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The Cross-Generational Transmission of Trauma: Ritual and Emotion among Survivors of the Holocaust

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Abstract

This article investigates the role of ritual in the cross-generational transmission of trauma among first- and second-generation Holocaust survivors. Based on a qualitative study of thirty-five second-generation survivors, the research examines the extent to which Jewish rituals were maintained in the postwar home and the ways in which the ritual life of the survivors conveyed the traumas of the past through the emotional dynamics of ritual observance. The findings of the research suggest that ritual was an important site of emotional exchange within survivor families and that in adulthood, the children of survivors have engaged in ritual innovation to separate from their traumatized parents. The principles of self-in-relation theory are used to illuminate the social psychological dimensions of ritualized transference across generations.

Keywords

trauma, emotion, ritual

Over the past two decades, the cross-generational transmission of trauma has become an increasingly important area of study. To a large extent this research has focused on second-generation Holocaust survivors who, according to the

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literature in the field, have "inherited" the posttraumatic symptoms of their traumatized parents. Beginning in 1966, psychiatric and psychological studies of the second generation of Holocaust survivors described the children of survivors as suffering from nightmares, guilt, depression, fear of death, sadness, and the presence of intrusive images (Baranowsky et al. 1998; Bergman and Jucovy 1982; Binder-Byrnes et al. 1998; Hass 1990; Holmes 1999; Prince 1985). Although research has found these symptoms to vary among second-generation survivors, the overall findings suggest that the Holocaust is "a dominant psychic reality" (Bergman and Jucovy 1982, 312) that is informed both the psychological and social development of the children of survivors. In particular, the research stresses the difficulty with which the second generation struggled to separate emotionally from their traumatized parents (Fonagy 1999; Kellerman 2001a; Sorscher and Cohen 1997).

In addition to posttraumatic stress disorder in the children of survivors, researchers investigate how older generations convey trauma to younger generations. The research focuses primarily on two modes of parental (first-generational) communication, which are obsessive storytelling and deep emotional silences (Baranowsky et al. 1998). In the first mode of communication, obsessive storytelling, parents were likely to speak continually and graphically about their experiences of Nazi persecution. Parents shared, even with young children, the horrors to which they and their relatives had been subjected. In the second mode of communication, deep emotional silences that are more difficult to articulate and assess, parental trauma was conveyed through what Bar-On (1995, 20) has termed "the untold story," feelings and emotions that permeated the survivor household. According to Bar-On (1995), it was these unspoken feelings that were most influential in the generational transmission of Holocaust trauma.

Although traumatic inheritance research is extensive and ongoing, little work exists on the social contexts in which survivors communicated told and untold stories to the children of survivors. More specifically, intergenerational transmission of trauma research tends to overlook the role that religion and family tradition have played in traumatic transference. This omission is especially glaring given the emotional quality of ritual behaviors. The goal of this study therefore is to explore the relationship between the cross-generational transmission of trauma and the observance of religious ritual in the post-Holocaust family. Based on a qualitative study of thirty-five second-generation survivors, I examine how families maintained Jewish rituals in the postwar home and how the ritual life of survivors conveyed the traumas of the past through the emotional dynamics of ritual observance. As an investigation into ritual and emotion in the post-Holocaust family, these research

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findings inform the study of the intergenerational transmission of trauma in three significant ways. First, I examine ritual as a site of traumatic transference. Second, I apply self-in-relation theory to the cross-generational transmission of trauma. Finally, I analyze ritual as a path to autonomy among second-generation Holocaust survivors.

Method and Participant Characteristics

I conducted the research under the auspices of the University of Colorado in accordance with the guidelines for research on human subjects. I obtained participants for this study through contacts with Children of Holocaust Survivor organizations and using a snowball sampling methodology. I first approached two Children of Survivor organizations in the Rocky Mountain region that met regularly. I explained that I was interested in studying the effects of mass trauma on the second generation and would be interested in attending their meetings, if that was permissible, and in interviewing the members individually. Both groups were open to my research and invited me to their events and social gatherings. Consisting of between ten and fifteen members, the groups met to share their experiences of growing up in survivor households and to create friendships and social support systems with other second-generation survivors with similar experiences and backgrounds. In addition to participant observation at these gatherings, I also conducted in-depth interviews with group members, as well as other second-generation survivors through snowball sampling. In extending the research beyond the Children of Survivor Organizations, I expanded the study to include second-generation survivors who were living in New York, Los Angeles, and Boston.

