem, lacking in confidence. She was lacking in confidence.

For a long time, I felt very unsafe in the world. From this intense fear that was passed on to me, fear of the world . . . First of all, I hated the world for what they did to my . . . first of all, America and the rest of the world, outside of what happened in Germany, for abandoning my . . . my people. And, of course, the Germans for, you know, killing my family and mentally and physically abusing my mother and father. So, I grew up with my own fear of the world, it was my own stuff, too. Passed on obviously, but just a fear of not being able to trust. And I think all this stuff distorted me. I, I felt very, very much in a fog often. Very confused about . . . whenever it came time to making decisions I was very confused. I was never clear. I never could make a clear decision. Fear, just always, fear, fear, fear, about moving on, fear about making a change, fear about growth. There was always fear, a terrible fear, which hindered me in many ways.
Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession

I got married very young to get out of my house. I was 19. My mother didn't instill any career goals in me. She saw that I had talents in certain areas. When she saw my High School play, she saw that I did a good job. I mean, everyone said, "You should be an actress. You're really very good." My mother never said, "you were very good." All she did was see me in the role of the wife, the mother, and I stayed safe in the little cottage, and the man would go out and work and I would clean and cook and feed the children just like she did. Because that's where I would be safe. Out in the world, I can't be safe. So, her intentions were good and she meant well, but she passed on to me this . . . this strong sense that I can't go anywhere in the world. I can't do anything.

So, I did marry the first person who came along and flattered me and paid some attention to me. Because I thought I was ugly and I thought I wasn't smart and everything. She never built me up. So, my life took many detours; I went the bumpy road. It wasn't so smooth. That I struggled through 26 years of a very abusive marriage, where I thought I deserved the abuse, you know, just all that. At some point, I just hit bottom. It was right around the time of Women's lib, and Gloria Steinem became my hero. You know, I really could identify with everything that she was saying. I went through a real identity crisis and I began to find, to try to find out who I really was.
Going back to school, taking theater . . . No, I want to be an actress, I don't care what my mother says. I want to do it. So I went back to school and studied with one of the top coaches in Boston, who constantly built me up and gave me credit. And said I had potential. And I worked with some very good teachers at Brandeis. And so, I did convince myself that I . . . I was okay and I wasn't just suited to be a mother and wife and stay home and cook and clean.

Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

The people that are in my life today are very patient, very loving, and they don't shut me up. You know, they honor my feelings at that moment and my story at that moment. And I receive validation all the time. It's okay to be who I am today with all my struggles and with all my insecurities. And if it means having been a survivor's child to reach the path of awareness where I am today . . . of letting go of judgment . . . I was very judgmental of the world and people. I would never talk to, let alone look at, a German, where today I'm proud to have them in my home and go to their homes. And not just Germans, per se, but I'm talking about children, who were from my father's abusers. The meeting in Germany with the children of the Third Reich was an absolute miracle. And the best part of it was when I rid myself of the poison. When I got rid of the poisonous hate. Because that's what keeps you from
being whole. And the poison of hate gets woven in with the poison of fear.

When I got rid of the fear, I was able to feel strong about myself, wake up and realize that I do not deserve to be abused anymore. And so as long as I am physically alive and present, until my last breath, I will speak at schools and wherever I can and tell children my father's stories. Because my father wants me to and because he told me that the reason he survived was to bear witness to what happened to the Jews at Auschwitz and the other camps. To bear witness to what hatred and fear can do in the world.

Alexi

Alexi was born in March of 1946, the first of four children, in a small German village near Belgium, on the left side of the Rhine River. He currently lives in Berlin on a small government pension due to a chronic and disabling liver disease. Alexi is interested in holistic healing and organic farming and would like to get out of the city and live in a place where he could grow his own food. He suffers from bouts of depression and is working hard to heal himself from a painful and traumatic family background.

I first met Alexi in February, 1994, at a conference at the University of Berlin when he attended a workshop which I facilitated, along with other members of a group of children of Holocaust survivors and children of the Third
Reich. He kept in touch with members of our group in Berlin and I met him again at the Convocation for Peace which took place at Auschwitz in December, 1994. Alexi was happy to participate in this study and we met for over two hours in a small room where we were staying in Oswiecim, Poland.

Parents' Experience During the War

I was born at the end of March in 1946. My father had just come out of the war and then my mother got pregnant. They lived in a rural setting. Everybody in these villages were subsistence farmers and also they had jobs besides that. And most of the families had many children. My mother was one of eight children; my father one of ten. My parents rarely talked about the war, but it affected me very much. When I was five years old, I drew pictures of airplanes going over our house. I still remember being very much afraid of these airplanes. As children, we saw a lot of holes in the earth where bombs had been dropped. And the frogs were swimming in these holes, baby frogs, and so on.

Most of what I know about the war I learned from my grandmother on my mother's side. Because she had lost two sons in the war and she was often complaining about that to me. She showed me the last letter from her favorite son. My father was working for the railroad. He was kind of partly doing a military job and partly he was working for
the railroad. Later on, he also worked near Moscow, when they had overrun Russia. He never had a high rank, first or second lieutenant, something like that . . . but, at the end of the war, he got into the Waffen SS. They took everybody by then who still had legs. He never talked to me about the war. He talked a lot to himself when he was working out in the fields. He was always talking to himself and singing songs. I learned some of the Nazi songs from him. He sometimes still sings these songs, giving expression to his feelings, singing his favorite songs. He still has pictures of Hitler hanging on his wall and has fond memories of those days. After the war, they were like beaten children who are ashamed of what they did. But still they can't see what they did wrong. And then they hid away their real fantasies and feelings.

When and How Alexi Learned about the Holocaust

Well, all these things I found out only much later. Because, at the time, it was all unspoken, you know? They are not even able to think about the war and about the Nazi regime and all these things. They are not able, even now, to look back on their lives and look at what was good for them and what was bad for them. My grandmother, she still was able to think about it. And she told us, "Oh, yes, we were misled by the first World War." Her husband got sick and died just before the second World War started. And she said, "I told my sons, 'You've got to go. Just go do your
duty,' but how did they return?" She told me several times that we were misled a second time. I didn't learn about the Holocaust until I was 14 or 15 years old, in the gymnasium . . . yes, at school.

I didn't remember any amazement or something like that because there was something about it . . . all my childhood that I already knew, but not consciously. There were no Jews in our town. At least, I didn't know of any at that time I was growing up. In the small towns in our area there were Jews once and they had been deported or fled. I know it now that quite a lot have been killed . . . in one of the towns where Jews were living. Also, in my childhood, in the church, they prayed in an arrogant way about the Jews. That they had the wrong belief and they prayed so God would lead them to the right belief, things like that. We prayed for the Jews.

Well, once I got a remark out of my father. And he said, "Well, Hitler should have left the Jews in peace and the church. But all the rest was right." You know, the war with the Russians and the Poles and everything else, that was right. He should have left the Jews alone." That's what he once said. Yeah, and I remember his best friend, he was killed in the war, at the end of the war. And I heard him talking to somebody else, he didn't tell me, that his friend had been in the SS. And he had been in Poland somewhere in concentration camps. I don't know if he later killed himself, he might have, but he witnessed
all these massacres, killing of Jews. And they met on vacation at the end of the war in our village and this man told my father, "It's not right; what we are doing here with the Jews."

**Personal Development during Childhood**

My parents were very strict and controlling. Once my father said, "We think what is right, that's it, and what is right is what the majority thinks" or something like that. It was mostly an unspoken dictatorship in my house. And, if I or anybody, if a child would be different, would try to go his own way, my father and mother, they would beat us or just make it look ridiculous and do whatever they had to until we went their way again.

My father is very much against people who don't work. He once told me, "There is one thing that nobody can ever accuse him of having done, that he was ever lazy one day in his life." Since I have been out of work, you know, I'm on early pension and he wants me to go to . . . if he would be in power, he told me several times, I would be sent to a forced labor camp. When I was younger, I was completely crushed by the beatings from my mother and also by them telling me that I'm a good boy being so industrious and intelligent and so on. And so, I hated my brother who was lazy and also jealous because he didn't work as much as I, and I beat him up. We had to work every day after school on the farm, with the cows. It was very boring for
children. My brother, he was always complaining, "Oh, again with the cows, always we have to go with the cows." And I just took it and I didn't want to have trouble with them.

I started rebelling when I was a student, at 22 or 23. Even then, I didn't rebel enough. And subconsciously when I was 13, I wanted to smash the head of my father. There was something telling me to do it . . . but I didn't know . . . it was from somewhere else. It seemed to come when we were working. And he had no hair, he was bald. And I had the hammer in my hands, to knock holes in the meadow or something. And I really had to restrain not to do it. I don't know . . . four or five times this was the situation. But I didn't know where it came from. He wasn't even the one who . . . he didn't even do it himself. He let us be mistreated by our mother. But it was he who had the strings and at that time I thought for a child, the perpetrator to be the mother was terrible. And I thought he was the good one. But now I can see he had the strings in his hands. And if you would ask him today, he would say that "children need to be beaten."

Oh, they were so righteous. I have to tell you something. In this area where we lived, we prayed all the time. When we got up, we prayed, even before breakfast, and again after breakfast and so on. Then, Hitler came and he was the new authority. But, after the war, they were very hypocritical again and went back to the old authority
in the church. And Adenauer was also an expression of this. So, they prayed all day long. At half past eleven, they prayed. Then before dinner and after dinner. And, in the evening again at six o'clock. Then before supper and after supper, and when we went to bed again. And there was everywhere ... they had this cross hanging with a naked man on it being tortured and so on. And, in these prayers also they talked about blood and your holy blood flowing out and stuff like this.

I still remember really kind of a bloody and sadistic feeling from one situation when this was going on. And I was very believing. I prayed myself and went to church sometimes twice a day. And I think that must have a real deep impact on a child. And if you tell them, "this holy man, Jesus, was killed by the Jews" ... I'm sure it has a very deep impact.

**Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession**

When I was 20, I wanted to go to the army. Even as young as 13, I wanted to be an officer and so on. I was a child of my parents. They didn't tell me to go to the army, but this harsh upbringing, it makes you feel so inferior that you have to compensate for it by being strong and being a hero and so on. And then you make an impression on the women and you might find a girlfriend and things like that. And you are afraid of your fear and of your feelings but you have to tuck it away and compensate
. . . and your anger, you project it on the Russians. Never a Russian did me anything wrong, but I wanted to kill Russians instead of my father.

I have no relationship with my father. It's very difficult to have a relationship with a man who wishes you in the chimney. I don't have that much humor yet or, or self confidence, or something. It makes me very afraid to go to him because children love their parents and you have to be so alert that you don't take all their insults on yourself, you understand? He's like a snake with five heads who bites at once. You have to be very alert.

In a way, I am the sacrifice for his inability to face himself. Well, this thing about sacrifice . . . I have been thinking that Jesus was a sacrifice for his father. The first child in the family of my father, he died as a child. He fell. He dropped into hot water, boiling water, when he was four. He was sacrificed. And the mother of my father, she named the next son she got, she gave the same name again. And this son was killed in the war as a soldier. So there was something about sacrifice going on in this family. And I was, I started being sick. I have a liver disease since I was 16, because I was so . . . always putting the aggression against myself. And I think, yeah, there's something . . . my father expects me to be sacrificed.

I had to flee, to move to Berlin . . . to get away from them. I still go around when I work somewhere . . . I
hurt myself here and I hurt myself there. It's something like I want to run off to Jesus and be bloody all the time, you know. There's still something in me that's working this way. It's like being haunted. And, yeah, I think it's hard to do something with your life when you still love your parents that hate you instead of loving yourself.

Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

I would like to have a garden and grow my own food and things like that . . . live in a way that doesn't destroy the earth. But, I still don't know how to manage it. Somehow, I have to stand up for myself and learn to take care of myself. Actually, I have been sick all my life, psychosomatic diseases, you know. Now I am working with re-birthing and other holistic techniques to help my body heal, and my mind.

We live our lives so out of touch with reality, the world is so hypocritical. We talk about wanting to preserve the environment and then we advertise new cars driving through the countryside, forgetting that the cars pollute the air there, and so on. So, I want to live my life in such a way that doesn't do harm . . . that doesn't harm the earth and that doesn't harm people.
Lois

Lois is a 35-year-old clinical psychologist who lives and works in West Hartford, Connecticut. She lives with her husband, Alan, who is also a participant in this study, and their two-year-old son, Ethan. The couple is expecting their second child in May, 1996. I met Lois for the first time at a meeting between children of Holocaust survivors and children of the Third Reich, that took place in Neuenberg, Germany, in February, 1993. All of us who attended this meeting keep in touch and I feel a close bond to Lois and her family, even though we don't get to see much of each other.

The drive to West Hartford took less than an hour and, given the short distance, I told myself that I should visit Lois and Alan more often. I arrived in time for a perfect summer lunch of cold cuts, potato salad, and root beer. After meeting Ethan for the first time and getting a tour of their spacious and lovely home, Lois and I sat down at the dining room table and began the interview.

Parents' Experience During the War

I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and lived in New Jersey all my life. I have one older sister, she's eleven months older than me and she lives in Texas. My mother is first generation American. She was born and raised in the Bronx. My father was born in a small town in Poland, which is now in Byelorussia. He had an older
brother who was five years older than him. And his parents were in the leather business. They bought and sold leather to shoemakers and other people who used leather. They had a little business in the center of town.

My father's family is also highly, highly religious in the extreme. My father, my grandfather, too, was probably in the synagogue five times a day and my mother would run the store when he and his brother went to synagogue. That played a major role back in 1939, when whatever deal Hitler made with Stalin gave Byelorussia over to the Russians, because . . . there were two issues. My father was in business which made him a capitalist and not too happy with the Communists and he was very religious which was another point against him for the Communists. They didn't look too kindly on that and so they took his business away and discouraged any kind of religious observances.

My grandfather was not a well man, either. I'm not sure what his problems were, but he was extremely religious and he didn't work on the Sabbath, which made him another enemy of the Russians. And it sounds like the police were really gunning for him. He was arrested, I think, on one occasion and kept for several weeks and nobody was allowed to see him. He probably would have been killed at that point, but my father had a cousin who was an attorney and had some kind of relationship with the Communist regime in power at the time, and was able to finagle my grandfather out of jail.
So, my father's brother who, at that time, was about 19, went to a different town and got a job as a teacher and would send money home to support the family. They didn't have any way of supporting themselves and my grandfather was becoming very ill and they weren't treated well and were really struggling financially. My father was about 14 then, and he went to a Yeshiva, a Jewish school, but they changed it to . . . then he had to go to a Russian school. He actually tried to go with the flow. He was an adolescent. He really wanted to fit in. And they taught him about Communism and he was a pretty good student. But he was still kind of shunned because he wasn't considered Russian, he was Polish. He was Jewish.

So that was their life until 1941, when Germany invaded. And, at that time, they very quickly formed a ghetto in town. And it got more and more crowded because they were emptying out other towns and moving the Jews into the ghetto. It seems that my father's home was part of where the ghetto was, where the fence was. So they were able to stay in their home, but there were about 15 people who moved in there with them at the time. So it was a pretty crowded place. And they were hungry and they were starved. His father just became more fragile, much more ill. And I guess it was around January of 1943. They were struggling in the ghetto. He had lost some family already. A relative of his had been shot. A cousin of his had been shot. Another cousin of his had actually taken his own
life. He threw himself in front of the train just before they arrested him and were going to take him away.

So, in January, 1943, they were getting wind of the liquidation of the ghetto. And, at that point, my uncle told my father and his parents that he had a group of people who decided they were going to form a partisan group and fight in the woods. And they never saw him again. It was only later that they found out, yes, he had gotten out of the ghetto, but they weren't a well-organized group. The best we can find and this is all second hand, my father found out after the war that the Germans had regular reconnaissance missions into the woods. The German army, I guess, they set attack dogs out and they claimed that my uncle was just literally ripped to pieces by attack dogs. And that's the best we know.

So, in the meantime, my Dad and his parents, they were liquidated in January, I don't remember the exact date, 1943. Put on trains and taken to Auschwitz. The train took several days, possibly weeks even. Lots of people died on the way. There wasn't any food. There was nothing to eat. People were already pretty fragile from starvation already. But they made it to Auschwitz. Didn't really know much about it. Separated pretty quickly. My father was separated from his mother and father when they arrived . . . and my father was taken to Auschwitz/ Birkenau, where he spent six weeks under pretty terrible conditions. And he was together with one cousin and, amazingly enough, it
sounds like they really remained together throughout the entire war.

So, after six weeks in Birkenau, he went to the main Auschwitz camp and spent a year there, almost a year. And there, he did lots of hard labor, heavy lifting. He was with his cousin at that time and also he really started to learn the ropes. He said that one of the first things that happened to him was . . . at the time, things were a little less organized and they let them go back to get their shoes at the trains. And my father had these very warm . . . in the leather business, he had these really warm boots. And, so, but what he didn't know was that, at night, the older inmates would come and take whatever they thought would be helpful. And I don't know how he thought about it, but he just grabbed a piece of metal on the side of the bunk and scuffed them up real bad. Just like in a minute he thought about it and did it. So they didn't look very appealing and they didn't take them. And he said that the shoes probably saved his life.

He said there were these wool-lined boots and just a series of things he described to me that were just real trivial, that made the difference between his dying that particular day and surviving to live another. After about a year in Auschwitz main camp, he was sent to Buna, which is another part of Auschwitz about six miles away. And he told me that, at the time, Buna was really the place where a lot of the factories were, where German companies had
factories. And he did a couple of different things. And
he learned to work the system, somehow. He worked for I.G.
Farbin Industries, painting these huge containers that were
like several stories high. So he spent most of his time at
Buna as slave labor for I. G. Farbin.

At this point, the war was getting close to being
over. And they were sent on a death march to another
smaller camp that I can't remember the name of. He wasn't
there very long before they shipped him out again, in a
train, in cattle cars to Germany. I guess they were moving
a lot of prisoners into Germany to try to keep ahead of the
Russians so they wouldn't see what was going on. And so,
in the last five months of the war, he was in four
different camps in Germany. And they were all pretty bad.
At this point, they were like doing farm labor and sleeping
in the open and getting rained on. My father had typhus at
this point and was dying. And they kept sending him, after
the last camp they were on another death march. My father
wasn't even able to keep up. This man, cousin, still
hanging in there with him, cousin Beryl, and he was
carrying him literally to keep him going. And my father
said that he was going to try to escape because he figured
he was going to die anyway. So I guess Beryl decided to go
with him and a couple of other people did, too. When they
came to the wooded area, my father just made a mad dash
with a bunch of people. The guards saw and several people
were shot and killed. He managed to survive in the woods.
Beryl did, too. They found a farmer who grudgingly let them in and gave them some food and they stayed there until the Americans came and liberated that area and took them to a hospital.

When and How Lois Learned about the Holocaust

I don't remember a time when I didn't know about the Holocaust. I'm not aware of any conscious memories that didn't include my father's stories. I don't remember a time when anybody ever sat me down and said, "This is what happened to your father." It was just kind of like I always knew something bad happened to him. When I was a little older, maybe nine or ten, my father kept his uniform in my closet in a paper bag, my bedroom closet. I have it here. I'll show it to you if you want. It's on its way down to Washington, to the Holocaust Museum. Anyway, I brought it in to my class in the eighth grade and did a talk. And I freaked everybody out. I just figured everybody knew. But I freaked people out big time. And I just, you know, it was just something that was always with me. I always knew.

Personal Development During Childhood

There was a sense of being different and wishing I didn't have that kind of history, but, at the same time, I didn't have a good reality base for how abnormal what I was hearing at home really was. I didn't realize that people
would be so shocked by seeing a concentration camp uniform. It was just sitting in my closet, no big deal. So I carried both feelings. And I could never separate how much of my shame was because my father was so old-fashioned because he was from Europe. I couldn't figure out how much of it was the Holocaust piece and how much was the fact that he was an immigrant and was very old-fashioned.

He was protective. I can look back now and say that particularly the protectiveness has everything to do with what happened to him. He was overly protective, overly cautious and downright suspicious. He had difficulty letting us do things on our own and take risks. This was hard for me. I used to get angry with him. It bothered me. And I was ashamed. There was a sense of shame because of ignorance of not knowing what he'd done. I don't think I was able to understand the way I understand now about the ways he was resourceful. I didn't think about him that way. I thought about him as a victim. And there was shame in that. And there was a real sense of denial. I didn't really want to know what had been done to him, because I just felt that he was a victim. I'm 34 now and I see it differently at 34. But, for most of my entire childhood, there was the sense of shame. And guilty - Oh, big time.

Oh, sure. Guilt. Guilt about everything. About doing anything that I felt would make him unhappy. Guilt, feeling guilty if I was angry or unhappy because I didn't want to make him unhappy. Guilt of not knowing what it was
I was supposed to do to make it better for him. And he just seemed so sad and so . . . just sad and depressed and alone and isolated. And I always felt that there was something I would do that would change that, if I could just figure out what. And we were surrounded by it. There was a whole group of people from . . . all emigrated and either lived in New York or Philadelphia. So, I was surrounded by Holocaust survivors all the time. There were like my cousins, my relatives on his side. Not a great time. He could bring the level of enjoyment in a room down to the ground. Just like a stone. My mother wanted him to do more public speaking about it, but it made him nervous. I heard some of the stuff he'd done in talks.

My mother was the exact opposite. I think underneath she was kind of depressed, too, but she tried to use a lot of things defensively to be happy all the time. She was a joker, you know. She was always on and it was her job . . . it seemed like she married him . . . and the contract was that she was going to try to lift his spirits. That was what her job was going to be. But she couldn't do that either. He was just . . . he had nightmares. My mother was telling me when they first got married, he'd wake up in cold sweats with nightmares. I think my Dad had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was never diagnosed. He never talked to anybody professionally. He was just scared all the time. Everything scared him.
I was one of those high-achieving types because I thought that was going to be the thing that was going to do it for him. Straight-A student. I was so afraid to do anything wrong or bad. I was the perfect teenager because I was so good. I was in National Honor Society. I just did everything I was told because I was scared to do something more. His fears really permeated my childhood. I didn't feel safe in the world and it took a long time to grow up. On top of this, my mother had a very serious heart condition. That's bad enough, but then to marry a man who lost everything, his wife becomes seriously ill, he's going to do everything he can not to lose that. That was a constant fear in his life and my sister and I had to live with that, too. Our fear that something is going to happen to her.

My Mom died in 1988. She had had two open heart operations. She'd had an aortic valve replaced twice. And one of the side effects of those valves, sometimes when you get older, is that they throw blood clots. And she was on a blood thinner. It sounds like she died very quickly. It happened very fast and it happened in a way that my mother would want. She died when she was entertaining. I feel sorry for the person she was having over to lunch (laughs), but . . . there was this new neighbor. She's nosy and as soon as a new neighbor moved in, she'd invite them over. But she wanted to know everything about them. This person knew my mother. Didn't know she had a heart condition. My
mother just dropped dead in the middle of lunch (both laugh). That was it. She was gone. And this poor woman. I loved my mother and I felt terrible about it. But, when you live with her being close to death for so long, you kind of get a morbid sense of humor about it.

Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession

I think it has everything to do with why I became a psychologist. Think it has everything to do with why I like working with an adolescent population, because it taps into my issues about separation and how I had such a hard time with it. And also the fact that my father ... I don't think it's a coincidence that my father was an adolescent, lived his adolescence in a concentration camp and I kind of just thought that through. It has everything to do with the fact that a lot of my work is in trauma. I got into therapy after my mother died and that's when I really did a lot of the hard work about who I am, separate from my father's experience. Am I entitled to do what I want and make decisions that may not make other people happy and assert myself? And I'm still not really, not a hundred percent good at that.

The thing that's hardest for me in my marriage to Alan is that I'm not as good at sharing my angry feelings as I could be. I'm better than I was, but I'm still not ... I keep a lot of stuff inside because I don't want to rock any boats. Because, in my house, growing up, I couldn't
communicate any anger or negative feelings because of everything my father went through. Because my mother was sick, too, and my father felt that the way to keep her alive was to never upset her.

So, I'm working on all this and I'm better at it than I was, particularly work-wise. I need to because I just really need better boundaries with my patients, people who are going through incredible amounts of suffering. I couldn't always make them better. You can't get into therapy . . . you can't be a therapist and feel like you can do that. You'll burn yourself out so fast.

Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

I think that Ethan's birth has allowed me to not tune out my father anymore. I think it's the very reason why I can listen to what he tells me about his experience. Because I feel I need to be able to let my son know someday what his grandfather did and what his family went through. But I think I'll do it very differently than my father did. It's not going to be dinner table conversation when they're three, four, or five years old. I think kids have too many fears at that point to do that to them. And my father used a lot of guilt, especially about not dating non-Jewish men. One time he said to me, "Well, if you marry someone who isn't Jewish, you're killing my parents all over again." That's a little heavy.
So it's important to me to communicate this heritage in a good way. The meeting in Germany was very good for me. It was a breakthrough for me in terms of anger because of some of the people I met in this group. I had to really deal with some intense rage that I couldn't ignore. But it was good for me, that was another step for me growth-wise to be able to confront someone and have them be okay about it. And nobody was going to be annihilated by my anger. It's helped me in my work, too, in terms of just being able to empathize in a much different way with people I work with. To see both sides.

Gertrude

Gertrude is the 58-year-old mother of two grown children who left her husband and the comfort of a quiet, middle-class life in 1983 to embark on a career as a peace activist. She is currently living in Berlin and has recently passed the exam to work as a Heilpratiker (a holistic health practitioner), although she would much rather work full-time for peace and social justice. Gertrude is also a member of a group of children of Holocaust Survivors and children of the Third Reich, and we met in Berlin in December, 1994, after returning from the Peace Convocation at Auschwitz.
Parents' Experience During the War

I was born in a small town in South Germany on the 10th of October, 1937. I have one sister. She's four years younger than I am. I was mainly raised by my mother and her sisters who had no children. Two, three sisters actually, but mainly two were in my close family. And the men during the war were either at the war or they were like my father, assigned positions that . . . my father was at a civilian job but he also did work for the military. He was a gardener and he was assigned jobs like excavating, excavating trees in the Black Forest for camouflage of airports. His last post was to be in charge of the garden, growing vegetables, huge, huge garden at the military airport for the American army and is now turned over, and is now becoming a civilian airport of Munich.

I remember it was . . . he still had this job at a time when most of my, of the other children's fathers . . . I was in Kindergarten at that time . . . we were already in the war. And in Kindergarten we were, you know, made proud of our fathers who fought for the nation. And I was always a little bit sorry that I had to say my father was a gardener and not a brave soldier. And I also think that my father, at least at the end, wanted to fight and not be called a . . . somebody who avoids fighting. So, in the last . . . he became a soldier very late, very late. Only in the last, maybe, I guess '43 he was trained in the Luftwaffe at . . . and I think that he came to be regular
army only in '44. According to my brother, he got into the Waffen SS in the end. Since January, 1945, that's now almost fifty years ago, he's been missing, so we don't know how he died or where. Well, where we can imagine, but it's not very certain, because in the last battles one could not really say where somebody was placed because hardly anybody returned. So, from his company they didn't find anybody.

Well, I remember a situation when my mother went out to get, to get food. And she had to go over, over land. And I was at home with my younger sister, alone, and she didn't come home. And when she did finally come home, the next day, she told the story . . . she didn't tell me but I overheard that she was attacked by deep flights. So she was afraid not to be able to come home again. But that didn't happen very often in our area. We only had one, one very serious bombing where a lot of people died. But mostly we had a lot of air raids, very many air raids because our town was close to Stuttgart. So, all the bombings for Stuttgart we had the air raids. So because sometimes it was quite nice to sit with the neighbors down in the shelter instead of going to sleep. Little children are like that.

When and How Gertrude Learned About the Holocaust

We children played outside on the streets; there were no cars or hardly any cars. This was after the war. And there was an older girl. I was maybe eight or nine and she
always told us things that the youngest would never be told by anybody else. And I remember that I, that I heard about how they had to strip naked. Because I remember that I thought this was awful. I was at an age where you wouldn't take off your clothes in front of other people. So this story must have been connected with the Holocaust.

I was fifteen when I became aware of the whole scope of the atrocities when I accompanied my sister to relatives in Switzerland. It was not possible to go to Switzerland without a special visa at that time. But my sister, my younger sister, was undernourished and I was allowed to be the person that accompanies her. And this was a pious family and they did Bible reading and praying every day, and always reminded, or were talking about, the terrible things that the Germans had done, looking at us all the while. And I felt very, very guilty. And also a little bit defensive. It wasn't pleasant for me.

As a child, you know, at first I did not think that the Germans were the bad people because if you . . . if you grow up in a loving surrounding and the nice people are around you, and then you have to go to the shelter because the enemies are so bad that they throw bombs. I mean, this is a picture that a little girl looks at, you know. Or, my father didn't come home, so I thought, "bad Russians." I didn't know at the time what the Germans had done to the Russians. So, it gradually changed, the picture of what was going on changed gradually, slowly, as I grew up.
Personal Development During Childhood

I think that some of my even earlier memories during the war were . . . led me to believe that something's wrong that the adults don't tell me. Would you like to hear about one of the things that affected me quite a bit? It was the christening of my younger sister. And later, by doing research, I found out that this must have been the day of declaring war on the Russians. And we had a family gathering. And I just, what I remember was the feelings . . . like it being a very happy, bright day, June. Everybody there, everybody happy. And then something dark, discussions. Something . . . they were sitting around the radio and I just remember the feeling, it's bad but it has nothing to do with me. I must have been five, four and a half, maybe.

So, I don't remember details, you know. But, later, I remember the feeling of being very happy and then something very dark comes, and wanting to escape. And this was also the subject of my early nightmares. I was always trying to escape by flying above the scene. I was afraid to go to sleep when I was little. They were recurring nightmares. And there were cages where they put people, my aunt, for example. My aunt was in the cage and they let the beasts pick at her. And I was trying to be pleasant and not . . . so that they wouldn't do it to me. Like, like I don't belong to her. It bothers me to be like that, but I was just trying to escape so that nobody would hurt me.
I have memories of my father when he was still a civilian. So when he came home, I was always happy because he was such a humorous man. And we had, you know, we stuck together against my mother, doing funny things where she would say, "Oh, isn't he a child, isn't that impossible!" Like he made a bed for me, for example. He made the bed and now he said, "Jump in and try if it's good." So, I said, "No, you do it." (laughs) And he did it and broke the bed. We just couldn't stop laughing and suddenly my mother, she was a very practical person, comes in . . . I think she was better at making the family survive somehow. (laughs) I loved him. I adored him. That's my memory.

So, whenever I had problems with my mother, I thought, oh, if only my father would be here, he would understand. This was an image that probably wasn't a reality, but I needed it. I grew up without, without men. My mother grew strong during the war. She was very good in taking care of us children. So I did not suffer much from starving or from being deprived of material things. We had a little garden and she always, she lived for us children. But she was not very good, and perhaps this has something to do with the war, with sensing the feelings of little girls. So, you know, you had to do your duty and be practical and why should you complain? You have everything. And I suffered from that.

She wasn't like somebody who was playing around, hugging us, she was always working. She literally worked
day and night. I mean, after the war, one had to somehow feed the kids. So, she worked during the day, usually at home, doing piece work at home. She didn't want to leave us alone. And suddenly there was . . . so little pay and so she had to work during the night. First, she did the piece work for the factory in the vicinity; and later she bought a machine to mend stockings, you know, men's stockings.

Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession

When I was 19, I went to England. I worked at first for a Jewish family in the outskirts of London, but not for very long. I had a strange feeling in that family. It was actually me who said I didn't want to work there anymore. I felt very, very guilty in that family, although they had not immediately suffered any of the Holocaust. Just because they were Jewish. And then I worked for an American, no, for an Englishwoman, whose husband was killed as the Royal Air Force combat fighter. And he was killed by the Germans. And she, every morning when I brought her breakfast, told me about it. But she was not really well. She told me history. It was not always blaming. She just wanted to talk about her experiences, about what she had in the war. So that was more history, not so much blaming. I think I did the blaming myself, you know, like self-blame. And when I think back, she wasn't,
she wasn't like, "Oh, you are a German." She had a German maid before me.

Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

There was a long period in my life when I was not thinking much about what happened outside. It was my life as a normal woman of a town, having a family, building up a business with my husband, having friends, going out, working, having little parties and so on. And I did not really, wasn't involved in politics and I didn't, you know . . . I knew there was a women's movement. I knew there was a students' movement. But it didn't affect me much. I didn't seem oppressed. I didn't feel that the students had much reason to revolt. I thought, "Well, they have it so good." I had the same thoughts as the conservative people think.

Then my children grew up and questioned me about my comfortable lifestyle and not thinking of what happens in South America or Nicaragua. I didn't even know where Nicaragua was and my daughter blamed me for not caring what (laughs) happens in Nicaragua, you know. I read the normal newspaper and watched TV news and we didn't really hear anything about these things. And it started when I was concerned that my daughter might be brainwashed. And I started to read what she read, and then I got all the alternative news, all the leftist news. And . . . I, in some respects, said, "If that's true, what they write here,
then I'm not very much better than my father, than the older generation who is, who was blind to what was really happening, in Germany," you know?

And some of the things I thought were true. But, what I see today is that I went too much the other way, like the pendulum swung too far. So, I had been blind for 25 years, and now I had to make up for the 25 years and I did it in too radical a way. It has much to do with this German history, you know, because why should I have been so concerned with what is happening in the world if I had not felt guilty about the blindness of my, of my country. I could not make good what happened then, but I could do it now. Now if injustice were done I had to fight for the oppressed and not turn my back on them. So, it really had to do with ... my past. And I think that the self-destructiveness in which I did it also had something to do with the German past.

