



SYMBOLIC REVENGE IN HOLOCAUST CHILD SURVIVORS

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Introduction

The attitudes of Holocaust survivors toward their persecutors present an intriguing subject for exploration. One component of the attitudes expressed is revenge. The concept of revenge is pervasive throughout literature, religious and legal writings, and history. Revenge is also considered a subset of political intolerance. Research on intolerance has been linked to age, education, and religious affiliation, among other demographic factors.¹ Political intolerance is associated with low education, older age, rural residence, and fundamentalist religious affiliation.² My recent qualitative research found a connection between family-of-origin relationships and intolerance.³ Survivors who evidenced positive relationships with their family-of-origin caregivers also demonstrated tolerant attitudes toward the perpetrators of the genocide; conversely, survivors who had troubled relationships with their family-of-origin caregivers expressed intolerance toward the perpetrators.⁴

The *Oxford Dictionaries* online define revenge as both concrete and symbolic. The concrete definition incorporates physical behavior: "The action of inflicting hurt or harm on someone for an injury or wrong suffered at their hands."⁵ Examples of concrete revenge are found in Holocaust survivor narratives during the later years of the war and immediately afterward.

The most famous example of concrete revenge is Abba Kovner, who believed that "the Jews must seek revenge, answering a crime that could not be answered."⁶ In the spring of 1945 he declared, "Yes, the War is over, but no, not for the Germans; it is time for the Germans to suffer; the Germans, who killed the Jews, must now pay with their own lives,"⁷ and quoted Psalm 94 in which God is called on to take revenge on the enemies of Israel. To seek revenge on the Germans he formed a brigade called the Avengers comprising approximately fifty Jews from the Vilna

Ghetto. Not satisfied with the international trials and military tribunals, Kovner wanted the Germans killed anonymously. He and his cohorts devised two plans: Plan A involved poisoning the water supplies of major German cities; Plan B entailed killing off Schutzstaffel (Protective Squadrons) guards held in American POW camps. In Plan A, false identifications allowed the members of the Avengers to disperse throughout cities of former concentration camps, get jobs in the city waterworks, learn how to turn off the pipes, and then fill them with poison. Plan B was to poison the bread that captured Schutzstaffel officers were eating as they awaited their trials in former concentration camps. Plan A failed when Kovner was arrested by the British. Plan B, however, worked, and a few thousand National Socialists (or Nazis) were poisoned, although no one knows how many were actually killed.⁸

In addition to Kovner's group, other individuals or small clusters of Jews in Europe pursued revenge at the end of World War II. Groups of individuals calling themselves the Din Assassins hunted down and executed several hundred Nazi war criminals. The Din assassins were British Jews, volunteers from Palestine, and Holocaust survivors. The word *din* is Hebrew for judgment, and symbolized the actions and justification for the actions behind these groups. After the war and the liberation of the camps, Jews and other survivors were sometimes given the opportunity by the Allied troops to take vengeance against the guards who had tortured them. Former victims tore guards to pieces or strangled Vichy collaborators. Rosenbaum wrote that most Jews accepted the notion that sporadic, improvised acts of vengeance were just and justifiable given the behavior of the Nazis and their collaborators.⁹

The second definition of revenge in the *Oxford Dictionaries* is of a symbolic nature: "the desire to inflict retribution."¹⁰ Symbolic revenge operates on the level of fantasy or is not expressed directly to the perpetrators. This type of revenge after the war was exemplified by individuals who pursued revenge through less violent means, such as by controlling the administration of the displaced persons (DP) camps or by participating in the black market. The economic recovery of Jews while in the DP camps in Germany was itself seen as a form of revenge, although not via specific acts of violence. When given the opportunity, the DPs hired Germans as nursemaids and housekeepers.¹¹ Others responded by serving as witnesses at trials of former Nazis such as Demjanjuk, a former German guard, or by pursuing Nazis, as in the case of the famed Nazi hunters Simon Wiesenthal and Serge Klarsfeld. For these individuals seeking justice was a form of revenge for the evil acts committed by the Nazis. This distinction of seeking justice is in

contrast to biblical notions of revenge. Rosenbaum stated that the word “justice” in the Bible always refers to the concept of revenge, which he posits is a symbolic vindication of justice.¹² Most individuals in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are more comfortable with the concept of meting out justice than with revenge. After the Demjanjuk verdict in 2011, in a response meant to support the concept of justice and minimize the idea of revenge, a survivor stated, “I’m satisfied. It doesn’t mean I can forget; it doesn’t mean I can forgive.”¹³

The concept of symbolic revenge toward the perpetrators of the final solution of the Jews was found in testimonies with Holocaust child survivors taken in the 1980s and 1990s as part of the Kestenberg Archive of Testimonies of Child Holocaust Survivors.¹⁴ This chapter focuses on how the attitudes, behaviors, and feelings of child survivors illustrate symbolic revenge.

