Crossing a Bridge over Troubled Water

The Effects of the Holocaust on the Children of Survivors

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[1] Photo Courtesy of Bernice Eisenstien. Bernice Eisenstein, *I was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, (New York:Riverhead Trade) Cover.

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The Effects of the Holocaust on the Children of Survivors

Growing up I have always loved history and assumed everyone else did as well. However, I soon learned that very few felt this connection to the past. Many of my peers would complain about history. To them history happened long ago and offered no valuable insight into their lives. However, history affects every one of us since those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Through history, we can learn the lessons of those who came before us, without making the same mistakes that they did. We already know the atrocities that can happen when a world is so caught up in a war that they are unable to see the persecution of millions of people. The Nazis persecuted Jews not behind closed doors, but right out on the street in front of many German individuals who did nothing but watch. Before the war, the myth of the stab-in-the back (the belief that the Jews' unwillingness to commit during World War I) was so widely spread that many were happy to see that Jews were finally paying for the Germany's loss in the Great War. Once the World War II began, Germans often did not stand up for Jewish Germans, because for many the war had taken so much from them that many individuals could not risk giving anything else up. When the persecution or word of it spread to other nations, the war made it difficult, so that relatively few individuals in these nations would stand up against injustice. Too many individuals were either happy that Hitler led their country (like Austria), or so caught up in destroying him (like England), that they did not have the ability or strength to help the millions of Jews who were dying. Millions turned their backs on the Jews in Nazi occupied Europe. In effect, they were forced to experience the horror that comes when a

dastardly man and his inner circle is allowed to become too powerful. For many individuals it is all a distant memory now, with the Holocaust being nothing more than a "history book chapter indicating an event that happened long ago in another part of the world."[2] However, those who experienced the Holocaust and their descendants are forced to pay the price, and will continue to pay the price, if we do not learn from history.

Others believe that history happened in the past so everything having to deal with it is over too. However, this is simply not the case. Individuals are shaped by their experiences, hence why every person is able to think of moments in their lives that were significant and life altering. For many individuals, regardless of background or ethnicity, marriage is a life altering event that sparks a family. Once they are married for many years and have had children and grandchildren, the marriage is also an event that occurred in the past. However, the children and grandchildren are a living result of one historical moment, a marriage that allowed subsequent generations to continue to be born and live. If an ordinary marriage of two people had long lasting effects, imagine the effects of a major historical event, like the Shoah (another term for the Holocaust, which means calamity in Hebrew). Lives were forever altered as the normal day to day activity of many individuals was thrown off course, when individuals were uprooted from their homes and stripped of everything. Those lucky enough to survive were not free when the war ended, since the "liberation of the camps in 1944 and 1945 did not end the traumas of the camp," as pointed out by Sarah Bender, an expert on the transgenerational effects of the Holocaust.[3] Survivors had to start their lives over again, often in a new land surrounded by strangers, while also dealing with the after-effects of the horror that had changed their lives. The extreme change and the trauma from living through the Shoah also caused descendants to be affected by the

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[2] Sarah M. Bender, "Transgenerational Effects of the Holocaust Past, Present, and Future," *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 9, no.3 (July 2004) 205.
[3] Bender, 205.

Holocaust, a historical event that occurred before they were even born, may last for generations to come. The long lasting effects of the Holocaust are clearly shown in the lives of the children of survivors many of whom believe that the war will never really be over, since it had the ability to shape their entire life. History has the power to continue to shape lives long after an event's ending. Noted survivor and scholar Elie Wiesel noted that the children of survivors know that "one can live a thousand miles away from the temple and still see it burn. One can die in Auschwitz, after Auschwitz" no longer functioned as a camp.[4]

In the case of children of Holocaust survivors, there are many different effects that have been transferred from the survivors to their children. However, when dealing with this subject it is important to note that there is an unmanageable number of variables. Every survivor of the Holocaust survived in different ways. Some survivors disguised themselves in the open, constantly lying about their identity, while others hid in small, dark places with no room to move. Other survivors endured the arduous work mandatory in labor camps, while others were sent to death factories, where they hoped each day that it would not be their last. After the war, survivors could choose to deal with their experiences in different ways, as well. If this did not create a messy enough situation, on its own, it is also important to remember that every child of survivors is also unique, each with their own personality. This caused differences in transference of effects to occur, even among siblings. In an attempt to manage this complex nexus of factors, I have examined a large and varied amount of data and selected individuals who have many factors in common. While this does not yield universal truths for every child of Holocaust survivors, I discovered that there are several effects that are seen in a large number of survivors and their children.

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[4] Elie Wiesel, *One Generation After* (New York: Schocken, 2011) 168-169.

To see the extent of what effects have reappeared in the next generation and which have grown into something different but related, I have analyzed memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, newspaper articles, graphic novels, psychological studies, scholarly articles, and media sources, including film and interviews. My topic of interest is still an emerging field of study. In this field, there have been notable contributions by Helen Epstein, Aaron Hass, and Martin S. Bergmann. In 1979 Epstein wrote a seminal book on this topic, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, in which she made the problems of the children of survivors clear. After publication of this work, it became clear that the children of survivors had been affected by the trauma their parents faced. It also became evident that these children were a unique group with similar contributions. Epstein wrote several other books, but none was as pathbreaking as *Children of the Holocaust*. As a result of it, the children of survivors came together to form a community, and further scholarship was done on the matter.

These subsequent studies include scholarly texts and psychological studies. Since Epstein's first book, scholars desired to check the authenticity of her findings in a broader sense and delved into further research to see what else they could discover. From this desire came many psychological studies on the children of Holocaust survivors, and even survivors' grandchildren. For my research, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, by Aaron Hass, became a starting point. Hass compared children of survivors of all ages and genders, using a standard questionnaire. He asked many questions about how the Holocaust has affected the children's views on the religion, non-Jews, life, and the possibility of a second genocide as widespread and devastating as the Holocaust. He also asked the children how much they knew about their parents' stories, and if their parents' reality ever caused them to have

nightmares. He was also curious what abnormalities the children saw in their parents. From these questions, Hass created a detailed analysis of many of the common problems experienced in the children of survivors. I was able to find many of his findings confirmed in studies conducted by other psychologists, who also asked a variety of questions. Another important figure in Holocaust research is Martin Bergmann, who analyzed not only the children of survivors, but the survivors and their grandchildren as well, in his work titled *Generations of the Holocaust*. This work allowed the transgenerational effects to be observed, since he discussed the common side effects of trauma in all three generations.

These studies make clear that while some of the effects of the Holocaust on survivors are mirrored in their children, other effects are not so obviously seen in the children and have transformed into much more complex symptoms. I have worked to analyze this transference between parent to child in the lives of Helen Epstein, Rochelle Rubenstein, Katrina Lantos-Sweet, Gabriela Korda, and Art Spiegelman. All of these individuals are children of two Jewish Holocaust survivors whose parents survived Auschwitz, with the exception of Katrina Lantos-Swett, whose mother did not experience the horror of a camp directly, having escaped to Switzerland as a child. The bulk of my research focused on Art Spiegelman and Helen Epstein who were both born in the years immediately after the war, and raised in New York State. Both have published works about their parents' Holocaust experiences and how this affected their own lives. Both also grew up in relatively privileged circumstances, having the material necessities of life. This privileged upbringing allowed me to conclude that if not for the Holocaust, these individuals would have grown up as any other American. However, through analyses of these sources, it is clear that many effects of their parents' experience during the Shoah were transferred in some way to their children. The Holocaust caused survivors and the children of the

survivors to develop abnormal parent-child relationships, trust issues, an inability to feel when it came to the Holocaust, an intense sense of guilt, and a strong Jewish identity. The Holocaust has also caused survivors to expect more from their children, than non-survivor parents, since there had to be a reason why they survived the Holocaust when a worthier individual did not.

Children of Holocaust Survivors or Second Generation Holocaust Survivors?

The term "second generation" is often used to denote the children of Holocaust survivors, but it is problematic. The dictionary definition of "second generation" is either the native child of naturalized parents or the second generation born in one specific country.[5] Many individuals are more familiar with the dictionary definition of second generation than its specific use meaning the children of Holocaust survivors. When I spoke to a group of individuals unfamiliar with the topic, they were quite confused as to what I meant by the second generation. At the time, I did not understand their confusion, because all of the works I read use the term. However, once I considered their confusion, it made sense. Second generation is indeed a term used when speaking of immigration, and was not used in conjunction with the Holocaust until the 1980s. This usage of the term has not become popular enough over the last three decades to be widely understood by those unfamiliar with the literature and work associated with the descendants of Holocaust survivors.

[5]*Merriam Webster Online Dictionary*, s.v. "second generation," accessed Nov 10, 2013.

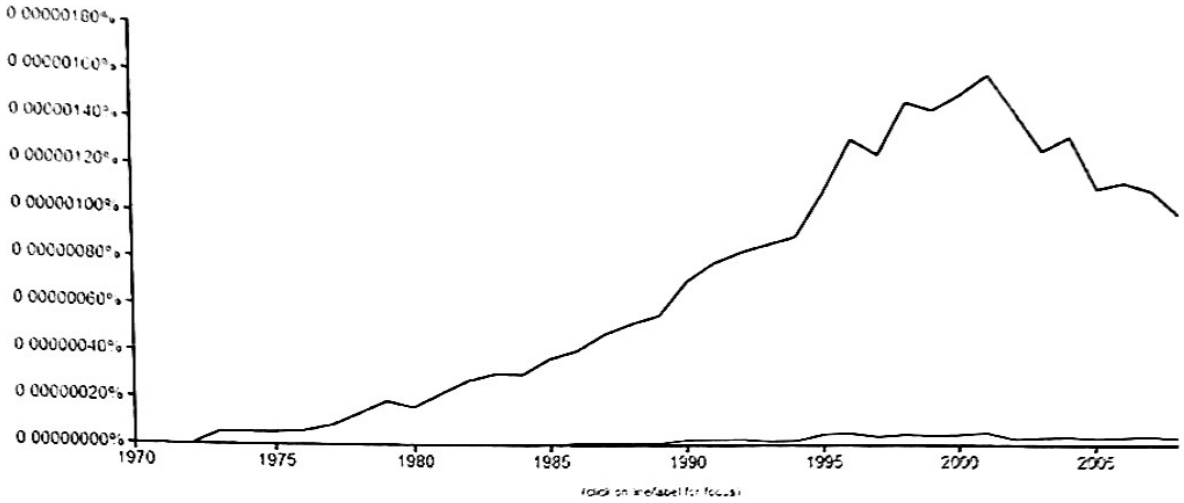

Figure 1: Google N-gram of "children of Holocaust survivor (blue) and "second generation Holocaust survivors" (red)

The term second generation survivor is a term associated with children whose parents survived the Holocaust. To determine when this term came into use and how often it has been deployed over time, I used Google Ngrams. This is an online source which provides the percentage of how many times a specific word or phrase was used in various books in yearly increments, as seen in figure 1. According to Google Ngrams, the use of the term "second generation Holocaust survivors" began in 1981 in a psychological study by Wilferd Quaytman, only two years after Helen Epstein published the first major work on the children of Holocaust survivors, titled *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*. Although Helen Epstein never used the term second generation survivor herself, her work likely sparked the use of the term. Epstein's work made many children of survivors feel as if they were part of a larger community of children shaped by the Holocaust and their parents' experiences of horror. This was a new phenomenon, since many had never realized that the impact of their parents' experiences on their lives was not an isolated instance, but rather similar to other children of Holocaust survivors. Eva Hoffman, a child of survivors, acknowledged Epstein's role in the creation of this group in her own memoir, stating that the "existence of the 'second generation' was probably announced in 1979 with the publication of Helen Epstein's seminal

book."[6] Many, within the group and outside, began to refer to these children as second generation survivors. The use of the term steadily grew, with notable scholars, such as Aaron Hass, referring to the group as the second generation or second generation survivors in their own works. When children of Holocaust survivors wrote their own memoirs, they too called themselves the second generation. A simple Google search shows how common the term has become, as pages and pages of books using the term "second generation survivors" are found. Children of Holocaust survivors thus embraced the term, and now their children are doing the same. The grandchildren of Holocaust survivors have continued this custom by referring to themselves as the third generation survivors, often abbreviated 3GS. However, I choose not to refer to the group as the second generation, since I find the term "children of Holocaust survivors" both more accurate and more informative.