When I was younger, I was very much ashamed, but also confused. I remember, right after the war, watching my mother cut her wedding pictures in half and burning my father in his SA uniform, and other papers and books with swastikas on them, in the stove, before the Americans came and found them. I know I should not carry the guilt forever, but, still, I get into these moods where I, I think I shouldn't forget. I shouldn't get rid of the burden. I know intellectually that it serves nobody, but in some instances, I can't help it. I've just started to
no longer try to make up things that my father might have
done. Just a few days ago, I said, "Now, I am going to
stop trying to dig up things that are not there." Just
because it cannot be that there was a nice Nazi, you know.
But now, I just think I have to take my father as he is and
not make up some criminal. Because apparently he was not.
I mean he was in the army, the Waffen SS, even at the end
of the war, and this is his guilt and his responsibility
and I don't want to erase that, but he wasn't a war
criminal.

It's not easy to be German at this time because there
are so many who say, "we are proud to be German." Now,
Germany is getting bigger again. Now Germany finally gets
its role in the world. Now Germany can have an army going
out again. You know, to be proud to be a German means
something completely different to most people than I want
it to mean. I want to accept my heritage, but I think as
part of this minority that doesn't deny the past; we have
to accept our Germanness in order to balance out this other
... which is very reactionary, yah? So, if you want to
find balance, there must be some Germans who accept to be
German and say, "We are Germans. We take responsibility
for our past and we want to heal," you know? Because the
German loss is tremendous also. We lost a whole culture, a
positive identity, and much that is good about German
culture.
I'm just beginning to be able to sing the songs again, German songs. And recently I sung them at my house and there were younger people who said they couldn't hear it. I said, "I understand; I respect your feelings. I couldn't hear them for many years myself, but these songs were there before the Third Reich." Suddenly they were sung in the Third Reich. That's why it's so difficult that we cannot sing them. There was a lot of singing and folklore and so on in the Third Reich that the people loved. But, you know, I understand that, for 50 years, we couldn't sing them. So, I think that now we have to give them a different meaning again. We have to allow ourselves what is good of our heritage.

Alan

Alan lives with his wife, Lois, also a participant in this study, and their two-year-old son, Ethan, in a peaceful neighborhood in West Hartford, Connecticut. The couple is expecting a baby girl in early May, 1996. Alan is 35 years old and has been a manufacturer's rep and distributor of pet supplies for the last eight years. He recently started his own business and is working 14 hours a day to make a go of it. Alan is also a member of a group of children of Holocaust survivors and children of parents involved in the Third Reich and he expresses a desire to be more involved in the work of this group and in Holocaust education in general. However, these are the years when
making a secure and comfortable life with his family is top priority. We sat in the living room for about an hour and a half while Alan shared the story of his family's plight during the war. Lois and Ethan took a nap.

Parents' Experience During the War

I grew up in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, which is north central Connecticut, not far from the Massachusetts border. I have a sister who is two and a half years older than I am and a brother who is seven years younger than myself. My sister lives, actually we all live in kind of a triangle . . . within 15 minutes of each other. My mother is the first generation born in the United States. Her mother came here from Russia after World War II. My father's family is from a village called Waranova, which, at the time, was in Poland, but today is considered White Russia or Byelorussia. The Jews in this community were used to having a hard time. They really had no love for the Russians or the Poles and they didn't feel like the War was their war. My family happened to be very active in town politics and, unfortunately, my uncle, who was the mayor of the town, was murdered by the Poles.

The people of Waranova were very scared when the Nazis came. The town quickly became a headquarters for the Germans in the area. What they were mostly interested in doing was rounding up people who were leaving the cities in Vilna, Lida, other cities in the area, the larger cities.
This was a very small community and within a short period of time, I would say a period of a few months, the situation grew very grim. And it was nothing like this community had ever experienced before.

And they, the Germans, made their selections. They would scare the life out of the Waranova community. Would scare the life out of anyone . . . which was they rounded up over 200 people who had escaped from other areas, in the local movie theater. And they locked them up in there for a few days without food or water. Then they proceeded to march them out to pits, which the people of Waranova were required to dig and then they were shot.

My family, my grandfather, grandmother, and father, who at this point was 12 years old, were selected to live and to be sent to the Lida ghetto, which is a larger ghetto of the south, approximately . . . which was about 20 miles south of Waranova. On the day of the selection, they called everyone out. My father decided to run. He was 12 years old and . . . a local Polish man caught him . . . my grandfather knew him and he told my father, "Look, if you don't go back, your father and mother will be killed." So they brought him back and they were spared.

From there, they were in the Lida ghetto for over ten months. Now, I believe we're in 1943. They had proceeded, once they got there, to make hiding places, like in any other ghetto. And they knew that they had to escape because otherwise it was certain death, either through
starvation or some type of illness or something that was in the ghetto. So, they had no option and they knew that. Many people who built what they called bunkers or hiding places were caught and, of course, immediately murdered. So building a hiding place was a very serious task and taken seriously. The Germans got a little more lax. And it was a rainy night . . . and they escaped. My father went with my grandmother and another child. And my grandfather took another child also. My father, at this point, was 13, and the two children were, one was somewhere in the neighborhood of six and the other about eight. They ran into the forest.

So what the Bielsky group did was they would send out people to see who was escaping from the ghetto and, fortunately for my family, they were found by one of these scouts and brought deep into the forest. They were split into different groups then. They had officers and people in charge and it was almost like a settlement, a city, an underground city in the forest. And this is how they survived for ten months until the liberation, when the Russians pushed back the Germans.

When and How Alan Learned About the Holocaust

There was never anything direct. It was always these people that my father was friends with and they're all special kinds of friends. They were people my mother didn't know but had heard of. There was a special kind of
familiarity, friendliness, almost like a family when they would get together. "Oh, this is somebody your father knew in the old country." Or, "this is from your father's home town." And then, of course, as time went on, my mother became, I wouldn't say a card-carrying member, but she was the spouse of one of these people. And then there was a little story here or a little bit there, but it was, I mean, I was so young it made no sense. I couldn't have been more than 8 or 9 years old before any of that stuff kind of stuck, that my father was separated from my grandfather. Nobody ever sat me down and said, "This is what happened. This is the way it was." Because in my family they didn't talk about it, not directly.

Personal Development During Childhood

Now that I look back on it from 25 years later, it had a severe impact on my parents' relationship and on how my father interacted with us kids. But, I'm not exactly sure why they wouldn't talk about it. My father never talked about it with his friends. But his special friends he would. They were all survivors. I remember doing stuff with my father. I also remember he had a nasty temper and he would say some hurtful things, not to me as a child, but to my Mom. I heard them and she used to recount things, you know, many years later.

He had a nasty ... he used to go off, just snap. He used physical punishment. We used to get strapped with a
belt. I never got hit across the face . . . I'd get a spanking or hit with a belt and stuff like that. And now that I have a kid, I think that was the ultimate worst thing in the world. I was terrified. When he was mad, I was absolutely terrified. And I'm not so sure if it was . . . I don't think that I was abused. It's not that. He would get out of control. I remember he grabbed my mother a few times and he choked her. So I mean he could take off. He could go off and he could say hurtful things, but my mother loved him dearly. So I think his experiences as a child . . . in my mind, I can't separate it, you know, that in some way, shape, or form, it had a severe impact on his psyche. I can't imagine my father's experiences as an adolescent not impacting him mentally.

Well, I went to this friend's stag last night and this man comes over to me whom I've been to school with his kids. And he was kind of a neighbor from a couple of streets over. And he said, "You know, I love your father. You father is the greatest guy, blah, blah, blah" I said, "I really appreciate hearing about this." It's kind of tough hearing about this at a stag, you know, but you take it where you can get it. Yeah, I mean, he died 25 years ago. He said my father would do anything for anybody. And he, they lived together at Hartford before we moved and bought houses in this new development. It was a big step for all these people with young kids. They helped each
other build rec rooms and my father had lots of friends . . . and so did my Mom.

I grew up in a very non-Jewish community. The way my mother puts it, "He wanted it that way." So you look by the mailboxes, "No, it doesn't look like there are Jews in this neighborhood. This looks good to me." I mean, I knew I was Jewish. I knew I was different from some of these other kids. At first, there were maybe about 12 Jewish families in this town of fifty thousand people. And, I mean, a lot of my friends were Roman Catholic. But my name was on the catechism rolls every single year. The kids would always get a chuckle. "Oh, yeah, yeah, he's just cutting class." Or something like that.

Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession

When I was about 19 and my father was already gone for quite a while, I started wanting to find out about my family background. I decided to go to school in Israel. I was an overseas student for a year. Then the whole world opened up from there. So, when I got to Israel, it ended up that my father's first cousin lived right behind the university. So, I used to jog over there and see my cousin . . . he's the same age as I am. So, I asked Fred to talk about it . . . I tried to find out a little here, a little there, about my father and his family. I really had no direction though. Then I took a class about genocide and there was a class project. I told the professor that I was
trying to track down information about my family throughout the year I was there and I said, "Do you mind if I do my research on this?"

To make a long story short, I was talking about this with my cousin and he put me in touch with some people who survived from my father's village. They said, "contact this gentleman, a pretty busy guy . . . he works in the government and he wrote a piece about the town of Waranova." This guy had the only English translation. So I called him and told him what I was doing. He said, "Oh, that's interesting." And I had no idea what I was doing. So he asks me my family name and my grandmother's name and then he tells me the name of my great grandfather. I said, "How did you know that? That's the man I'm named after." So he tells me to come to dinner the night after next. Then everything kind of snowballed from there.

That's how I learned my family history and it's had a big effect on my life, the person that I am today. Who I am and how I react to things, my temperament and manners. And I need to find out because . . . it was like the big secret, you know. I don't know. Maybe I shouldn't say secret, but it was a big mystery. And now I could fill in the blanks. So, a lot of the information I found is very painful, emotional, sad, and in the annals of history you can't find a comparison in many places. Just how do you compare the systematic destruction of a race of people of which you are a member?
For me, as the child of a survivor, this information has been very fulfilling to me. It's been very positive for me to know what my father went through and also very painful and emotional. I would like to devote more time to what we are a part of. I want to go back and . . . go back to Russia, to go back to my father's home town. And I would desperately like to do that. I would like to write. I would like to read. I would like to talk to and interact with my people. There's a million things I would like to do with this heritage.

Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

It would be nice if the world could learn from this so we don't have this type of mass murder or genocide today. But we have it. We have it in Bosnia, the ethnic cleansing is the same thing all over again. And, for me as a Jew, it's even more important to not turn our backs on those people. So I have a need to work with other people, to reach out and do more so people can live in peace. Sometimes trust is very hard and trust of non-Jews is, is especially hard. So, I am changing and . . . still, deep down in my heart, there are prejudices . . . And it's an everyday battle not to say something like . . . the term goyim. Goyim, to me, is a derogatory word. It means non-Jew, kind of, dirty non-Jew and this is what they did. So it's a battle. There's a battle goes on in everyone's heart, to choose not to hate. Not to pass the hate on.
Helga

Helga was born in Pozin, now in Poland, in 1943. She is the mother of two grown children and currently lives with her husband in Puchheim, a town in southern Germany, not far from Munich. Helga has spent much of the last six years uncovering the truth about her father's past and is one of the most courageous and honorable people I have ever met. She is a member of a group of children of Holocaust survivors and children of the Third Reich, and makes herself available for public speaking engagements. Helga has been increasingly helping others who want to research their family history and in her spare time she makes the most amazing puppets. Helga and I met at the home of a mutual friend in Berlin in December, 1994.

Parents' Experience During the War

My grandparents come from Russia, both sides came from Russia, but they were German immigrants to Russia. My parents married in 1939 in the beginning of the war. They came over to Pozin like all German people they were brought over to Germany to the Reich. I was born in Pozin, which is now in Poland, in 1943. I have two brothers and two sisters and I am born in the middle. So, they lived in Pozin and my mother wrote a story about the past, the family's past. And she said in this story that my father was responsible for the people to find rooms, the Germans. And so he had to make the Polish people move out and the
Germans move in. And my mother said to me, he made them take all their belongings, everything. But later my grandmother said that when they moved in the family had to just leave and even their supper was still warm on the table.