Altogether, I interviewed thirty-five second-generation survivors: seventeen women and eighteen men between the ages of forty-six and fifty-eight. The in-depth tape-recorded interviews ranged between two and four hours, and they were transcribed for the purposes of analysis. Using a life history approach, I followed an open-ended interview schedule focused on family history, the transmission of knowledge about the Holocaust, religious upbringing, and current spiritual beliefs and practices. The majority of the interviews took place in the homes of the participants, and I conducted all of the interviews ensuring confidentiality. Because of the familial location of the interview sites (e.g., family homes), respondents frequently shared photographs, family documents, and precious family artifacts that had survived the war. In some instances the process of sharing led to tours through the participant's home, as she or he pointed out framed photographs of their

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parents before and after the war and of other family members who did not survive. Other times, respondents produced carefully assembled scrapbooks that chronicled their parent's ordeal and survival in newspaper accounts published in local newspapers during the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the interview settings were, in many cases, field sites in and of themselves—they were spaces of memory and family culture where participants framed recollections of the past and narratives of childhood by the familial surroundings that enriched and recalled the respondents' ties to loss, survival, and catastrophe.

My connection to the participants was intensified by the surroundings where the research took place, homes where families preserved the traumas of the past both in the material and emotional culture of the second generation. The in-depth interviews helped to strengthen my empathic bonds to the respondents to whom I already felt connected because of my own postwar Jewish childhood. In the East Coast suburb where my family lived, there was a small survivor community whose presence was acknowledged in whispers and lowered voices, quietly revering those who had "been in the camps." Decades later, when I approached the children of survivors for this research project, I carried with me my own memory of their imagined parents, shopkeepers, and teachers who had survived Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Treblinka—sites of Nazi terror that, at an early age, had been indelibly inscribed into my own Jewish consciousness. As a result, the interviews were often deeply emotional both for the respondents and for me as each of us negotiated the feelings engendered by the persistence of traumatic memories and the recounting of a life personally informed by the Jewish genocide of World War II.

Although all of the study respondents were born to Jewish parents, importantly, the religious upbringing of the survivors was varied and diverse. Nearly half of the respondents grew up in conservative Jewish homes. Among the other half, five of the respondents were raised as Orthodox Jews, six as reform Jews, three without any denominational affiliation, three as atheists, and two as non-Jews—one Unitarian and one Catholic. At the time of the interviews, four respondents identified as Orthodox Jews, seven as Conservative Jews, six as Reform Jews, three as followers of Jewish Renewal (a modern-day egalitarian movements that has its roots in Hasidism), and ten as Jewish spiritual seekers who had not yet found a synagogue or movement with which to affiliate. One respondent identified as atheist, two as Unitarian, and two as Buddhist. Regardless of current religious affiliation, however, all of the respondents identified ethnically as Jewish. All participants were college educated and close to half held graduate degrees. Participants were working in fields such as teaching, health care, accounting, domestic work, art, and filmmaking.

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Finally, although this research, like previous studies, tends to group all second-generation survivors together for the purposes of research, the parental backgrounds of the participants were characterized by numerous differences. In this study alone, the parents of respondents came from diverse backgrounds, including Poland, Russia, Germany, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, France, and Italy. These differences informed both the survivors' refugee experiences and how they forged their Jewish identity through a cultural framework. Additionally, the conditions of survivorship were not the same for all first-generation parents. While some of the parents of the participants survived through hiding, other parents suffered in labor and death camps. These differences contextualized the transmission of trauma to the second generation and created an important backdrop for their connection to their parents' suffering. Beginning with a discussion of Jewish ritual in the survivor family, I explore the significance of ritual as a mode of traumatic transference and ritual innovation as a means of separation among adult children of survivors.

