

April 2016

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Recommended Citation

Gaufberg, Rachel (2016) "Retrospective Emotional Interpretation of Holocaust Victims: Case Studies of USC Shoah Foundation Testimonies," *Scholarly Undergraduate Research Journal at Clark*: Vol. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://commons.clarku.edu/surj/vol2/iss1/2>

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RETROSPECTIVE EMOTIONAL INTERPRETATION OF HOLOCAUST VICTIMS: AN ANALYSIS OF USC SHOAH FOUNDATION TESTIMONIES

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ABSTRACT

Extensive research has been conducted on the emotional and psychological conditions of survivors post-Holocaust, specifically symptoms of trauma of which many have been grouped and coined into terms such as “survivor syndrome” and “concentration camp syndrome” (USHMM, 2015). In addition, the treatment of such conditions has been studied and implemented. Conversely, significantly less research has been conducted regarding the emotional/psychological experiences of victims during these events, as recollected by victims in the present. Personal narratives of Holocaust survivors shed light on the emotional and psychological implications of the Holocaust’s traumatic events on individuals. In this paper, Holocaust survivors’ retrospective descriptions of emotional responses as experienced during these events will be analyzed.

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

Personal narratives of Holocaust survivors shed light on the emotional and psychological impact of the Holocaust’s traumatic events on individuals. In this paper, Holocaust survivors’ retrospective descriptions of their emotional responses as experienced during these events will be analyzed. Extensive research has been conducted on the emotional and psychological conditions of survivors post-Holocaust, specifically symptoms of trauma of which many have been grouped and coined into terms such as “survivor syndrome” and “concentration camp syndrome” (USHMM, 2015). In addition, the treatment of such conditions has been implemented and studied.

Significantly less research has been conducted regarding the emotional and psychological experiences of victims during these events, as recollected by victims in the present. This largely may be due to the implications of retrospective emotional interpretation. When individuals recount events in their past and describe their emotional inter-

pretations of these events, they are simply recounting these emotions from memory and not physically reliving it. Therefore, these recollections of past emotional experiences are influenced by the individual’s subsequent experiences in life, as well as the general passing of the time. In addition to these potential inaccuracies, which are further discussed later in the paper, research on the emotional states of victims during these traumatic events may seem far less prevalent than the emotional state of survivors in the present. This may be due to the fact that, although the emotional and psychological symptoms of the past may be studied, only emotional symptoms of the present may be studied and treated.

Some may also view the emotional aspect of psychological analysis as problematic because emotions may elicit contrary perspectives on historical events such as the Holocaust. I argue that research on the emotional interpretations of victims during the time of the Holocaust is critical for our understanding of 1)

how these events were interpreted by victims psychologically, and 2) the influence of these emotional experiences on the present day psychological and emotional state of victims. For example, the memory of emotional experiences can reflect the emotion regulation strategies used in a particular situation. Emotional regulation refers to attempts to influence one’s subjective emotional experience and expression, involving both up-and-down-regulation, as well as antecedent-focused and response-focused emotional regulation (Gross, 1998). Emotional retrospection can provide insight into the type of emotional regulation used in the present, specifically when dealing with post-Holocaust emotional and psychological burdens. Finally, remembering the emotions one experienced in the past is one of the core elements of the human experience. For individuals who experienced a life event as emotionally heavy and significant as the Holocaust, recollection of the emotions from these events, although indescribably difficult, is a deeply meaningful reflective

practice that shapes one's unique life experience.

Emotional responses to three different scenarios during the Holocaust will be explored: (1) emotional responses to life in ghetto or concentration camps, (2) emotional responses to bereavement, and (3) emotional responses to liberation. The study is divided into three major stages of the Holocaust in order to organize and contextualize the research within the broader context of the Holocaust. These specific scenarios were chosen because they can be viewed more or less as a chronological progression through the Holocaust. Broadly speaking, the first stage involved individuals taken to the ghetto or concentration camps, where they were first exposed to the innumerable horrors they would face in the coming months and years. The second stage could be seen as the ever-present experience of death that began to initially surround and finally fully encompass them. And the third stage, was liberation which was the end of many of the immediate horrors but for some may have been just the beginning of the emotional and psychological trauma. These scenarios will be thematically analyzed in order to identify dominating emotional themes within several testimonies of survivors from the Holocaust, and to provide for a deeper and more cohesive understanding of the individuals' experiences.

METHOD

Source of Testimonies

Research was conducted using testimonies from the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded in 1994 by

director Steven Spielberg (USCSF, 2007-2015). The institute is dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides in an effort to "forever preserve the faces and voices of the people who witnessed history, allowing their firsthand stories to enlighten and inspire action against intolerance for generations to come" (USCSF, 2007-2015). The archive contains over 53,000 testimonies, the vast majority of which include a complete personal history of life before, during, and after the interviewee's firsthand experience with genocide (USCSF, 2007-2015). Testimonies average over two hours in length, and are conducted in 63 countries and in 39 languages (USCSF, 2007-2015). The archive is fully searchable via indexed keywords, phrases, names, and images.

Selection of Testimonies

Four individual testimonies were selected from the USC Shoah Foundation archive. The four testimonies were identified via three keywords that were entered into the search engine on the USC Shoah Foundation homepage. These keywords were "ghetto-related psychological reactions," "bereavement-related psychological reactions," and "liberation-related psychological reactions". The key words corresponded to the three scenarios that are of interest to the research question: emotional responses to life in ghetto/concentration camps, emotional responses to bereavement, and emotional responses to liberation. Testimonies were primarily selected on the basis of containing rich, detailed emotional descriptions

of all three scenarios. Because such testimonies that accounted for all three scenarios were limited in number, it was difficult to control for factors such as age, place of birth, gender, etc. This being said, the interviewees do not differ extensively in age, and the families of the interviewees all held a certain level of religiosity in their homes. Factors such as socioeconomic status, place of birth, and gender differ between the testimonies. Two of the testimonies, the narratives of Manya Altman and Gloria Abrams, contain events from all three scenarios. The testimonies of Fela Abramowicz and Erno Abelesz were selected because each gave detailed descriptions of one of the three scenarios; Abelesz described emotional responses to liberation, and Abramowicz accounted for emotional responses to life in the ghetto.

Sample Description

Manya Altman was a female born on December 5, 1923 to the parents of Isaac Lewin and Yohevet Lewin in the city of Lodz, Poland (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995). Manya had one sister and two brothers. The family was middle class; they owned an import-export business at which both the mother and the father worked. When asked about her family life, Manya states that, "we were a happy family [...] we were a close family," and that "I had a good childhood." Her family engaged in cultural activities in Lodz, such as going to the opera and other forms of theater. Manya describes her family as being religiously observant. She went seven years to a Jewish public school and two years to gymnasium. Manya did not feel

much anti-Semitism growing up, primarily because all her friends were Jewish and she “didn’t have any connection to non-Jewish people” (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995).

Gloria Abrams was a female born on May 6, 1925 in the city of Wielun (otherwise known as Lodz), Poland (G. Abrams, personal communication, November 12, 1995). Gloria does not mention the names of her parents. She had three brothers and one sister. Her father owned a business and made a “nice living”, and she describes her family as being “close-knit.” She came from what she describes as a “very religious family” – they would go to synagogue many times a week, and her brother was studying to be a rabbi before he was killed in the Holocaust. She recounts having a significant awareness of anti-Semitism while growing up (G. Abrams, personal communication, November 12, 1995).

Fela Abramowicz was a female born on March 20, 1923 to the parents of Esther Rak and Zelman Rak in Warsaw, Poland (F. Abramowicz, personal communication, December 19, 1996). She had four sisters and two brothers. Fela describes growing up in “difficult conditions” in Warsaw, because money was low in the family and her father struggled with his business. She describes herself and her siblings as “free thinkers”, interested in politics, reading newspapers, and knowing what was going on in the world, more so than her parents were. She was born into a “strictly orthodox home.” She lived in a Jewish area in Warsaw, and went to an all-Jewish school.

She describes the Jewish culture as being very rich, with everyone engaging in the celebration of Jewish holidays. She does not speak of any incidences of anti-Semitism in her testimony (F. Abramowicz, personal communication, December 19, 1996).

Erno Abelesz was a male born July 5, 1930 in Kapuvar, Hungary to the parents of David Abelesz and Helen Hoffman (E. Abelesz, personal communication, September 19, 1995). Erno had five brothers and one sister. His father owned a grocery shop, and his family was “respected” as business people in the town. He describes his family as being “very close, very loving”, and as being one of the largest extended families in the town. He describes his childhood as being generally “happy and contented.” His family was Orthodox, and his parents sent him to Cheder after school hours where he learned Hebrew. Erno recounts that there was not much segregation between Jews and Gentiles in his town. He primarily experienced anti-Semitism by other school children who called him names, but other than these instances Erno never directly experienced frightening anti-Semitic incidences (E. Abelesz, personal communication, September 19, 1995).

Analytic Procedure

Once all four testimonies were selected, each testimony was listened to in full in order to gain background knowledge on the survivor. Each testimony lasted on average two hours. During the initial listening period, the times of segments in which the individual spoke of information pertaining to one of the three scenarios, i.e. emotional responses to life

in ghetto/concentration camps, emotional responses to bereavement, and emotional responses to liberation, were recorded. Once each testimony was listened to completely, the segments in which the individual spoke of information relevant to the research question were revisited. These segments were transcribed in full, including the questions asked by the interviewer in order to gain context to the responses by the interviewee. Once these segments were transcribed from all four testimonies, the segments were compared with one another in order to find corresponding themes within each scenario. In order to label findings as an overarching ‘theme’, similarities needed to be matched between at least two of the four testimonies. Once these similarities were found and themes created, the relevant segments were once again reviewed, and directly transcribed quotations were organized under each theme. The final step in organizing these quotations into themes was the synthesis of information across participants. This entailed viewing each theme separately and finding similarities and disparities between the individual narratives within each theme. Once this was done, a cohesive interpretation of each theme within each scenario, with regards to the individual narratives, was synthesized.

FINDINGS

Emotional Responses To Life In Ghetto/Concentration Camp

Life within the ghetto encompassed an enormous breadth of the tragedies experienced in the Holocaust. The overall life conditions within the ghetto gave rise to a number of varying emotional

responses and interpretations by the individuals who experienced the ghetto. The survivors' descriptions of their emotional responses to life while in the ghetto can be generally categorized into two overarching emotional responses: an experience of emotional desensitization to events, and a deep sense of perseverance in the face of conditions within the ghetto.

Desensitization

As evidenced by the testimonies of Manya Altman and Gloria Abrams, life in the ghetto and concentration camps seemed to produce an experience of general desensitization. Manya describes life in the ghetto as "really bad. People were dying from hunger, I could see kids, small kids, laying, you know, on the street, with full of hair, growing on the body, and swollen belly, you know, and it was really... we didn't starve, but we didn't have, you know, we didn't have clothes, didn't have nothing" (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995). She tells of a story of two sisters, both friends of Manya's, who caught typhus and died in front of Manya. When the interviewer asks how Manya handled their death, Manya replies that, "you saw death everyday on the street. Old people, children dying. You didn't pay attention. You just want to survive yourself." Here, Manya takes a significant pause and looks intentionally at the interviewer for a few seconds. She continues, "You get used to this, you know." She pauses again, "You just thinking about your own family. Was really, really bad." In another instance, Manya describes witnessing the executions of Roma people in the ghetto. She describes the horrendous

scene in vivid detail, recounting the screams of Roma individuals whose limbs were "chopped off" by the Nazis, the body parts that were strewn on the ground, and Roma children being thrown to their deaths out of windows in several story high buildings. The interviewer asks "What did you think would happen to you? Did you think that you would be next?" To this, Manya replied, "You know, you didn't think. You were just living from day to day." Here, Manya pauses and her brow furrows. "They could catch you on the street, they could catch you anyplace. They did to one of my brothers. So you were never thinking about this, you just wanna, you wanna survive" (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995).

Gloria Abram recounts similar experiences of desensitization. In response to questions asked by the interviewer about her experiences of the ghetto, Gloria replies, "You just live for the moment, you never knew will you survive that moment, or you be killed, or you go on..." Her one wish in the camp was "to eat a whole bread as much as I want, and then I could die. At least for once I won't be hungry. That's what I wished for. I want only want to live, to eat a whole bread. And then I could die" (G. Abrams, personal communication, November 12, 1995). When the interviewer asks if Gloria truly wished to die in the ghetto, Gloria responds that yes, she did wish to die. She explains this by saying that "[w]hen a person goes through so much hardship, pain, there is nothing left in me. No living. Everything is dead [...] everything was killed in me. No joy to live. Absolutely" (G.

Abrams, personal communication, November 12, 1995).

Sense of Perseverance

In addition to desensitization, life in the ghetto seemed to produce an inextinguishable will to survive, and a sense of perseverance that was necessary to live from day to day. Both Fela Abramowicz and Manya Altman directly attribute this sense of perseverance to their young age. In response to the events that Fela witnessed in the ghetto, Fela questioned why the events were happening. She recounts of herself and others in the ghetto, "And all of us think, why?" She continues, "I'm 18 years old! You know I want to live, you know, I mean how could the world exist without me?" Here she pauses momentarily and laughs. "I want to be a part of it. And the most important thing, I want to see is the Germans defeated. That was the most important thing, eh, motivation, you know they got to be defeated, I want to see it, I want to live to see it" (F. Abramowicz, personal communication, December 19, 1996).

Manya speaks of her gruesome labor working in a factory in a concentration camp. She describes the conditions: the freezing cold, the lack of food and water, the non-stop work hours, and the constant fear of being at the Nazis' mercy for any mistake that might be made. Despite the unbearable working conditions, Manya describes the sense of perseverance and hope within each of the young workers, "Well, we were young people. We were full of, we had this... to survive, this will to survive. When you're 18, 20, 21, you know, they were all the same, they was a few

little bit older from us, but 95% were in the 20s. Early 20s, early 19, 18 something like this. And we wanna survive.” She then says that “We never going to forget the last night before the Americans came. We knew that the end is here. Our end” (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995).

Emotional Responses To Bereavement

Death was rampant during the Holocaust, and the experience of the death of loved ones in particular plagued individuals constantly. Personal experiences of bereavement from the Shoah Foundation testimonies shed light on two overarching emotional responses to bereavement: emotional desensitization and despair. Interestingly enough, lack of emotional response was more-so attributed to the death of friends, whereas utter despair was attributed to the loss of immediate family.

Desensitization

In concurrence with the experience of desensitization to general events in the ghetto, desensitization was referenced in particular to experiences of death and bereavement. As was described regarding desensitization to life in the ghetto, Manya recounts that although the death from typhoid of her two friends was “depressing,” “you saw death everyday on the street” and “you didn’t pay attention [...] you get used to this. You was just thinking about your own family” (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995).

Gloria recounts that she witnessed several of her friends commit suicide in the ghetto, primarily by jumping to their

deaths from buildings or by self-hanging. When asked by the interview how it was to witness the deaths of her friends, Gloria replied, “Well...” she takes a momentary pause here. “It was very painful. But we knew none of us were going to survive anyhow. That we going to die somehow” (G. Abrams, personal communication, November 12, 1995).

Despair

In response to the loss of loved ones, testimonies reveal a sense of despair and a sense of deep loneliness and isolation in the world. Gloria, along with one of her brothers, was the only individual of her family to survive the Holocaust. She recounts that her siblings “disappeared just like my parents. They were gassed to death ... and they say they are buried someplace in Treblinka.” She speaks of her present wish to journey to Treblinka, “and give my best, last respect to my dear parents and brothers and sister and cousins and uncles and aunt. The whole family, I’m the only survivor and my brother, I don’t have anybody else in the whole world.” She continues to tell of her experience after she lost her family: “To be alone, to lose your parents, and the whole family, in one day, you become a total orphan. I was too young to experience that.” Once her family was gone, “there was nothing left to live for. I knew that my family is gone, I’m all alone in this world, there’s no cause to live. And I’m wandering the world all alone. And it’s horrible.” She then moves from speaking about her emotional response to bereavement in the past to her current state of bereavement: “I’m never recover it. I can’t sleep at night, it’s 50 years, but it haunts me. And I

have many dreams ... I’m lost for the rest of my life, I don’t live. I just exist” (G. Abrams, personal communication, November 12, 1995).

Throughout the whole interview, Manya stays composed, speaking of the events with relatively little emotional expression. Only when she reaches a point in her interview in which she speaks of the loss of her family does she express deep emotion. Manya tells of the tragic murder of her family members; her brother was hanged after stealing a piece of bread, and it was most probable that her other brother, her sister, and mother were gassed to death in Auschwitz. Although Manya does not speak directly of the emotional effect the loss of her family had on her in the past, she does allude to the deep effect of the trauma that it had on her at the time of the Holocaust. She describes that once they were liberated, “we were happy that we survive. That’s what we wanted. But the memories always gonna be with us. Sometime you know when I’m sitting alone, I just think about my family.... I said I’m not gonna cry.” At this point in the interview, Manya breaks down into tears, looks away, and reaches for a tissue. She continues, “I’m thinking about my father, my mother, my sister (wipes her nose), my brothers, I say if I die at least I’m gonna be with them, together. So I’m not afraid to die” (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995).

Emotional Responses To Liberation

In contrast to the popularized notion that liberation was an indescribably joyful and defini-

tive turning point in the lives of Holocaust survivors, these testimonies shed light on the complex emotional interpretation associated with liberation. Primarily, the testimonies display the individuals' considerable uncertainty of the future and an inability to process the events and implications of liberation.

Uncertainty

When asked about experiences of liberation and post-liberation, survivors Erno Abelesz and Gloria Abrams recount their experiences of the weighing uncertainty of the future. When asked by the interviewer if he remembered what it felt like having been liberated by the Russians, Erno, with frequent pauses and a fairly hesitant reply, responds by saying that, "Well it was, I felt, I felt it's something great thing... I-I'm a survivor of my, possibly sole survivor for the family, and it's a great chance where you, you know that you are going to live. But what the future is going to bring, which way to go, what to go, which country to go to, and ah, how to establish your life again. And I knew by that time that I have no parents and eh, I didn't know whether there will be any other survivors from my close family. I just felt lost, I-I-I didn't know what, what's going to happen" (E. Abelesz, personal communication, September 19, 1995).

Gloria's interpretation of her liberation is similar to that of Erno. When the interviewer asked Gloria what she felt when the Russians liberated the town, Gloria replies that, "I was, ah, very happy..." She hesitates when making this statement, then continues: "we figured at least we won't suffer so much, and we're

alive, so we were glad to be, to survive... but there were still hardship because no one, I was still young and there was no one to take care of us. We didn't have where to go, what to eat... (*shrugs shoulders*) It was horrible" (G. Abrams, personal communication, November 12, 1995).

Inability To Process

Excerpts from the testimonies reveal the relative inability of the survivors to fully process that they were being liberated, primarily due to the fact that upon liberation, the physical and mental well-being of the survivors was damaged extensively. Manya describes the vivid scene in which the Americans liberated the camp: "They came like wild animals, the Americans, open the gates [...] then came a Jewish one, from New York, he was speaking Jewish, I don't know, a Major, something, and he said 'Kinder sens fre'. And we cried and we hugged ourselves, but we didn't want to go out from the barracks, we were afraid. And then, ah, they went after the SS, you know, and they took the SS women, they were horrible, horrible, and disrobed them on the trucks, they were naked, they cut the hair from them..." In response to this description, the interviewer asks Manya, "How did the inmates handle that? Were they happy, were they angry? Did they want to kill them?" Manya answered, "No, we didn't, we really didn't. We were just happy that we survive. We were happy to see what the American doing to them. But we wanna survive... we were hungry. We were dirty. We were full of lice..." (M. Altman, personal communication, October 24, 1995).

Similarly to Manya's ex-

perience of liberation, regarding her diverted focus on obtainment of food and health care, Erno speaks that "for this timing I was just really, my main point is just to, to eat well whatever food I can get hold of it, and very quickly I, physically I recovered. Very quickly, I was, I was in a good physical condition" (E. Abelesz, personal communication, September 19, 1995).

DISCUSSION

In terms of the possible causes and subsequent implications of these psychological experiences, research on the implications of retrospective emotional analysis needs to be further discussed to provide a foundation on this area of study utilized within this paper. Research finds that there exist a variety of cognitive processes that influence recollection, which cause retrospective ratings of emotion to be inaccurate. These cognitive processes include heuristics: cognitive "hard-wired mental shortcuts" that individuals use daily in routine decision making and judgment (Herbert, 2010); cognitive structures, the basic mental processes people use to make sense of information (Garner, 2007); implicit theories, personal constructions about particular phenomenon that reside in the minds of individuals (Sternberg, Conway, Ketrion, & Bernstein, 1981); and motivations (Barrett, 1997). More specifically, retrospective ratings of emotions have been found to be influenced in the direction of respondents' personality descriptions i.e. individuals who described themselves as neurotic remembered experiencing more negative emotion than they reported on a momentary basis, and individu-

als who described themselves as extroverted displayed a trend of remembering more positive emotion than they reported on a momentary basis (Barrett, 1997). Age, among other individual difference factors, has also been found to influence both the momentary and retrospective ratings of emotions (Röcke et al., 2011). The thematic psychological/emotional analysis of the USC Shoah Foundation testimonies was conducted by the researcher, and must be read by the reader, with these biases in mind.

REVIEW OF FINDINGS

Analysis of testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation concerning the emotional implications of life in the ghetto, bereavement, and liberation resulted in the finding of two major themes within each scenario.

Analysis of emotional responses to life in the ghetto from the testimonies of Manya Altman, Fela Abramowicz, and Gloria Abrams revealed the overarching experiences of desensitization to events and an emergent sense of perseverance in the face of the inhumane conditions. In regards to desensitization, it seems that Manya and Gloria were both over-saturated to the conditions surrounding them. The brutal murdering of the Roma and the tragic death of the sisters in Manya's testimony, and the prevalence of starvation as described by Gloria, caused them to experience a level of desensitization to the horrors that were occurring. The initial pain and hardships of life in the ghetto led to a lack of any emotion, whether it be joy or pain. Fela and Manya both describe a sense of perseverance and will to survive in re-

sponse to life in the ghetto, which they both attributed to their youth. This attribute provided the individuals the psychological and emotional power needed to push forward until liberation. For Fela specifically, the events in the ghetto fueled her motivation to continue on and persevere in order see justice brought to the perpetrators. Both Fela and Manya desired to live and continue experiencing the world, in face of the tragedies constantly faced within the ghetto.

Analysis of emotional responses to bereavement from the testimonies of Manya Altman and Gloria Abrams revealed the overarching themes of desensitization to death, as consistent with the overall experience in the ghetto, and deep despair. Specifically, both Manya and Gloria revealed a desensitization to death in regards to the death of their friends, whereas despair was experienced in response to the death of family members. This is consistent with Manya's comment that one became desensitized to the death so prevalent in the ghetto, and that "[y]ou just thinking about your own family." The death of her friends did leave Manya impacted by negative emotions, but the level of emotional impact may have been dulled because of the constant experience of death in the Holocaust. Although Gloria admits to the pain of seeing close friends lose their lives, she alludes to a sense of justification of suicide due to the perceived fact that death was imminent and inevitable. This justification may have helped Gloria to cope psychologically with the pain experienced from the loss. Therefore, death did not hold with it the emotional

heaviness that it would in situations outside of the context of the Holocaust. It is evident that Gloria still experiences the trauma of losing her family to this day, and although she now has a family of her own, the memories of the murders of her siblings, parents, and extended family are buried deep inside her, leaving her with a persistent sense of isolation and loneliness. Her descriptions of her emotional response to bereavement during the Holocaust morph into her experience of bereavement in the present day. Similarly, the fact that the only point of the interview in which Manya expressed deep emotion, and visibly painful and devastated emotions for that matter, brings to light the deep despair that arose from the bereavement of loved ones.

Analysis of emotional responses to liberation from the testimonies of Manya Altman, Erno Abelesz, and Gloria Abrams revealed the major themes of uncertainty of the future and a relative inability to process the events and implications of liberation due to lack of basic needs such as food and health. Despite the glorious freedom gained from being liberated, Erno now had to face the harsh reality of dealing with the aftermath of the Holocaust; in his case, the loss of his family, and the necessity to completely reestablish his life again. Although there is a sense of happiness, greatness, and other positive emotion in general regarding liberation, these emotions seem to be overshadowed by the dooming sense of uncertainty of the future. Manya's response to the liberation displays that, although the survivors were happy with the actions of revenge by the Americans, the

survivors' primary concerns were that of fulfilling their basic needs of food and health. If the former inmates were not of such weak physical condition, it would be likely that their response to the liberation would be less focused on the necessary fulfillment of basic needs and more on the present and future implications of liberation. The damaged physical well-being of the survivors at the time of liberation contributed to an inability to process their liberation. Erno's primary response to liberation was not the fact that he was now free, but an immediate need to recover physically. This need to regain physical strength transcended Erno's ability to fully process the events and implications of liberation.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the study, as discussed in the theoretical introduction and discussion, include the nature of retrospective emotional analysis and the shortcomings of this analysis. Because retrospective analysis does not utilize descriptions directly from the time of the Holocaust, such as written clips or other forms of recording, researchers must hold the uncertainty of inaccuracy in emotional recollection.

In addition, there were a limited number of testimonies that contained all three scenarios of interest. Specifically, only two testimonies were identified. Because two testimonies would not provide sufficient information needed to discover themes within the scenarios, two additional testimonies were selected which covered at minimum one of the scenarios. The fact that there was not full consistency across all three scenarios, i.e. descriptions

from the additional two testimonies did not provide full information on all three scenarios, may have posed methodological issues.

Finally, the task of performing this analysis was limited by time. As discussed in the subsequent section of "Future Research," significantly more in-depth and extensive analysis could be performed in regards to the broader research topic of retrospective emotional analysis of Holocaust victims. Due to the lack of time and resources, level of depth of analysis was significantly limited.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This research was simply a preliminary effort to shed some light on emotional implications at the time of the Holocaust as identified by survivors in the present. Additional research can and should be conducted, which would expand analysis to a significantly increased number of testimonies. The number of scenarios within the Holocaust should be significantly expanded as well, which would primarily narrow the definition of each scenario. For example, "life in the ghetto" could be subdivided into a number of categories, such as emotional responses to "life in the barracks", or "life in the context of forced labor." Additionally, "bereavement" could be subdivided in regards to family members versus friends. By narrowing the definition of each scenario, more in-depth analysis could be performed on emotional responses to these specific events. Finally, these scenarios could be compared with one another, providing information on the ways in which emotional responses

varied from one situation in the Holocaust to another.

CONCLUSION

Testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation of four Holocaust victims were selected, transcribed, and analyzed in regards to the survivors' present-day emotional interpretation of the events experienced during the Holocaust. Consistent themes across all testimonies were discovered in relation to the three scenarios of emotional responses to life in the ghetto, emotional responses to bereavement, and emotional responses to liberation. These themes were organized and discussed. Although limitations were present in the research process, these limitations did not pose significant threat to the reliability and validity of the findings. Future research can and should be conducted regarding the broader question of retrospective emotional interpretation of the experiences of victims of the Holocaust.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of Holocaust survivor testimonies provided insight into the emotional and psychological complexities of living through the Holocaust. By deeply examining the present descriptions of past emotional experiences of just four individuals, we advance understanding of the dominant emotional and psychological themes of that tragic time in the human experience.

RETROSPECTIVE EMOTIONAL INTERPRETATION OF HOLOCAUST VICTIMS: Rachel Gaufberg

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FACULTY SPONSER: Johanna Ray Vollhardt, Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rachel would like to extend her sincerest thanks to Dr. Johanna Ray Vollhardt of Clark University's Psychology Department for her help and guidance in this publication.

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