So there are two sides to the story of my family, one of the very good side, told by my mother and the other that I didn't find out until much later. The only thing I knew, I had heard from my sister, who was accidentally told by a friend of the family, that my father joined the SS. But when, if she wanted to tell it to me, first of all, it didn't mean anything to me. And I told her, "Oh, I'm not interested in ... I don't have a father. He's dead." So I knew he was in the SS, but it was the only thing I knew, and I wasn't interested in the topic of the war. Nobody in my family ever spoke about the war. Never. And I had no questions. I lived in a vacuum, I think.

My mother always said he was a good man. And when I started later on to have questions and I asked my mother's sister and she said, "Oh, nothing happened." But she told me my mother visited him in White Russia for three months with my oldest brother. Through some little accidents, some questions were answered. But everybody said, "nothing happened." He was a good man. He could not hurt a fly. He even saved some person's lives and a woman came once with flowers to thank him. He died in 1954, when I was thirteen.
When and How Helga Learned About the Holocaust

I had a lot of health problems and depression. It was very bad. I didn't want to live anymore. I was suicidal. I tried to suicide several times. Finally, in 1986 or 1987, after ten years of not knowing how to live and to die, I finally went to a hospital. And, after this, I made a five-year psychoanalysis. I had heard in Germany even the therapists are very much afraid of this topic and are avoiding it. I had the only therapist who was not afraid of it and told me, "You have to look at what happened to your father." Because I told him I knew he was a member of the SS. So he said because of my trauma or whatever difficulty I should know what he had done during the war. But I was still in a very big depression and didn't know where to start. It took me a very long time to find out where to go.

Finally, my sister was the one who brought me on the right way because her husband is an historian and he knew where to go. And so she wrote a letter to Ludwigsburg and she got the answer. She had to identify herself. Then she got afraid and did not do anything anymore. And I visited her up north in Germany and I said, "Okay. I can on my way back to Munich, if it's on the way, I will go and look for it." And that's what I did. And I came to this building and the guard let me in. Nobody asked for identification. I was brought to the lawyer. He heard my father's name and some minutes later I got a paper in my hand. It said that
my father (sighs) . . . can I say this . . . was acting in White Russia and was responsible for liquidating the Jews. And he was not only responsible. He was a perpetrator himself . . . because I saw . . . later I found witnesses.

I saw written stories of witnesses who said they had, they were women who did the laundry and they had to wash his laundry. His initials were on his laundry, sometimes his name. And it was bloody. So they knew he was very close to all this horror and he did it himself. So I found out, in a very short time, I got this paper in my hand and from one minute to the other (sighs) this father I had known before died. And in other documents that I saw later, there were witnesses that said he was a very sadistic killer. What can I say? Everybody was afraid of him, even the Germans. He was, he was a fanatic.

Personal Development During Childhood

I have two childhoods. The one I remember very clearly. I can tell you very clearly where every little flower was growing and the birds' nests; I can show you today . . . the same. I can show you where I caught the fishes, and which fishes in the water. I can tell you everything about the nature, but I cannot tell a word about my father. I nearly don't remember the adults of my family. I don't know how my grandmother looked alive. I don't remember my father at all. Just a few things I remember. I was very, very angry that he came home very
early in December, 1945, and wasn't injured. He had on his legs and nothing happened to him. Other children had fathers who were in Russia and came home very late. But I don't know why I was angry. I remember that I, when I was a little child, I went to bed and was always thinking that you have to love your family. You have to love them and they are always right. I always had to believe the people.

Emotionally, Suzanne, it is very difficult for me to talk about my own feelings. I would like to talk but I cannot because I cannot put my feelings in words. I never learned how to say my feelings. I can say I'm sad. I can say I'm lucky. It's a horror but I cannot tell you because I do not know how to. I'm glad I can feel now. I can cry now because, I didn't say yet. I found out during my psychoanalysis that he abused me even sadistically, he hit with his, oh the. I'm glad I survived him. I found out that he nearly killed me several times. And he abused me since I am a baby till I was thirteen. I had no memory of that.

Impact of Legacy on Chosen Profession

I can say now that this horrible day I found out my father's past was a birth for me, because I woke up. I opened my eyes. I learned to look. I feel very strong. The moment I found out, my depression was gone. I know, it's, if you have time to have depressions they are there. But, if you have no time, you have no time to be
sick. But I had to do something now. Even when there was time for depressions they didn't come back. One way it made me sick was to know what he had done to the people.

I cannot do anything with this heritage. I cannot make it not happen. The only thing I can do is talk about it. And in Germany, there are no people who want to know. I'm very glad I have this group I belong to. They're my friends. Some Germans, sometimes I get a bad feeling, they don't want me to talk about this... they make me feel guilty. But when I see the victim's side I know I am doing right, because I get a lot of response to this and they are very thankful for me to talk about it. So, I will go on speaking because I cannot do right for everybody. And, in this case, it's more important to help victims than to help the perpetrators. I cannot put it under the cupboard again.

Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

Sometimes it costs a lot to tell what really happens. My grandmother is still alive. She's 99 now. My mother, they are living together for 79 years. All their lives they lived together but they didn't want me anymore because I have questions and I don't want to believe when I hear the answers. I believe and I don't believe. I want to trust somebody but I can't because I know they are lying. They cannot tell the truth. It's broken. The connection is broken. I'm very sad because of my grandmother. I know
she saved my life several times. I know it. I don't know how she saved me but I know she did. There's a wonderful picture of her, me sitting on her lap, and she is holding a flower in front of her and my face. So I know she . . . she's good and loved me. I got some love from her. So I have lost my family because I can no longer accept the code of silence and denial.

I just came back from Auschwitz, from this horrible place where I must say I had a very wonderful time. It's a horrible thing to tell somebody. It was incredible. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the camp. People came from all over the world, monks and priests and peace people. I told my story and I had the feeling that I'm caught in a very safe like feather pillow, they catch me. I got so much love and now I feel like I am a different person. I feel very strong, but I don't know if I deserve all this. It's a horrible past and with this past I am honored. This topic is so horrible and what happened there doesn't fit. We sang and loved each other and hugged each other. We cried and laughed and danced together where this horror happened . . . and prayed together, Germans and Jews and all kinds of people from all over the world, that this will never happen again. I am invited to Jim's house, the man whose grandfather is from the village my father liquidated. My heart is so full. I have no words.
CHAPTER 5

THEMES WITHIN THEMES

Introduction

In Chapter 4, the participant profiles were crafted within the structure of four major categories that emerged from the original interview transcripts. In this section of the research, each of these categories will provide the framework, separate from the individual profiles, for a closer look at the issues, concerns, differences, and common experiences expressed by the participants. This organization of major themes (categories within the profiles) and sub-themes (themes within the categories) provides a focused and detailed background for the emergence of theoretical implications. This analysis of themes within themes will use quotes from the interview transcripts in order to preserve the essential meaning of the participants' stories. The themes within the four categories are listed in Figure 2.

Profile Category #1: When and How the Participants Learned About the Holocaust

This category emerged as the natural starting place in every profile once the participant finished telling his/her parents' story and began to reflect on how they themselves were affected by this heritage. How the participants came upon this information provided valuable insight into the nature and scope of communication between the parents and
**Categories and Themes Chart**

**Profile Category #1**

When and how the participants learned about the Holocaust and became aware of their parents' experiences as survivors, perpetrators, or bystanders during the Third Reich.

**Themes**

My parents told Holocaust stories for as long as I can remember.

I found out in school/from a TV movie.

The Holocaust is a taboo subject/nobody ever talked about it.

There were family secrets/I always sensed that something was wrong.

**Profile Category #2**

The affect of this legacy on the personal development of the participants during childhood.

**Themes**

Feeling different/isolated

Feeling ashamed

Feeling guilty/responsible

Living with depressed, fearful, traumatized parents

**Profile Category #3**

The impact of this legacy on participant's chosen profession and current work in the world.

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Figure 2. Categories and Themes Chart

Continued, next page.
Figure 2, continued:

Themes
Feel a need to participate in Holocaust education
Career provides opportunity for personal growth and validation
Profile Category #4
The participant's values and current thoughts on spiritual and social issues
Themes
The need to bear witness to the Holocaust
Meeting the descendants of the other side
Learning to find inner peace and self-acceptance

their children. As the participants attempted to answer this question, some spoke at length about how they learned to assimilate and manage the weight of this information. Others spoke about the burden of a sensed but unspoken darkness about their parents and their homes.

Themes
My parents told Holocaust stories as long as I can remember. This theme came up frequently, but in different ways, among the children of survivor parents and all but one of them grew up listening to their parents' stories. Sometimes the parents needed to talk to relieve themselves
of night terrors and overwhelming anxiety and the children were captive listeners. Anna describes what was a regular occurrence in her childhood:

My mother would come in the bed and tell me she had a bad dream and tell me about it, and scare me to death and then leave and go back to bed. I'd stay awake thinking the Nazis were down the street, or under the bed, or in the closet.

Some of the Holocaust stories heard over and over again by the survivors' children placed an emphasis on the horrors, near-death scenarios, and deprivation experienced by the parents. Anna describes some typical stories told to her by her mother:

I had to just try to make some sense of this nightmare story that I kept hearing again and again. How she got the blue numbers and how Dad got the blue numbers. She goes, "they didn't paint them on, you know. They burned them on . . . they used an iron like they do for cows . . . they burned my skin and you could smell it."

Anna continues:

And here I had to go to bed at night thinking about German Shepherds biting my mother in the ass. It's one of her big famous happy stories. And my grandmother burning in an oven and my little cousins. Typical story . . . she said, "you know your cousins, they walked into an oven and they handed them Hershey bars, and that's why they walked into the oven. They closed the door. They burned them."

Other participants heard stories from their parents that placed a greater emphasis on how they managed to survive against great odds. Zelda felt honored to hear these stories and remembers asking her father to tell some of her favorite ones over and over again in an effort to feel close to him.
I heard my father's stories almost on a daily basis when I was growing up. It was the way I connected with my father. We didn't sit and talk about how's the weather. We didn't go out and throw a ball in the back yard. You know, we didn't go on biking trips. We didn't go to the ocean together. We didn't do any of that. We developed a relationship by sitting and my being the listener and him being the story teller. From as long as I can remember.

Lois describes how her father's stories were such an integral part of her life they were almost ordinary:

I don't remember a time when I didn't know about the Holocaust. I'm not aware of any conscious memories that don't include my father's stories. I don't remember a time when anybody sat me down and said, "this is what happened to your father." It was just kind of like I always knew something bad happened to him. It was just something that was always with me.

This is further illustrated by the following incident:

When I was a little older, maybe nine or ten, my father kept his uniform in my closet in a paper bag, my bedroom closet. I have it here. I'll show it to you if you want. It's on its way to Washington to the Holocaust Museum. Anyway, I brought it in to my class in the eighth grade and gave a talk. And I freaked everybody out. And I didn't think I was going to freak anybody out. I just figured everybody knew. It was just there in the closet.

The participants who grew up listening to their parents' stories about the Holocaust were adolescents when they began thinking about what this heritage meant to them in terms of their own identity, their role in the family, and their place in the larger community.