The children themselves did not experience the Holocaust. They never lived through it, so to say that they are "survivors" is quite puzzling. As we will see, the children have indeed been affected by the Shoah. Their parents' experiences forced them to deal with the Holocaust early on, and deal with its legacies in their parents' lives, whether they desired to or fought against knowledge about their parents' past. Whether they were able to admit it openly or not, their lives were changed by the Holocaust. Nonetheless, they did not survive the Holocaust. The children of survivors did not deal with the deep hatred present during the Shoah. They did not become the walking dead. They were not forced to complete strenuous tasks with very little food. Nor did they constantly have to stay hidden or be vigilant and ready to hide, hoping that they might be lucky enough to escape deportation. Thus the term "Holocaust survivor" should not be applied to them. The children might still be referred to as survivors, since they dealt with

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[6] Eva Hoffman, *After such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004) xi.

the trauma of living in the shadow of such horror and terror. Yet, this is a different type of "survivor" altogether. The children survived the nonlethal knowledge of what horrors Nazis forced their parents to endure, while their parents actually survived the event. The children are a distinct group of children, raised by parents who could not forget the Holocaust. They differ from other individuals; since no one else knows exactly what it is like living with parents who were marked by the horrors they had faced. Consequently, "children of Holocaust survivors" is the most accurate term for them.

Breaking the Silence

Some scholars postulate that there was a conspiracy of silence when dealing with the Holocaust. The concept was first introduced by Yael Danieli in the 1960s. According to Danieli, the "conspiracy of silence" has "socialized survivors into keeping quiet about their past and [kept] non-survivors from asking" about their role in the Holocaust.[7] The silence was due to the fact that they lived in a world that would rather forget that such atrocities were ever allowed to occur than listen and help the individuals who were affected. Most people simply do not want to hear about what occurred, especially not the disturbing, inhumane things the Nazis had done to these survivors. In the previously Nazi-occupied countries, there was often still too much antisemitism for anyone to listen. Many still believed that Jews had deserved everything that the Nazis had put them through. Even the few who felt truly sorry did not wish to hear their stories, since it only caused them pain. In the United States, there were already many Jews who were well integrated into American society, and felt the last thing they needed was for these survivors to complicate their situation by sharing their stories.

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[7] Bender, 208.

Many of those who did listen did not help the survivors either, since they could not believe that what the survivors told them could actually be true. These listeners often thought the survivors were exaggerating and that it could not have been that bad. There were also many Holocaust deniers who claimed thatthe genocide never transpired in the first place. These Holocaust deniers had examples to point to, since some of the footage and pictures of the camps were recreations of what had once occurred there. Others believed that yes the Holocaust had happened, but Jews had sealed their own destiny by going like "sheep to the slaughter" without putting up a fight.[8] Still others were suspicious, because they believed that survivors had to "perform immoral acts in order to survive."[9] This idea was debunked by Hermann Langbein, in his production of *Against all Hope: Resistance in the Nazi Concentration Camp*, which shatters the belief that all prisoners passively allowed themselves to be slaughtered.[10] However, the myth was not destroyed until the late 1990s, long after initial deniers made such claims. As a result, many survivors received the message that it would simply be a lot easier if they kept their mouths shut, and tried to forget everything that had happened to them during the war.

When survivors had children, they continued to keep silent. Many of these survivor-parents maintained their silence for all the aforementioned reasons. A majority of parents also were unwilling to speak about their past, because they "feared that [by] telling what they went through, their pain would hurt their children."[11] By not telling their children what they experienced, they felt they were protecting them. However, many children of survivors always knew that their parents had endured the Shoah. Some children later felt that not talking about the

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[8] "Conspiracy of Silence: A Conversation with Dr. Yael Danieli," *Reform Judism*, Winter 2009.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Hermann Langbein, *Against all Hope: Resistance in the Nazi Concentration Camps*, (New York: Paragon House, 1998).
[11] Shelia Erlich. "Short-Term Group Therapy with Holocaust Survivors and the Second Generation," *Group*, Vol. 26, No.2 (June2002), 163-171.

Holocaust only made things worse. Yet many parents refused to share their experience, because they hoped that if their children were ignorant of the past, they might be able to escape it.[12] Children of parents who refused to talk about the Holocaust continued the silence, by not asking questions. Robert Prince, an eminent psychologists and a child of survivors himself, conducted a study on the children of survivors, discovering that these children felt it was "cruel to ask parents questions and make their wounds bleed again."[13] The few survivors who divulged information of their past to their children, did not tell of anything as horrific as what is portrayed in many Holocaust documentaries. This does not mean that they did not experience these same nightmares. It simply reflects the trend that Prince observed when he stated that many survivors "described their experiences of loss in only the barest outline form."[14] Survivors did this so that they did not have to admit to their children the humiliation they had been through during the process of their dehumanization. Prince found that other survivors "denied they had suffered either in comparison to others or at all."[15] This was most-likely due to one of two reasons: either the survivors believed and knew that it could have been much worse, or they did not want their children to see them as weak. Whether survivors openly talked about the Holocaust or kept utterly silent, most children did not ask their parents to divulge any more information, again usually for one of two reasons. Either the children were afraid of hurting their parents by reminding them of painful memories, or they were protecting themselves from the reality of what their parents had endured, unable to deal with the exposed truth.

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[12] Victoria A. Elmwood, "Happy, Happy Ever After": The Transformation of Trauma Between the Generations in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*," *Biography an Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (Fall2004 2004): 691-720.
[13] Robert M. Prince, *The Legacy of the Holocaust*, (New York: Other Press, 1999), 46.
[14] Prince, 36.
[15] Prince, 36.

However, not all children of Holocaust survivors followed this trend. Some were brave enough to break the silence. One of them was Art Spiegelman. Art was born on February 15, 1948 in Sweden, to Vladek and Anja, who had both survived Auschwitz. The family soon immigrated to the United States in pursuit of the American Dream. Art grew up as a fairly normal child, always knowing that his parents and most of their friends had survived the Holocaust. However, he did not ask his parents much while he was child, nor did they offer any information, especially his father, who did not wish to tell his son of the terrible things that he had experienced. It was only once Art was in his mid- to late twenties that he decided to ask his father to tell his story of the Holocaust. This timing also coincides with when talk of the Holocaust became more readily discussed in the 1970s. However, whether this spurred Art to question his father seems unlikely. Art questioned his father about his Holocaust past, because he was interested in illustrating a story about racism using cats and mice. It does not seem likely that this desire would not have existed without a growing consciousness of the Holocaust in mainstream society, since it was always an important subject in his life.

Art's career as a comic book artist depended on finding a story worth telling. In his search, it "seemed obvious that it had to be this story I got from my parents."[16] So Art told the story of his father and the war in his 1986 book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Within this story Art includes himself, showing the influence the Holocaust had on his own upbringing. He never expected that this book would find a broad audience. Yet, his memoir/biography became a best-seller, causing him to be "haunted by this 5,000 pound Maus."[17]After the publication of the two volumes, numerous individuals asked Art when there would be a third one, since his readers desired more of this story. He had narrated his father's Holocaust story. Thus, with the final

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[16] Nina Siegel, "Art Spiegelman Interview," *The Progressive*, accessed on November 10, 2013.
[17] "Art Spiegelman Reflects on 60 Years of Pen and Ink," *NPR Books*, September 14, 2013, accessed on October 28, 2013.

pages of the second volume taking readers to the end of the war, came the end of *Maus*. For him, there was nothing more to tell. Be that as it may, the end of the Holocaust's results on Art's life did not end, just because he had told his father's whole Holocaust story. *Maus* made his career and overshadowed his other works when it became a best-selling memoir. Without it, he might still be producing small underground comics, and very few people would ever have heard of him. The recreation of his father's story in comic book form made it easy to convey a graphic description of what it was like to be a Jew during the Holocaust. Art's account became the choice for educators and an engrossing graphic tale for others. His decision to write and draw this story made his memoir a perfect selection, since he wrote not only about his father's Holocaust past, but his own interaction with it as well.

Another individual who decided to break through the taboos against speaking of the horrific Holocaust past was Helen Epstein. She was born on November 27, 1947in Czechoslovakia to Kurt and Franci Epstein. Both had been in Auschwitz before being transported to Bergen-Belsen, where they resided until liberation. Soon after Helen was born, her parents immigrated with her to the United States, just like the Spiegelmans, in the hope that they would be finally free and have the ability to make a new life for themselves. As a child, Helen heard the stories her parents told their other survivor friends, during their many weekend trips to the wilderness, anywhere that was surrounded by trees and the great outdoors.[18] However, she did not remember much about what her parents had been through. Helen even noted that her father frequently gave her books about the war, yet "she could not remember a single fact."[19] Even though Helen saw the tattoo on her mother's arm every single day, she was incapable of

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[18] Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 220.
[19] Helen Epstein, "The Heirs of the Holocaust," *New York Times*, June 19, 1997.

recalling the number.[20] It was not until Helen became a journalist that she saw the need to learn about her parents' past. Helen came to see the development of a distinct group of children of survivors, who "were strikingly different people, people who never would have met under ordinary circumstances," yet were united by the sole fact that their parents were survivors.[21] This ability of the Holocaust to unite so many different people intrigued her as a journalist, prompting her first to write an article about these children, and then a book, in which she looked at many survivors' children as herself, to examine how they had been affected by their survivor-parents. Like Art Spiegelman Helen eventually wrote the story of her mother's past, which she found to be an extremely rewarding endeavor. By telling her mother's story, Helen was able to reconstruct a lost reality, "creating for herself a great-grandma and a grandma and the mother I would have had without the Holocaust."[22] Thus this process became for Helen an extraordinary writing experience, since it allowed her finally to claim the family she had lost.

For Art Spiegelman and Helen Epstein, embracing the Holocaust and openly speaking about it was necessary, even if other children of survivors could not understand it. Helen and Art turned to their writing and art "in an effort to sort through the experience of growing up in families with memories too terrible to speak of."[23] Children of survivors may have never lived through the nightmare of the Holocaust, yet still they cannot avoid it. It has affected their lives in more ways than they are aware of. By presenting their parents' tales along with their own, to a larger reading public, they succeeded in transferring the trauma of the Shoah from survivor-parents to their children.

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust,* 340.
[22] Dinitia Smith, "For the Holocaust 'Second Generation' an Artistic Quest," *New York Times* (1923-Current File) Dec. 23, 1997.
[23] Dinitia Smith.

Interpreting the Cases of Art Spiegelman and Helen Epstein and the Transgenerational Effects they Explore

It is impossible to analyze the effects of the Holocaust on children of survivors without examining the lives of their parents. Every Holocaust experience was different for every individual. The effects from the trauma depended on the individual survivor. Therefore, even though we can find many effects in a majority of survivors, those from the Holocaust manifested themselves in different ways and intensities. It is important to examine how the trauma of enduring seemingly endless torture, horror, and persecution affected the survivors, since, as Aaron Hass found, their children often acted as mirrors. Children of survivors reflected the attitudes, perceptions, and fears of their parents, as they awaited a "repetition of the persecution their parents experienced."[24] Therefore, an effect observed in the survivors could also be seen in the children. As Epstein found, the parents' Holocaust past influenced the very lives their children lived, as the Holocaust experiences "had been a dominant influence on the basic choices [children of survivors] had made in their lives."[25] Even if the parents tried to protect their children from everything related to the Holocaust, most survivors could not help but transmit their trauma, as "they continued to live in its shadow."[26] The Holocaust has had long lasting effects that last for generations to come. Whether the children of survivors openly embraced the Holocaust or turned away from it, "the experience (and the memory) remains, even for those who know it only at a distance."[27]

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[24] Aaron Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 7.
[25] Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust,* 220.
[26] Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy, *Generations of the Holocaust* (New York: Basic Books, 1982) 311.
[27] Michael Rothberg and Art Spiegelman, "'We Were Talking Jewish': Art Spiegelman's Maus as Holocaust Production," *Contemporary Literature* 35, no. 4 (1994), 666.

Relationships between Survivor-Parents and their Children

The Holocaust caused abnormal parent child relationships to occur between the survivor-parents and their children. For most survivors, "family members, friends, homes, and towns were all gone."[28] As a result of survivors' losses, they depended heavily on their children to replace all that they had lost. Survivors clung to their children very tightly, trying to protect them from the vicious place they knew the world could be. As we have seen, survivor-parents even tried to protect their children from the pain of the past, hoping that by being oblivious to what they endured, their children could escape it. However, these survivor-parents were unaware that even if they tried not speak of their Holocaust experience, their children somehow knew. Many psychological studies, including those conducted by Robert Prince and Aaron Hass, show that children of survivors had a "sense of always having known that their parents were survivors."[29] Since their children knew the truth, the desired effect of shielding them did not occur. Yet, another unforeseen effect did result from parents' need to shield their children from the truth.

From this need to protect, children learned that protecting their loved ones from pain was important. Thus, in return for survivors protecting their children from the anguish of the reality, their children attempted to do the same for their parents, evident in the fact that, as Hass found, usually the children of Holocaust survivors were "generally more protective of their parents than their Jewish American peers" were.[30] Survivors' children knew that their parents already endured such a degree of pain that they hated to bring up anything that might hurt them. If they asked their parents about the Holocaust and pain could be seen or heard in the survivor, the children would immediately drop the subject, in order to avoid causing unwanted pain. As a result

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[28] Bender, 205.
[29] Prince, 29.
[30] Hass, 87.

"parents do not tell, and their children do not ask," as Dan Bar-on found in a study.[31] Bar-on noted that this became a pattern in the relationships between Holocaust survivors and their children. This pattern is so widely seen in these parent-child relationships because it protected both parties. Parents thought that by not telling they protected their children from unimaginable horrors, and children felt that by not asking they could protect their parents from the pain their parents' memories caused them. This protective child parent relationship was also observed by Hass, Epstein, and Bergmann, as something that occurred in a majority of survivors' children.

Epstein observed this same protective relationship in Rochelle Rubenstein. Epstein's interview with Rochelle "struck the most responsive chord in her," because she observed the protective parent-child relationship Rochelle focused on in her own relationship with her parents.[32] Rochelle Rubenstein was also a child of two survivors of Auschwitz, and spoke mainly about her relationship with her parents when interviewed by Epstein. Rochelle's relationship with her parents differed greatly from the parent-child relationships she witnessed in her friends. They had the ability to have a casual relationship, but for Helen, Rochelle, and other children of survivors, this was simply not an option. A very serious relationship between survivor-parents and their children developed. To protect their parents from pain, children often had to take on the role of parents. This was often seen in the parents' need to depend on their children to answer the door or translate a letter, since many of the survivors were not fluent in the languages of their new homelands, and depended on their children to help them understand.[33] This dependence is common among all immigrant families, and not limited to the Holocaust.

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[31] Dan Bar-On, Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).
[32] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust* , 45.
[33] Hass.

However, there are factors that were exclusive to the relationship between Holocaust survivors and their children. Rochelle observed that being a child of survivors meant "there were things you couldn't do and certain things [that] were not allowed to be touched and if you touched them it would be like a grenade that would explode."[34] This was due to the fact that survivors had painful memories associated with many simple things, causing them to be quite delicate. Children had to "be gentle with them [survivors], because they could shatter quite easily."[35] Another way Rochelle and other children acted as parents was by pretending to be happy no matter what, since "parents had a stake in their [children's] 'normalcy' [and] any hint of disorder would hurt them."[36] In Helen's case, this is the reason why she would never discuss her visions of "a group of men in black coats bursting into the auditorium and shooting everybody dead," every time her mother took her to Carnegie Hall.[37] Helen allowed her mother to believe that she was a normal well-adjusted child. In Rochelle's case, even though she was often angry with them, she would conceal it to spare them the pain of this knowledge.

The children of survivors were not the only ones worrying in these relationships, evident by the fact that many survivors became extremely protective of their children. In Rochelle's case, her father's first words when he got home were always about Rochelle.[38] He was always asking about her to make sure that she was safe. This overprotective relationship was also seen in his inability to allow Rochelle to live too far away for too long of a time. Rochelle's father had begrudgingly agreed to allow her to study in New York. Once she was married and was finished with school, he could not stand for her to be so far away, begging her to come back home. He could not stand to "lose" anyone else, since he had already lost a wife and two children in the

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[34] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust* , 39.
[35] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust* , 41.
[36] Epstein, "Heirs of the Holocaust."
[37] Ibid.
[38] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust,* 37.

Holocaust.[39] This protectiveness was also shown in the stories her parents told, since they "never told her about being hit or tortured."[40] Survivors of the Holocaust had lost so many loved ones that they simply could not suffer through any more losses. As a result, they tried to protect their children as much as they possibly could, never even being able to separate from their children without telling them to be safe.

Aside from this protective relationship, Hass also observed that many children either idealized their parents or turned away from them. The children who idealized their survivor parent(s) focused on "assumed heroic qualities of mastery, strength, resilience, and adaptation."[41] For these children, the fact that their parents had been among the few individuals to survive the Holocaust meant that they had to be heroes.[42] In some survivor cases, it is easy to see why a child saw them as heroes, since to survive individuals usually had to be clever and able to get themselves out of sticky situations. This equation of survivor and hero also makes sense when we consider that many survivors shielded their children from the most horrific stories. Instead, survivors told their children tales of their bravery when they had come face to face with danger or their ability to sidestep the peril altogether. However, there is a problem with this idea that surviving made one heroic and honorable, since it made those who did not survive shameful. Children who idealized their parents did not recognize this problem, while those who explicitly chose not to make their parents into heroes often had the same beliefs as their parents. According to many survivors, survival in the Holocaust was simply based on luck and nothing else.[43] While it is clear that often survival depended on more than mere luck, as seen in the case of Vladek

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[39] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust* , 40.
[40] Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust* , 41.
[41] Hass, 88.
[42] Naomi Berger and Alan L. Berger, *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 73.
[43] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Summit, 1988) 76.

Spiegelman, the survivor still believed that there was no reason they lived when somebody else perished. The children of survivors who turn away and rebel from their parents focus on the humiliation or the shell of a person that the Holocaust had made some survivors become.

Throughout *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* and in subsequent interviews, Art lets his negative feelings for his father be known. Art "refused to sentimentalize or sanctify the survivor."[44] Art saw his father as a truly annoying man. A true depiction of Vladek needed to include his annoying habits; even if they were a result of the horror he faced during the war. For instance Art depicted his father's need to save everything, picking up what others would consider trash. Obviously such behavior embarrassed Art, but Vladek simply could not break the habit. Art believed that Vladek's love of holding onto everything created a situation in which "he was more attached to things than people."[45] Vladek's quirk stemmed from the Holocaust. During this time, it was necessary to save everything, because it was never clear whether an item might save one's life. For example, Vladek once kept a cheese wrapper, which allowed him to write a note to Anja, which kept her alive.[46] Without this note, Anja would have continued to have been beaten and mistreated to such an extent that she might have been incapable of continuing the fight of survival. Art saw his father as this impossible man and therefore depicted a man who had many quirks, since Vladek was so unpleasant for Art to be around.

Art showed the annoying and irrational qualities his father possessed in *Maus*, as a way to explain their strained relationship. Another hard to bear quality of Vladek was that he "felt physical pain to part with even a nickel."[47] Vladek had desired acquiring wealth before the war,

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[44] Rachel Cooke, Interview with Art Spiegelman. "Art Spiegelman: 'Auschwitz became for us a safe place,'" *The Observer*, October 22, 2011.
[45] Art Spiegelman, *Maus II: A Survivors Tale: And Here is Where My Troubles Began*, (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 93.
[46] Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 78.
[47] Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 131.

as evident by his inability to be satisfied with Lucia, whose family "had no money."[48] However, this desire for money intensified with the Holocaust. Instead of simply desiring wealth, Vladek now needed money to feel secure. Vladek's struggle to survive during the Holocaust caused him to become stingier, since every valuable bought them extra time to live outside of Auschwitz. Thus, Vladek's possession of these items was justified, especially since Vladek, like many other survivors, constantly worried that something horrible would come again. By saving everything he could, Vladek could assure himself that he would have the funds necessary to allow his entire family to live, something he had been unable to do during the Holocaust, since he had not been able to keep his first child alive through the war.

Another irksome habit was Vladek's inability to throw away any little bit of food. This inability to throw away even scraps reached the highest degree of annoyance and embarrassment, when Vladek insisted on "returning a load of open boxes and partially eaten food."[49] Vladek had first offered the half eaten groceries to Art and Francoise, but neither of them had wanted it. Vladek could not stand to see this food go to waste; therefore he felt it was reasonable to take the items back to the grocery store. Such an act was completely absurd to Art, who was never forced to witness people dying due to lack of food. Vladek observed people starving for years, thus, it was only natural. . The same reluctance of disposing of edible food was also witnessed in Helen's father, who "flew into sudden rages when his children didn't eat their dinner."[50] According to a study conducted by Amy Sindler, Nancy Wellman, and Oren Baruch, this attitude towards food was common among survivors. They observed that a majority of survivors had "difficulty throwing food away, even when spoiled… and experience[d] anxiety when food

[48] Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 15.
[49] Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 89.
[50] Smith, Dinitia.

[was] not readily available."[51] All of which makes perfect sense considering how little food survivors received while in the camps. An objective look at the situation allows an impartial observer to see the justification for Vladek's unusual tendencies, but Art could not be objective since he dealt with father's habits every day. Another possible reason Art had such difficulty forgiving his father's quirky nature may be due to the fact that he had a difficult relationship with his father. This becomes more plausible when considering that Anja also exhibited tendencies, which bothered Art, like a need to constantly be reassured of her son's love.[52] However, Art was able to forgive his mother for her shortcomings, because no matter how irksome she could be, there was a deep sense of love that surpassed all of her faults. While Art loved his father, the emotion was not deep enough to mask Vladek's deficiencies.

Art never believed that his father was a hero for having survived Hitler's death sentence. For Art it was "impossible to make [his] father heroic, because it would have been such a lie that nothing else could come from it."[53] The Holocaust had made Vladek into an intolerable man to his son. Although Art worried that exposing his father's faults would subject him to ridicule, he had to show Vladek as the man forever broken by the war. Only by showing the true personality of Vladek could Art depict the ruined father-son relationship the Holocaust had created by intensifying tendencies already present in Vladek and producing new habits. Young sons often idolize their fathers and wish to become just like them, but traumatic life experiences like the Holocaust can turn men into something they never were before ruins the natural order. Vladek suffered through many unthinkable times. Even though Art recognized his father's pain, he also

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[51] Amy J. Sindler, Nancy S. Wellman, Oren Baruch Stier, "Holocaust Survivors Report Long-Term Effects on Attitudes Toward Food," *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaivor* 36, no. 4 (July 2004), 189-196.
[52] *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale*, 103.
[53] "Making of Maus," 10 Dec. 2008, *POV Inheritence*, (PBS).

realized that "unimaginable suffering doesn't make a person better, it just makes them suffer."[54] This realization made it easier for Art to deal with the fact that he would never have an easy relationship with his father.

The Holocaust ruined the lives even of some of those who survived. A significant amount of survivors unintentionally robbed their children of a childhood, by constantly assuming that the worst could happen. Art Spiegelman is an example of a child whose normal childhood had been taken from him the day Hitler took power. Art and many other children could never look up to the men the Holocaust had made their fathers, and they turned away from them. However, the Holocaust also created children who placed their parents on pedestals, believing that they were heroes. These children unquestioningly adored their parents for being strong enough to survive. They believed that their parents survived for a reason. An example of a child who idealized her parents was Helen Epstein.

Helen always saw her mother and father as real life heroes. Kurt had told Helen and her siblings of his 1936 Olympic glory days attempting to "impress on us [his children] the importance of his participation."[55] He made "sports the core of his conversations" with his own children and their friends.[56] Kurt did this because he wanted his children to see him as the amazing man he once was. He did not want his children to know of the dehumanized, one hundred pound object he became inside Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. However, he obviously could not completely ignore his past in the camps. Therefore, when Helen asked about this dark time in his life, he told her of his reputation of being a man so pure that even in the camps he was regarded as one of the few incorruptible men, since he was one of the few "who never stole from

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[54] Cooke.
[55] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 143.
[56] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 143.

or denounced a fellow inmate."[57] Helen believed that her father survived without compromising his morals, and was very proud of him. If Vladek had told Art boosted that he survived in a moral manner, Art probably would not accepted the fact as truth as Helen had. Art's difficult relationship with Vladek would have cast doubt upon the truth of such a statement. Helen's acceptance is due to her favorable relationship with her father, making him into a hero. She seems largely unaware of the stories, in which her father was humiliated. Yet, she recalls her father telling the tale of his final days in the camp spent searching for other survivors and helping to protect the ones he found. Revealing only tales that made him into a fighter figure and avoiding the ones of humiliation is very common among male survivors. Katarzyna Post has observed that male survivors have a tendency to relive their pasts making "events [of the Holocaust] meaningful by perceiving themselves as active participants."[58] As a result, Helen, and many other children of survivors, grew up idolizing their parents for their active participation in the war. Helen also made her mother into a hero. Franci had outsmarted death, and to Helen this made her "more adroit than the Greek heroes whose exploits were called myths."[59] Helen was so impressed with her parents' heroism that she always saw their survival as something to be admired. Helen idealized her parents to such a degree that according to her, whatever her "parents said always had the most impact on my life."[60]

Another child of Holocaust survivors whose parents had a large impact on her life is Katrina Lantos-Sweet. For Katrina, the Holocaust caused her parents, Tom Lantos and Annette Tilleman Lantos, to become better people, since it opened their eyes to those who were suffering. Once her parents became aware of this grief after the war, they felt they had no choice but to aid

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[57] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 167.
[58] Prot, 36.
[59] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 167.
[60] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 183.

those who needed someone to help. This led Tom to a life of public service, in which he became the only Jewish Holocaust survivor to serve in the United States House of Representatives. While Katrina grew up, Tom and Annette taught her to live by the Hebrew saying that "he who saves one life saves the universe." This saying became so important to Katrina's family, since her parents' lives had been saved by the act of a single man, by the name of Wallenberg. As a result, Tom and his wife produced two daughters, who had seventeen children. Thus in just one family, nineteen individuals owe their lives to Wallenberg, and this number increases with each subsequent generation. Tom's and Annette's survival made Katrina believe that one individual truly does have the power to make a difference. This idea was strengthened by the fact that her father became a champion for human rights in Congress, due to his conviction that "it is our responsibility as a free legislative body to stand up and to speak out against outrages," as Katrina stated in an interview.[61] When Katrina thought of her father, she saw a hero. A man so great that not many "guys could hold a candle to [her] dad."[62] Katrina idealized her father, as a man who had survived to help those suffering around the world and to continue the message of never forgetting the atrocities of the Holocaust. Therefore, when he died, Katrina felt compelled to "carry on the unique legacy" of her father, as a champion for human rights.[63]

Katrina and Helen, on the one hand, and Art on the other exhibit the two possible relationships between children and survivor-parents. Some children rejected their parents, rebelling against everything they had wanted for them and the lifestyle they lived. Art exemplified this by refusing to accept that "the war made him [Vladek] this way."[64] Even though Art could see the influence of the Holocaust on his father's life, Art was unable to tolerate him

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[61] Lamb.
[62] Ibid.
[63] "Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, Vice Chair."
[64] Speigelman, *Maus I*, 131.

for what he had become. On the other hand, Helen believed that her parents' survival made them into superhumans, so great that they deserved to be equal to Greek gods and Olympian heroes, and therefore idealized her parents. Katrina also idealized her parents, since she felt blessed to have "had parents that were inspirational and amazing parents at the same time."[65] She embraced her parents' wishes one hundred percent.

The differences between rejection and acceptance in the cases of Katrina, Helen, and Art, may stem from the experiences their parents faced during the Holocaust, and how the survivors faced challenges and later retold these experiences to their children. In Katrina's case, her parents received help. Therefore, even in the midst of all this evil, Tom and Annette witnessed a world also filled with good. Consequently, they taught Katrina to see the light amongst the darkness. In contrast, Vladek did not receive much assistance, and had only himself to count on, when it came to his survival and that of his family. Vladek's world, during the war, was filled with wickedness that continued to haunt him throughout Art's life. He never taught his son to see the good in others, because for Vladek this good did not exist or was not to be trusted. As a result, when the good in Vladek was not easily seen, Art did not search to find it, simply accepting that their relationship would never be ideal. Whether this is true in all relationships in Art's life is unlikely, since he was able to see the good in his mother. It seems that Art was simply more inclined not to look for good in the man who constantly told him that such a thing did not exist. In Helen's case, her parents had been in Auschwitz for a shorter time than Vladek, and thus did not experience the same degree of evil he endured. Helen's parents worked to forget the harshest memories of the Holocaust, only telling their children of the good, for fear of scaring them. Kurt and Franci had told her the stories of their heroic feats and of Kurt's Olympic glory

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[65] Lamb.

days so often that the association with her parents as heroes had been ingrained into her as a child.

Parents' Inability to be Emotionally Available

Another aspect common in these parent-child relationships is due to the parents' inability to truly be there for their children. According to a psychological study conducted by Robert Prince, many survivor-parents "had difficulty helping their children deal with the normal issues of development."[66] Survivors' development did not follow the normal course, since much of their normal development was hindered or overshadowed by the consequences of the prejudice against Jews. Survivors who endured the Holocaust as children were robbed of their childhood, and therefore did not experience normal development. Those who had survived Hitler's reign of terror as adults did have the chance at a normal development, however this had been overshadowed by their Holocaust experience, as everything they thought they knew about the world was no longer true. It was "hard for parents to understand this world [their children grew up in], because of where they came from."[67] Many survivors lived through a world more dastardly than our deepest nightmares could possibly create, with deceit, torture, and victimization on every corner. The world for them had been an evil place, where many felt that they could not afford to trust anybody. Of course, there were exceptions to this, as shown by the positive outcome of Tom Lantos' trust in Wallenberg. Yet in many cases, to survive, individuals had to learn how to cope in this new world, and as a result could not relate to a normal world any longer. They were unable to be there for their children fully, because to the survivor many of the issues their children faced made no sense to them.

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[66] Prince, 59.
[67] Prince, 60.

Survivors' inability to address their children's concerns is best seen in the opening pages of *Maus*. In these first few pages, a young Artie is racing with his friends. However, his friends all leave him when he falls. He returns home crying and tells his father what has just happened. However, Vladek is unable to comprehend how such a small thing could cause his son pain. While many parents would comfort their children, Vladek does not sympathize with his son, and essentially tells Artie that what he has just experienced is insignificant. Vladek immediately relates the idea of friends with all those people who had turned their backs on him. This inability to properly address the small problems of childhood with sympathy is a common characteristic of survivors since their "child's woes were discounted by the magnitude of their own trauma."[68] Some survivor-parents lack the ability to address a problem without comparing it to the difficulties they themselves faced during the war years. According to Victoria Elmwood, a literary scholar, this forced Art to "grow up in the shadow of the Holocaust [where] all [his own experiences] wither in comparison to his father's wartime trials,."[69] Art and many other children of Holocaust survivors grew up with parents with the inability to relate to the day to day problems of everyday life, causing them to be unable to turn to their parents for comfort, like many other child do in times of difficulty. This reinforces the unusualness of the parent-child relationships shaped by the Shoah.

The Importance of Grandparents

Out of these unusual parent-child relationships, a great importance on the parents can also be observed. Children of survivors felt that it was extremely important that their parents be around for their grandchildren. The "importance of having grandparents for the third generation

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[68] Victoria Elmwood, 695.
[69] Elmwood, 694.

[grandchildren of Holocaust survivors] is a prevalent theme for many" of the children of survivors.[70] The gas chambers had stripped a majority of children of survivors of the benefit of having grandparents. Therefore, when it came time for them to have their own children, they wanted them to have a relationship with their grandparents. The Holocaust had left these families with a stub of a family tree. Now it was up to the survivors and their children to rebuild the roots of their families once again. It is for this reason that Katrina Lantos Swett and Annette Tillemann-Dick, daughters of Tom Lantos, decided at a very young age that they wanted to give their parents the gift of many grandchildren.[71] When these children were born, both Katrina and Annette wanted their children to have a meaningful relationship with their survivor-grandparents. In this way, they could ensure that their family would continue to thrive long after the Nazis. By creating thriving families, some children of survivors could show that all of these people are alive today in spite of Hitler. Their parents were never meant to survive, however, they somehow did. As a result, children felt it was important to continue to produce individuals who would never have been born if Hitler's plan had been realized and he had lived, and it was important for these newly produced grandchildren to have the knowledge of what their parents had survived. For Katrina Lantos-Swett, the need of her children to be aware of their grandparents' Nazi past was realized when Tom accompanied his grandchildren to the camp he was imprisoned, during the Shoah.[72]

Psychic Numbing

In survivors a phenomenon known as psychic numbing often occurred. The term psychic numbing refers to many survivors' need to distance themselves from the pain of the Holocaust,

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[70] Bender, 210.
[71] *The Last Days*, directed by James Moll (1998; Los Angeles, CA: Universal Studios, 1998), DVD.
[72] Ibid.

by feeling absolutely nothing. Children of Holocaust survivors were mirrors when it came to how they dealt emotionally with the agony of the knowledge that the Nazis had treated their parents like vermin. Children were unable to stand the thought that anybody had hurt their parents and had no idea how to deal with this information, therefore they looked to the example their parents set forth. During the Holocaust, many survivors "blocked out all capacity for emotion, in the interest of continuously adapting to their changing, hostile environments."[73] They needed to be numb, because without the ability to block out their pain, the overwhelming loss of almost everyone and everything they held dear would crush their will to survive. During this time, emotions equaled weakness and if they wanted to survive, they could not be weak.[74]

After the war, many Holocaust survivors still were unable to deal with the reality of what they had experienced. A majority of survivors had witnessed the murder of loved ones, and while some were lucky enough to find that a loved one had survived, others were left completely alone. After survivors had been liberated, many still needed the numbness they had developed as a survival skill. Although they had survived the camps, they were left with nothing and needed to rebuild their lives. With the task of reinventing themselves, many could not risk allowing themselves to feel once again. Survivors feared that they would feel "helpless and hopeless as they remember[ed] the pain of their past."[75] The loss many had experienced was too painful for them to mourn, especially in the case of a lost child or parent, since it had the potential to send survivors into an endless spiral of grief. They had to hide their feelings to continue to survive. Some survivors felt a duty to remember and deal with their pain so that they could fully testify about what they had experienced because of Hitler and the Nazis. There were many survivors

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[73] Hass 9.
[74] Ilany Kolgan, *The Cry of the Mute Children: A Psychoanalytical Perspective of the Second Generation of the Holocaust* (London: Free Association Books, 1995) 83.
[75] Erlich, 166.

who would not allow themselves to feel anything for years to come, when it came to their experience with the Holocaust.

Franci Epstein is an example of a survivor who had learned to hide her true emotions during the World War II. Franci had been in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, and had learned that to survive she had to ignore the possibility that she could easily be the next to die. She had to fight to live to see the American liberation of the camp. Once liberated, Franci still did not allow herself to feel, since she could not have mourned the death of her entire family and continue to live every new day. Therefore, when a young Helen asked her mother what had happened during the war, Franci told her story like impersonal information, stating "what happened, with no feeling attached."[76] Helen's mother did not show pain, which was characteristic of many female survivors who were "more prone to symptoms of persistent avoidance or numbing of general responsiveness," than their male counter-parts.[77] As a result, Helen was taught not to show pain as well. She just absorbed the facts of what her mother had been through. Similarly, when learning of the Holocaust, Helen did not allow herself to feel the pain that came with acknowledging the fact that six million Jews had been brutally murdered by Nazis, since it was just another fact. Instead, Helen built a box in her brain, which became a vault, "always collecting pictures, words, [her] parents' glances, becoming loaded with the weight" of the truths of her family's painful past.[78] Her placement of these objects into a box allowed her to bypass the excruciating realization that Nazis had tortured her parents as they worked to exterminate them, and everyone like them, from this earth. As a result, when she heard that Nazis murdered over six million Jews, she had "never been able to feel what other people

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[76] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 152.
[77] Prot, 36.
[78] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 13.

felt when they spoke of the war, [since] all [she] felt was a numbness, a cold, deadening blanket which covered her like a fog."[79] Remembering the truth was too painful.

For Helen, this same inability to feel extended to more of her life than just the Holocaust. Her parents' inability to truly mourn all whom they had lost during the war was "inherited" by Helen. Her parents never taught her how to mourn the loss of a loved one. Therefore, when her childhood nurse Milena died, Helen did not know how to react. She could not mourn and never even cried. She could not "mourn for her any more than [she] had mourned for [her] real grandparents."[80] Helen locked her feelings away into her box, and kept them hidden away to save herself the pain of feeling these intense emotions.

Helen Epstein and Aaron Hass observed children of survivors' inability to remember their parents' past. When Epstein could no longer ignore the iron box she had created in her head, she confronted it by talking with other children of survivors. Some children of survivors even go so far as to say that they "know nothing, even though they've heard it inside and out, they could never bring themselves to recount" such terrible memories involving their parents.[81] While talking to these children, Epstein observed that none of the children she spoke with could "recall the numbers, their order, or even the arm [on] which their parents bore a tattoo."[82] This lack of knowledge did not come from the children's inability to remember the number, since it is as easy to learn as a phone number. Instead it is an unwillingness to memorize this number. This number is a reminder of the constant suffering a child's parents went through.[83] No child ever wants to deal with the fact that their parents have been harmed, which is especially true in the children of survivors whose parents were brutally tortured. In Aaron Hass's psychological work,

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[79] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 45.
[80] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 254.
[81] Epstein, "Heirs of the Holocaust."
[82] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 26.
[83] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 27.

he observed that the children of survivors could not recall much about their parents' Holocaust experiences. Even those who believed they remembered a great deal, did not have the ability to recall much when asked to retell the stories.[84] Children of survivors failed to learn the significant details, and few could even recall which camp was meant to be their parent's grave. This selective memory becomes understandable, when considering that these details often evoked pictures in the minds of children of survivors that were too painful for them to bear.

Art Spiegelman also lacked the ability to feel anything when hearing the results of the Nazis' hate. His father, Vladek, was minutely aware of the fact that his survival throughout the war meant that he could not show the pain or loss he experienced. In his memoir *Maus*, Art never once mentions whether Vladek ever feared for his life or was scared of death. Vladek needed to stay strong, and if he could not stay tough for his own sake, then he needed to maintain his strength for Anja. She was weak and nervous causing her to need many pills, even before the war.[85] Vladek always helped Anja to calm down; and when she could see no possibility other than a certain death, he gave her the hope necessary to survive. Vladek gave off the impression that he was fearless throughout the entire experience. After the war, Vladek did not tell his story to Art as a child, only revealing his Holocaust experiences much later when Art asked to interview Vladek for *Maus*. Art knew that his parents were Holocaust survivors, but did not know the details of their stories. Vladek and Anja did not speak of the torture or abuse they experienced, possibly because Vladek feared that by speaking about it they would be forced to "relive the pain and shame" of their past or that it would harm Art to hear of their terrible past.[86] This does not mean that Vladek shared nothing of his past, since the first few pages of *Maus*, mentioned above, tell the reader that the past had a way of slipping out at times, yet he refrained

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[84] Hass, 85.
[85] Art Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 19.
[86] Hass, 73.

from telling Art his entire story, until Art requested he do so. While this does not seem unusual considering how few contemporary children can accurately account their parents past, there is a difference. In today's society, parents do not often recount their life stories to their children. However, this does not come from a suppression of the past, and likely occurs from a child's lack of interest or a absence of relevance placed on these personal histories. The same cannot be said about Vladek. He intentionally hid the past from his son, as a way to protect him. The only time utterances of his dark Holocaust ridden past emerged were when they simply were said in the heat of the moment. Vladek never sat down with his son and told him his story, because he like many survivors was simply trying to shield his child from agony.[87] As a result, Art also felt a psychic numbness when it came to the horrors of his parents' journey through the Hell of the Holocaust.

In *Maus*, Spiegelman depicts the deaths of many individuals, including that of his own mother. All of these images have the power to evoke emotional responses in readers, however the images used in the strip about his mother are different. In these few pages, he depicted the death of his mother more emotionally than the deaths of millions of people, because it was the only one that "he experienced directly."[88] The death of six million was just a statistic to Spiegelman. Even though many of his own relatives perished during the Holocaust, their deaths were not as emotional. He never knew these relatives and many of them faded into the faceless mass of victims. On the other hand, his mother's death was personal. Spiegelman loved his mother and remembered the very moment he got the news that she had committed suicide. Anja's death was Art's central trauma, since he reached "less resolution with regard to her

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[87] Erlich, 167.
[88] "Making of Maus."

suicide than he [did] with Vladek's alienating war time experience."[89] It was an extremely emotional moment for him, and this difference in emotion can be seen in the style of drawings he uses in *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* (the graphic episodes that depicts Anja's death).

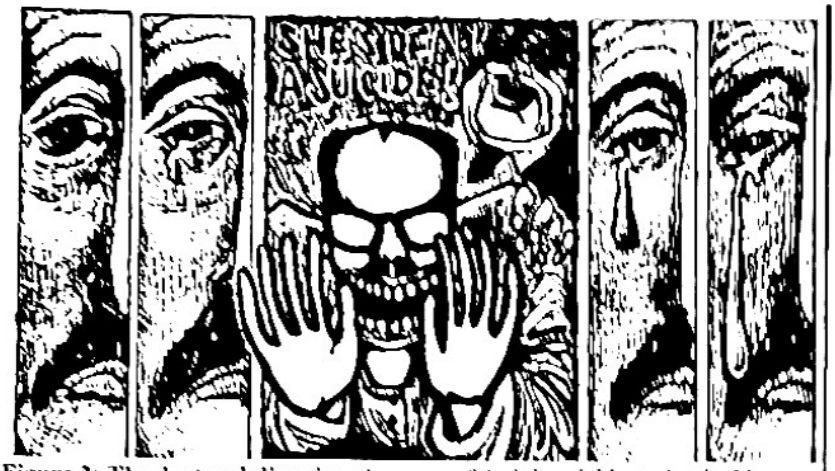

Figure 2: The doctor delivering the news of Anja's suicide to Art in *Maus*.

The bold lines in figure 2 from *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* create an emotionally charged image.[90] The pain of the experience is evident to viewers in the shading and lighting choice and the expression of the figures. Spiegelman chose to create *Maus* in only black and white. Even though he has done the same here, these few pages stand out. They are darker than any of the other pages, seemingly soaked in black ink. Since black is a color associated with mourning, it is understood that this event was quite sorrowful for him. The figures illustrated are also quite different. In the scenes in which Spiegelman illustrates his father's story, Art uses animals to represent individuals, using dogs for Americans, cats for Nazis, mice for Jews, and pigs for Poles. The use of animals in his work was inspired by a talk on racism and comics. Originally, he planned on using cat and mice to tell the epic story of racism in relationships between African Americans and white individuals, in which whites would be Klu Klux Kats and blacks would be mice. After soon discovering how little he knew on the topic, he switched to the Holocaust. While this metaphor works well in distinguishing between the different types of people and implying the fact that the Americans chased Nazis and Nazis chased Jews, just as dogs chase cats and cats chase mice; it is not as

[89] Elmwood, 706.
[90] Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 100-103.

emotional as images of humans. Viewers have the ability to identify with other humans, in a way they just cannot with animals. The use of humans in *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* was not a conscious choice for Art, at this time. He had always used humans and it never occurred to him to use any other type of figure. However, the use of humans makes the experience more painful, since the viewer can better sympathize with Art during this tragic time.

The figures in *Prisoner on the Hell Planet* are more expressive than those in *Maus*. Figure 3 is an episode Vladek has described for his son. It represents the pleasure SS officers took in torturing prisoners. In this scene, the officer has thrown a prisoner's hat and demands he retrieve it. When he does, the officer will shoot him for trying to run away.[91] The SS officer is a true villain, yet he is not very frightening to the viewer. On the other hand, in the detail from the episode of Anja's suicide, on the left, Spiegelman depicted a doctor who was truly frightening. The doctor appears to be a horrific monster, even though he is not a villain. Spiegelman perceives this harmless doctor as evil, because he brings the news that his mother has died. Although the Nazis were truly evil people, Art does not depict them as evil as his mother's doctor, since his mother's death is much more personal. The death of six million Jews was a statistic, a faceless mass. The lack of emotion associated with this number explains why Spiegelman depicted the death of one individual as "more emotional than the deaths of millions of people."[92] Art understood how to mourn the death of his mother, but he could not comprehend

Figure 3: A scene from Auschwitz as seen in Art Spiegelman's graphic memoir *Maus*.

[91]Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 35.
[92] "Making of Maus."

how to react to the death of millions. His parents, like many other survivors, lacked the ability to deal emotionally with the Holocaust causing their children to feel little or nothing when told of the hell Hitler's hatred had created. While many uninvolved in the Holocaust also lack the inability to feel, this lack is quite different. When asking a completely disconnected group of individuals to empathize with people different themselves experiencing something they cannot imagine, it seems reasonable that there would be a lack of emotion in the postwar period. However, this inability to feel becomes more concerning, when considering these children had a direct tie to the Shoah. Their parents lived in this world. For children to be unable to imagine their suffering is concerning, when children often woke up to parents screaming in terror.

Loss of Trust

Children of survivors also mirrored the loss of trust developed as a survival technique. During the Holocaust, Jews could "no longer trust one's neighbors, and the circumstances of life were unpredictable."[93] In many cases, someone who had been a friend or a dear neighbor turned on someone else simply because person was Jewish. Often survivors of the Holocaust lost a basic trust in people "having witnessed a morally inverted world where the righteous were destroyed by the power of evil in man."[94] They saw a high degree of evil in ordinary men, who appear no different than anyone else, an evil so extreme that many could not even imagine. No one was immune to the power of the Nazis to brainwash an individual, turning them into malicious men, and every single person Jews met was a potential threat or enemy. Some survivors told their children "the world was a jungle and there are no friends" to count on.[95] A significant amount of survivors experienced circumstances that made them believe that the only people who could be

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[93] Bergmann, 53.
[94] Hass, 14.
[95] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 125.

counted on were relatives, since friends turned their backs on them when things became tough. Even family could not be depended upon, since families often turned their backs when times were tough.

During the war years, Vladek experienced several situations that taught him that nobody could be trusted. In one of these situations, Haskel, a cousin, took treasured jewels from his father-in-law in exchange for Haskel's aid in freeing him and his wife. However, Haskel only offered to help Anja's father for the money but never actually attempted to help him.[96] Vladek's father-in-law had been a millionaire, but even this could not save him from the evil of man. If anything, his riches made him an easier pawn to be played by deceitful men. This scenario taught Vladek that nobody could fully be trusted, since even family would turn their backs, if they saw a better opportunity ahead. Haskel was favored by the Nazis, since he would gamble with them and allow them to win. Taking his father-in-law's money just gave him the chance to stay in the Nazis' favor longer, and possibly aid another individual with a better chance of survival.

In another case, Abraham had enlisted the help of Poles to escape. Vladek believed that his escape was successful, since he received a letter urging Anja and him to come join them. However, the Poles never wished to help and left Abraham to suffer. The letter claiming that all was well was a fake that Abraham had been forced to write by the Poles who were supposedly going to help.[97] Vladek discovered all of this when arriving at Auschwitz only to find that Abraham was there too. This reaffirmed Vladek's belief that no one could be trusted, since again family betrayed him, even though Abraham never intended to do so. Vladek became extremely cautious during his stay in Auschwitz, never trusting anyone to help him to survive, even if there were many cases in which help from others was the only reason he survived. Even though

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[96]Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 115.
[97] Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 27.

Vladek came into favor with individuals of power, he made sure to keep his guard up. Whenever he sensed that they might soon betray him, he moved on, unwilling to take the risk of being the next one shot or sent to the gas chambers.

The first individual who favored Vladek in the camps was a Polish Kapo. Vladek came into favor with him, because the kapo wished to learn English, and he was one of the few inmates in his barrack who knew both English and Polish.[98] Vladek remained safe for two months, however it soon came time for him to move on as more and more individuals were necessary for outside work duty. Vladek then arranged to work in a tin shop, but he felt very unsafe here. Instead of waiting until he was selected for death, Vladek convinced a Kapo that he would make an excellent shoe maker.[99] As a result, he avoided the normal selections and received more food, allowing him to be better off than most within the camps. However, this job that kept him safe would not last long, and soon enough he would be forced to move on. Vladek never allowed himself to become too comfortable in any job, because compliancy could lead him to his ultimate doom.

After he escaped from a death march, Vladek was forced to trust a Pole, since he needed his help to stay hidden. The Polish individual seemed willing to help, as he told Vladek and a friend that there was a pit in the back and it was "none of [his] business if they want[ed] to lie in it."[100] Nonetheless, the man's true colors became clear when a couple of SS officers approached him. He immediately told them that there were two Jews hiding in a pit. Luckily for Vladek, these officers did not care to find the Jews and moved on. Vladek was safe and learned once again that nobody could be trusted to help. Therefore, when a young Art cried that his friends had abandoned him, his father merely scoffed at the term. The notion of friends was so ridiculous

[98] Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 36.
[99] Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 61.
[100] Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 109.

to Vladek, who only had friends when it was convnent, that he remarked "if you lock them in a room with no food for a week then you could see" that no one can be counted on, because your "friend" turns against you.[101] This remark was an attempt to help keep his son safe, by instilling in him a basic skepticism necessary for survival. Consequently, Art himself inherited this same lack of trust that was so crucial to his father's survival. Art's "relationship to others is less naïve because he knows what other people are capable of."[102] His father taught him at a very young age that the "world was a vicious place and you have to watch out."[103] He must be very careful in choosing his friends, since no one could be trusted.

In the case of Helen Epstein, her parents' lack of trust in individuals developed into something more extreme. Helen is the child of two Holocaust survivors, both of whom had escaped a trip to the gas chambers at Auschwitz, as they were sent to Bergen-Belsen soon after their arrival. As a result her parents lacked the basic trust of individual who had not experienced the Shoah. Franci Epstein's trust issues seem to stem from the fact that she was never Jewish. Her father had raised her to be a German citizen, highly identifying with all things German. He never saw himself or his children as Jewish, and foolishly trusted that his lack of identification with his Jewishness would save his family.[104] This trust was broken when they all of the sudden found themselves being persecuted for something they did not embrace. From this moment on, Franci could not trust in the same way she had before the war. This effect of the Holocaust trauma she endured was passed on to her daughter. Helen inherited this same belief that the

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[101]Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 6.
[102] Hass, 40.
[103] Prince, 70.
[104] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 149.

"world was an evil unsafe place, full of pain [and] without hope or future."[105] However, her trust issues were also more complex.

Helen's trust issues pertained to more than just her inability to trust other people, since Helen also lacked the ability to trust in phenomena she could not explain. The most notable of these was her inability to believe in God. For an individual to believe in an omnipotent God, whom they cannot see, requires a great deal of faith. A study conducted by Brenner noted that for most survivors the "Holocaust created grave doubts about the nature of God and his relationship to human beings," even as some survivors continued to believe in him.[106] This doubt came from survivors' inability to find answers to questions such as why God allowed such horrors to be cast upon his Chosen People or why God was not stepping in to aid them. In their attempts to find answers "survivors' prewar faith system was lost, retained, or significantly altered."[107] This change in faith due to lingering questions was not limited to the survivors themselves and often extended to their children. Helen was unable to develop such faith without trusting that such a person could exist. Her trouble believing that such a God could exist only enhanced by her belief that if there was a God, "he would not allow such atrocities to happen."[108] This notion of a graceful God who allowed such horrible things to happen to their parents was very hard for many children of survivors, like Helen to undertake. However, there were many others who openly embraced God, since he was the only being who could be trusted to always be there for them.

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[105] Ilany Kogan, *The Cry of Mute Children: A Psychoanalytic Perspective of the Second Generation of the Holocaust*, (London: Free Association Books, 1995), 27.
[106] Reeve Robert Brenner, *The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors* (New York: Free Press, 1980) 238.
[107] Jennifer Goldenberg, "A Minyan of Trees: The Role of Faith and Ritual in Postwar Coping and Its Relevance to Working with Trauma Survivors," in *Transcending Trauma: Survival, Resilence, and Clinical Implications in Survival Families*, ed. Bea Hollinder-Goldfein et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012) 133.
[108] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 235.

As a result of their parents' experiences, not only did children have trouble trusting, they also constantly felt a sense of otherness. In many cases, survivor-parents taught their children to be "suspicious of others and to look out for only themselves lest someone would exploit or enslave" them.[109] Survivors themselves were forced to live enslaved by the Nazis' power, and wanted to make sure that their children would never have to experience the same trauma they had. While their parents' intentions were well meaning, forcing children to constantly be suspicious of others was not healthy for their relationships with others. Children like Helen Epstein and Art Spiegelman had trouble joining groups or sporting teams, because no matter how successful or accepted they were they "always felt different, alone, and apart from the other kids."[110] They were told over and over again that the only people whom you can trust are family, and even then there were always exceptions. Everyone, apart from an individual's most trusted family members, could be a potential enemy, isolating them from the outside world.

Surprisingly, survivors and their children often were unable even to find comfort in a Jewish community. Non-survivor Jews (defined as individuals who had never been in the Holocaust) "who knew so little of what had taken place in Europe and often seemed to care less," could not relate to the survivors.[111] Survivors did not believe that any single individual had the power to understand what their lives had been like in hiding or in the camps, since they lived lives so distant from normalcy that they could not even be comprehended. And it did not help that many Rabbis "tried to explain the Holocaust as the 'will of God' or as a necessary sacrifice to establish the state of Israel."[112] Neither the survivors nor their children had the power to believe all that they had been through was merely a price for a homeland. They found no comfort

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[109] Bergmann, 139.
[110] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 125.
[111] Hass, *Shadow of the Holocaust,* 15.
[112] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 148.

in the company of other Jews, believing the only people who could truly understand were other survivors. As for survivors' children, they also often felt isolated, since being Jewish meant something vastly different to them, than to those with "non-survivor parents." Children, like Epstein, often had trouble believing that Jews were the chosen people. From their experience, all the Jews had been chosen for was suffering. They were, also, incapable of fathoming the idea that all this suffering was just a price to pay for Israel. This is also why Spiegelman's book did not depict the happy ending in the creation of a Jewish homeland. Many of the memories and psychological studies I examined, have examples of children of survivors who believed that suffering made being Jewish sweet, and this was simply something that "non-survivors" did not understand.

Survivors could not trust American Jews, preferring the company of other survivors over Jewish non-survivors. Overall, many survivors had trouble meshing into the Jewish non-survivor enclaves in the United States. "After liberation the [survivors'] desire was to sleep, to forget and be reborn," and this aspiration was even more intensified in non-survivors who feared that the possibility that survivors' need to speak about the past would cause trouble for them.[113] They simple could not understand what the survivors had been through, and honestly did not want to. When Kurt Epstein picked up his children at synagogue, he never talked to any of the other parents. They did not want to hear his stories, being blissful in their ignorance. Jews had been in the States for a while and had already begun to assimilate into American culture. Survivors were "often perceived as a threat and living evidence of an event most people preferred to forget."[114] Survivors had the ability to disrupt society, and non-survivors believed they would suffer because of them.

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[113] Bergmann, *Generations of the Holocaust*, 9.
[114] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 98.

Non-survivors did not have the desire to welcome newcomers, and the survivors themselves did not make the effort to fit in. Survivors did not take the initiative to establish "close relationships with people who were not refugees."[115] They simply did not feel comfortable around people who would never be able to understand what they had been through. After all, what survivors of Auschwitz experienced was so inhumane that most of us would not have the ability to imagine anything close to what actually happened. Even the pictures are hard for us to believe, since it is incomprehensible to us that people could actually be that inhumane. Although we know the facts, only survivors of the Shoah will be able to fully understand what occurred. Survivors were all too aware of this fact, and chose to associate only with other survivors. In the case of Art Spiegelman, all of his father's friends survived the Holocaust as well.[116] As a result, Art did not realize that other people's parents "did not wake up screaming in the middle of night," until he moved away to college.[117] As a child, the Shoah had always been a topic for him, while thoughts of showers expelling gas instead of water were natural for him. He was a child of Holocaust survivors, and therefore he could never ignore the association. He did not feel the same need to always associate with survivors and their children, but he did always feel like a displaced person.

The Epsteins also tended to associate with only other survivors. Kurt felt most comfortable outdoors where other survivors would also escape. Here they would spend many hours telling and retelling stories from their own experiences. They were among the few people that actually had the ability to comprehend what occurred inside the camps, since "those who have survived a nightmarish reality are tied together by a special bond of common fate and

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Spiegelman, *Maus II*, 22.
[117] "Making of Maus."

common guilt."[118] Since her family felt so comfortable associating with these survivors, young Helen associated these survivors as lost relatives. Helen knew that Milena and Ivan Herben, who were also survivors, "were not real grandparents, that [they] bore no physical resemblance to each other, that [their] names were different... but that did not matter."[119] These people became stand-ins for the family that Hitler destroyed. Other children of survivors also felt that their parents' closest friends became family.[120] As a result, children of survivors always associated more closely with other children of survivors. Many of these children, like Rochelle and Eli Rubenstein, would ultimately marry other children of survivors. They formed closer bonds to these individuals, since their parents spent a majority of time with survivors and their children. Many children of survivors followed their parents' example, associating more closely with other survivors' children then Jewish non-survivors' children. This may have been a conscious choice or may have been a result of the fact that their parents associated only with survivors, causing them to spend more time with survivors children and create stronger relationships.

Jewish Identity

Even though many survivors and their children could not relate easily with other Jews who had not experienced the Holocaust, they still identified themselves as Jewish. Robert Prince's psychological study of children of survivors notes that "all subjects included the dimension of Jewishness in their dimension of themselves."[121] As a consequence of the Holocaust, children of survivors are inherently Jewish, whether they wish to be or not. I use the term inherently Jewish to make the point that these children will always have a connection to

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[118] Bergmann, *Generations of the Holocaust*, 48.
[119] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 165.
[120] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 313.
[121] Prince, 94.

Judaism, in the sense that it is part of their heritage and history. These children were unable to escape their Jewish roots, and at some level would always be Jews. The children of survivors were different than children of non-survivor Jews in this respect. A normal Jewish child had the choice to choose a different identity. While this new distinction might have meant that they were ostracized from their family and community, the choice still existed. The children of Holocaust survivors were never given this choice. The impact on subsequent generations was so profound, because "the threat was targeted because of who their families were, because of being Jewish."[122] The Nazis had taken the decision out of their hands, when they murdered and tortured millions of Jews, for the solitary reason that they were Jewish. Hitler made Jews not only a religious group, but an ethnicity since he persecuted even those who did not consider themselves to be religious. Also, many Jews considered their identity to be tied to the country they lived in, believing that they were in fact German or Polish citizens, who just happened to practice Judaism, like other individuals practice Catholicism or Protestantism. By creating a race of Jewish individuals, children of survivors were Jewish, just like the child of a German was inherently German. Therefore, the survivors and their descendants were rendered unable to be anything other than Jewish, even if they did not practice Judaism.

Helen Epstein is an example of a child who has identified herself as Jewish, which is odd considering the fact that she never had the ability to believe in God. Helen did not understand how her family could be part of God's Chosen People, since it seemed to her that they had been "chosen for suffering and not anything nice."[123] Despite this inability, Helen was raised Jewish. As previously discussed Franci's father raised her to be an ideal German citizen, and she never considered herself to be Jewish since it was a religion. The Holocaust changed this belief. Being

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[122] Brian Lamb, "Katrina Lantos Swett," in *CSPAN: Interesting People. Informative Conversations*, April 15, 2012, accessed on October 15, 2013.
[123] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 41.

Jewish was no longer just a religious choice, since it was part of a long established culture and had been treated as an ethnicity by Hitler. When Franci found herself detained in Auschwitz she "vowed that were she to survive the war and have children that those children would be raised as Jews."[124] Franci saw the need for her children to know where they came from and to know what it was to be raised Jewish. Due to this need, Franci's children grew up in American synagogues and Helen even went to Hebrew University. Helen could not be anything other than Jewish, even though she did not believe in the same things that Orthodox Jews did she identified with secular Jews. Being Jewish is part of what included her in this distinct group children of survivors, whose parents were persecuted for the sole reason that they were Jewish.

Art Spiegelman's and Katrina Lantos-Swett's religious choices also exemplified an inherent Jewishness, without any practice of the traditions many individuals associate with the religious group. For Art Spiegelman, the creation of *Maus* made him Jewish to the general population. However, according to Art, he only embraced the "parts that were not embraceable [as he was] happy being a rootless cosmopolitan, alienated in most" respects.[125] Art did not practice the traditional Jewish religious holidays, like Hanukah and Passover. Yet he embraced the fact that his parents had been displaced persons, making him a displaced person as well. In this way, Art is inherently Jewish. However he was "uneasy with the notion of the Jew as the fighting machine" in his work, and tried to keep his book from becoming one that was filled with the standard Holocaust tropes.[126] In this way, although he never denied his Jewishness, he did not feel the same connection to it as religious Jews. This same lack of connection to the Jewish religion was evident in Katrina Lantos Swett's decision to embrace Mormonism. While she chose to practice another religion, Katrina felt as if there was "no way that she could ever not be

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[124] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 153.
[125] Cooke.
[126] Ibid.

Jewish."[127] For individuals like Katrina and Art, their Jewishness would always be present. Being Jewish is part of their culture and their heritage. Thus it is a part of them they that could never be shed, just as a German could not choose to shed himself of his German identity. The children of Holocaust survivors will always have a Jewish heritage, if only by the fact that their family history can be traced back to the Shoah.

Even those children who did not originally identify with their Jewish lineage, eventually identified with this heritage. This is seen in a child Helen Epstein identifies by the pseudonym Gabriela Korda. Gabriela was the child of two Holocaust survivors. The Nazis imprisoned her mother in Auschwitz and her father was placed in a forced labor camp. Once they had been liberated from the camps they immigrated to South America. When Gabriela was born, her parents vowed to raise her as un-Jewish a possible.[128] They did not want their daughter to ever experience anything close to what they did, while Hitler ruled over Germany. Therefore, her parents sent her to a school filled with the children of German persecutors and raised her to be Protestant. In her school, other children looked upon her as being Aryan, since she had blue eyes and blond hair. Her appearance was so close to the ideal German that when the students created a page to express how they believed that Aryans were dominant over the the indigenous people in South America, Gabriela was pictured to represent the perfect German.[129] Being raised as a German made it so that Gabriela was very close to everything German. However, soon even she would realize her Jewish heritage and finally admit to being Jewish. No matter what, the children of Holocaust survivors could not escape their Jewish identity. It was a part of them that they simply could not shed.

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[127] Lamb.
[128] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 129.
[129] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 131.

Guilt

The hardest effect for "non-survivors" to understand is the guilt associated with survival. However, for the survivors and their children, this is something quite familiar. Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi has asked what this guilt may be about and came to the answer that "when everything was over, an awareness came out that one had done nothing or not enough to counter the system that immersed us."[130] Many survivors had not taken a stand against their oppressors; since they either feared the ramifications of such an action or knew that it would not help to fight or try to escape. After all, it was not uncommon for Nazis to murder anyone who acted out, as well as other Jews, sending the message that it is foolish to try and fight the Nazi might. As a result, many survivors constantly asked themselves "what right did I have to live when better individuals died? Are you ashamed because you are alive in place of another? And in particular, of a man more generous, more sensitive, more useful, wiser, worthier of living?"[131] The Holocaust was truly a game of devil's arithmetic were one often had to die for another to live. The reasoning for one to live over another, often had no real logic, and instead was based on luck and not merit. As a result, many psychological studies have reported that "guilt feelings are regarded as one of the major symptoms among Holocaust survivors."[132] With feelings of guilt so prevalent in survivors, it makes sense that extreme guilt is also observed in the children of Holocaust survivors.

Survivors' children often feel an intense sense of guilt, because the life they lived was so much easier than their parents' experiences in the Shoah. Robert Prince observed that many

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[130] Levi, 78.
[131] Ibid, 78.
[132] Katarzyna Prot. "Late Effects of Trauma: PTSD in Holocaust Survivors." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 15, no 1: 28-42. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host* (accessed January 31, 2014). 34.

children "felt suffocated by [their] guilt for not helping out more."[133] This was the reason Art Spiegelman felt guilty for being unable to stand being around his father for too long. Art continually felt guilty that he was not there for Vladek, until he had to spend any time with him. Prince also observed that children of survivors felt "guilt[y] for not being 'a good enough' child, guilt for growing up too easy."[134] The children of survivors actually felt badly that they had never been forced to live though a concentration camp. They felt such guilt that they constantly wondered why my parents, grandparents, sister, or brother? Why not me? In Art's case, he was the only one in his family who had not been a part of the Holocaust. He was the outsider of the family, who had never had to live fearing that his life would be taken every second of every day.[135] He lived in a world more pleasant than the one of his parents, one that would actually be seen as rather privileged since he never wanted for any material objects. As a result, he asked himself why he was not there during the Holocaust and would he have survived if he had been? It seems silly for children of survivors to ask why they had not been forced to live through the torturous reign of Hitler and the Nazis, since the obvious answer is that the tragedy happened before he was even born. Yet, the child still could not answer this question for himself. For children like Art, they were lucky to be born after the war, just like their parents were fortunate to survive the war.

Helen Epstein also wondered about why she had been lucky enough to be born in the post war years, but this was not her most pressing question. Helen's mind focused on the idea of what if it had been her? Could she have survived, like Franci and Kurt had? For many years, this was nothing more than a persistent question that she would answer in her own daydreams about the Holocaust. However, there soon came a day when Helen was able to discover the answers to her

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[133] Prince, 62.
[134] Prince, 62.
[135] Elmwood.

curiosity. In May of 1967, tensions rose between Israel and their neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Everyone feared that this tension would lead to a war. This fear caused Helen to believe that she needed to go help her people. She was incapable of "allowing herself to sit back and watch, [since] Israel wasn't a refugee for me. It was a place where Jews could be masters of their own destiny."[136] Helen and other children of survivors knew that this was something worth fighting for, since it was a place where survivors and non-survivor Jews could finally feel free. Therefore, they packed their bags and hopped on a flight to Israel, unaware that the conflict would not explode into a long explosive war, and be concluded shortly after their arrival. However, the trip to Israel did prove to Helen that if it had been her, she could have survived. In Israel, Helen had managed well, adapting to life while she "learned to speak the language that had survived centuries of exile, depression, oppression, and the Holocaust."[137] Yet, the knowledge that she was a fighter and would have found a way to survive was not enough to ease her feelings of guilt; since neither the survivors nor their children ever had the ability to fully escape the remorse.

Education and Expectations

Survivors wanted to believe that they had lived for a reason, and maybe this reason was to produce these miracle children who were never meant to be born, if the Holocaust had succeeded in wiping out all Jews. Shoah survivors felt an extreme sense of guilt that they had lived while someone worthier or smarter had died. To ease this guilt, many survivors pushed their children to be successful. Thus, survivors' children "studied hard, learned to play sports and

[136] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 251.
[137] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 299.

instruments, [and] entered into the social and cultural lives of their respective cultures."[138] These children had to be great to make up for the people who had perished. Survivor-parents saw "their children as sources of security and gratification and maintained high expectations for them, with a special emphasis on intellectual achievement."[139] As a result, their children did often do well and were some of the best students and professionals. Their children succeeded, because if they did not, their parents made it seem as if their children would be the death of them. Their children felt guilty each time their parents said "for this I survived the camps."[140] Due to this guilt, survivors' children often worked hard to meet their parents' expectations.

Katrina Lantos-Swett was a product of this shared academic push on children of survivors. Katrina graduated from Yale University in 1974, at the age of eighteen.[141] She continued on to earn her Juris Doctor in 1976. Eventually she returned to school to earn a PhD in history in 2001. For Katrina, education became a lifelong pursuit that she could not manage to escape; even after receiving two post-secondary degrees, she still wanted more. This unquenchable thirst for knowledge directly resulted from the importance of education placed upon the children of Holocaust survivors.

In Art Spiegelman's life, his parents pushed him to strive academically. This fits the pattern of survivors pushing their children to acquire education, since education opened new doors and allowed children to succeed. However, this push could also be seen as a burden to children who needed to fit into the mold of their parents' ideal child.[142] For children who did not have the easiest relationships with their parents, this burden felt like the weight of the world was

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[138] Epstein, "Heirs of the Holocaust."
[139] Bergmann, 23.
[140] Hass, 51.
[141] "Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, Vice Chair," *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*, accessed on November 16, 2013.
[142] Prince, 74.

on their shoulders. Art was one of these individuals, since he had a problematic relationship with his father. Instead of following his father's wishes, he rebelled. In deference to going to medical school, Art studied philosophy and art, before eventually dropping out of Harpur College. By not even attempting to pursue the life his parents wanted, Art "failed spectacularly to become a doctor or a dentist."[143] This made Art a failure in the eyes of his father. Even though Art became a highly acclaimed comic artist, with a best-selling memoir, this was simply not enough. Vladek and many other survivors pushed their children to strive to acquire the most knowledge possible. Survivors deemed any success, other than this, inadequate.

Art could feel this, and expressed his sense of inadequacy when dealing with Richieu, his ghost brother who had died at the young age of five or six as a result of Nazi persecution (may have been poisoned). When dealing with portraying an individual who died so young, Art asks "How does one represent a boy that no one knew, who had little chance to even exist?"[144] For Art, he acts as the perfect child and brother who would "have become a doctor and married a wealthy Jewish woman," and he hated Richieu for that.[145] The very fact that Art imagined this fate for his ghost brother reinforced how much was expected of these children. Art and his family gave Richieu the power to forever make Art feel inadequate, as he became "a site of investment for all of Art's anxieties about his shortcomings in his parents' eyes."[146] Since Richieu did not survive and all that remained of him was a single picture in his parents' bedroom, Vladek and Art always saw him as the child who would never have rebelled. After all, a photo cannot talk back or make any decisions. Therefore, the individual in the picture can only live the life the viewer imagines for him. Even though all Richieu's future ever could be after his death

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[143] Cooke.
[144] Elmwood, 701.
[145] Spiegelman, 15.
[146] Elmwood, 702.

was a fantasy, Vladek expected Art to "somehow replace or otherwise fill Richeu's shoes."[147] Both Vladek and Art believed that Richieu would have listened to his parents and become a product of the survivors' push towards education, unlike his brother.

Helen also exhibited this push towards education while also exhibiting the survivors' need to have their children act as replacements. Helen's parents wanted her to be "a success, a doctor, or lawyer, [or] someone big."[148] Helen seemed to achieve this by obtaining her degree at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. With this degree she acquired the ability to write pieces published around the world. Epstein also was able to write *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, one of the foremost works on the subject. Helen made a name for herself, becoming "someone big" just as her parents had wanted. She also reflected survivors' desire to replace the loved ones they had lost. Kurt named her after his own mother. He expected her to act just as his mother had. "When she did not conform to this model [she] had never seen," her father was perplexed. The two would often get in arguments, because Helen did not act like his mother would have. She was expected to be a perfect replacement of the mother whom Hitler had taken away from him.

Survivors' push towards education also had to do with the fact that they constantly feared another Holocaust. The Nazis had stripped survivors of every possible thing during the Holocaust. This slow removal of everything associated with their identity and humanity, haunted them for the rest of their lives. They lived in fear that their enemies would become powerful enough to do this again. To that end, their children had to "acquire an education, because [their] enemies could take everything away, but that."[149] Since education was the only thing that a person could hold on to, survivors wanted their children to receive the highest possible. They did

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[147] Elmwood, 704.
[148] Epstein, *Children of the* Holocaust, 183.
[149] Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust*, 27.

this to keep their children from ever having to experience the same trauma they faced, by preparing them for the possibility of another calamity.

Some believe that this is a result of the survivors' immigration experience and nothing more. It is true that immigrants also pushed their children to achieve academically, yet the reasons for why were quite different than those of survivors. Immigrants pushed their children to receive higher education because they wanted them to have the opportunity to live the American dream. They wanted their children to be able to succeed here in this new land, and knew that the United States of America was the place where they could go from nothing to become someone great. In America, their children had the ability to break free of the restraints of a rigid class system. While survivors wanted their children to succeed, it was not because they wanted them to achieve the American Dream. Survivors needed their children to succeed, because their children's success was a way for survivors to continue to prove that Hitler had not won. Jews are still living today, and they are even producing some of the best and most successful children. These children had to succeed to make up for the murder of some great minds. Survivors also pushed their children to acquire as much knowledge as possible, out of the fear that another Holocaust might occur. They feared their children would be stripped of everything. However, education was the one thing that could never be taken. This belief of why education is important is different than most immigrants, who wanted their children to acquire education to aid them in their quest to achieve material success.

Conclusion

The Holocaust left scars on the survivors who saw the Nazis perform evil and horrifying deeds; the stories of these acts seem unreal. It is hard to imagine that an ordinary human-being

could slaughter a person without even blinking. Yet, many Nazis were able to easily murder a Jew in cold blood, because had created propaganda that dehumanized Jews, making them into vermin. Eventually this propaganda along with the antisemitism already present would make killing a Jew was no different than killing a fly. Being forced to witness this inhumane slaughter and the walking dead every day for months or even years is bound to leave an individual with significant psychological trauma.

In my research, I have examined individuals whose parents had survived the Holocaust, focusing mainly on Art Spiegelman and Helen Epstein. Through their stories and numerous other memoirs, scholarly articles, newspapers, and psychological studies, I have discovered symptoms that were commonly transferred from survivor-parent to child. While not all of these can be found in every individual, it is clear that there are side-effects of the Holocaust which are prevalent in a great deal of children of Holocaust survivors. Due to the Holocaust, strange relationships evolved between survivor-parents and their children. In these relationships, children were often forced to become the parents caring for the survivors, who were left emotionally stunted. Children learned very quickly to be careful with their parents, since their time in the camps had made many survivors fragile. Also a tendency emerged from these survivor-parent child relationships for children to either fully embrace their parents and idolize them, like Helen Epstein and Katrina Lantos-Sweet, or reject them and rebel, like Art Spiegelman. Another result of the Holocaust was that survivors suffered many psychological symptoms, which then transferred to their children. Children of survivors could be mirrors when it came to their parents' symptoms, often reflecting the tendencies of their parents, including the guilt that often resulted from survival and their Jewish identity.

Many non-survivors assume the war ended, the day the last camp was liberated. However, these individuals do not consider the aftermath that comes from a tragedy so momentous. Holocaust survivors had everything stripped from them, and now had to find a way to create a new life for themselves with nothing. And they had to do this, when they could still not escape the demons of their past lives. Many decided to make a fresh start somewhere new, such as Israel, Canada, or America. In these new lands, they would quickly start a family to replace some of those they had lost during the war. Many succeeded in creating a life in which their family was financially secure and prosperous. However, this did not mean that the family was emotionally stable. Some survivors could not escape the memories of their Holocaust days, having constant nightmares and other psychological symptoms as an effect. The children, of those who were haunted by the past, would wake up to their parents' screams and live every day tiptoeing around their emotionally damaged parents. As a result, the children of Holocaust survivors would become damaged themselves. They would experience some of the same effects of the Holocaust that their parents who actually survived the Shoah acquired. Although the children never survived the trauma of the Holocaust, they would survive the trauma of being the direct descendant to someone who constantly feared and worried that their enemies would come for them or who felt guilty that they survived, while others perished. The children of Holocaust survivors have been affected by an event they did not even live through. It had such monumental consequences, that even if they tried to outrun it, they could never escape their parents' past. History has shaped their lives, and will continue to affect the lives of individuals for generations to come. But why does it matter that children of Holocaust survivors have been affected by the war? What is the greater meaning?

When dealing with the Holocaust, it is important to note the uniqueness of the atrocity. The Shoah occurred in one of the most culturally sophisticated and industrially advanced nations of the twentieth century. It did not occur in a Third World country, but in Germany; a nation that was forward thinking and offered many incentives to the general populace. Yet even in this advanced nation tragedy struck. In one of the leading world powers of the time, Hitler was able to take control of the Nazi party, and with its support execute one of the most horrific genocides ever. This alerts everyone, since it sends the message that genocides can occur anywhere. As a result, the Holocaust is constantly used as an example of just how evil humans are deep, deep down. The Holocaust is also unique because it targeted individuals who truly believed they were citizens of the lands they inhabited. Many of those targeted believed that they were German. They may or may not have embraced the fact that they were Jewish, but this was their religious identity, and not as important as their national identity. Yet the Nazis stripped them of any other identities, labeling them as nothing more than Jewish. The Holocaust was a calamity unlike any other the world has ever seen. However, does its uniqueness matter?

The Holocaust "can, and has served as a template for thinking about [the aftermath of] other tragic events."[150] The transgenerational effects of the Holocaust matter, because they show what results from traumatic events. The Holocaust is just one example of how tragedy has the power to affect generations to come. This same phenomenon can be witnessed in other genocides, such as the ones in Armenia and Cambodia. It can also be witnessed with an event closer to home: the tragic loss of many American individuals on September 11, 2001. Among the people directly affected by the tragedy were 1,700 pregnant women.[151] In some of these women, the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was witnessed. And similarly

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[150] Hoffman, xiv.
[151] "Pregnant 9/11 Survivors Transmitted Trauma to Their Children: The Emerging Field of Epigenetics Shows how Traumatic Experiences can be Transmitted from one Generation to the Next," *The Guardian*, September 9, 2011.

Holocaust survivors transmitted trauma to their offspring, "the children [of these pregnant women] have inherited the nightmare that their mothers experienced on that day."[152] Since the attack did not occur very long ago, it is unclear how long the effects will last. However, Rachel Yehuda has been conducting psychological studies to figure out how the effects have been transferred and for how many generations they will continue to be seen. So far she is fairly confident that "children who inherited the nightmare of the World Trade Centre attack from their mothers while in the womb may in turn pass it on to their own children."[153] I am sure that with time we will come to see similar results in the transference of the effects of trauma, in the survivors of Hurricane Katrina, the 2011 Tohoku earthquake of Japan, and the recent Typhon Haiyan, although exactly what transfers will be unique to the tragedy itself. Individuals in these instances will be shaped by their past, whether they survived the tragedy or were born after the event to those who experienced the trauma directly. The full implications of a historical event cannot be calculated soon after the event occurred, since it will take time to realize just how large of an effect its consequence will play in individuals' lives and the world as a whole. History has the power to continually affect individuals, just as survivors and their children were molded by the evil reign of Hitler and his Nazis. The children of Holocaust survivors were forced to cross over the troubled waters of their parents' Nazi past, in an attempt to free themselves from the Holocaust. However, it often seems that nothing they did had the power to free them of all ties of the past, since they all continue to be affected.

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[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.

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