Review of the Literature

Vengeance has been called “a pervasive and perhaps inevitable response to injustice.”¹⁵ However, Schuman and Ross argued that acts of revenge are not necessarily automatic or universal responses to injustice. Acts of revenge may be minimized when external sources, governments or other systems, work to punish the perpetrators and thus provide some solace to their victims.¹⁶ Supporting this view, some survivors stated that they did not believe in human justice since many of the Nazis and other perpetrators went unpunished.¹⁷ They were found to incorporate acts of symbolic revenge against the Nazis in their descriptions of building their future, expressing anger, hatred, and the need for revenge.¹⁸

New research has further explored the concept of revenge, focusing in more detail on the idea of symbolic revenge among Holocaust survivors. A study based on twenty-nine interviews found a wide variation in aversion toward Germans and Germany.¹⁹ Aversion in this study seems to be another name for symbolic revenge or intolerant attitudes toward the perpetrators of the Nazi genocide. In their study, Cherfas and his colleagues found the degree of aversion ranged from concentrating solely on those closest to the Nazi perpetrators to encompassing anyone with German ancestry or any situation or product linked to contemporary Germany. The study concluded, “This wide variation of aversion following horrific experiences is not easily explained by known psychological mechanisms and has important implications for understanding and ameliorating ethnopolitical conflict.”²⁰

The Kestenbergs asserted that revenge that was sought before liberation was transformed into a sense of justice rather than into personal revenge. They wrote that many of the child survivors would rather turn Nazis over to the authorities than punish them by themselves.²¹ In an early research project, completed around the same time as many of the Judith Kestenberg interviews, Robinson found that the survivors spoke of symbolic revenge.²² In a follow-up study several years later, the survivors continued to speak of revenge, more specifically fantasies of committing revenge against Germans.²³ Symbolic revenge may be one facet of the concept of intolerance. In my research, intolerant survivors expressed generalized hatred toward both the perpetrators of the Holocaust and ethnic, racial, and religious groups other than Jews, but it was no more than a small subset who actually participated in violent acts of revenge.²⁴

The interviews in the Kestenberg archive describe the nature of symbolic revenge and its composition. This study explores the concept of symbolic revenge illustrated in the interviews and examines the viability of the factors that influenced individuals to express symbolic revenge.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative analysis of thirty-three interviews from the Kestenberg archive. The semistructured interviews chosen for this study were conducted in English. Given the fact that revenge, whether symbolic or concrete, can be described using many words, coding was conducted through the qualitative computer-coding program NVivo 7. Any statements about revenge, boycotting, avoidance of the German language or Germany; attitudes toward national, religious, racial, or ethnic groups other than Jews; or fantasies about revenge were tracked and coded.

For this pilot project the interviews that were reviewed for expressions of revenge were chosen randomly from the four hundred interviews in English that had been transcribed at the time of the study. These interviews had online abstracts available to the researcher. Two hundred interviews were randomly selected to be reviewed. Of the two hundred, the online abstracts of thirty-three indicated that they would be appropriate for the study. These thirty-three abstracts contained key words relating to prewar family life and attitudes toward perpetrators. Of the thirty-three interviews examined, twelve described attitudes toward perpetrators that conform to the *Oxford Dictionaries'* online

definition of symbolic revenge. These interviews were then coded for such factors as age at onset of the war, war experiences, family losses due to the war, religious affiliation, and gender, to try to further understand the nature of symbolic revenge. Symbolic revenge is described as the desire to repay an injury or wrong and does not include physical acts of violence. The methodology in this study relied on grounded research theory, which is small scaled and focused, emphasizing the continuous exchange between analyzing the data and continuing to gather more data until enough data has been collected and analyzed that a theory fitting the data is created.²⁵

Results

Who Were the Child Survivors?

Approximately one-third of the interviews mentioned revenge. All discussions of revenge in these interviews are symbolic acts of revenge. The responses of the twelve survivors profiled in this study to questions about their attitudes toward Germans and other European groups were unequivocal and not diminished by government or institutional actions.

While the hatred of some survivors was aimed specifically at Nazi Germans, the perpetrators from the World War II era, others identified Polish, Ukrainian, and other European ethnic groups as the source of their hatred and fantasies of revenge. The twelve survivors who discussed revenge in their interviews varied in age, war experience, and losses suffered. The oldest were born in 1926, and the youngest in 1942. The majority were under ten years old when World War II started. They were born in several European countries: Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Holland, and France. Four were born in Poland, making it the country with the largest representation of child survivors in this group, not surprising given the size of Poland's prewar Jewish population. Ten of the twelve survivors were female, making the gender factor the strongest demographic characteristic in this group. In the larger sample of thirty-three interviews, seventeen were female, three were male, and the gender of four was unidentified. Thus, while the percentage of females in the English language interviews in the archives is not known, the predominance of females in the larger sample reviewed for this study suggests that the majority of English language interviews in the archive are female. Nevertheless, without comparing the small sample analyzed for this study to a larger group of

English-speaking child survivor interviews, it is inconclusive whether gender is a factor that influences men and women to think differently about symbolic revenge.

The survivors' war experiences varied. Four of them spent the war in hiding, four in ghettos and camps, two used false papers and joined the partisans, and two escaped Europe just before the war began, having already experienced Nazi persecution. None of the twelve were the sole survivors of their families. Several survived with parents and siblings, and even those who lost parents survived with other relatives such as a sibling, uncles, aunts, or cousins. Their young ages at the time the war started precluded any analysis of the nature of the family-of-origin relationships. Most did not describe prewar family relationships or dynamics. Thus, any linkage between family-of-origin relationships and intolerance or aversion could not be explored. However, the concept of symbolic revenge found in these twelve interviews supports the Kestenbergs' observation that survivors would rather not punish the Germans themselves, but would rather turn them over to government authorities.

Symbolic Acts of Revenge

The words of the survivors in these interviews clearly shed light on the definition of symbolic revenge. When speaking about their attitudes toward perpetrators, they focused on symbolic acts of revenge comprising three types of behavior: (1) small-scale and individual behaviors of revenge, (2) intense feelings of hatred toward specific European national groups who they saw as anti-Semitic, and (3) thoughts of future acts of revenge. Small-scale behaviors are included in this group of symbolic revenge because, due to their size and nature, they do not impact the perpetrators' lives. Boycotts of goods or avoidance of speaking German are individual acts that may bring satisfaction to the child survivor but are not usually known to the perpetrators.

Individual Behaviors of Symbolic Revenge

Although the child survivors in this study did not engage in acts of violence toward their perpetrators, many engaged in personal acts of symbolic revenge including such actions as avoiding living in or traveling to Germany, boycotting German products and language, and avoiding contact with Germans. The key point of these symbolic acts was that they did not impact the perpetrators and were known only to the survivors.

HB was born in Hamburg in 1926 to a teacher and a housewife.²⁶ She survived with her father and brother by escaping on a train with the help of her family's maid and ultimately left Europe, departing on a boat from Italy in 1940. At the time of the interview, on May 20, 1986, she was a psychotherapist and had never married. HB stated, "I certainly couldn't see myself living in Germany. That's about the last place and I cannot understand how German Jews or Viennese Jews . . . They say nothing will happen in Germany or anywhere. No one can live in such a place."

LC, another German survivor, also escaped from Europe in 1940 at the age of nine with her parents and sister on a boat to America with the help of her maid.²⁷ Married after the war and with two sons, LC was first an artist and then the director of a nonprofit agency. LC also expressed a strong antipathy toward people connected to Germany. She reported, for example, a very negative reaction to seeing skinheads near her at a racetrack in May 1994 in Las Vegas:

In front of me was a guy and I saw on his arm a huge swastika and he looked like a biker and . . . I said right out loud . . . "They shouldn't let this pig in here, why are they letting this idiot bet; look at that Nazi!" and the guy ignored me. . . . I went to a different window and I mentioned it to some lady and I said: "Look at that guy over there, I wonder if he is a skinhead or biker . . .," and she said: "Well let me get security." I said: "wait, it may be my wish but it's not illegal." LC then remarked to the interviewer, "Sometimes our freedom of speech here goes too far . . . when the Nazis almost marched in Skokie . . . I was ready to start a brawl if he [the skinhead] said: "yeah, I wish all you Jews just dropped dead," I could kill him . . . I get so furious. There I was and I could have had the whole place in a riot and I wanted to but I knew enough when she said she would get security, and I said: "no don't get security; it's not illegal for him to place a bet unless he comes in here naked."

Other survivors pursued revenge by making a stand against traveling to Germany, speaking German, or buying German products. EK was born in a small town in Hungary in 1927.²⁸ Her parents moved to Budapest to avoid persecution but ended up in jail. She survived with her brother and sister through false papers sent to her family by an uncle in Yugoslavia and through joining the partisans. At the time of the interview, EK was married with two children and living in the United States. She told her interviewer that she refused to speak German when visiting Germany on business with her husband. Regarding her attitude toward traveling in Germany she declared,

I never wanted to and said, "Why should I give them my money? I can't stand them." He [her husband] said, "Look, I don't like them either, but it's business, so you can come along." So one day, I gave in and went to

Germany . . . I just refused to speak German. I kept walking up to people and saying, "Do you speak English?" if I wanted directions. And most of the people didn't, at the time. Finally, [one person] started speaking to me in German, giving me directions and I was listening and then he said something and I said [she spoke to him in German, the exact words not written into the transcript]. And he looked at me and said, "You speak German?" I . . . ran out of the store . . . such a feeling came over me that I just saw the SS [Schutzstaffel] marching and I saw . . . Hitler's picture hanging on the walls . . . in my imagination. And I said, "My God, what am I doing here?" . . . here I'm standing and nobody's telling me, "Dirty Jew," . . . I could never forgive them for what they did.

PK was born during the war in 1942 in Slovakia.²⁹ He and his grandmother received false papers, while his parents joined the partisans. He ended up in Bergen-Belsen. After the war, his parents found him and they returned to Slovakia, eventually moving to Prague. PK married a non-Jew in Czechoslovakia and had one daughter with her. After living eight years in Israel and divorcing his first wife, PK moved to the United States with his second wife, an American he met in Israel. PK spoke of boycotting German products: "I still don't buy German products. You can't give me a Mercedes. I won't take it. And if I am in a department store and I . . . see something nice . . . first, I see if it's made in Germany. If it's made in Germany, I go to the bathroom and wash my hands . . . And unfortunately . . . when they opened the Berlin Wall . . . when I saw the happiness of the people, I wanted to throw up."

Another survivor, E, was born in Holland in 1939.³⁰ In 1943 she, her parents, and her two sisters went into hiding, each in several different places to avoid discovery. After the war E moved to Israel for six years and worked in a medical laboratory where she met her husband, an American citizen. E and their child returned with her husband to the United States where she gave birth to another daughter. E also avoided traveling to Germany: "I have never spent any vacation, although I have been in the airport in Germany. I have never deliberately made a trip to Germany; definitely not . . . I always have a hard time with Germans . . . First of all it depends on their age, if they are older, where were you? If they are younger, who are your parents? I always want to know . . . I certainly wouldn't go out of my way to choose a German for a friend."

LS, born in Poland in 1938, also hid with non-Jewish families in Poland during the war.³¹ She survived with only her uncle, her mother's brother; they immigrated to the United States together when she was nine. As an adult she lived in New York City with her husband. LS noted that she was so young when the war started that her only memories of her family come from her uncle. She too stated that she avoided

listening to or speaking German and hated traveling to Germany with her husband on business:

I couldn't tolerate listening to the [German] language. When we came to the United States, my aunt used to listen to the radio . . . to opera. And there was a Jewish opera star who was from Germany, very famous, Schmidt . . . and . . . they used to play it on the radio. I either had to walk out of the room or shut the radio off . . . Years later, I married a German Jew. I was surrounded by German. But still, when my husband would refer to certain things and use the German for them, I would say: "Don't say that word! Use the English word for it!" . . . Of course, he travels to Germany quite a lot on business, and I've never wanted to go. I absolutely never wanted to go back. Until this past summer . . . I finally said . . . I better confront my fears . . . And I was angry because it was so beautiful . . . I was angry that the other countries didn't have as beautiful a countryside as Germany . . . I wanted to hate it and I didn't. I wanted to hate the people, and I didn't. Whoever I came in contact with . . . young people, I didn't hate them. I found them intelligent, I found them caring . . . , I found them concerned about what happened during the Second World War. However, anybody that I passed that was old enough to have done damage, the question went through my mind, where were you? And what did you do?

When asked by the interviewer, "Suppose you had a chance to kill, what would you do?" LS answered,³² "You know something . . . I think I'm a very moral person [crying] but I'd kill any son of a bitch that did any harm to the Jews. I'd kill them all. Paying reparations in money is not paying for all the lives that were lost . . . I keep wondering whether I'm crying because being a moral person I would commit this sin and it would make me ashamed to do this but I sure as hell would. [crying begins to stop] Yes, I could kill. Thinking it out very cold bloodedly, not in passion, like somebody who gets angry and kills, and then realizes he has made a mistake, no. I could."

Some survivors revealed conflicting thoughts about revenge. FS, one of the older child survivors born in 1931 in Czechoslovakia, told the interviewer in vivid detail about the prewar anti-Semitic attacks she observed or that her family members underwent.³³ She survived in hiding thanks to the foresight of her father who prepared hiding places for his children. After the war FS moved to Australia with her family. In Australia she worked as a translator for medical school researchers, married an Australian, and had five children. FS told the following story: "They [the Allied troops] lined up the Germans and told the inmates they could do what they like with them. I remember there was a huge mountain of snow and the Germans had to stand on top and the Russians said: "Do what you like." They weren't touched, nobody

touched them. I'm still not sure whether it was fear, whether we're not killers, or whether it was weakness. Whether we are not killers, this is what I would like to believe because nobody touched them . . . I wouldn't kill them." Yet she declared, "I feel very, very strongly that Nazis wherever they are that it's a horrible thing that they not be punished." The interviews did not disclose why FS did not want to be viewed as a killer, while other survivors expressed no difficulty with this concept.

The survivors who described the acts of revenge they committed against European groups, especially the Germans and Ukrainians, were born in different European countries. Their war experiences varied from escaping Europe, to hiding, and to living through the ghettos and camps. Their interviews did not reveal why they engaged in symbolic individual acts of revenge as opposed to the survivors who spoke of their hatred without participating in boycotts around travel, goods, or language.

In earlier research on revenge, four factors were found to influence the acts of revenge: (1) the persistence of anger, (2) the perceptions of the cost of revenge, (3) cultural and religious values regarding revenge, and (4) the presence of external systems that provided justice for the victims. It was concluded that there was a connection between victims who found religious support for revenge and their subsequent acts of revenge.³⁴ However, in the child interviews in this pilot study on revenge, no connection between religion and symbolic revenge was identified. Of the twelve interviewees only two identified themselves as religious Jews. The majority labeled themselves nonreligious or secular Jews. In addition, the relationship between the factors of anger, perceived costs of revenge, and values to symbolic revenge could not be discerned in the interviews because questions about these factors had not been asked in the original interviews. It is unknown if other considerations—such as moral values, worldview, or Western culture—influenced ideas of revenge because the original interviews did not solicit information about these factors either.

Targeting Hatred toward Specific European Ethnic Groups

Some survivors expressed strong feelings of hatred toward Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, and other European ethnic groups who persecuted the Jews during the war. TG, born in Lodz, Poland, in 1927 exemplifies the survivors who talked about revenge through labeling.³⁵ After living in the Lodz Ghetto from 1942 to 1944, she and her family were

deported to Auschwitz where her parents and siblings were murdered. Her only surviving family member was an uncle. She immigrated to the United States with her German Jewish boyfriend who later became her husband. He worked as a tailor while she raised their three sons. TG expressed strong feelings of hatred toward the Polish people—not only those who lived during the war but also those she knew at the time she was interviewed. She stated, “I have a Polish girl working for me . . . I hate them. Even though she washes my floors and she’s born after the war . . . I just hate them . . . I would never talk to her about it because I would talk of hatred, because they were the ones, really, to start all this . . . when they started among Polish Jews. Every Polish Jew will tell you it didn’t start with Germany. It started with Poles, their hatred of the Jew, because the Jew could help themselves a little better than they could and that’s how I feel. I always felt that way.”

SI, a Polish survivor, also expressed hatred toward Polish people.³⁶ He saw his entire family, parents and sisters, shot in front of his eyes. He was in ghettos and camps, escaped into the woods from trains that were attacked, was captured by Germans and then rescued by Americans, one of whom was Jewish. SI moved to the United States and was single at the time of the interview. He remarked, “It’s an old adage; the Pole doesn’t like anybody, not even himself. He doesn’t like the German, he doesn’t like the Russian, he certainly doesn’t like the Jew, and he fights with his children and beats his wife up anyway.”

Other survivors vacillated between feelings of anger and hatred, on the one hand, and attempts to view Germans in a more positive light, on the other. SG, born in France in 1933 into an assimilated, financially comfortable Jewish family, remembered and described events she saw when the Germans invaded Paris.³⁷ She first hid in Limoges with her parents and then on her own in several farms and a convent. She was reunited with her parents and sister in the latter years of the war. After the war, she and her family returned to Paris. With her employer’s help, SG immigrated to the United States, where she met her husband. At the time of the interview she had three children and worked as a teacher. She stated, “I hate Germany with a passion. [voice cracking] When the wall came down, I was . . . everybody, even Jews, were telling me: ‘Oh, Germany is finally [...] democracy again,’ and I was angry, I was angry. I hate Germany but then when I meet a German, I kind of deny my own feelings and I have to decide if that German is worthwhile befriending.” She qualified her hatred further: “I’ve met Germans, non-Jew Germans and some of them are young . . . or they are my age and I have to tell myself that they were not responsible for what their parents did. So if their personalities [are] approachable, they are humans and we are

compatible, then I will try to push aside you know the country that they came from. And I will try to judge them for themselves.”

EK expressed similarly conflicting viewpoints.³⁸ When she was in Israel she saw many young Germans working on kibbutzim, and she saw that “they . . . were searching. They were trying to find . . . excuses for their parents’ actions . . . There were a few good Germans . . . some that tried to help, but not enough and unfortunately, most of them, when you scratched them; it came out, the anti-Semitism. Very few really went out of their way to help, never mind risk their life.”

PK expressed a far more positive opinion of the different European groups than of Germans during the war:³⁹ “I always admired the Danish, what they did . . . for the Jews, taking them to Sweden. I always admire . . . the Dutch that they are so ashamed. They did a lot for Jews . . . and they are ashamed they didn’t do enough. . . . The French [are a] joke. They are [were] so eager to help. Even the Hungarians, they are anti-Semites, but more religious anti-Semitism. And really, until 1944, no Hungarian Jew was deported. The same with Italians. And look at the fascist Franco. He protected all the Jews.”

Similarly, LS expressed both positive and negative attitudes.⁴⁰ LS’s experiences differed from PK, and her positive attitude was related to her war experiences: “A lot of people have very ugly feelings for the Polish and cursed them and . . . the Russians . . . I only have good feelings. They saved my life. The Russians came in and saved my life. They wiped out the Germans. I mean, they may have done horrendous things in their own right, but . . . where I’m concerned, they saved my life. I don’t have these negative feelings about the Polish people, or about the Russians.” And she elaborated further: “Everybody hated the Ukrainians . . . Because they were the worst as far as Jew baiters, and Jew haters, and turning people in and even after the war, when the war ended.”

Not everyone hated the Germans or was conflicted about how they viewed the European perpetrators. One survivor even expressed more positive feelings. NK was born to a Bundist father and traditional mother in 1929 in Lodz, Poland.⁴¹ She survived a ghetto and work camp but lost her father, mother, and brother during the war. She immigrated to the United States where she married and raised a family. When asked by the interviewer if she hated the Germans, NK responded, “No.” She went on to state, “I don’t think I’m capable of hate. I don’t hate anybody.” She admitted that she had been afraid of the Polish police and that she had been aware that there was anti-Semitism in Poland and that Jews were not liked. It is not clear what factors influenced NK’s more-positive attitude from her interview.

Imagining Future Acts of Revenge

There were survivors who imagined how they might engage in future acts of revenge. HB explained, "I would want to do everything I could to expose them and bring them to trial. I feel very, very strongly that Nazis wherever they are that it's a horrible thing that they not be punished."⁴²

Another survivor discussed how the Germans should be punished. CK, born in 1926 in Czechoslovakia, was in a children's block in an unnamed death camp until 1944.⁴³ She also worked in a factory, was beaten, and survived bombings. After the war CK was reunited with her sister. She reported that post-liberation she was sick with tuberculosis for three years. CK married her husband, himself a survivor of camps, in Czechoslovakia before immigrating to the United States. CK expressed, "I would like to see every one of them [Germans] killed but not by me. I would like to see them punished because they don't deserve to live. But it's usually the ones who committed the worst atrocities that are free. They have power and money that people accept them . . . I would definitely have them arrested . . . In fact, I think I would even be able to shoot him. But I would want him to die a slow death not a fast one. But I, myself, can't do it." LC also fantasized about revenge:⁴⁴ "As a child, I was thinking, I want to find an SS [Schutzstaffel] man and I want to kill him . . . little by little. I want to pull out a fingernail and I was thinking these hateful thoughts and . . . if it's a bad person, I want to kill . . . the skinheads . . . I get so angry that if someone would say, if I give you a machine gun, do you want to infiltrate this group and help kill them, I would say yes I would."

PK expressed similar thoughts regarding punishment:

They [the Germans] would destroy other lives . . . They really should be punished . . . Those are my feelings. . . . You can live with it, even though you are missing a tooth and . . . you learn to live if you are one hand short . . . I learned to live with it also, but it is my private madness. I am . . . against Nazi hunting. No more. You don't punish the same person. You punish, actually, innocent people. The families, the children, they don't even know who the father was. And you catch the son-of-a-bitch, and you destroy the children's lives or grandchildren's, today. It is not right. But I am against camaraderie, also. Not to be friends with the Germans.

The nature of their war experience was not found to be relevant in influencing which child survivors discussed revenge. The twelve interviews spanned a variety of war experiences and yet no discernable pattern relating to the severity of war experiences arose in conjunc-

tion with the three particular facets of symbolic revenge identified in this study: targeting hatred, individual actions, or fantasizing about revenge.

Discussion

This study on revenge is a pilot project based on a small sample of semi-structured interviews in which the Holocaust child survivors discussed the concept of symbolic revenge in three different ways: boycotting of countries, language, or goods; expressing strong feelings of hatred toward certain European ethnic or national groups who had persecuted the Jews in World War II; and fantasizing about future acts of revenge. The analysis of the factors influencing the survivors to engage in one of these three types of symbolic revenge supports previous research findings for a few key factors while confirming that the other factors do not impact revenge in this study. The literature on intolerance and prejudice suggested that certain factors may play a role in the adoption of ideas of revenge by survivors of genocide. Conservative or liberal religious beliefs, pessimism versus optimism,⁴⁵ a view of the world as a threatening or benign place,⁴⁶ particularistic or universalistic political beliefs, altruism⁴⁷ or self-oriented behavior, and negative or positive family-of-origin relationships⁴⁸ have been identified as key influences on attitudes, behaviors, or thoughts of revenge. Due to the focus of the questions asked in the original Kestenberg study, information on several of these factors was not available. The one factor that is present in all the interviews is a description of the religious beliefs of the survivors. Beatty and Oliver postulated that religious theology, intolerant leadership cues, and a history of persecution for religious beliefs may interact to create distinctive denominational patterns of tolerance.⁴⁹ In some research, however, it has been found that high levels of religiosity are linked to greater levels of aversion.⁵⁰ Yet other studies do not find a connection between levels of religiosity and aversion or intolerance.⁵¹ This study supports previous research that fundamentalist religious beliefs and attitudes, behaviors or thoughts of revenge are not linked.

Demographic factors vary in their level of influence on Holocaust child survivors. Because their war experiences varied, the severity of their persecution is not indicative of which survivors would be more likely to engage in symbolic revenge. This finding is confirmed by previous research.⁵² The majority of the child survivors in this study were women. One reason for this finding may be that women, especially women who came of age in the middle of the twentieth century, would

be more inclined to express thoughts of revenge rather than to participate in acts of physical revenge. The prevailing culture of that era did not encourage women to engage in physical acts of revenge, suggesting that they would be less successful than men in this arena.

The most salient finding of this study is that all the child survivors who spoke of symbolic revenge survived with at least one family member. This is a new finding not revealed in previous studies on revenge. Further research is needed to understand the connection between surviving with a family member and revenge.

Conclusion

This study looked at the concept of revenge in twelve child survivor interviews of the Kestenberg archive. All twelve interviews discussed notions of revenge toward Germans and others. The revenge expressed was symbolic in nature and could be classified into three types of behavior: (1) conducting small-scale and individual behaviors of revenge with no discernable impact on the targets, (2) intense feelings of hatred toward specific European national groups who they saw as anti-Semitic, and (3) thoughts of future acts of revenge. The survivors' words clearly illustrate each of the facets of symbolic revenge. However, the small number of interviews that discussed revenge in conjunction with the focus of the original study and the questions it asked did not allow for in-depth analysis of the underlying factors of symbolic revenge. The questions asked in these interviews did not lead to a disclosure of factors that may have influenced survivors to choose one form of symbolic revenge over another. Applying the ideas expressed about the nature of symbolic revenge to current survivors of genocide and probing for information about the influences on them could build on the material in the Kestenberg archive and give us a better understanding of symbolic revenge. This research is a pilot study about the nature of symbolic revenge and can be applied only to current child survivors of genocide. Oral and psychosocial life histories of child survivors of genocide need to include questions about revenge thus giving survivors the opportunity to both confront and express strong emotions about the perpetrators of the genocides. Validating survivors' statements about physical and symbolic descriptions of revenge is part of the healing process after persecution. In order to understand more about the underlying factors influencing who engages in physical acts of revenge as opposed to symbolic acts of revenge or no revenge, it is critical to ask survivors about key elements identified in the litera-

ture as possible influences on revenge. Some of these factors, such as the nature of the war experiences, family losses due to the war, religious affiliation, and gender, were tracked in this study. Future studies would also benefit from asking survivors who discuss revenge about their political beliefs and behaviors, levels of optimism, worldview, and family relationships and dynamics in their families of origin. The survivors' answers on these issues have the potential to give researchers a more in-depth understanding of who engages in symbolic revenge and why they do so.

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Notes

1. Wilcox and Jelen, "Evangelicals and Political Tolerance," 42; Maykovich, "Correlates of Racial Prejudice," 1019; Alozie, "Political Tolerance Hypotheses," 1; Bobo and Licari, "Education and Political Tolerance," 303; Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*, 105; Karpov, "Political Tolerance in Poland and the United States," 1525.
2. Wilcox and Jelen, "Evangelicals and Political Tolerance," 42; Maykovich, "Correlates of Racial Prejudice," 1019; Alozie, "Political Tolerance Hypotheses," 1; Ellison and Musick, "Southern Intolerance," 393; Tuch, "Urbanism, Region and Tolerance Revisited," 509.
3. The research examined eighteen semistructured interviews of the Transcending Trauma Project (TTP), Council for Relationships that discussed tolerance or intolerance toward the perpetrators of the genocide against the Jews. The eighteen interviews were divided into three groups: tolerant, limited-intolerant, and intolerant individuals. Demographic findings revealed that no discernable pattern was found regarding education,

religion, country of origin, and socioeconomic status. The only demographic characteristic that differed in the three groups was gender, with males representing five out of six intolerant survivors and no tolerant survivors. In addition, the research explored the ways in which the quality of family relationships was found to be influential in creating tolerance in survivors toward both perpetrators and other groups in society through the TTP's Quality of Family Dynamics Paradigm, a five-factor continuum of behavior between the caregivers and the child that described the nature of the caregiver-child relationship. The five factors are closeness-distance, empathy-self-centeredness, validation-criticalness, expressive of positive emotion-expressive of negative emotion, and open communication-closed communication.

4. Isserman, "If Someone Throws a Rock on You," 112.
5. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/revenge
6. Cohen, *The Avengers*, 136.
7. Cohen, "A Final Mission."
8. *Ibid.*, 189; Greenberg, "The Avengers."
9. Rosenbaum, 17.
10. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/revenge
11. Grossman, *Jews, Germans, and Allies*, 109.
12. Rosenbaum, *Payback*, 24.
13. *Ibid.*, 53.
14. All interviews quoted in this chapter were held at the Oral History Division, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
15. Schumann and Ross, "The Benefits, Costs, and Paradox of Revenge," 1193.
16. *Ibid.*, 1200.
17. Schumann and Ross, "The Benefits, Costs, and Paradox of Revenge," 1193; Greenberg, "The Avengers."
18. Mazor, Gampel, Enright, and Orenstein, "Holocaust Survivors."
19. Cherfas, Rozin, Cohen, Davidson, and McCauley, "The Framing of Atrocities," 65.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Kestenberg and Kestenberg, "Organized Persecution of Children."
22. Robinson, Rapaport-Bar Server, and Metzger, *Echoes of the Holocaust*, 19.
23. Robinson and Metzger, "What Do Holocaust Survivors Feel Today?," 3.
24. Isserman, "Political Tolerance and Intolerance," 36.
25. Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*.
26. Testimony of HB-MK,(257) 10-4, 53.
27. Testimony of LC, (257) 15-20, 27.
28. Testimony of EK,(257) 18-31, 40-41.
29. Testimony of PK, (257)18-32, 21.
30. Testimony of E, (257) 18-34, 49.
31. Testimony of LS, (257) 21-26, 10-11.
32. This question is poorly worded and may have influenced the nature of the answer. Interview standards have changed since this original research

was conducted in the 1980s. Thus, there is not much discussion in the literature on qualitative research on questions like this one that appear to lead the interviewee to give responses that follow a specific direction. This is because currently research protocols are examined by Institutional Review Boards that eliminate questions like these. It is understood that values, beliefs, and life experiences influence the construction of research questions, data collection, and interpretation of findings (Hewitt, "Ethical Components," 1149) and need to be considered when constructing interview protocols.

33. Testimony of FS (257) 24-15:40)
34. Schumann and Ross, "The Benefits, Costs, and Paradox of Revenge," 1200.
35. Testimony of TG, (257) 16-33c, 74.
36. Testimony of SI, (257) 18-2, 14.
37. Testimony of SG, (257)10-38, 47.
38. Testimony of EK, (257)18-31, 42.
39. Testimony of PK, (257)18-32, 37.
40. Testimony of LS, (257) 21-26, 10.
41. Testimony of NK, (257) 18-35, 82.
42. Testimony of HB, (257)10-4, 62.
43. Testimony of CK, (257) 18-30, 7.
44. Testimony of LC, (257)15-20, 18.
45. Carmil and Breznitz, "Personal Trauma and World View," 403.
46. Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle, *Psychology of Religious Behaviour*, 220; Gibson, "Alternative Measures of Political Tolerance," 570; Gibson, "A Sober Second Thought," 833; Gibson, "Do Strong Group Identities Fuel Intolerance?," 27; Chanley, "Commitment to Political Tolerance," 344.
47. Sigal and Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth*, 137; Monroe, *Heart of Altruism*, 200.
48. Isserman, "If Someone Throws a Rock on You," 112.
49. Beatty and Walter, "Religious Preference and Practice," 327.
50. Cherfas et al., "Framing of Atrocities," 76; Corbett and Corbett, *Politics and Religion*, 290; McFarland, "Religious Orientations," 333; Moore, "Intolerance of 'Others,'" 304.
51. Grandin and Brinkerhoff, "Does Religiosity Encourage," 32; Kunovich and Hodson, "Conflict, Religious Identity," 643.
52. Isserman, "Political Tolerance and Intolerance," 42.

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