I found out in school or from watching a TV movie. All four descendants of parents involved in the Third Reich report learning about the Holocaust in gymnasium (equivalent to our high school), when they were 14 or 15
years old. None of them ever heard anything about Nazi atrocities in their homes. Helga and Alexi remember only brief references to World War II in their history lessons and Gertrude mentions that there is a running joke among Germans of her generation (that is, perhaps, not so funny), that Germany history, as it was taught in school, stopped with Bismarck.

Beatrix remembers being shown a documentary about Auschwitz at school by some older students who were not authorized to do this, but who wanted to teach people about the Holocaust. She remembers the powerful effect it had on her life.

It was terrible . . . I just remember dead bodies everywhere. I especially remember the dead bodies of the children. I promised myself then that I would never have children. I think it was some older people at the school that tried to show us what happened to the Jews. And I still think that I can't bear children to a society that did that. I can't pass that on.

The Holocaust is a taboo subject/nobody ever talked about it. While some teachers at the gymnasium may have considered it their responsibility to cover the events of World War II, including some mention of the Holocaust, the parents of this second generation apparently felt no such obligation. Gertrude was 15 years old before she became aware of the full scope of Nazi atrocities when she traveled with her sister to Switzerland. There she was confronted daily with details of the horrible things the Germans had done, by the relatives she and her sister were staying with. Helga also reports never hearing a single
word about the Jews or the Holocaust when she was growing up. "Nobody ever talked about any of it, not even the war." Alexi found out, as an adult, that many of the Jews that lived in nearby villages where he grew up were deported or murdered during the war. He told me that he didn't remember any sense of amazement or shock when he heard about it because, on some level, he already knew, but not consciously. Alexi elaborates:

Well, all these things I found out only much later. Because at the time it was all unspoken, you know? They are not even able to think about the war and about the Nazi regime and all these things. They are not able to think, to make rational thoughts about it. They are not able, even now, to look back on their lives and look at what was good for them and what was bad for them.

There were family secrets/I always sensed something was wrong. Secrecy is a theme that runs throughout the experience of all the participants in one form or another. Alan, whose father escaped from the Waranova ghetto and lived out the war in the woods with the help of the Bielsky partisan group, overheard bits and pieces of his father's experience when the adults thought he was out of hearing range. He explains:

There was never anything direct. It was always these people that my father was friends with, and they're all special friends. There was a special kind of familiarity, friendliness, almost like a family, when they would get together. "Oh, this is somebody your father knew in the old country." Nobody ever sat me down and said, "this is what happened; this is the way it was." Because in my family they didn't talk about it, not directly. Except with his "special friends," with them he would talk about it.
Beatrix felt a strong attraction to a Jewish cemetery about a mile from her village. She describes what became her favorite playground:

It was a silent and very exotic place. No one visited it. Kind of a forgotten place. And there was something curious or something special about it . . . and the houses in the village, some of them anyway, were named after Jewish families. So I found out about some of them later, but at the time it was very interesting. I felt drawn to that place but didn't really understand why at the time.

Beatrix later traveled to Ohio and met some of the surviving relatives of the people buried in that cemetery. She also sensed, correctly, that her father, who was a doctor, had full knowledge of and may have participated in medical experiments. Alexi overheard a secret conversation between his father and his best friend, an SS officer, who describes what he saw when traveling to several concentration camps. Gertrude heard rumors from older children, with whom she played in the street, about the Jews being forced to take all of their clothes off.

Anna, Zelda, and Lois heard the stories of what their parents experienced frequently and in great detail, but secrecy also became an issue in their lives. In a way, they became the reservoir for family history that nobody out in the world wanted to hear about. Zelda states that she is honored to hold her father's stories, but it is also a burden and she feels sad that it is the primary way they relate. Lois learned quickly, when she brought her father's concentration camp uniform to school for "Show and
Tell," that some things are best kept secret, at least until your audience is prepared. Anna talks about being afraid to bring friends home because she never knew how her mother was going to behave. She speaks about living two separate lives, "the scary, dark one at home," and the other one, outside, among her "white bread friends," in which the reality of what happened to her mother increasingly becomes her secret.

Profile Category #2: The Effect of This Legacy on the Personal Development of the Participants During Childhood

In many ways, this theme cuts to the essence of this study. The way we build a sense of self, a separate identity with which to relate to others and learn to engage the world, is grounded in the way we are parented. When the parenting is provided by people who have suffered greatly, who are fearful and traumatized, or who live in a state of deep denial and dissociation, growing up can be very hard.

Themes

Feeling different/isolated. For children of Holocaust survivors, it would be difficult to not feel different. Information about the systematic murder of millions of innocent people, including the members of your family, as well as stories of extreme, often unbelievable, cruelty perpetrated against your parents by the Nazis, is hard to assimilate. Fortunately, children come equipped with a
number of defense mechanisms to ward off unmanageable levels of anxiety, including denial, repression, regression, projection, etc. All of the participants in this study mentioned feeling different and sometimes isolated from other people due to their heritage. For several participants, these feelings were strongest during adolescence and resulted in a lot of soul searching. Anna, who has been comforting and taking care of her mother since she was a very young child, expresses mixed feelings:

I definitely felt isolated growing up. I had a difficult time relating to other kids because I felt like I knew something or experienced something they couldn't begin to understand in their lily-white, padded lives of wholesome Wonder Bread and Captain Kangaroo and Rice Crispy breakfast. Life seemed so simple to my non-Jewish friends. They had so little to worry about . . . and here I go to bed thinking about my mother hiding from the Nazis in icy water under a bridge.

At the same time that Anna complains about feeling different and isolated from other children, you can also sense her pride, and even a mild sense of superiority for having shared and endured her mother's suffering. As she gets older, this feeling is transformed into a passionate commitment to tell her mother's story and make the world not turn away.

Zelda's family lived among other survivor families, first in Israel and then in Worcester, Massachusetts, and she describes being somewhat sheltered from the outside world until they moved to Boston when she was 12. "That's when it all began for me, the struggle. I think a lot of
the Holocaust stuff came up for me at that time." Zelda, who was named after her grandfather, Zalmon, changed her name to Karen, because the kids in school were mean to her and called her "Zelda, the witch." Suddenly, a name that was popular and considered beautiful in Israel made her feel ugly and different.

Zelda, Lois, and Anna all three speak about feeling different and inferior because their parents were immigrants. Anna stated that she had some American Jewish friends whose parents avoided survivors because they felt guilty about not doing anything to help during the Holocaust. Anna described other American Jewish kids as thinking they were superior just because they were Americans for a few generations longer and because, "my Dad was a butcher and their fathers were lawyers and doctors." For Lois, there was also a sense of being different and wishing she didn't have the family history she did. She states that,

... at the same time, I really didn't have a good reality base for how abnormal what I was hearing at home really was. I didn't realize that people would be so shocked by seeing a concentration camp uniform. It was just sitting in my closet, no big deal. So I carried both feelings.

The German participants grew up in their own country, devastated as it was after the war, and didn't experience a sense of being different until they traveled outside of Germany and were confronted with information about the Holocaust. When they questioned their parents about their
role during the war, they were met with a "wall of silence." Subsequently, it was their search for the truth that isolated them and made them feel different from their friends and family members who chose to remain steeped in denial.

Beatrix, who grew up with the fear that her father was involved in medical experiments during the war, traveled extensively in the United States and befriended the children of her father's victims as often as possible. About ten years ago, she invited her father to walk with her in the Jewish cemetery near their village and, for the first time, he admitted to her that he knew everything about the medical experiments. However, she never found out exactly what he did. For much of her life, Beatrix felt so different and outside of the human race that she couldn't allow herself to bring children into the world.

Helga's insistence on finding out the truth about her father resulted in her being disowned by her mother and grandmother. She became the family pariah and is accused of bringing dishonor to the family name. Helga's deep sense of isolation is somewhat alleviated when she speaks in public about her father's crimes. Gertrude experiences her German heritage as difficult and isolating, regardless of what her father did during the war. If the opposite of feeling isolated and different is having a sense of belonging, it is indeed difficult to place your identity
with a country that is associated with so much evil and is so disliked in the world community.

**Feeling ashamed.** Feeling ashamed of one's self or of one's parents was a common experience among the participants. Anna split her life into two, the "weird one" at home and the "normal one" outside, and she was very careful about whom she brought home because she was ashamed of her mother. "It's very hard to keep friends when you've got a cuckoo Mom." Lois and Zelda talk about being ashamed of their fathers because they were immigrants and old-fashioned in their ways. Lois also admits feeling ashamed of her father because she saw him as a victim. She explains:

> There was a sense of shame because of ignorance, of my not knowing what he'd done. I don't think I was able to understand the way I understand now about the ways he was resourceful. I didn't think about him that way. I thought about him as a victim. And there was shame in that . . . and there was a real sense of denial, too. I didn't really want to know what had been done to him, because I just felt that he was a victim. Now I am able to see it differently but for most of my entire childhood there was this sense of shame.

Beatrix, Helga, and Gertrude all express a deeply embedded sense of shame about the Holocaust and their German identity. For Beatrix, coming to terms with being German was a long process, sometimes a mourning process, which included the realization that she cannot get rid of this heritage. Beatrix elaborates:

> It's my life. It's not something outside or even something I'm thinking about and feeling responsible for anymore. It's inside . . . it's my center. Where I am, there is the Holocaust,
in a way. I can't run away from it. And it's not that I'm still mourning about the dead . . . it's that sometimes I have a picture of being . . . of having part of myself destroyed by the Holocaust.

Alexi's sense of shame seems to be rooted in his father's utter rejection of him and his inability to stop seeking his approval. He talks about being trapped in a cycle of self-sacrifice and self-destruction and blames himself for his father's cruelty. All of the German participants have experienced being shamed by others for inherited sins, for the actions of their parents' generation, and struggle to understand where they begin and end as separate individuals.

Feeling guilty/responsible. Needless to say, there is more than enough guilt to go around among the participants in this study and it takes many diverse forms. The children of survivors grew up feeling responsible for the well-being of their parents and they felt guilty every time they did something that might upset or worry them. Even during adolescence, when rebelling against your parents is "your job," Lois and Zelda managed it only half-heartedly because their parents were so traumatized and fragile. Lois describes her feelings about guilt:

Oh, sure, I felt guilty about everything. About doing anything that I thought would make him unhappy. I felt guilty if I was angry or unhappy because I didn't want to make him unhappy . . . Guilty for not knowing what it was I was supposed to do to make it better for him. And he just seemed so sad and so . . . just sad and depressed and alone and isolated. And I always felt that there was something I could do that would change that, if I could just figure out what.
Lois continues:

I was one of those high achieving types because I thought that was going to be the thing that was going to do it for him. Straight A student. I was so afraid to do anything wrong or bad. I was the perfect teenager because I was so good. I was in National Honor Society. I just did everything I was told because I was scared to do something more. His fears really permeated my childhood.

In addition to feeling responsible for her father's well-being, Lois also had to tread softly around her mother who had a serious heart condition and "threatened to drop dead on you whenever anything upset her." Anna talks about feeling guilty whenever she was angry at or felt ashamed of her mother. She used to go outside to wait for the school bus 20 minutes early, even in the dead of winter, so she could get away from her mother. Then at night, reminded by the nightmares of her mother's suffering, Anna feels "guilty as hell."

The children of survivors were parentified and grew up feeling responsible for their fearful and traumatized parents. They also wished their parents were different, more "normal" and nurturing, and socially acceptable. These feelings, however, are unacceptable in the face of their parents' suffering, as is their rage and disappointment in parents who cannot always meet their needs. But, how can you be angry at someone who spent their adolescence in Auschwitz?