Ritual as a Site of Posttraumatic Emotion

In the study of ritual and emotion, the work of Durkheim (1995) and Geertz (1973) elaborate how group rituals are the site of shared emotions that connect group members to an ancestral past. As a source of cohesion and memory, rituals provide a means to form and sustain group identity among individuals with a common history and shared culture. Scheff (1979) and Turner (1969) further examine the emotional character of ritual performance that allows participants to express and externalize repressed feeling states, creating conditions under which the cathartic release of emotion is made possible. Following these theorists, Bird (1995) explores how religious ritual functions particularly in the family, outlining four dimensions of family-based ritual practice. Among these dimensions are the expression of feelings that ordinarily are silenced in the family and the affirmation of cultural identity through the maintenance of religious traditions. These interrelated functions of family ritual, as articulated by Bird, were found to be especially significant in post-Holocaust families. Accordingly, familial ritual practice became an important site for the cross-generational transmission of trauma.

Turning to the study of posttraumatic stress disorder among survivor populations, Herman (1992) describes a cycle of emotional repression and expression where survivors vacillate between remembering and forgetting, a contradictory set of responses that result in a "dialectic of trauma." In this dialectic, states of rage, hatred, and grief alternate with periods of numbness and emotional disconnection. According to the accounts of the second generation,

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the cycle of expression became embedded in the ritual performances of the first generation who, through religious practice and traditions, relived the emotions of their traumatic past. In particular, the participants reported that the observance of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), the holiest day of the Jewish year, was especially significant for the evocation of traumatic memory and the attending expression of traumatic feelings in the survivor household. As described in the narratives of the second generation, the observance of this religious holiday produced great emotional strain within families, as feelings of anger, guilt, and inconsolable sadness permeated the emotional dynamics of fasting and prayer. Aaron Hass (1990, 68-9), a scholar of Holocaust trauma and a second-generation survivor, describes the Yom Kippur ritualization of his father's Holocaust narrative in this way:

> The ritual began when I was eight or nine years old and lasted for about ten years. It took place on the night of Yom Kippur. In observance of Jewish legal restrictions, our apartment in Brooklyn was dark except for a shaft of light coming from under the closed door of the bathroom. This streak would be our lantern in the blackness. One was not permitted to switch on electricity for twenty-four hours during this holy period.
>
> The story was brief and always the same. The somber environment and the mystical day on which it was told lent an eeriness to the account. We lay on my parents' bed, my father laying on his side, I on my right side facing him. I could barely make out the outlines of his face. My father spoke in Yiddish. "We [the partisans] found out that a German officer would be at the farmhouse of a Pole who had betrayed Jews to him. The German was probably delivering two bottles of Vodka as payment for the two Jews the Pole handed over. We came in and they were drinking together. We tied them up and cut a small hole in each one's arm. For hours we put salt in the open wounds. Then we shot them both." My father's voice reflected an increasing bitterness as the story progressed. I absorbed my father's determination as he spoke, and I felt my anger swell. I was fascinated. I was also frightened.

In this autobiographical account, Hass (1990) captures the feelings his father's ritual storytelling aroused in the "eerie" atmosphere of Yom Kippur. In a complex ritual of religious observance, atrocity storytelling, and emotional exchange, Hass internalized both the anger of the perpetrator/father as well the fear of a young child who became witness to the scene of his father's

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rage and violence. As this case powerfully illustrates, the observance of the High Holy Days was framed by emotion-laden memories that were relived each year on Yom Kippur. Further, in Hass's recollection, the father symbolizes the rage and violence of the perpetrators while the German officer and the Polish informants represent the victims of torture and terror.

In comparison with Hass's (1990) experience, a number of respondents in this study reported that the anger and bitterness communicated during the observance of the High Holy days, and especially Yom Kippur, emanated from their parents' anger and rage, not at their German tormentors, but at a God who abandoned the Jews during their time of greatest need. Torn between moral outrage at a God who had let so many innocent Jews die and a deep moral commitment to keep Judaism alive, the first generation conveyed a complicated set of emotions that were brought on especially by the period of reflection and repentance that the holiday demanded. In the following account, a fifty-two-year-old participant raised in an orthodox home describes how his father's rage toward God became intertwined with the family's adherence to religious tradition:

> My Dad spoke of the Holocaust incessantly. From as early as I can remember, he spoke of his experiences before and during the war. . . . My Dad was raised by a very, the word he uses, is "pious" man. His father was extremely religious. He came from a large family. It was a very rigid reality. This is what life is about, studying Talmud and the Torah. It was really jammed down his throat. Then his dad, my grandfather, was taken away and murdered and the rest of the family was killed. My father and his brother were the only survivors. When he started to raise his own family, he was still coming from this place of guilt and anger. It was weird mixed messages. He was so non-religious and pissed off at God and he couldn't believe any of it, but yet he felt we had to observe all the laws and rituals. So it was kind of schizophrenic. I had to be Bar Mitzvahed—there was no choice—we had to keep kosher, keep the Sabbath, fast, light candles, and if my mother showed up at things without her wig, that was like heresy. But Yom Kippur? That was always the hardest, when the anger and bitterness was the strongest—it was just a kind of jammed down your throat—this is the way it is kind of thing without any depth—the only feelings were that of rage and bitterness.

As these two narratives illustrate, second-generation survivors associated the observance of Yom Kippur with the remembrance of violence and rage in one

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case and the transmission of embittered feelings toward God in the other case. Although these accounts each offer a different perspective on the effects of anger in the intergenerational transference of trauma, both reveal the important role that the Yom Kippur ritual played in engendering memories of a specifically Jewish trauma and the posttraumatic feeling states that such memories invoke.

A second and equally powerful set of emotions triggered by the observance of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, were those feelings associated with survivor guilt. The liturgy for this religious holiday involves the recitation of sins for which the supplicant asks God for forgiveness and mercy. As research on first-generation survivors has poignantly shown, the memory of survivorship was often accompanied by feelings of self-blame and guilt that, in the aftermath of catastrophe, contributed to the posttraumatic symptoms of the surviving generations (Herman 1992; Langer 1991). It is thus not surprising that Yom Kippur, with its emphasis on sin and self-recrimination, was often a difficult and angst-ridden holiday in the survivor family.

The narrative of a woman respondent illustrates this dimension of the High Holiday observance. Piecing together her mother's wartime experiences from stories she told her as a young child, the respondent, now in her fifties, recounted how her mother was deported to Auschwitz at age seventeen where she survived by working in a munitions factory. This participant described her mother as very beautiful and smart, a woman who lived by her wits and was able to sustain a privileged life as a prisoner. At the same time, the respondent said that although her mother spoke with pride of her survival, there was an unspoken subtext to her stories, an undercurrent of silence, regret, and guilt that surfaced especially during her observance of Yom Kippur:

> Surviving such a horrendous event, you can't begrudge anybody for doing what they had to do to get by at Auschwitz. My mother suffers from survivor guilt, because there is another side of the story. Remember I told you there were nine siblings, including my own mother? I believe it was 1941; her mother and father went to some little town near Krakow where they were hiding. It was a tiny little village. My mother was in Krakow at that time and she heard that they were going to the village to kill all the Jews. She was able to get to a telephone and she called but there was no answer. She knew right then and there that that was it for her parents. Then her uncles, their children, her little nieces with whom she was very close—all killed.

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> My mother did not want to raise us Jewish. We were Unitarians. I think that being Jewish was too painful. Having said that she observed all the holidays. We had Passover, and Yom Kippur was very sad for her. She would gorge herself the day before so that she could spend the whole day fasting. . . . She would just lay in bed all day. My sister and I were scared because it was the one time a year when her feelings of guilt and grief overwhelmed her and she couldn't eat or move or even talk to us. There was just this silence and her pain.

As this account reveals, even in nonreligiously Jewish households, survivors observed the Yom Kippur ritual, maintaining a yearly tradition when people were able to give expression and make visible painful emotions in the post-catastrophe culture of the survivor family.

Along with fasting and the recalling of sins and wrongdoing, family members traditionally remember the dead on Yom Kippur. At the onset of the holiday, the lighting of memorial (Yahrzeit) candles in the home signals the beginning of a memorial period. Accordingly, study participants gave vivid and emotional accounts of kitchen countertops and dining room tables lined with ritual candles, small glass containers with Hebrew lettering that, for the child of survivors, came to symbolize the Jewish nature of traumatic loss. A woman in her sixties, whose father died when she was twelve, recounted an early childhood memory. She framed her father's only connection to Judaism through this act of memorialization:

> My father escaped from Bratislava, jumped the train and came to Italy. It is unclear whether his parents died in Theresienstadt or Auschwitz. My father grew up Jewish. My grandmother, my father's mother was orthodox and when he married my mother everyone said she was a foreign woman, even though she was a Jew, because she came from Italy. My mother did not keep a kosher home and she was not brought up in a religious home. After the war, my father was not religious but he kept Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah and he always lit a Yahrzeit candle for his father. That was very important to me—the only time I would see his grief, when his feelings were not hidden. I remember I talked to him about it and how important it was. And I light a Yahrzeit candle for him every day. I feel I owe it to him.

While Yom Kippur was clearly the most emotion-laden ritual in the survivor household, the participants also reported other forms of observance that left a deep impression on the second generation. Surrounded by sadness, loss,

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and anger, participants describe the ritual life of the family as joyless, rigid, and obligatory. A number of respondents remarked on the rigidity with which their families kept kosher, observed the Sabbath, or strictly maintained the dietary rules of Passover. Often their parents became angry or upset if someone violated a rule or law. Others remarked on the compulsive and often depressing observance of holidays such as Sukkoth (the Feast of the Tabernacles) that, while for other Jews were celebratory and festive, for their families were unhappy and despairing occasions:

> My parents didn't take particular joy in practicing ritual. They felt that this was the way they were brought up and they didn't want us to lose the identity. I remember hating Sukkoth because we never did anything joyful or exciting. My father didn't go to work. We didn't go to school but there was no warmth, no bringing us together, just the persistent memory of who was not there, who would not be celebrating with us.

The findings on Yom Kippur and the persistence of other Jewish rituals among observant as well as nonobservant survivors suggest that in the aftermath of the Holocaust, ritual practice was one means by which older generations conveyed the emotional trauma of the catastrophe to the next generation. Along with the telling of atrocity narratives and/or the feeling-laden silences that were pervasive in the postwar family culture, the practice of ritual established a separate but compelling emotional space where children were witness to their parents' suffering and rage and where the emotional boundaries between the first and second generation became blurred within a ritualized context of Jewish observance. Thus, as an important site of emotional exchange, the significance of ritual for the intergenerational transmission of trauma can in part be explained through the paradigm of self-in-relation theory.

Ritual as a Site of Emotional Exchange: Self-in-Relation Theory and the Cross-Generational Transmission of Trauma

In the past decade, scholars put forward various theoretical models to explain the relationship between the intergenerational transmission of trauma and personality development in second-generation survivors. Within this field of study, Kellerman (2001b) notes the four prominent models of transmission that

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dominate the second-generation literature: psychoanalytic, social learning, communication, and relational theory. The psychoanalytic view suggests that the child "unconsciously absorbs the repressed and insufficiently worked-through Holocaust experiences of survivor parents" (Kellerman 2001b, 260). The social learning and family system theories focus on the more overt ways in which survivor parents engaged in inadequate or destructive parenting behaviors while establishing closed family systems in which the interdependency between the child and the parent created an obstacle to the child's independence. And lastly, the relational model, based on object relations theory, emphasizes a psychodynamic in which the child internalizes the traumatized parent who then becomes a reflection of the child self (Holmes 1999).

Expanding on Kellerman's (2001b) discussion, a fifth model of transmission, the self-in-relation perspective (Chodorow 1978; Jordan et al. 1991), can add further insight on the child's identification with a traumatized parent. Originating out of the relational school of development, the self-in-relation paradigm takes as its starting point the exchange of feelings that, beginning in infancy, takes place between the child and caregiver. As such, this theory shifts the emphasis in development from the internalization of a parent-object to the emotional relationship that characterizes the parent-child dynamic. Feminist in orientation, self-in-relation theory highlights the value of empathy (the emotional identification with the feelings of others) in personality development and illuminates the way in which identity evolves out of the strong emotional connection that takes place between a parent and child:

> The earliest representation of the self, then, is of a self whose core—which is emotional—is attended by other(s) and in turn, begins to attend to the emotions of other(s). Part of the internal image of oneself includes feeling the other's emotions and *acting on* them as they are in interplay with one's own emotions. (Miller 1991, 14)

In applying the self-in-relation model to the findings on ritual and the transference of trauma, respondents' narratives suggest that the practice of ritual provided a familial space where an intense exchange of emotion took place between the first and second generations. This ritualized form of emotional exchange created a socio-emotional context for traumatic sharing where the emotional boundaries between parent and child were especially permeable. As a site of emotional transference, ritual played a significant role in establishing a relational environment that fostered, through empathy and connectivity, the child's emotional identification with a traumatized parent. Second-generation survivors thus describe themselves as "having absorbed"

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the trauma of their parents as if it were their own. Here a woman respondent, now in her fifties, describes this internalization of her parents' suffering:

> As a young child, what I lived was the emotional pain in my body that I was receiving from them. Children pick up everything. My parents lived in so much grief. How can you even imagine them emotionally surviving all that suffering? I intuited the pain that they lived in and that was in their bodies. I didn't know how to separate myself from it. Whatever my unconscious experience was, my life was about their pain and how to make it better, how not to feel it, whatever it was about.

Another respondent, whose mother survived Auschwitz, described the sense of shared terror that pervaded her dreams and nightmares:

> I used to have very bad dreams, totally about being captured. I have to tell you that I still have Holocaust dreams from time to time, about being raped, being rounded up, about being imprisoned.

While accounts like these were common among participants, others described the process of absorption as a kind of supernatural phenomenon in which the trauma of the first generation had somehow inexplicably become lodged in the collective unconscious of their children. One participant, whose mother's life had been fraught with emotion, offered this perspective on what she has come to understand as the second generation's propensity for "psychic" experiences:

> My mother was from Poland. She wound up in a forced labor camp and then there was something about Auschwitz and only her father survived. I had recurring dreams as a very small child, probably prior to age four that I remember to this day because they were recurring dreams. The dream always started with a panoramic view of the city. And understand that at three or four, I had never seen cobblestone streets. I had never seen such structures. Every time I had the dream, I remembered that I had had it before, but when I woke up I didn't remember it. And in the dream there was a panoramic view of the city. It was like I had a camera and I was panning slowly. I could draw it for you, to this day. Eventually it makes its way to the train station. It's a wooden train station. There is nothing metal. The station house, I see some poles, the ties are wood. And I see a train track and after a few

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> minutes I see a man running down the train track, screaming. I had that dream I can't tell you how many times. And one time I woke up afterwards crying and my mother came into my room, and I remembered the dream and she said, "What's wrong?" And I told her the dream and my mother turned white as a sheet and she started to cry. She told me that she found out after the war, the Gestapo had come to take her family away while her father was out bartering food. When he came home, the family was gone. He heard they had been put on the transport and he ran down to the train tracks, crying, running after the train. She swore she never told me that. Obviously I was too little. How would I know that at three years old unless—and I believe there is kind of a higher mentality. There's a collective consciousness and every child of a Holocaust survivor I talked to believes the same thing. Every person in our group said they agreed. We remember things and recognize people in our life we have never met. I don't know how that is possible.

As these diverse narratives illustrate, second-generation survivors express shared knowledge of and feeling for their parent's trauma that, in part, can be explained by the transfer of emotion that took place during the ritual observances in the survivor household. Within the framework of self-in-relation theory, religious practice became a site of emotional exchange, contributing to the confusion between self and other in the second generation's remembrance and "re-experiencing" of Holocaust trauma. Consequently, study respondents, like other children of survivors, struggle to establish a separate and nontraumatized sense of self. Much of the second-generation research addresses the problem of enmeshment among children of survivors, emphasizing their need to find paths to autonomy that facilitate a healthy separation from the first generation (Kellerman 2001a). As the second set of findings of this study reveals, among the most important strategies for establishing a separate sense of self has been the reinvention of ritual among the second generation, a trend that reflects the adult child's desire to remain connected to his or her Jewish heritage while at the same time create a separate and distinct identity.

Forging Separate Identities: Culture Bearing and the Reinvention of Jewish Ritual among Second-Generation Survivors

The data from this study support strongly the finding that while ritual was a site of emotional exchange in the formative years of the second generation,

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in adulthood the practice of ritual facilitated a process of separation and individuation. Sociology of religion research points to a number of significant trends in religion and spirituality among the Baby Boomer generation. Among these trends, Roof (1999) and Wuthnow (1998) indicate a decisive turn toward religious creativity, individualism, and ritual invention. Like others of their generation who came of age in the cultural dislocations of the 1960s, children of Holocaust survivors embraced the values of religious experimentation and innovation as they sought to negotiate the difficult emotional terrain of their survivor upbringing. Although the innovative strategies of the respondents look similar to their nonsurvivor counter parts, the social psychological lens through which the children of survivors sought out ritual innovation was distinctly different. As one respondent remarked:

> As a child of survivors, you feel this obligation to make sure Hitler doesn't succeed. At the same time, you don't want to do it the way your parents did—you want holidays to be fun, to bring joy. So I think you have to do more than just observe the rituals—you have to do it differently.

Faced with a moral obligation to preserve Judaism and a competing psychological need to separate from their traumatized Jewish parents, the second generation created new ritual forms that maintained Jewish tradition without reproducing the traumatizing ritual experiences of their childhood. Rejecting the sadness, grief, and rage of the first generation, the adult children of survivors intentionally and self-consciously reinvented Jewish customs in a manner that strongly differentiated their observance from that of their parents. Not surprisingly, among the rituals that were of particular importance to the project of creative innovation were those that focused on Yom Kippur. Given the significance of the Day of Atonement for the first generation, the majority of respondents sought ways to bring new meaning to a holy day that had deep associations with parental despair. A nonpracticing participant in his forties described the alternative ritual he created for the observance of this holiday:

> We don't do the High Holidays. I just can't resonate with them. I guess I am somewhat rebellious around Yom Kippur in particular, about fasting on that day. Yet, being the son of somebody who is a Holocaust survivor, it is hard for me to just ignore the traditions. There are times when I go off on my own for two or three days on a kind of vision quest. I'll sit with myself and not eat and I try to think about what Yom Kippur is designed to do—what it is all about—what does it mean to repent when you have this terrible history.

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This innovative approach to Yom Kippur is also found among other Jews in the United States, including those affiliated with the Jewish Renewal movement, who are seeking to create new ritual practices that incorporate meditation and prayer in natural and noninstitutionalized settings (Eisen 1998). For the second generation such alternatives had great appeal in part because they offered nontraditional modes of spiritual reflection that were far removed from the overwhelming emotional experiences that their parents had conveyed during High Holiday observance.

While new approaches to Yom Kippur were among the most solemn and serious of the ritual innovations, the reinvention of ritual among the respondents also included other customs, most notably those associated with the traditions of Sabbath and Passover. Recent surveys of Jews in the United States suggest that a little over a quarter of the Jewish population regularly prepare a traditional Friday night dinner to usher in the beginning of the Sabbath (Cohen 2006). Among study respondents, nearly one third of the participants routinely maintained Friday night dinners to foster a family culture of connection and relatedness. Here an unaffiliated respondent offers this view of the weekly Sabbath customs that she practices in her home:

> I don't consider myself religiously Jewish at all. But I definitely practice the Jewish rituals. I made a chalice that I use for Friday night when we light the candles and say the blessings over the wine. We always have Friday night dinner. Our daughter thinks challah is the best food substance in the land. But Friday night candles are the most important ones for me. It keeps my relationship with my parents and yet because we do it so differently—with our own prayers and blessings and family time—it is our own.

Similarly, another respondent, also a mother, recast the melancholy Sabbath observance of her childhood through a lens of connection to family and friends:

> The kids wouldn't give up Friday night for anything. It's the only time that we sit down together. It's a very special night for them. When we were kids, it was so different. It was just us with our parents. They were so busy trying to get life together there was no time for us really—not even on the Sabbath. Now we have our kids and our friends and we all get together and share the week with one another.

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In both of these accounts, the respondents maintained the Sabbath, especially Friday night dinner, as a ritual of connectedness to reshape and sustain Jewish identity. The traditional concepts that mark the Sabbath as a liminal space separating the sacred from the profane are replaced with meaning systems emphasizing familial continuity and cultural connection. This phenomenon, documented in other research on Jewish women and tradition (Davidman and Tenenbaum 1994), was especially pronounced among daughters of survivors who tended to focus on the relational value of ritual rather than the importance of Jewish law for Sabbath observance.

The celebration of Passover offered yet another ritual context for innovation and creativity. Here, more than in any other ritual observance, the participants linked the remembrance of Jewish catastrophe with a moral imperative to move beyond an explicitly Jewish worldview, as one respondent, now a member of Jewish Renewal, explained:

> The holiday that we do in our hearts is Passover. We try to be inclusive in those. We try to go beyond the concept of the slavery of Jews. When I was growing up, my family was always about us and them. That's what my family has always been about, us and them. So I try to be inclusive and open the idea up to the concept of slavery that we have in our world, in our hearts, ourselves, the prisons that we create for ourselves. In that way we don't hide that it comes from a Jewish thing, we talk about it. In that way we bring in some Jewish holidays but with a more universal understanding.

Significantly, Passover provided a ritual context for the second generation's shift from the "us and them" mentality that fueled the fears and anxieties of the first generation. Because the story of the Jews' enslavement in Egypt can be read as a timeless parable of resistance and empowerment, Passover became a valuable form of ritual observance for many of the respondents who, in seeking to resolve the tensions between a longing to remain connected to Jewish heritage and the need to distances themselves from the trauma of their parents, chose the story of the liberation of the Jews from Egypt as a tradition that could be adapted and made relevant for a contemporary perspective on enslavement and oppression. In expanding the notion of human suffering beyond the boundaries of Jewish experience, the children of survivors found ways to incorporate values of social justice into their ritual lives, an innovation that, in making a break from the past, helped to define an individual and separate identity.

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Finally, for those participants who do not consider themselves to be religiously Jewish, the rituals that were most important were those that bestowed upon their children the "right" of Jewish identity. One respondent, currently a Unitarian, expressed great concern that her adopted child would not be considered Jewish unless she underwent a traditional conversion ceremony that included emergence in a mikveh (ritual bath). She sought out a rabbi who would perform this rite with her daughter:

> We were determined to have my daughter be Jewish and to take her to the mikveh. We tried. At the very last moment my daughter broke her leg and she had a stress fracture, so she had a brace on. The Rabbi in all of her wonderfulness said she couldn't go into the mikveh because the *mikveh* had to touch all of her body parts. I thought she was joking initially, and she wasn't. She was very fundamentalist around this process. So at the very last moment, we went to a friend's swimming pool and we gave her Mogen David wine and we had challah and we sang. The swimming pool was the mikveh. She had been practicing how to jump in before the day and so she just jumped in. So she is Jewish and "they" can deal with it later.

This account highlights two significant qualities of the second generation. First, they desire to ensure the Jewishness of their children, regardless of their religious orientation. Second, this generation is willing to create new rituals when the traditional approach fails. In this narrative, the alternative mikveh rite, while a departure from traditional Jewish law, nevertheless met the individual criteria of the respondent whose openness and flexibility were characteristic of other children of survivors who prided themselves both on their creativity and their ability to distance themselves from the more painful aspects of their parents' ritual lives.

Conclusion

In bringing the varied findings of this research together, there are a number of important insights on the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Among the most significant insights are those that illuminate the ways in which ritual functioned as a site of emotional exchange in the post-Holocaust family, revealing an aspect of traumatic transference thus far overlooked in the psychological literature. In exploring the effects of ritual observance on the second generation, the research gives further support to the relational approach to the cross-generational transmission of trauma as this approach is viewed

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through the lens of self-in-relation theory. Additionally, the findings on ritual further an understanding of how children of survivors work to resolve their identification with a traumatized parent through the creation of new cultural forms that offer a path to autonomy and separation. Although ritual innovation is only one way the second generation seeks to unravel the deep and often troubling emotional connections to the first generation, this trend reveals the kinds of creative resolutions that succeeding generations have developed in response to the sometimes conflicting emotional needs that have framed the life experiences of children of survivors.

Future research on trauma and ritual might also consider the importance of ritual for collective memory in the survivor family. As this research has illustrated, in the aftermath of catastrophe and familial destruction, ritual appears to grow in importance as a source for the intergenerational transmission of trauma-based memories among survivors and their descendents. This finding has important implications for the study of mass trauma, family tradition, and collective memory, an area of research that can shed further light on religion and the formation of social memory. Future work in ritual and mass trauma might return to Halbwachs's (1992) work on religious tradition and collective memory, providing a contemporary consideration of the importance of family ritual as a vehicle for the construction of social memory and the transfer of traumatic emotion.

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Bio

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