The German participants describe parents who were harsh, distant, and unapproachable. Beatrix talks about
wishing she was not her parents' child and Gertrude idolizes a fun but absent father, while the mother who raised her was too busy working to stop and give her a hug. Helga emerges, at the age of 47, from a protective fog that hid the memory of an abusive father who she discovered was a sadistic war criminal. Alexi, who was severely beaten and emotionally abused, is trying to recover from the rejection of a man who sings Nazi marching songs and still has his walls covered with photographs of Adolph Hitler.

The children of these parents all struggled with strong feelings of guilt and personal responsibility, especially during adolescence when most of them first found out about the Holocaust. Beatrix describes an incident that occurred when she attended a death and dying workshop at a building that used to be a Benedictine Monastery:

One evening we had a service, a mourning service, and we were asked to write down the names of the people we were mourning about. And I wrote down the names of the two families that were deported from my home village. And, after the service, I felt restless in a way. I knew that the Jewish families were collected ... in a way before they were forced to go to the railroad station. And the thing was that the gathering point was in the garden of St. Benedict. It was like being in my center. Yes? And I was very restless until I prayed the Kaddish. Really, I don't know. I was so nervous and I felt so bad ... it was to me like my duty to pray the Kaddish.

All three women, Beatrix, Helga, and Gertrude, are involved in a process of learning to let go of feelings of guilt for crimes they had no part in, at the same time that they allow themselves to mourn the loss of Jewish lives and culture. They also mourn the collective loss of human
courage, compassion, and decency that was characteristic of their parents and their country during the Third Reich.

Living with depressed, fearful, and traumatized parents. Much has already been said about the nightmares and deep depression experienced by the survivor parents in this study. Although none of them were officially diagnosed or engaged in psychiatric treatment, it is likely that they all suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to one degree or another. As a result, Lois and Zelda describe parents who were very controlling, overprotective, and fearful of the outside world. Zelda elaborates:

She was afraid of the outside world and she wanted to keep us safe in the house. So, when we went out, she was always afraid. I always made sure to come home early so she wouldn't worry. Because I knew how she'd get when she worried. When my brother was younger, he would cut himself and she would see blood and we wouldn't have time to fix his cut because she'd be too busy fainting. She couldn't handle anything where there was a risk that somebody might be hurt. They were both pretty traumatized and overreacted, probably to a lot of things like that.

Lois was often angry at her father because he was "overly protective, overly cautious, and downright suspicious. He had difficulty letting us do anything on our own or take any risks. This was hard for me. It bothered me a lot." Lois and Zelda both describe their homes as dark and depressing. They were surrounded with Holocaust survivors all the time and Zelda states:

The hardest part for me was the weight that sat on my heart ... I think. The losses. That's how I was burdened by it more than anything else.
Being reminded of it all the time because my father kept constantly telling his stories. So, I was constantly reminded of what he left behind, of what he lost.

Alan has fond memories of his father who died when he was 12 years old. He also has memories of a man who had "a nasty temper and would just snap sometimes." Alan states:

He used physical punishment. We used to get strapped with a belt. I never got hit across the face. I'd get a spanking or hit with a belt and stuff like that. And now that I have a kid, I think that was the absolute worst thing in the world. I was terrified. When he was mad, I was absolutely terrified. He would get out of control. I remember he grabbed my mother a few times and choked her. So, I mean, he could take off. He could go off and also say some hurtful things, but my mother loved him dearly.

Zelda also grew up with a father that "was full of rage." In her family, it was her brother who was physically punished when he started hanging around with the wrong crowd and getting into trouble. Zelda talks about her father's rage as some darkness that would just overcome him. "All that rage, that he really wanted to smack the Nazis, but we were his only targets." Anna also considers herself an "abuse survivor" and describes a mother who "sometimes flew into a rage and ran her home as if it were a concentration camp."

The parents of the German participants were also depressed after the war. They had endured years of bombing raids and economic hardship and then they suffered a crushing defeat in the war. Alexi describes how his parents felt after the war:
They were kind of like beaten children who are ashamed about what they did. But still, they, they can't see what they did wrong. And like everybody else, they hid away their real fantasies and feelings.

Gertrude remembers a scene from her childhood:

My mother is kneeling in front of the huge tiled stove, stuffing paper and torn books with swastikas into the opening. We live in the outskirts of a small town. No more air raids but occasional shootings in the distance. The adults don't talk much. The Americans are drawing closer and they will slaughter us. It is scary to see my strong mother in such a panic. I watch as she cuts her wedding picture in two parts, burning my father in his SA uniform. We did not know at that time that he was probably killed in action three months earlier. It is April, 1945.

Unlike the homes of the survivors, which were filled with nightmares and intense emotions, fear, sadness, and sometimes rage, the German homes were deadly silent, and the parenting was cold and overly strict. Alexi describes routine beatings that had as much to do with his father's child-rearing philosophy as with anything he or his brother ever did wrong. His father was an authoritarian man and Alexi spent his childhood doing and thinking what was expected of him. Independent thinking and strong feelings were not encouraged and only hard work and obedience kept the strap away.

Helga was also taught that you have to love your family no matter what and that "they are always right." She talks about not having any thoughts or opinions of her own and not being interested in much of anything until she started psychoanalysis in her forties. Gertrude is impressed by her mother's ability to earn a living and hold
the family together during and after the war, but she describes her as lacking in affection and "unable to sense the feelings of little girls."

One of the more difficult aspects of growing up with these parents was their inability to be emotionally available to their children. Helga tells me, "it is very difficult for me to talk about my own feelings. I would like to but I cannot put my feelings into words. I never learned how . . . to say my feelings." These parents survived their war trauma and their feelings of guilt and shame by dissociating from their feelings and engaging in non-stop work. Alexi suggests that his parents and probably many other Germans of their generation are still unable to think about what happened during the Nazi regime. Beatrix wrote to me a month or so after our interview and told me that her father had died during the exact time of our meeting in Berlin. She felt that our talk had allowed her to forgive him and that, sensing her forgiveness, his Soul felt free to move on.

Category #3: The Impact of This Legacy on the Participants' Chosen Profession and Current Work in the World

This category emerges as one of the primary ways the participants find to make their parents' suffering and trauma have meaning in the world. They, each in their own way, feel that they've gained in knowledge and inner
strength because of their heritage and want that experience to be of benefit to themselves and others.

**Themes**

*Feel a need to participate in Holocaust education.*

While attending college in Israel, Alan engaged in extensive research about his family background and was able to obtain a written account of how his father and grandfather survived in the woods of White Russia with the help of a partisan group. He hopes to travel there someday and is interested in continuing his research and finding opportunities to share his family's story. Alan and his wife, Lois, are both very concerned about passing on their legacy in a positive way to their children. Lois has come to realize, in the last few years, that her father was indeed a survivor, not a helpless victim, and she is learning to hear his stories in a new way.

Anna has written a play about her mother's experience in Theresienstadt, which has been taken out of moth balls and is being shown in schools throughout the Boston area. Zelda has also written a play about the Holocaust and has recorded every one of her father's stories. She and Anna speak in schools, churches, and synagogues on a regular basis.

Gertrude works as a peace activist and also speaks publicly about the Holocaust, as do Beatrix and Helga. Beatrix explains that there were many signs and seeming
accidents that led her to become a pastor. She sees educating the world about the Holocaust as an important part of her ministry.

Career provides opportunity for personal growth and validation. Lois is a clinical psychologist and says that her father's experience during the Holocaust had a lot to do with her career choice. She has worked extensively with adolescents and also with trauma survivors, which has helped her to better understand herself and her father. Lois' father spent his adolescence at Auschwitz and other concentration camps. She now understands that he survived, not only because he was young and strong and could work, but also because he had inner strength, courage, and forbearance.

Both Anna and Zelda fell in love with acting and the theater. There, they found an opportunity to express themselves, to tap into their creativity, and too finally get some personal validation. Anna describes going to her acting teacher's homeroom every morning to chat with him about plays and acting techniques:

He gave me a major part in Pajama Game, my first show. The ovations, the applause, positive feedback. I got to sing, which I do well, and I got to dance and do things and wear costumes. It was phenomenal. I'd never known anything so joyous. So much reward in doing theater. I never left it from the day I stepped into that room, went back stage. I have been on stage, near a stage, teaching theater at some school or at some community college since 1964.
Zelda had "hit bottom and was going through a real identity crisis" just before she decided to go back to school and study theater:

I want to be an actress; I don't care what my mother says. I want to do it. So I went back to school and studied with one of the top coaches in Boston, who constantly built me up and gave me credit. And said I had potential. And I worked with some very good teachers at Brandeis. And so, I did convince myself that I was okay and I wasn't just suited to be a mother and a wife and stay home and cook and clean.

Growing up as they did, with depressed and traumatized parents, few of the participants received the encouragement and support they needed to develop self-esteem. In addition, the process of individuation and the development of a separate sense of self was hard fought and late in coming. For some of the participants, acting class and the work place became the arena within which this process could finally be completed.

Category #4: The Participants' Values and Current Thoughts on Spiritual and Social Issues

This last category emerged as a way of collecting what lessons, common concerns, and meaning the participants give to their experience as children of Holocaust survivors and children of parents who served the Third Reich. At the same time that each person's experience is highly personal and unique, there are a surprising number of shared issues and problems between the two groups. The participants are connected by a difficult and painful legacy and they seem
to have developed a similar sense of what is important and of value about their experience.

Themes

The need to bear witness to the Holocaust. All eight participants in this study have a strong commitment to actively bear witness to the reality of the Holocaust. Anna feels that her whole life has been based on the fact that people don't care enough, that the whole world, not just the Germans, allowed the Holocaust to happen; that nobody did anything to stop it. Living as closely as she does with the consequences of that indifference, Anna considers it her life's work to educate as many people as possible about what happened to her family. Beatrix, similarly, feels "a calling from God" to work for peace in the world and to help Germans who want to take responsibility for their heritage. She asks, "otherwise, why do I have the opportunity to meet Jewish friends and to learn how to mourn for what happened to them?"

Zelda states that, "as long as I have breath and am physically alive and present, I will tell my father's stories, at schools, wherever they will hear me." Zelda's father has told her frequently that the reason he survived was so that he could bear witness to what happened to the Jews at Auschwitz and the other concentration camps. Zelda considers it a duty and an honor to continue that tradition and to bear witness to what hatred and fear can do.
Lois and Alan express a need to find a healthy and responsible way to inform their children about the family history. They also want to continue to research and document their parents' stories and to learn as much as they can about the Holocaust. Lois says, "it is important for me to communicate this heritage in a good way." Like Anna, Alan struggles to understand how such horrible things could possibly have happened. Almost as if to answer his own question, he expresses great sadness about the "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia that nobody is doing anything about.

Alexi speaks out about the hypocrisy of his parents' generation, who prayed day and night and were so pious until Hitler came along and became their new god. Then, after the war, they went back to the church and took up their old prayers as if nothing had ever happened.

Gertrude's response to her guilty feelings about what she calls, "the blindness of my country" was to become a political activist for several years. She explains, "I could not make good what happened then but I could do it now. Now, if injustice were done I had to fight for the oppressed and not turn my back on them." Nowadays, Gertrude says she takes a less radical, more balanced approach to bearing witness to her German past.

Since uncovering the truth about her father, Helga has become estranged from her mother and grandmother but has made many new friends. She has become quite the sleuth and is getting requests to help other people who want to find
out what their fathers did during the war. Helga's courage and willingness to suffer the truth of her father's crimes is an inspiration to everyone who meets her.

Meeting the descendants of the other side. There was a joint meeting for children of Holocaust survivors and children of the Third Reich that took place in February, 1993, in Neuenberg, Germany, which was attended by several of the participants in this study. The meeting lasted for four days and, before it was over, deep and enduring friendships were formed that continue to this day. Several members of this group were also present at the Peace Convocation that took place in December of 1994 at Auschwitz to commemorate the liberation of the camp. Anna talks about the importance of meeting "face to face, heart to heart," to listen and speak the truth to one another. She adds that "when the children of natural enemies can do this, there is hope for the healing of our planet."

Zelda describes the meeting in Germany with the children of the Third Reich as "an absolute miracle." Since then, Zelda has invited Helga over to her house to meet her parents. She credits the meeting in Germany and her new German friends for helping her to rid herself of "the poisonous hate" that she carried around and which she says kept her from being whole. Alan and Helga met at this meeting and discovered that Helga's father was responsible for liquidating the ghetto where Alan's father and grandfather were until they escaped into the woods of White
Russia. Alan and Helga have become very close and she speaks of him as being "like a new brother." These relationships between the descendants of Holocaust survivors and the Third Reich are sacred and very important to everyone in this study. They provide sufficient support and love to foster healing and help to lighten the load of carrying this difficult legacy.

**Learning to find peace and self-acceptance.** Like all of us, the participants in this study strive to attain some inner peace and come to terms with who they are. Anna talks about learning to be less confrontive and allowing herself an occasional vacation from what she calls her "Holocaust Hobby." Lois and Alan are inspired to "make peace with and communicate their heritage in a good way" to their two-year-old son, Ethan, and the baby girl who is on the way. They want to make sure that the next generation, at least in their house, "knows about their heritage but isn't scarred by it." Zelda states, "when I got rid of the fear I was able to feel strong about myself, wake up and realize that I do not deserve to be abused anymore." She elaborates:

The people that are in my life today are very patient, very loving, and they don't shut me up. You know, they honor my feelings at the moment and my story at that moment . . . and I receive validation all the time. It's okay to be who I am today with all my struggles and with all my insecurities. And if it means having been a survivor's child to reach the path of awareness where I am today . . . of letting go of judgment . . . so be it.
Alexi wants to find a place where he can live in
harmony with nature and grow his own food. He is exploring
different holistic healing techniques and says, "I want to
live my life in peace, in such a way that doesn't do harm,
that doesn't harm the earth or other people." Beatrix has
been through a long process of healing and of coming to
terms with her heritage. She realizes that she cannot get
away from being German or from what her father did and she
says, "where I am, there is the Holocaust." She explains
that she is not talking about something morbid, but of just
being with and accepting who and what she is.

Having immersed herself, for far too long, in
unhealthy and unnecessary amounts of guilt and shame for
the sins of her country, Gertrude talks about trying to
find a more balanced way to live with her heritage:

I know I should not carry the guilt forever, but
still I get into these moods where I think I
shouldn't forget. I shouldn't get rid of the
burden. I know intellectually that it serves
nobdy, but in some instances I can't help it.
I've just started to no longer try to make up
things that my father might have done. Just a
few days ago, I said, "now I am going to stop
trying to dig up things that are not there."

Gertrude spoke about being able to sing German songs
again that nobody sang for 50 years because they were
associated with the Third Reich. She explains that these
songs were there long before the Third Reich and that it is
time for Germans to allow themselves some solace in what is
positive about their culture. Gertrude elaborates:
It's not easy to be German at this time, because there are so many who say, we are proud to be German. Now Germany is getting bigger again. Now Germany finally gets its role in the world. Now Germany can have an army going out again. You know, to be proud to be a German means something completely different to most people than I want it to mean. I want to accept my heritage but I think as part of this minority that doesn't deny the past, we have to accept our Germanness, too, in order to balance out this other . . . which is very reactionary. So, if you want balance, there must be some Germans who accept to be German and say, "We are Germans. We want to take responsibility for our past and we want to heal," you know. Because the German loss is tremendous also. We lost a whole culture, a positive identity, and much that is good about being German.

At an interfaith service which took place at Auschwitz in December, 1994, people were asked to call out the names of spiritual leaders that had been an inspiration to them. Gandhi and Buddha and Martin Luther King were named among other great teachers and people of peace and love. Towards the end of the naming ceremony, somebody called out Helga's name and she was asked to go to the front of the auditorium where she was hugged by one of the Rabbis whose grandfather lived in a village that was liquidated by Helga's father. Helga is adamant that she does not want to be made a hero for being the daughter of a sadistic killer, but she cannot help but be loved for her courage and her commitment to the truth.

Perhaps one of the greatest losses experienced by the German participants is the loss of parents who could be open and honest and models of higher human virtues. For Helga, Beatrix, Alexi, and Gertrude, there is a need to
build a new identity based on integrity, responsibility, and an acceptance of the past.
CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This study revealed the insights and life experiences of eight articulate and courageous people who have grown up with the legacy of the Holocaust. Some historical and psychological context, as well as a glimpse into current thought in Holocaust studies was provided by the literature review. This information provided a rich and thought-provoking background within which to better understand the life stories of the participants.

Four of the participants in this study are the children of parents who survived Nazi atrocities in concentration camps, forced labor camps, or by hiding in the woods of White Russia with the help of a partisan group. The other four participants have parents who were members of the SA, SS, or the Waffen-SS. One of the parents was involved in the euthanasia program and another one was responsible for the liquidation of the Jews in White Russia. Each interview began with an in-depth description of their parents' experiences during the war and was followed by a reflection of when and how they first heard about the Holocaust.

The children of Holocaust survivors grew up hearing about the horror and suffering their parents went through, often in great detail. They learned to hide their feelings
and walk lightly in their homes so as not to upset their already traumatized parents. They were parentified and, because their parents were sometimes unable to control their rage, they endured physical and verbal abuse. They felt isolated and different from their peers and guilt and shame were their regular companions. Nevertheless, they were strongly connected with their parents and felt angry at the world for abandoning them and their people. They, each in their own way, grew up to honor their parents and to bear witness to their heritage in a positive and compassionate way.

In contrast with the children of survivors, who knew about the Holocaust at an early age, the descendants of the Third Reich were in High School before they came into contact with any information about the extermination of the Jews. Their parents never spoke to them about the war or the Holocaust and two of the participants first learned the full extent of Nazi atrocities when they were traveling in England and the United States. They were burdened with feelings of shame and guilt for the crimes of their parents' generation during their adolescence and had a very difficult time developing a positive identity.

The children of survivors were cut off from their family history because their grandparents and other family members were murdered by the Nazis. The descendants of the Third Reich also had their past cut off at the roots because of their parents' silence and denial. Their
upbringing was harsh and lacking in warmth and affection and sometimes they, too, were the victims of child abuse. Most difficult of all was the sense of secrecy and the feeling that they came from an "evil people," and carried some "bad seed." Because their parents lacked the courage and integrity to be honest about their history, the children were left to imagine the worst and to carry the burden of sins that were not their own.

All of the participants describe a process of healing and of coming to terms with who they are, separate from their parents. Many of them finally found the nurturance and validation they needed to feel whole in their work; in the performing arts, as educators, psychologists, religious leaders, and in working for world peace. They have all found the inner strength to deal with this dark and painful legacy and emerge as loving, socially conscious and courageous people.

All of the participants have experienced a lifting of the burden by meeting with and developing friendships with members of the other side. They have been to each others' homes and even met each others' parents. Zelda credits her German friends for helping her get rid of the hatred that kept her from being whole. Helga is reminded by the children of survivors that she is not her father and doesn't have to carry his guilt. Lois discovers that she can express her rage without annihilating anybody and Alan can hug the daughter of the man who ordered the liquidation
of the ghetto where his father lived and come to think of her as a sister.

Implications

The implications of this study are many. First, I am reminded of the power and healing capacity of being able to speak one's truth and be heard. The simple act of listening without judgment, of bearing witness with an open heart, can mend the wounds of generations. The possibility that people with an inherited enmity can meet one another, recognize their common humanity and work together for peace and reconciliation is huge and leaves me feeling very hopeful.

I am reminded of how, in spite of being unique and unlike any other, we all want and need the same things; to be loved and nurtured and free to become the sacred beings we already are. I am reminded of the human capacity to endure, to move through great suffering, and emerge, wiser and more beautiful, with an even greater love for life.

I am reminded that we are not alone, that we are not separate beings able to act with impunity in ways that do not affect us all. When we kill the Jews of the world, we destroy our own Souls. I am reminded that we must bear the burdens of our inhumanity and, by speaking the truth, make of our hearts a place where love can grow.

I am reminded that the capacity for good or evil runs through the heart of every man and woman and the choices we
make and the willingness to take responsibility for those choices determine the nature of our character. I am grateful for the long and growthful journey that this study has taken me on and would like to close this chapter of my life with a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh (1987) entitled, "Please Call Me By My True Names."

Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow because even today I still arrive.

Look deeply: I arrive in every second to be a bud on a spring branch, to be a tiny bird, with wings still fragile, learning to sing in my new nest, to be a caterpillar in the heart of flower, to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry, in order to fear and to hope, the rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that are alive.

I am the mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river, and I am the bird which, when spring comes, arrives in time to eat the mayfly.

I am the frog swimming happily in the clear water of a pond, and I am also the grass-snake who, approaching in silence, feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks, and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the 12-year old girl, refugee on a small boat, who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate, and I am the pirate my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo, with plenty of power in my hands, and I am the man who has to pay his
"deb't of blood" to my people,
dying slowly in a forced labor camp.

My joy is like spring, so warm it makes
flowers bloom in all walks of life.
My pain is like a river of tears,
so full it fills up four oceans.

Please call me by my true names,
so I can hear all my cries and my laughs
at once.
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names,
so I can wake up,
and so the door of my heart can be left open,
the door of compassion (p. 64).
Please tell me about your parents' experience during the war.

How old were you when you first heard about the Holocaust and how did it affect you?

What was it like in your home when you were growing up?

Please tell me how your parents' experience affected your choice of career or your work in the world.

How has this legacy affected your relationships with other people?

What was it like for you to participate in this interview?
This interview is part of a study entitled, "Exploring the Psychological Effects of the Holocaust on the Second Generation: A Phenomenological Inquiry with Children of Holocaust Survivors and Children of Parents Who Served the Third Reich." The children of Holocaust survivors and the children of the Third Reich have inherited a painful and difficult legacy. The purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of how they dealt with the unresolved issues of fear, guilt, and shame handed down from their parents' generation.

This study is being conducted as part of the doctoral work of Suzanne Brita Schecker at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst. The information generated from this interview will be used initially in a doctoral thesis. It may, at a later date, also be used in articles or a book. The following conditions will apply regarding the safeguarding of information collected for this study:

1. All information will be recorded anonymously. A code will be used to identify tape and transcriptions of the interviews. No individually identifiable information will be used and confidentiality is assured.

2. Participation in this study is voluntary and the participant may withdraw at any time. If the participant withdraws, all written and audio materials will be destroyed.

3. The participant may request at any time that all or any part of the interview not be used.

4. There will be no monetary compensation for participation.

5. There is no anticipated risk in participation.

I will be happy to share with you written materials that are derived from this study at its conclusion. If, at any time, you have questions or concerns about this study, please call Suzanne Schecker at (413) 586-9368.

I have read the foregoing statement and discussed it to my satisfaction with Suzanne Brita Schecker. I wish to participate in the study.

Date: __________________ Signature: __________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY


