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# Coping strategies and adaptation mechanisms utilized by female Holocaust survivors from the Auschwitz Concentration Camp

Joy Erlichman Miller

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COPING STRATEGIES AND ADAPTATION MECHANISMS  
UTILIZED BY FEMALE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS FROM THE  
AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF WALDEN UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

HUMAN SERVICES

BY

JOY ERLICHMAN MILLER

MAY, 1996

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ABSTRACT

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## ABSTRACT

The female experience during the Holocaust has largely been ignored as significantly different than that of male counterparts. This gender-specific research study investigates the “unique, poignant voices” of women’s coping strategies utilized during internment in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

Focusing specifically on the video oral history testimonies of the complete collection of female survivors of Auschwitz, which were produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the study suggests that the predominate coping strategies used by females was affiliation with others as the means of survival. Through the utilization of clustering sheets, the data suggested that affiliation and assistance from others was essential in female survival and coping, coupled primarily with the utilization of emotion-focused coping strategies.

Additionally, the study utilizes telephone interviews with the Holocaust survivors in the sample, three to five years after their testimonies were elicited as part of the permanent exhibits and research archives at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The findings from the interviews concur with the predominant utilization of affiliation as a coping mechanism for survival of massive traumatization during internment in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp.



## DEDICATION

The resiliency of the human spirit is astonishing. The survivors of the Nazi Holocaust have vigilantly reminded us of the inner strength of those who fight to survive, as well as eloquently spoken for the millions of Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah Witnesses, homosexuals, and other “enemies of the State” who could not speak for themselves.

In memory of all that were consumed, may this serve as a reminder that we must never forget the lessons of the Holocaust. May we always remember to speak of these “truths” to our children and impart the lessons to our children’s children in memory of those who have perished during the Shoah.

This is dedicated to all those who were consumed during the Holocaust, as well as the brave survivors who “bear witness” to the atrocities of genocide. May we be ever watchful of the darkness and evil that lives in the ideologies of prejudice, hatred, and racism.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over thirty years ago, I sat quietly shocked and abhorred as my Hebrew school teachers spoke of their internment in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Struggling within, I have wondered if I would have possessed the strength to endure, survive, and cope with the atrocities of the Holocaust.

This research study has become a transformational healing journey which has led me to those who “bear witness” to the Nazi Holocaust. They have opened their hearts, their souls, and shared their deepest guarded thoughts and emotions with someone who needed to know the “truth” of their experience. Their stories, insights, interpretations, and lives will continue to live through those of us who will “never forget” as we pass these lessons to others.

My deepest thanks, respect, and love to the brave survivors in my research study--Mady D., Fritzie F., Alice C., Nina K., Ruth M., Helen G., Lily M., Kate B., Cecilie K., Guta W., Margaret K., Barbara F., Toby S., Eva S., Helen W., and Magda B. who have taught me about the strength of the human spirit, and the loving devotion, nurturing, and caring of women. A special thank you to the 10 survivors who participated in the telephone interviews and who shared their “stories” with me, and allowed me into

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He who has a **why** to live can bear  
with almost any **how**.

Nietzsche

## PREFACE

### Historical Overview

#### Racism and Anti-Semitism

A long history of persecution laid the groundwork for the genocide of six million Jews during the Holocaust. Hitler's Nazi ideology was deeply rooted in long-standing anti-Semitism which was on the upswing in the early 20th century. Ripe for diabolical evilness, the rising sentiments toward scapegoating Jews for the ills of the German people after World War I was never more favorable. The rise in anti-Semitism and the hatred ~~of~~ of Jews did not begin with Hitler's Third Reich, however.

Historically, the Jews had experienced anti-Semitic sentiments since the time of the Greeks. "The first anti-Jewish policy started in the fourth century after Christ in Rome" (Hillberg, 1985, p. 5). For 12 centuries the Church insisted that the Jews accept Christ or be scapegoated until they submitted to conversion. These conversions were never intended to increase the power of the Church but were necessary because believers needed to save the unbelievers from eternal hellfire. Those who attempted to convert Jews were illustrating their conviction to the doctrines of the Church. Those who would not convert were thought to be either ignorant

or mistaken in their beliefs. The most evil of those disbelievers were the Jews who were rumored to steal Christian children and kill them for blood to be used in ritual services.

The Church was not the only one to profess anti-Semitism and persecution of the Jews. Anti-Semitism was not limited to one portion of society. “Anti-Semitism was sanctioned politically, socially, and religiously until it became like a birthright -- handed down from one generation to another” (Lawliss, 1994, p. 13).

One of the most noted anti-Semitic propagandists was the German theologian Martin Luther, founder of Protestantism (Hillberg, 1985). In 1495 he stated that the Jews were “the plague” of the country; and he encouraged the murder of Jews, as well as the burning of synagogues and Jewish homes. Jews were seen as inflexible, fixed in their beliefs; and Luther encouraged their expulsion or exclusion from the general population. Persecution of Jews was supported and condoned within society after his published writings.

In the 19th century, there was a dramatic development related to the issue of anti-Semitism and racism. In 1895, at a Reichstag meeting, a German named Ahlwardt stated that Jews were not just a religion but, in fact, a “race.” Within this famous speech, he asserted that the Jews were “beasts of prey” and not Germans, whether they were born within the

country or not. Clearly, “A Jew who is born in Germany is still no German; he is still a Jew” (Hilberg, 1985, p. 16). Anti-Semitic policies had been narrowed to three ideologies: conversion, expulsion, and annihilation. Hilberg stated that conversion was the earliest solution to the Jewish concern, and “the second appeared as an alternative to the first, and the third emerged as an alternative to the second” (p. 7).

Sociologists and historians have written countless texts which recount that Jews were seen as an enemy which needed to be extinguished, a “beast of prey,” and a plague upon the German people (Berenbaum, 1993; Hillberg, 1985; Lawliss, 1994; Schleunes, 1990). These thoughts were echoed by German anti-Semitic Houston Stewart Chamberlain in his book The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century (cited in Yahil, 1990).

Chamberlain proclaimed that the Aryans were a superior master race which could be distinguished by the length of their skull. Upon reading Chamberlain’s works, Kaiser Wilhelm II asserted that Chamberlain had brought “order to confusion: light to darkness (and) proof for what we suspected” (Schleunes, 1990, p. 29) This epic work “legitimized” the view of Jewish inferiority and placed Jews on the lowest level of Nature’s hierarchy.

Chamberlain asserted that it was possible to raise breeds of people, similar to horses and dogs (cited in Yahil, 1990). This enhanced race

would create the perfect breed of Aryans. This new school of thought brought about a renewed determination and belief in the concepts of racism. Race became a governing factor in society's evaluation of superiority and inferiority. It was because of race that someone was denoted as good or bad or worthy of living or dying. Yahil (1990) reported,

Race is now a fixed and immutable property of universal Nature; it can, however, be corrupted and purified -- just as a religious man is corrupted by sin but is given the opportunity to purify himself. But in the eyes of the anti-Semite, the corrupt nature of the Jew is static and in no way given to change, whether they are regarded as a race whose purity has been preserved since its genesis or a racial mixture." (p. 35)

Chamberlain contended that through utilization of these concepts and tenets a hierarchical system of superior to inferior race could be established.

Racism became a political doctrine which had three components as noted by Yahil (1990). First, "race is a biological given, a determining factor, like the forces of nature themselves; secondly, race is a genetic factor that finds expression in all aspects of life; thirdly, race is the prime element in any form of rule" ( p. 37). With these workings in place, the creation of the most devastating anti-Semitic Nazi racist legislation known to humankind was established in 1935 with the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws.

## The Rising Climate Welcomes a Scapegoat

As early as 1918, the Second Reich openly declared the desire to punish the perpetrators responsible for the disaster that had befallen Germany after World War I. Scapegoated as the perpetrators of corruption and the originators of the German *Volk's* destruction, the Jews were the focal point of German retribution (Lawliss, 1994). Utilizing mounting anti-Semitism and centuries of long standing hatred, the roots of racist ideology gained wider acceptance. "The Jew" came to symbolize all that was abhorred by the Nazi regime--liberalism, industrialization, communism, urbanism, modernism, and economic extortion of the masses. Hitler believed that the Jews had captured control of the Weimar government, the media and press, the sciences and arts, the professions, the economy, and, the most threatening, the biological purity of the Aryan Nation. The Aryan agrarian philosophy could only be accomplished through expansion of the *Lebensraum* (living space) by destroying the "inferiors" who had tainted the original Reichland. The only means of destroying the Jewish contaminating agent was with complete and systematic annihilation of the population as a whole. Utilizing two guiding tenets, Hitler declared his purposeful determination to Germany:

1. Creation of an Aryan Nation compiled of a "superior master race." This would only be possible by means of segregating and cleansing



the German population of all elements which had “infected” and “tainted” German people and the Volkland. This goal would be accomplished by the total annihilation of the Jews, inferior minorities, mentally ill patients, handicapped patients, alcoholics, gays, and schizophrenics.

2. Creation of a system which would effectively and efficiently destroy this destructive “inferior” population in its entirety.

The Nazis carried out this systematic process by utilizing interconnected diabolical methodology for choking the life from all facets of Jewish life. This intentional “Final Solution” was only possible by utilizing measures which encompassed legislation that would destroy the Jews by means of economic, social, political, familial, religious, and psychological methodology. Working interactively, these measures would eliminate the Jewish problem once and for all (Berenbaum, 1993; Hillberg, 1985; Lawliss, 1994).

The German social climate was readied for the National Socialist (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) Nazi ideology which proclaimed the German people superior and dictated the eradication of those who were seen as undesirable. Lawliss (1994) concludes this gave Hitler “license to expand the Reich eastward to obtain *Lebensraum*, or living space, for his master race at the expense of those in the path of conquest (p. 16).” Hitler clearly prophesied that his “master race” would

expand eastward into the Soviet Union and destroy “inferiors” who stood in his way. Two million Slavs and six million Jews were the victims of his terrorizing push for power and control.

### Systematic Legislation to Destroy the Jews

Ignited by propaganda and legislative restrictions, the German people were ripe for the adoption of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (1911), or “Jewish Order.” This anti-Semitic material detailed a secret plan of Jews to dominate the world through the use of liberalism and communism (Edelheit & Edelheit, 1994). As protection the provisions included the following:

1. Jews living in Germany would be subject to Alien laws, and Eastern Europeans would be deported or expelled.
2. Jews would be barred from holding public office or forbidden to be lawyers, and Jewish doctors would only be able to practice on Jews.
3. Jews would not serve in the army.
4. Jews would not study in German educational institutions, and Jewish teachers would not teach German children.
5. Jewish journalists could only publish in Jewish publications, and their publications could be censored.
6. Jews could only vote within their communities.

7. Jews had to sell their holdings in agricultural land after one year, or face punishment.

8. Jewish businesses had to be marked prominently with a Star of David.

9. Jews were forbidden to bear German personal or family names and were forced to alter their identity.

10. Jews who returned after being expelled from the Reich would be hanged, and those who were sentenced to prison would have to leave the Reich with their families a month after release (cited in Yahil, 1990, p. 39).

The provisions of this protocol called for the systematic expulsion of Jews from all areas of economic, political, industrial, and family life within the German Nation. Coupled with the ideological changes professed in the 19th century, anti-Semitism and racism were united and legislated with the passage of the Nuremberg Race Laws in 1935. Jews were stripped of all rights and citizenship. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor (sexual relations were forbidden between Jews and Aryans) and the Reich Citizenship Law (Jews became subjects of the state, and only racial Germans were allowed political rights) became the central core of Nazi racist ideology (Berenbaum, 1993). Whether assimilated or accepted within society, Jews and Mischlinge (hybrid Jews) determined by their

ancestry and lineage were targeted by the Third Reich. The Jews, for the first time, were not persecuted for their religious practices but rather because of their race identity or blood lines. Jews were targeted as not being German or “kindred blood” and were labeled, in fact, an inferior “race” which had robbed the German nation of its world domination. The Aryan Nation declared itself superior; and the Jews were depicted as “beasts of prey” and “mongrels” who needed to be expelled, evicted, eradicated, or exterminated. They were no longer members of the German nation; the Jews were merely objects in need of disposal (Berenbaum, 1993). The Führer reminded the German nation that its people must be protected from the racial contamination of pure Aryan blood. Hitler remarked that it was the duty of the Aryan Nation to “arouse, to whip up, and to incite in our people instinctive repugnance of the Jews” (cited in Lawliss, 1994).

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

### 1933

- January 30 Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany and Jews feel effects of anti-Jewish policies.
- March 20 The first concentration camp at Dachau is established.

### 1935

- September 15 Nuremberg Laws are established which contain Reich Citizenship Law stating that German citizens belong to those of German or related blood; the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor which prohibits the marriage and extra-marital intercourse between Jews and Germans.
- November 15 First Ordinance to Reich Citizenship specifies that "a Jew cannot be a Reich citizen."

### 1938

- June 15 1500 German Jews are sent to concentration camps.
- October 5 The passports of German Jews are marked with a "J" for Jude.
- November 9-10 "Night of the Broken Glass" or Kristallnacht which destroys Jewish synagogues and businesses. 30,000 Jews interned in camps.
- November 15 Jewish children excluded from German schools.

### 1939

- January 30 Hitler declares that world war will mean the "annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."
- May 15 Ravensbruck, the first women's camp, is established and on May 18 the first women arrive.
- June 29 Austrian Gypsy females are deported to Ravensbruck.
- September 1 Germany invades Poland and WW II begins.
- September 3 Great Britain and France declares war on Germany.
- September 17 Russian troops invade Poland and occupy half of the country.
- September 28 Germany and Russia divide Poland.

## **1940**

- January First experimental gassing of Jews and other “undesirables.”
- February 8 Establishment of Lodz ghetto which is sealed on April 30.
- April-June Germany invades Norway, Holland, Denmark, France, and Belgium.
- April 27 Himmler orders the establishment of Auschwitz in Oswiecim, Poland.
- October Warsaw ghetto established.

## **1941**

- March 1 Himmler comes to Auschwitz and orders additional facilities and the construction of Birkenau (Auschwitz II). Prisoners are available for forced labor to construct I.G. Farben.
- March 3 Eichmann is appointed head of Gestapo’s Section for Jewish Affairs.
- June 22 Germany invades Russia. Poland is under total control of Germany.
- July 31 Goring signs orders to give Heydrich authority to prepare “the Final Solution of the Jewish question.”
- September 3 The first experiment of Zyklon B in Auschwitz.
- September 29-30 Einsatzkommando murders 33,000 Jews near Kiev.
- October 15 20,000 Jews deported from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, and Luxembourg to eastward ghettos.
- November Theresienstadt ghetto and concentration camp is established.
- December 7 Japan attacks Pearl Harbor. U.S. declares war on Japan.
- December 11 United States declares war on Germany.

## **1942**

- January 20 Wannsee Conference establishes doctrine for the “Final Solution.”
- February 15 First transport killed with Zyklon B gas in Auschwitz.

March 1	First inmates moved to Birkenau (Auschwitz II).
March 20	Farmhouse renovated for gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau.
March 26	Separate women's camp established in Auschwitz.
May 4	First time a "selection" takes place for those who have been in Auschwitz for months. The unfit are sent to gas chambers.
July 4	First selection at the railroad unloading platforms in Auschwitz.
July 7	Himmler agrees to experimentation with Jewish women in Auschwitz.
July 15	Jews deported from Westerbork. Anne Frank and family deported to Auschwitz.
July 19	Himmler orders extermination of Polish Jews completed by the end of the year.
July-September	Warsaw ghetto is liquidated.

### **1943**

January 18	First Warsaw uprising.
March-June	Four crematoriums and gas chambers are operational in Auschwitz-Birkenau.
April 19-May 16	Warsaw ghetto uprising and destruction of ghetto.
June	Himmler orders liquidation of all ghettos.
July 11	Bans to reference of "final solution of the Jewish question."
October 1-2	7,200 Danish Jews are rescued by Danes.
December	First transport of Austrian Jews to Auschwitz.

### **1944**

March 19	Germany occupies Hungary. Wearing of the Jewish Star declared in April.
May	First transport of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz.
June 6	D-Day. Forces land in Normandy.
August 2	Gypsy family camp is liquidated.
October 7	Sonderkommando revolt in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Explosives smuggled by Jewish women and Crematorium IV is destroyed.
November	Killing with Zyklon B in gas chambers is discontinued.
November 26	Himmler orders destruction of crematorium in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

**1945**

January 6	Hanging of four Jewish resistance fighters who smuggled explosives to Sonderkommando.
January 17-18	Evacuation and forced march from Auschwitz. 31,894 prisoners in last roll call with 16,577 reported to be female.
April 11	Buchenwald is liberated by U.S. forces.
April 15	Bergen-Belsen is liberated by British forces.
April 29-30	Ravensbruck is liberated by Russians.
May 7-8	Germany surrenders; V-E Day.



## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

### Introduction to the Study

The Holocaust is the name given to the Third Reich's systematic annihilation of over 12 million defenseless men, women, and children. The orchestrated genocide in Nazi Germany includes those murdered in ghettos, concentration camps, extermination death centers, and by *Einsatzgruppen*, or killing squads, during their reign of terror. The campaign of genocide was relentless toward those whom the Nazis believed to be a threat to the Third Reich's creation of a superior Aryan Nation. The primary population targeted for extermination and annihilation was the Jews. Hitler believed the only means of doing away with the "vermin," the "menacing element," that infected the Reich was to eliminate the "Jew" and all that the Jew embodied. One key to this annihilation strategy was gender-based targeting of females who were the link to future generations of the Jewish population.

The Nazi *Endlösung*, or "Final Solution," eliminated 72% of eastern and central European Jews (Dimsdale, 1974). It is estimated that 90% of Jewish Poles, Austrians, and Germans were killed in the "Final Solution" (Dawidowicz, 1976). Between five and six million Jews were destroyed

during the *Shoah*, the Hebrew word for catastrophe, including over one million children. Millions of women were tortured, raped, and exterminated, facing “double jeopardy” not only because they were Jewish, but also because they held the link to further generations (Ringelheim, 1993). The stench of death lurked everywhere with nowhere to hide from the potential of death’s grasping hand (Rappaport, 1991). Hitler’s reign orchestrated the systematic annihilation of approximately two thirds of the Jews in prewar Europe and approximately one third of the Jews worldwide. No other event in history clearly illustrates the devastating atrocities of genocide and the event which targeted the complete and ultimate annihilation of a particular population at large (Lawliss, 1994). Surviving such a devastating time in history mandated finely-honed skills for coping and adaptation to massive traumatization. Mediating the reaction to emotional, physical, economic, cultural, and psychological stressors, men and women were forced to utilize defense and coping strategies to deal with devastating horrors which were unimaginable to humans. Generally, the voices for interpretation, definition, and analysis of coping have been gender specific to males and termed gender neutral. Facing similar, but not identical circumstances, males and females had been blended together as one unified voice. To gain a meaningful and complete

understanding of the Holocaust, it is essential to view the unique means of coping strategies for survival and adaptation used by females (Ringelheim, 1993).

### Statement of the Problem

No other event in modern history has been marked with such systematic dehumanization and annihilation of a targeted population. The Auschwitz Concentration Camp has become an accepted metaphor for the demonic human dark side which perpetrated a degree of genocide beyond human comprehension. Each death camp and concentration camp had its unique methods of physical and psychological torture, dehumanization, and destruction of the human spirit. Human experimentation, means and basis for extermination, scheduled selections, and other systematic perpetration varied from one camp to another. Survivors have come to speak of unique camp experiences which generate an understanding of the interwoven, yet diverse, genocidal atrocities that took place during the Shoah. Even amongst survivors of the Holocaust, there is a “survivor’s guilt” (a guilt for surviving when so many did not) which permeates their celebration of personal resiliency and strength. Many survivors have derived a hierarchy of “perceived atrocity and horrors ” at different concentration camp

locations. The experiences of an Auschwitz survivor were quite different than those of a Schindler's Jew. They all speak from the same "voice," but clearly each camp experience had its own unique means of humiliating and rapping the dignity from prisoners. During a personal narrative, a survivor of a Swiss work camp stated, "I was living in paradise compared to them; they were in Auschwitz. They know of pain. I am not a survivor when you look at how they suffered."

Survival mechanisms for coping and adapting to these atrocities has been a subject of interest for current historians, psychologists, and scholars. However, the gender-specific differences of adapting and coping responses for women within a specific camp have not been explored. Still in their infancy, gender-related studies, as they relate to this population and which are specific to camp location, are absent within the research. There is a need to investigate the coping strategies and adapting of females who survived the Auschwitz death camp. Their voices, compiled through personal oral narrative, hold the key to the coping strategies and adaptation of those who survived extreme massive traumatization.

### Background: Women in Double Jeopardy

The atrocities of genocide utilized interconnected diabolical methodology to choke the life from all facets of Jewish existence. This intentional “Final Solution” was only possible by targeting Jewish women specifically as women, for they were the only ones who would finally be able to ensure the continuity of Jewish life (Heinemann, 1986; Ringelheim, 1993; Ritner & Roth, 1993). Ringelheim (1993) and Ritner and Roth (1993) contend that there is sound evidence that the odds for survival were much worse for Jewish women than for Jewish men. Until 1942, Jewish men may have perished at a quicker rate than females, but statistics illustrate that the overall loss of life during the Shoah was greater for Jewish women. Gender was clearly not a neutral issue for the Nazis. Jewish women were the link to the destiny of the Jewish nation, and their annihilation was necessary for the completion of Hitler’s plan for the creation of a superior Aryan Nation. Joan Ringelheim (1993), the Director of Oral History at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, writes,

Jewish women were to be killed not simply as Jewish women who may carry and give birth to the next generation of Jews. Although all Jews were to be killed, Jewish women’s death and survival rate were dependent upon two obvious descriptions: Jewishness and femaleness. (p.392)

When the figures are looked at, it is easy to see why women had less of a chance to survive than men. There were 200 women

and 1,000 men on Schindler's list. In another labor camp, Debica, there were ten women and three hundred men. None of these numbers can make us sanguine about the possibilities for either Jewish women or Jewish men to survive. But they add to the growing impression that Nazi policy allowed for the possibility of more Jewish men than Jewish women to survive; and that the Jewish Councils, either through ignorance or acknowledgment of the situation, decided to save Jews-- which often meant the saving of Jewish men. (p.399)

The voices of the Holocaust have been predominantly those of men.

The voices of experiences, historical depiction, and analysis have come from a male perspective. The classic works of our time celebrate the masterpieces of men who have interwoven various disciplines and include writers, psychologists, theologians, philosophers, historians, scholars, as well as those who speak from a personal voice as a survivor. The works of men such as Yehuda Bauer (1982, 1989), Bruno Bettelheim (1960), Terrence Des Pres (1976), Joel Dimsdale (1974, 1978, 1980), Victor Frankl (1984, 1988), Martin Gilbert (1981, 1985), Raul Hillberg (1985), Primo Levi (1965, 1993), Art Spiegelman (1986, 1991), and Elie Weisel (1985) have led the way in Holocaust studies for generations. Their research added to our understanding of survivors at large. Shaping our understanding, these monumental works have impacted our insight, perceptions, and interpretations of a systematic genocidal annihilation that is incomprehensible from a "human" perspective.

Currently, there is a new wave of personal reflection--that of women. For years the reports of women have been virtually absent. Probably the most widely recognized and easily identified female voice from the Holocaust was that of Anne Frank. Her work opened the door from a female perspective, depicting the atrocities of the Nazis which previously had been interpreted from a male perspective. Now, the works of women such as Charlotte Delbo (1993), Anna Eibeshitz (1993, 1994), Marlene Heinemann (1986), Isabella Leitner (1985, 1993, 1994), Joan Ringelheim (1984, 1993), Carol Ritner (1993), and Nechama Tec (1986) illustrate the genocide from a different perspective that focuses on the feelings, coping strategies, and trauma that express the invisible female voice. The unique reflections of women for too long have been silenced by the male perspective.

In Gender and Destiny, Heinemann (1986) emphasizes the gender-specific differences which illustrate the poignant voices of Holocaust survivors:

But to assume that Holocaust literature by men represents the writings of women is to remain blind to the findings of scholarship about the significance of gender in history and literature. Men and women live in different cultural spheres in all societies and have experienced many historical epochs and turning points in quite different ways. Until examination has shown whether men and women experienced and wrote about the Holocaust in the same way,

research which implies the “universality” of men’s writing and experiences will be inadequate. (p. 2)

The investigation of such gender-specific differences is essential for an accurate understanding of the Holocaust experience. Rappaport (1991), in a study of coping and adaptation of massive trauma survivors during the Holocaust, suggests that there were different forms of coping techniques used by the two genders. It revealed that women tended to cope by bonding emotionally to others, while men utilized coping mechanisms such as task orientation. Concurring with the findings of Marlene Heinemann (1986) and Joan Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993), it appears that these hypotheses are consistent with gender-related studies. Gilligan’s (1993) work with gender-related studies concurs that women view relationships and affiliation with others as the primary concerns for moral decision making and female development. Current authors such as John Gray (1993) and Deborah Tannen (1990) suggest that such gender-oriented coping is common to the general population and is a biologically based coping mechanism which is reinforced by cultural environmental stimuli.



### Purpose of the Study

Heinemann (1986) states, “Many writers of the Holocaust, both survivors and non-survivors, deny the significance of a specifically female experience of the Holocaust” (p. 13). Authors such as Ellman (1968) and Pawelczyn’ska (1979) are reported to dismiss the uniqueness of the treatment of women by the Nazis. These authors believe that a survivor was a survivor; and cruelty, inhumanity, and humiliation were shared equally by the entire survivor population.

Women, however, were in double jeopardy. They faced special circumstances which included sexual and maternal vulnerability and violation. Heinemann (1986) states that women faced issues of “fertility and sexuality” (p. 14). Gender became an issue of destiny targeting the annihilation of the species through the extinction and sterilization of women. They also faced rape, sexual and physical abuse, forced prostitution, branding, sterilization, mandated abortions, and defiling acts of sexual perversion. Women were forced to kill their own babies as well as other children. Some pregnant women were thrown alive into the crematoriums. Those with children were generally chosen in death selections. Many were separated from their young, while others were forced to make “choiceless choices” by selecting one child over another in

an effort to save one child from impending death. To overlook such intricate feminine issues is to negate their unique experiences.

The purpose of this inquiry is to explore the coping and adaptation strategies of Auschwitz survivors from a gender-specific viewpoint. Addressing these gender specific differences, the poignant female voices will be recorded and analyzed. The thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of these women will reveal distinct differences which are unique to females. Without this understanding of differences in coping mechanisms and adaptation, we ignore vital research findings necessary for understanding gender-related defense mechanisms and survival strategies.

#### Assumptions of the Study

The study under inquiry is a gender-specific investigation of survivors' coping mechanisms. It is assumed that the study will reveal specific coping styles and strategies utilized during extreme massive traumatization. These forms of adaptation are assumed to fall within gender-specific categories that are related to women's techniques of coping strategies utilized for survival. It is assumed that these coping mechanisms may be similar to techniques used by male counterparts, but that a woman's unique appraisal of resilient survival will utilize gender-specific coping

strategies. The study will utilize phenomenological case studies which are the most viable method of study deemed appropriate for this type of research. We assume that the lapse in time since internment in Auschwitz will not affect the results of this study.

### Scope of the Study

The study will direct itself to the coping strategies conveyed through case studies of personal narratives from female Auschwitz survivors through the use of oral history. The focus of this study will be solely directed at one camp location in Poland, the Auschwitz concentration camp, which has come to symbolize the atrocities of the Nazi regime. The study will focus specifically on oral responses given during personal narratives by a sample of female Auschwitz survivors who have given their oral history through video archival testimony at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The testimonies have been elicited in an effort to document and preserve the unique narratives of survivors who wish to bear witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust. These eye-witness testimonies create a living archival record housed in the Department of Oral History Research Institute within the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The sample of this study will include the total “comprehensive” collection of 16 female survivors from Auschwitz who have volunteered to bear witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust. This collection represents the entire collection of testimonies gathered by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by their own interviewers for use in the permanent exhibits at the opening of the Museum. Each of the survivors were interviewed in the time period of 1989 to 1991. The 16 females in the case study were interned in Auschwitz, and the study will research the coping strategies utilized during their term of internment. The inquiry is limited by the survivors’ ability to recall and communicate their specific coping mechanisms and means of adaptation utilized during their traumatization over 50 years ago. Validity and reliability of qualitative oral histories will be assured through methods of triangulation that include multiple methods of data collection and analysis, including collection of survivor testimonies from multiple interviewers from the Department of Oral History at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.; multiple sources of data collected through testimonies; multiple researchers recording the coding of the findings within the study; confirmation of the emerging findings through related correlated testimonies of survivors within the prevailing research literature.

### Delimitations

Auschwitz has become the metaphor for concentration camp experiences. While Auschwitz may be viewed in this fashion, each camp experienced its own unique forms of genocidal atrocities and perversions. The results of this inquiry cannot be generalized to apply to the population of survivors at large. This study is limited to a general categorization of Auschwitz camp survivors which does not include consideration of national origin, detainment prior to transport to the Auschwitz camp, or previous ghetto or concentration camp experiences. The study also recognizes that females' internment in Auschwitz were many times shorter than those of male counterparts due to the fact that women were not transported to Auschwitz much earlier than 1943, and most women were quickly chosen for liquidation during selections, used for experimentation, or sent to working camps if they met requirements of a specific selection.

This study directs itself only to female survivors from the Auschwitz concentration camp. The researcher contends that a Polish female and a Hungarian female had uniquely different experiences, such as internment dates, ghettoization, societal persecution. These differences are not addressed within this inquiry. Also, a "survivor" is defined as anyone who spent one day in the Auschwitz concentration camp, and this study has not

separated the sample population from other survivors who spent months and years within this camp. The delimitation also includes the predetermined exclusion of personal narratives from the male population which have not been collected for this study.

The researcher also notes that a delimitation may include the survivor's recollection of eye-witness events during the Holocaust as reported over 40 years later within the visual oral history. The recollections assume that the interpretations and insights will be as accurate as the survivor's recollections and memories.

### Definition of Terms

Due to the nature of the material presented in this work, a variety of definitions may not be commonly clearly understood. Terminology relating to the Holocaust (from the Greek meaning "consumed by fire") and psychological definitions which are study specific are defined in an effort of assisting clarity.

#### Holocaust Specific Terminology

Aktion (Action or round-up)--A raid against Jews which was used for the purpose of gathering victims for deportation to Nazi concentration camps, killing squads, or extermination camps.

Aryan--The primary purpose was a term designed by the Nazis to define a superior, white, Nordic heroic race which would inherit the Volkland.

Kapo (Kapo)--A male or female prisoner who was appointed by the SS as the head of a work battalion. Capos were generally drawn from criminals and hardened inmates within a camp.

Deportation--The transportation and resettlement of Jews from Nazi-occupied countries to extermination camps, work camps, or concentration camps in other Nazi-occupied European locations.

Die Endlösung --The Jewish “Final Solution.”

Einsatzgruppen- -Mobile killing units manned by the SS or SD which were used to wipe out entire populations of Jews or unwanted political opponents. Generally these groups were the perpetrators of mass extermination through killing squads and mobile killing units primarily in Poland and the USSR.

Final Solution (Die Endlösung)--This is the term applied for the extermination of the European Jewish population.

Jew--A person descended from two Jewish grandparents belonging to the Jewish religion, or a person married to a Jewish person on or before September 15, 1935.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor--A portion of the Nuremberg Laws which prohibited Jews from engaging in sexual or marital relationships with Aryans.

Lebensraum- -This term means “living space.” Hitler’s goal was the conquest of land for the expansion for Aryan living space within Eastern Europe.

Mischlinge- -A Nazi term for a hybrid, or someone who is part Jewish under racial definitions of the Nuremberg Laws. A “Mischlinge of a first degree” is descended from two Jewish grandparents but not belonging to the Jewish religion and not married to a Jewish person on September 15, 1935. A “Mischlinge of the second degree” is defined as a person descended from one Jewish grandparent.

Musulman (Musselman)- -A prisoner who was part of the “living dead.” Generally a prisoner who had exhausted his/her psychological and physical resources and was on the verge of death.

Nuremberg Laws--Enacted in 1935, these laws delineated the legal exclusion of Jews from German life.

Reich Citizenship Law--A portion of the Nuremberg Laws which excluded Jewish citizenship from Germany.



SS--The Schutzstaffel, or protected squad, who were the elite guard under Heinrich Himmler. The SS included combat troops as well as the secret police of Gestapo.

Selection--The decision of who would live and who would die as determined by SS doctors on the appearance of the prisoner.

Shoah- -A term for the Holocaust which means catastrophe or fire designating the annihilation of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis.

#### Coping Styles or Defense Mechanisms:

Terminology related to psychological definitions, which are study specific, are defined in an effort to assist clarity (American Psychiatric Association DSM-IV, 1994).

Affiliation--The person deals with emotional conflict by gaining assistance or gaining support from others.

Denial--The person deals with emotional conflict by refusing to acknowledge the existence of reality or experience.

Dissociation--The person deals with emotional conflict by a breakdown of memory, perception, or conscious awareness in self or the environment.

Humor--The person deals with emotional conflict through the use of humor to avoid the stressor.

Repression--The person deals with emotional conflict by expelling thoughts, experiences, or wishes from awareness.

### Study Specific Terminology

The newly revised American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - DSM-IV (1994), defines defense mechanisms or coping styles as “automatic psychological processes that protect the individual against anxiety and from the awareness of internal or external dangers or stressors” (p. 751). This psychiatric tool for diagnostic evaluation depicts these mechanisms of “coping” as something that an individual does not consciously identify during the process of traumatization. These mechanisms and techniques act as a means to mediate the reaction to emotional conflicts that are stressors during times of internal or external conflictualization. Specific techniques used as defense mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, techniques such as denial, displacement, dissociation, repression, splitting, sublimation, humor, and affiliation. In the specific cases of our sample population, the survivors of Auschwitz were exposed to consistent traumatization which

included witnessing death, confronting the actual threat of death, and fearing severe injury to themselves or to others. These survivors also include the development of coping mechanisms which are responses to “intense fear, helplessness, or horror” (APA, 1994, p. 428).

Many writers have addressed the identification of coping styles and defense mechanisms. One of the most noted Holocaust survivors, Victor Frankl, (1984, 1988) believes that survivors identified a “meaning or will to survive” as a means of coping with the traumatization of the Holocaust. Definitions generally include an effort to manage the perceived threat to the traumatic experience (Lazarus & Launier, 1978). Some individuals utilize a variety of defense mechanisms and coping styles, while others responded differently to identical traumatization. The reaction to such traumatization generally is thought to fall under one of two theories. The first, which includes the views of McCrae (1984) and Vaillant (1977) states that there is a generalized coping style that is unique to each survivor. They tend to use the same coping style time after time in various situations. Other researchers, such as Lazarus and Folkman (1984), believe that individuals may utilize a wide variety of responses to stressors which are specific to an individual situation.

## Research Questions

Initially, discussion with Joan Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History Director, was the motivating factor in the investigation of research for this study. After listening to the testimonies of over 20 survivors from the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a variety of coping strategies emerged from the oral histories. Research of Heinemann (1986), Rappaport (1991), Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993), and Rittner and Roth (1993), all touches on the issues of gender-related coping strategies during the Holocaust. Survivors of Auschwitz were used in some of the studies, but no one work dealt exclusively with the issues specific to a camp location and coping strategies. The works suggested a need for further study which encompassed questions related specifically to the unique voices of women, gender-specific coping, and the resiliency of women. Questions emerged as follow:

1. What was the primary coping strategy utilized by female survivors in the Auschwitz concentration camp?
2. What is the relationship of problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping strategies utilized by female survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp?

3. What is the relationship between female survivors of Auschwitz and affiliation or emotional bonding as a method of emotion-focused coping and adaptation?

### Significance of the Study

The time is nearing in which the voices of the survivors of the Holocaust will no longer be heard. The advancing age of our 50,000 Holocaust survivors is quickly eliminating our opportunities to gain answers to many of the questions concerning coping strategies and adaptation during massive extreme traumatization. So that future generations can understand what so few have lived to tell, it is necessary to quickly and effectively capture the meaning of the survivors' interpretation of their individual coping mechanisms for survival during the Holocaust. In an effort to facilitate further understanding, this study will be a significant addition to the knowledge base of research that is needed for meaningful interpretation from the female perspective. The case studies derived from survivors' personal narratives will be utilized from the archival oral testimonies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Department of Oral History. To date, the entire collection of female survivors' testimonies from Auschwitz has not been utilized as a

source of archival case study related to gender-specific research. The study under inquiry is an effort to provide a valuable insight into the gender-related coping strategies of the target population. This work will impact the scholarly knowledge of women's study as it relates, most specifically, to the adaptation of women under severe stress. This study will delve into a research-based, qualitative, phenomenological case study utilizing personal narratives which will be clustered to extract the potential occurrence of gender-related coping strategies of female Auschwitz survivors. Such considerations are currently absent from research data as it relates to specific camp location experiences.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Definition of Terminology

A confusing web of literature surrounds the terminology related to stress, adaptation, and coping strategies. Researchers (Dimsdale, 1980; Kleber & Bron, 1992; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Wilson, Harrel & Kahana, 1988) concur that there is considerable confusion which exists in the clarity of terminology in the area of research. Cofer and Appley (1964) suggest that the use of the “word *stress* came into vogue, (and) each investigator, who had been working with a concept he felt was closely related, substituted the word stress” (p. 449). Eva Kahanna (1988) contends that her review of the prevailing literature identifies at least seven different terms for the conditions which relate to the terminology of stress which include

*extremity* (Davidson, 1980; DesPres, 1976; Garfield, 1979), *extreme stress* (Baider & Sarell, 1984; Benner, Roskies & Lazarus, 1980; Kahana, Kahana & Harrel, 1985), *massive stress* (Schmolling, 1984); *disaster* (Cleary & Houts, 1984; McCaughey, 1985); *traumatic event* (Krystal, 1968, Terr, 1979) all referring to stress-provoking conditions. (p. 58)

Prevailing literature becomes more confusing when terminology such as coping, coping mechanism, defense mechanisms, adaptation, survival, and trauma are all used interchangeably without clarification within many research studies.

Attempting to simplify and clarify the inquiry, the literature review will take a purposeful investigation into the definition and research as it relates to the topics of (a) stress; (b) adaptation, coping strategies, or coping mechanisms; (c) massive traumatization; (d) gender-related interpretations of coping strategies used during the Holocaust.

### Definition and History of the Term “Stress”

Plagued by inconsistent terminology and confusing use of terms, the research relating to *stress* is difficult to decipher (Cofer and Appley, 1964; Lazarus, 1993). The term *stress* has been utilized in the fields of medicine, physical science, sociology, physiology, and psychology and has sometimes been conflicting in definition and meanings.

The term *stress* was first used in the 14th century to mean adversity, hardship, or affliction. In the 17th century, biologist and physicist Robert Hooke used the term directed toward the physical sciences describing stress in man-made structures such as bridges. By the 19th century, the



term *stress* became linked to terminology such as *load* and *strain* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 2).

Kahana (1988) agrees that there is no commonly accepted definition for stress and cites common definitions used by Selye which describe stress as “any demand upon the body, be the effect mental or somatic” (p. 56). Monat and Lazarus (1991) suggest that there are three distinct disciplinary usage of stress which include *systemic stress*, which includes Selye’s work (1956, 1974) relating to the disturbance of tissue; *psychological stress*, which involves cognitive factors leading to the evaluation of threat (Lazarus, 1966); and *social stress*, which looks at the disruption to a system or social unit. Kahana reports that Haan (1982) believes there is an implied understanding of the term *stress* and that an explicit definition of the term is unnecessary. Kleber and Bron (1992) agree that definitions vary concerning the term *stress* but believe that stress is globally used to describe an interaction between the environment and the skills and needs available to the individual facing stress. Additionally, they contend that a cognitive element of personal attachment to the individual’s meaning in the stressful situation is the link between psychological and physiological reactions. Lazarus (1993) agrees that environment and individual assessment is relevant and contends that, despite the differences in

definitions, four concepts must always be considered in the stress process: an internal or external agent, a personal evaluation that the stress is threatening, a coping process of the body or mind to that stress, and a complex reaction which is called the stress reaction.

R.S. Lazarus, in the early 1950s, discovered that the effects of stress were not identical for all people affected by identical stress. Research indicated that for some persons the stress aroused by a given condition was large, while for others it was small (Lazarus, 1993; Lazarus & Erickson, 1952). Selye (1956, 1974) contended that stress was divided into two categories which included *eustress* (positive stress which is associated with motivating forces of a healthy nature) and *distress* (negative stress associated with disrupting physiological and psychological consequences). Lazarus (1966, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978) also believed that stress could have motivating or positive effects and made distinctions in the kinds of stress which fell into three categories: harm, threat, and challenge. *Harm* was defined as psychological damage, such as loss which had already occurred. Examples might include the loss of a job or of a family member. *Threat* was the anticipation of harm, such as an examination or a possible attack in a dark alley. *Challenge* referred to a difficult demand such as a job change or a move to another city which

possibly could have a positive effect. Each stress state brought about different states of minds which might be exhilarating on one hand or might, on the other hand, create panic, sadness, or intense fear. Benner, Roskies, Lazarus (1980) believe that the person is not a passive victim but instead has an active part in shaping the experience. The outcome is directly related to the emotional response of the person.

Scientists in the 20th century became interested in the human capacity to maintain homeostasis under the impact of stress (Cannon, 1939; Seyle, 1956). Scientists, researchers, psychologists, and sociologists have long been interested in human adaptation psychologically to stress, but the first incidence of the effects of stress related to war was found in a book called Men Under Stress (Grinker & Spiegel, 1945). Facing the concerns of combat fatigue and men's functioning during combat, researchers became interested in the correlation of stress during war and nervous or psychotic breakdowns. The emotional breakdown of concentration camp prisoners under extreme stress became an issue of investigation for researchers after World War II (Bettelheim, 1943, 1960; Cohen, 1953, DesPres, 1976; Dimsdale, 1980, Frankl, 1984, 1988; Kahana, 1988; Krystal, 1968).

Terminology defined as massive stress has been determined by researchers (Dimsdale, 1980; Marmar & Horwitz, 1988; Parson, 1988; Wilson, Harrel, & Kahana, 1988) when describing survivors of the Holocaust and the Vietnam War. Massive stress is related more specifically in definition to massive traumatization or extreme massive stress. Typically, research studies concerning massive stress exist but focus on the coping strategies or effects of the physiological or psychological stress upon the victim.

#### Adaptation, Coping Strategies or Coping Mechanisms

While it has been recognized that the definitions for the term *stress* are varied and complex, it is also true that the term *coping* has a variety of definitions and similar synonyms within the research. Terms such as adaptation (Lazarus 1993; Monat & Lazarus, 1991), coping mechanisms, coping strategies, defense mechanisms, and coping styles all appear in the literature sometimes producing different meanings. Dimsdale (1978) suggests that many researchers use coping as part of a stimulus-response paradigm, but actually the verb “to cope” is derived from the French verb *couper*, which means to strike. Coping from his viewpoint involves the ability of a coping strategist to remain flexible and maintain survival in the

long term. Dimsdale (1980) believes *coping* is only considered successful if the person's self-esteem is maintained and there is continuity with the past and the future. Monat and Lazarus (1991) define *coping* as an individual's attempt to master the demands which include harm, threat, or loss which are perceived (appraised) to be draining of resources. Kahana (1988) defines automatic or familiar reactions as *adaptive behaviors* and believes that *coping* is an effort of the individual to master a problem. The coping response is utilized as a means of recreating homeostasis in the individual. Lazarus (1966, 1991, 1993; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978) proposed that coping is a process which includes the entire time period from moment of perceived stress through the duration of appraisal including the adaptation by the individual. Research and theoretical interpretations done by Lazarus center around two coping processes which include *problem-focused coping*, in which the individual's relationship with the environment is altered by coping strategies to lower psychological stress, and *emotion-focused coping*, which changes the way in which the individual interprets the stress which is occurring. Problem-focused coping is used in situations where coping may produce a positive change. In contrast, emotion-focused coping is

used more often with loss. This type of coping strategy (emotion-focused) produces an adaptation to something such as death that will not change.

In an effort to measure coping processes, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) created The Ways of Coping Questionnaire, which consists of 67 statements about thoughts and actions of the individual. Findings of that work demonstrated that coping is a complex process, and individuals utilize basic coping in everyday stressful situations; coping strategies are determined by the appraisal one gives to the stress; generally, problem-focused coping is used if the appraisal indicates that something concrete can be accomplished, while emotion-focused coping is utilized if one's appraisal is that nothing can be accomplished; men and women use similar coping patterns despite beliefs that they differ; some coping strategies are more stable than others; positive outcomes are associated with some coping strategies and negative outcomes with others; coping patterns differ with differing stressful encounters and differing individuals. Kahana (1988) concurs with Lazarus in believing that approaches and definitions of coping vary between the relationships to the environment and the person who copes with an appraised situation.

Valliant (1993) believes that the human mind copes with danger and stress by utilizing three processes: coping through the use of *social*

*supports* or emotional connections with others; *cognitive coping strategies* which are learned behaviors to adapt to stress situations; *ego mechanisms of defense* (comparing it to Cannon's "wisdom of the body") which are unconscious strategies involuntarily utilized in the individual.

Additionally, the theory of Valliant (1977) suggests that individuals tend to use a generalized pattern of coping strategies for certain situations, concurring with McCrae (1984) who expands the theory stating that individuals use specific coping strategies with a specific coping response. McCrae suggests a theoretical foundation based on the premise that feelings, faith, and fatalism are used as coping mechanisms with loss while wishful thinking and faith are used with threat. Challenge produced coping strategies include positive thinking, humor, denial, and drawing strength from adversity. Billings and Moss (1981) agree with McCrae's theory and also believe that selected coping strategies are continually used by individuals during their lifetime.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) believe that coping includes all means to manage a stressful situation. They believe that no one strategy is considered inherently better than another strategy. The appropriateness of a specific strategy is dependent upon any given circumstance which is determined only by its effects in the long term. Theorists and researchers

such as Jacobson et al. (1986), Meissner (1981), Perry (1990), Valliant (1992), have all rated defense or coping mechanisms in categories such as mature, immature, narcissistic, and neurotic. These ego defense mechanisms (coping strategies) are defined by this group of clinicians in terms of healthy or dysfunctional mechanisms coping strategies for stress or trauma. For example, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) contend that denial or denial-like processes are used when nothing constructive can be done to overcome threat or harm, major illness, or loss of a loved one. Meissner, in contrast, views denial in the category of narcissistic defenses, while Valliant views it as a psychotic defense. Salamon (1994) suggests a theory which indicates that denial and avoidance have been typically categorized as an immature ego defense mechanism commonly used by Holocaust victims. He believes that concentration camp survivors, under daily tortures of massive traumatization, utilized less mature defense mechanisms of denial, repression, and negation. This paradoxical strategy was necessary due to the long-lasting extreme stress of the specific event. Salamon believes these patterns of coping were extremely useful under the auspices of prolonged extreme stress.

Dimsdale ( 1974, 1978, 1980) explored coping strategies in his investigations of survivors of the Holocaust. Dimsdale (1980) theorized



that coping strategies of survivors include 10 classifications including focus on the good (looking for small gratifications); survival for some purpose (to bear witness, seek revenge, help others, etc.); humor (insulation from reality and mediator of stress); psychological removal (insulating self from others, muselman or walking death); time focusing (thinking of another time or place); mastery of the environment (maintaining some form of dignity or mastery internally or externally); the will to live (discovery of a purpose or desire not to surrender to adversity); hope (active hope which is a conviction that an end is near, or passive that where there is life, there is hope); group affiliation (friendships and assistance from others); regressive behaviors (crying, acting as a child, vulnerability); fatalism (null coping or relying on others or fate); surrendering to stress (an anti-coping to stress). He suggests that there may be a hierarchy of functional coping strategies that are used by survivors during extreme stress. Bruno Bettelheim (1960), one of the first psychologists to study the effects of coping on concentration camp survivors, suggests that coping involved intellectual withdrawal, identification with the aggressor, or a muselman effect. DesPres (1976), Dimsdale (1980) and Frankl (1984, 1988) suggested that survivors coped, using the will to live and finding a meaning or purpose to survive.

DesPres also concluded that survivors used a splitting technique to separate themselves and be an observer of what was occurring. Coping, in his opinion, also involved stealing, acts of resistance, suicide, smuggling, and focusing on day-to-day maintenance of tasks.

Noted psychotherapist and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl (1984, 1988) contends that an existential technique which utilizes the discovery of a meaning in life motivates people to be strong enough to survive.

According to Frankl (1984), “the striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man” (p. 121). Frankl believes the uniqueness of each person’s meaning is as individual as each person. Even a tragic or unavoidable circumstance can be turned into a personal learning experience and can produce human achievement by discovering the meaning of the lesson. Human systems have a challenge to discover for themselves the ultimate meaning and what is important to them. Frankl contended that survivors’ acquisition of meaning occurred through three distinct pathways: that of creating or accomplishing a deed or goal; experiencing goodness, affiliation with others, truth, or beauty; discovering a meaning in the midst of unavoidable suffering.

Psychological disorders related to combat stress were first discussed after the Civil War and termed *soldier’s heart*, describing a strain due to

the stress of war (cited in Kleber & Bron, 1992). In World War I the term *shell shock* was introduced, when Freud employed the term *Kriegsneurosen* or war neuroses (cited in Kleber & Bron, 1992). Criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-I) defined gross stress reaction with war or acute traumatic neurosis.

Combat experience related to stress has been the topic of research (Brill & Beebe, 1955; Elder & Clipp, 1988; Parson, 1988) surrounding veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. With the rising awareness of psychosocial impairments related to stress reactions in World War II and the Vietnam War, a larger focus was placed on the syndrome known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Kleber and Bron (1992) state that 15.2% of all male veterans and 8.5% of females from Vietnam fulfilled the criteria for PTSD, with an additional 11.1% male and 7.8% females veterans suffering from clinical stress reactions (836,000 veterans of the U.S. with full or partial stress disorder).

The PTSD patient, unable to cope, was defined with the following criteria: The person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with events which involved threatened death or serious injury to themselves or others; the response involved horror, helplessness, or intense fear; the traumatic event is persistently reexperienced by the individual; the person

is avoidant of the stimulus and experiences numbing; the person experiences increased arousal (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, DSM-IV, 1994). The DSM-IV includes the symptomology of the person being unable to discontinue thoughts, images, or perceptions related to the trauma, recurring frightening dreams, hallucinations, hypervigilance, irritability or outbursts of anger, flashbacks, detachments, and avoidance of people, places, or activities as some of the criteria exhibited by the inability to cope. Symptomology and effects of PTSD resulting from massive traumatization have been reported by survivors of the Holocaust, POWs and veterans of the Vietnam War (Parsons, 1988), and Cambodian refugees (Kinzie, 1988). Hunter (1988) suggests it is essential “to look at those common psychological residuals of captivity, regardless of war, or time in history, that persist to impact the psychosocial adjustment of former captives” (p. 161).

#### Massive traumatization or extreme stress

Parson (1988) believes that those who have endured extreme stress or massive traumatization suffer a “profound rupture in the very fabric of the self” (p. 245). Des Pres (1976), Dimsdale (1980), Kahana (1988), Krystal (1968), Lifton (1980, 1986), Spiegelman (1986, 1991), and Wiesel

(1985) agree that the traumatization experienced due to extreme stress ruptures the survivor's world deep into its very core. Kahana (1988) noted that extreme stress or traumatization has five aspects: Total life is disrupted and the fabric of normal life has become disconnected from reality; the new situation is hostile, threatening, horrific, and dangerous; the ability to create change and remove the stressors is limited; there appears to be no predictable end to the extreme stress or traumatization; there is pain, suffering, and life appears meaningless and irrational. Life appears to have no anchoring or means of predicting what might occur. Moral principles--good and bad, evil and right--seem to have no place within this setting. Cohen (1953) and Kahana (1988) believe that prisoners living under extreme stress or massive traumatization experience little chance for choice or outcomes. Survivors are relatively helpless, and there is a high predominance of chance, compared to ordinary stressors in which an individual can anticipate the use of a variety of coping strategies. Cordell (1982) suggests that those exposed to extreme massive trauma are confronted with the issue of absolute uncertainty which is necessary for adequate coping strategies. Benner, Roskies, and Lazarus (1980) contend that concentration camp experiences differ from other massive traumas because of three elements. First, there was a persistent and consistent

threat from a hostile force, with no place for escape. It is apparent that the concentration camps were systematically organized to destroy the soul and the very fiber of the prisoners by stripping them of their support and personal identity. Secondly, the ability of the survivors to affect the environment was severely limited. Coping by use of problem-solving, such as a decision to eat now or eat later, could only affect small segments of life. Lastly, the difficulty for a prisoner to discover a means of coping by seeking a meaning or purpose for the genocide and atrocities that surrounded him was limited. The Jewish people had known suffering in their collective past, but the “suffering inflicted by the Holocaust had no ultimate good, reward, or meaning inherent in it” (p. 223).

Kleber and Bron (1992) suggest that the extreme long-lasting effects of massive traumatization of concentration camp survivors can only be understood after examination of the events during captivity. They contend that the extreme conditions included prisoner humiliation; crude violence; verbal, sexual, and physical abuse; separation from loved ones; constant threat of death to self and others; horrific living conditions; negligent hygienic conditions; hunger; and absolute hopelessness. Chodoff (1970) reports that prisoner’s survival depended on his or her ability to cope with the daily humiliation and abuse at the hands of the Nazis. Self-

preservation behavior became a necessity in the disruption of reality. Cohen (1953), DesPres (1976), and Frankl (1984, 1988) speak about the central theme of prisoner's thoughts. Bettelheim speaks of survivors returning to primitive emotional stages of development during massive traumatization. Frankl (1984) reports that prisoners of concentration camps experienced phases of massive traumatization which included shock (a numbing or shut down mechanism) and apathy (an emotional death where reality dims and emotions surround self-preservation). Chodoff (1986) agrees that concentration camp inmates experienced shock, followed by apathy, and thereafter, more active coping mechanisms for self-preservation.

The coping strategy identified by Frankl was through identification of meaning or purpose within the suffering. Although there was no purpose for the suffering, victims were strengthened by their own individual purpose for existence (Benner, Roskies, & Lazarus, 1980). In Frankl's work Man's Search for Meaning (1984), he shares his philosophy of coping strategy which contends that the meaning in life includes suffering and death. The discovery of finding a meaning or purpose for living includes the courage to maintain hope and that life could be reconstructed once again by those who remained strong. Frankl stated that

“it is possible to practice the art of living even in a concentration camp, although suffering is omnipresent” (p. 64). The Nazis could take everything from a prisoner, but they could not choose one’s attitude in any situation. One chose to submit, or not, to those who threatened to rob prisoners of their very inner souls. Survivors endured suffering rather than give up to the persecutors (Benner, Roskies, & Lazarus, 1980).

DesPres (1976) believes that concentration camp prisoners were driven by fear and by the blows of a whip. He contends that all organisms strive to find protection within their environment and search to discover coping strategies. Each prisoner living in this traumatization knew he/she must give up, or bear the commitment to that day. Des Pres agreed with Frankl that prisoners went through phases of survival, but he suggests that the first stage, which is similar to Frankl’s, is that of *initial collapse*. The breakdown is then followed by a stage of reintegration and recovery to a stable selfhood. He believes that prisoners survived and moved from withdrawal to self-preservation and forms of resistance. Bettelheim (1960) stated that if the desire to live is lost, if a prisoner does not move through the initial collapse, he will lose his fabric of inner strength and soon die. Survivors realized that life must go on, if only through routine and habit. Krystal (1968) and Lifton (1968) suggest that this initial stage is generally



short-termed in duration; and coping strategies generally include dissociation, denial, shock, or disbelief. Benner, Roskies, and Lazarus (1980) note that selective apathy and denial were essential for life. Eitinger (1983) suggests that the second stage is met with coping strategies, emotional numbing, or decisions to make some choices while confronting the environment.

Des Pres (1976) noted that survivors did not choose their imprisoned destiny and would find a means of escape if they could only discover one. They were trapped in a world which was filled with Nazi domination, where dehumanization and total annihilation of Jewish people was proclaimed by the powers that held control. "The concentration camps were *in* this world and yet *not in* this world, places where behavior was grossly exaggerated, without apparent logic, yet fiercely hostile and encompassing" (p. 83). Those who experienced extreme massive traumatization have been ultimately changed forever. The success of coping strategies of survivors was "to come through; to keep a living soul in a living body" (p. 7).

## Gender-Related Interpretations of Coping Strategies

### Used during the Holocaust

The Nazi ideology was hypocritical; it encouraged the fertility of German women, while exterminating any Jewish women who were pregnant. Rosenbaum (1993) contends that hypocrisy prevailed in a society where women living outside concentration camps were punished for their infertility, while mothers and children living within the concentration camp walls were murdered for their fertility. The discontinuation of the Jewish race could only be accomplished by the death of those who could create new life. Accomplishing this deliberate "Final Solution" would only be possible if women were targeted for destruction as a means of discontinuing the future Jewish population. The issue of gender clearly placed women in double jeopardy (Ringelheim, 1993). Women must be eliminated to insure that the "vermin" which infected the Aryan Nation would be destroyed.

For centuries, the unique experiences and coping strategies of women were ignored. The voice of the survivor was capsulated into one voice, which was predominately male. Women's specific means of coping and adapting to the genocidal atrocities of the Holocaust were silenced by males who generalized the "meaning" of all who were to bear witness. But

researchers and historians such as Charlotte Delbo (1992, 1993), Marlene Heinemann (1986), Isabella Leitner (1985, 1986, 1993, 1994), Joan Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993), Carol Ritter (1993), and Nechama Tec (1986), have discussed the Shoah from a different perspective which focuses on the feelings, coping strategies, and traumas that expresses the "invisible female voice." Psychologist Carol Gilligan (1993) contend that the unique reflections of women, for too long, have been silenced by the male perspective which has generalized men's thoughts and concepts as universal to all human systems. Rittner & Roth (1993) cite that Ringelheim, Fagin, and Ozick have been severely criticized for their gender-related conclusions. Ritner & Roth note that Holocaust opposition has argued that gender-specific focusing has a potential danger of denigrating the Holocaust, reducing it to sexism, and detracting from the experiences of the survivors. Opponents believe that the genocide and atrocities perpetrated by the Third Reich saw Jews as Jews, not as men, women, or children.

One of the most noted Holocaust survivors, Viktor Frankl (1984, 1988), believes that survivors identified with a "meaning or will to survive" as a means of coping with the traumatization of the Holocaust. Rappaport's (1991) work with the coping strategies and methods of adaptation incorporated by massive trauma survivors during the Holocaust suggested

that there were different forms of gender-specific coping techniques used in the development of "meaning" for survival. It revealed that women tended to cope by bonding emotionally to others, while men utilized coping mechanisms such as task orientation. Belle (cited in Monat & Lazarus, 1991) agrees that women value relationships and define themselves in terms of the relationship in which they are a part. Women have been viewed as intensive, versus extensive, in terms of relationships. Rosenbaum (1993) believes that group affiliation was necessary for women's physical and emotional survival. Traditional male roles defined men as protectors and task-oriented, while traditional female roles defined women as nurturers, care-takers, and creators of bonding with others. She contends that women were able to achieve their traditional life pattern of role identity easier than their male counterparts. Concurring with the findings of Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993) and Heineman (1986), it appears that these hypotheses are consistent with the gender-related studies of Erickson, Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Chodorow. Current theorists and researchers John Gray (1993) and Deborah Tannen (1990) suggest that female gender-oriented search for "meaning" is commonly directed towards relationships with others. Belle (1991) believes women seek out support more readily than males during times of stress. Belle believes that, typically, females seek help and

assistance when faced with problems and need for emotional support. Women also have shown a propensity to seek out more formal and informal sources of support and affiliation than males during stress. Belle also suggests that gender-specific differences relate to the loss of loved ones where women appear less vulnerable than male counterparts due to the use of support networks. Each of these components played a vital role in coping and adaptation during the Holocaust. Anna Pawelczyn'ska (1979) contends that every female survivor of Auschwitz found support and encouragement from her fellow prisoners. The assistance of other women helped maintain female emotional strength and resiliency. The bonds created with others assisted in coping with the dehumanizing acts of the Nazi regime.

Carol Gilligan believes that women make moral judgments by relating to conflicts and choices of their male counterparts. Her research illustrates that choices by females were made on the basis of their responsibility to nurture others within their circle of focus. Moral decisions involve concern for affiliation, caring for others' needs, alleviating hurt and pain for others, and caring for others' feelings. "Care becomes the self-chosen principle of a judgment that remains psychological

in its concern with relationships and response but becomes universal in its condemnation of exploitation and hurt" (Gilligan, 1993, p. 74).

Dr. Gisella Perl (1993), a prisoner of Auschwitz, was "selected" by Dr. Josef Mengele to run a hospital ward within the death camp. Perl was forced to make "choiceless choices," selecting either to save the life of pregnant mothers or to save their babies. Forced into a no-win decision, Perl chose to save mothers at the expense of killing their babies. As Perl stated, "I had to remain alive...it was up to me to save the life of the mother, if there was no other way, than by destroying the life of their unborn baby." Dramatically illustrated, this dilemma became a moral decision which ultimately defined Dr. Perl's meaning for survival. With no medicines, bandages, drugs, or instruments, the only means of assisting others was through words of encouragement, comforting, nurturing, and kindness. Other researchers have confirmed Gilligan's approach to women's moral decisions. Clearly, women's decisions are based on meaning, which includes a dimension of concern and caring for others that they value. Concurring with the approaches of Frankl and Gilligan, Rittner and Roth's (1993) masterpiece, Different Voices: Women in the Holocaust, compiled female survivors' narratives that bear witness to their own personal interpretation of "meaning" and moral choices. Documented

within this work, it becomes clear that establishing and creating binding relationships was a critical factor for many survivors. Rosenbaum (1993) contends, “those seeking survival had to rebuild themselves through rebuilding their communal ties, and vice versa” (p. 126). Re-establishing a new community or family through bonding with other women assisted the surviving prisoners in creating a reason to live.

Building and nurturing relationships appear to be a powerful element in a woman’s search for meaning. In Ringleheim’s (1993) research with survivors, she reports that all of her subjects speak of relationships with other women for support and encouragement. From her research, a survivor named Rose stated,

Women’s friendship is different than men’s friendship you see...We have these motherly instincts, friend instincts more...But that’s what was holding the women together because everybody had to have someone to lean on, to depend on. The men, no...the men didn’t do that ( p. 381).

Other survivors in Ringelheim’s research confirm the same feelings as survivor Susan declares,

These women supported me physically...emotionally and spiritually...Without this protection, I would have died...Always part of some group of women for whom you went through fire...You knew your group cared for you...It was the reciprocity that kept you alive and going (p. 381).

In contrast, Holocaust literature speaks rarely about the importance of friendships or relationships in men's personal narratives.

For others, the concern of maintaining dignity was the force which held the meaning for survival. Survivors internally motivated themselves by declaring that they had made the moral and conscious choice to die, if they were selected, in an attempt to maintain personal dignity. For many, abandoning that struggle meant giving in to the desires and wishes of the Nazi ideology. Losing one's dignity meant losing and becoming like the many *Musulman* (German word for living corpse or living dead) condemned to self-inflicted mental death, facing the end of their perceived physical and psychological resources. It was quite obvious that the goal of the Nazi concentration camp procedure was designed to ultimately destroy the self-esteem and dignity of each of its prisoners. Isabelle Leitner (1993) concurs with meaning derived from the attempt to maintain dignity. Leitner (1993) writes in her memoir, "My body is nearly dead, but my vision is throbbing with life -- even here. I want you to live for the very life that is yours" (p. 68).

Prisoners lost their identity, their name, their families, their personal possessions, their food, their ability to maintain bodily functions, and even their hair. Twenty Months in Auschwitz, a poignant narrative by Pelagia



Lewinska (1993), portrays the strength of the human spirit. A means of defying the Nazis was to maintain even the smallest amount of dignity in personal care. For some, it was protecting their clothing from disease-infested lice, for others maintenance of cleanliness to the best of their ability; many resisted personal soiling; but for Lewinska, it was the cleaning of her boots each night. She reported that "It was our part in an act of protest which said: We will not let ourselves be broken!" (Rittner & Roth, 1993, p. 97). Focusing on appearance was a means of maintaining a part of one's identity from before the war. Psychological health was many times affected by the physical state of maintaining appearance (Katz & Ringelheim, 1983). Maintaining physical appearances could be the deciding factor in the life or death of a woman at the hands of Mengele's selection. The Nazis believed that a woman's physical appearance determined her bodily strength and, ultimately, her fate.

For other women, meaning was derived from the belief that they must stay alive in order to "bear witness" for those who could not speak. The voices which exited from the chimneys could only be heard through those who lived to speak the truth. Auschwitz resistance fighters Anna Heilmann and Rose Meth (1993) found motivation for survival in their promise to bear witness to famous resistance fighters such as Gisi

Fleischman (who helped run an underground railroad to get Jews out of Poland), Haika Grossman (who organized partisans in Vilna), and Marla Zimmetbaum (the first women to escape from Auschwitz and whose suicidal defiance at the gallows was a legendary act of resistance which motivated others to discover a meaning for life and death). Heilmann and Meth chose to aid a resistance movement in 1944 which smuggled gunpowder from the factory to the *Sonderkommando* to destroy Crematorium IV in the Auschwitz death camp. The acts of resistance paid tribute to other resistance fighters who were hanged when caught by the SS. Those brave women inspired others to face unbelievable danger through resistance. Their narratives include the statement " We were all going to die, but were not giving our lives for nothing...We, too, decided that we were not going to let ourselves be taken without a struggle," (Heilmann & Meth, 1993, p. 133). Resistance by prisoners also took the form of denial of the Nazi goal to dehumanize and annihilate the human spirit. Each moment that a woman choose to resist the dehumanization, her noncompliance stood as an active show of resistance.

Lipman (1991) suggests that many survivors believe that humor played a vital role in their coping and adaptation. Humor was the light of hope which was used as a psychological weapon and a bond between trusted

friends. Humor became a diversion, a shield, and a light-hearted morale booster for those struggling in adversity. Humor became a form of personal resistance, a detachment from reality, and a means of depersonalization of the atrocities that were part of daily tortured lives. "In short, a cryptic redefining of the victim's world" (Lipman, 1991, p. 10).

Livia Jackson (1993) believes that nearly all Auschwitz victims knew that their survival had something to do with an element of luck or chance. Many believe that luck had more to do with their survival than anything under their own control.

The choices people made --'choiceless' or not -- did make a difference, but factors such as the following probably mattered just as much, if not more: a person's age and sex; when one was deported; whether he or she could ward off sickness; whether one might draw a work assignment that would reduce energy output or enable one to obtain better food; whether one could avoid the punishing whims of guards or the caprice of periodic selections; whether there was help of any kind that one could count on" (Jackson, 1993, p. 73).

It was a common hypothesis, however, that survival was luck, but true living (Frankl's will for meaning) occurred because these survivors discovered a meaning to their continued forge onward despite the atrocities around them.

Frankl's (1984) approach reveals that despite such tremendous man-made atrocities and unending suffering, a helpless victim in extreme

circumstances for which there is no hope of altering can rise above him/herself and grow beyond the limits of what is believable. Frankl states, “He (she) may turn a personal tragedy into a triumph” (p. 170).

Concurring with Frankl’s philosophy, Nietzsche has stated, “He who has a *why* to live can bear almost any *how*.”

Despite the massive numbers of females murdered, surviving Jewish women continue to bear witness and celebrate their ability to survive. Through oral histories, narratives, and autobiographies, their personal stories celebrate the “meaning” which kept them ever striving to survive despite insurmountable odds. Whether it was due to luck, technical skills, non-Jewish appearance, a hope of reunion, faith, humor, personal resistance, or with the assistance of, or through a relationship with another, they survived, holding on valiantly to the “will to live!”

As a general overview of the prevailing literature the research (Appendix I) indicates that Des Pres (1976), Dimsdale (1978, 1980), Frankl (1984, 1988), and Perl (1948) suggest the coping strategy of discovery of a purpose, meaning, or will to live. Heilmann and Meth (1993) believe that bearing witness and personal resistance were common strategies for adaptation. Holocaust survivor Des Pres (1976) suggests that numbing, personal resistance, and focusing on daily survival were used by

concentration camp victims. Krystal (1968) believed that numbing, denial, and depersonalization were used as strategies. Benner, Roskies, and Lazarus (1980) agree numbing and denial were used often and add that the ability to make personal choices in daily life was a coping strategy. Bettelheim (1943) and Schmolling (1984) concur that numbing was used for coping but suggest that identification with the aggressor was used by many other survivors. Schmolling also contends that religious faith, rage, and friendships were coping strategies used by many during the Shoah. Leitner (1993) and Lewinska (1993) contend that maintenance of dignity and resistance were means of coping. Lipman (1991) believes that survival coping was enhanced through the utilization of humor. Jackson (1993) and Frankl (1984, 1988) contend that luck or destiny was a coping mechanism for some survivors. Affiliation and emotional bonding with others was noted in the work of Belle (1991), Chodoff (1970, 1981, 1986), DesPres (1976), Heinemann (1986), Klein (1980), Rappaport (1991), Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993), and Schmolling (1984).

### Theoretical Base of the Study

As R.S. Lazarus (1991) has described, coping consists of cognitive and behavioral techniques which are utilized in an effort to manage internal

and external demands upon a human being. As Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have described, coping may be utilized in two specific directions in an effort to affect directly or indirectly the appraisal of the situation or adaptation to the stressor. The two coping strategies, *problem-focused* and *emotion-focused coping*, are the theoretical base of this research study. The study will investigate the occurrence of problem-focused coping which is action-centered, as well as emotion-focused coping (cognitive coping strategies) which involves thinking rather than acting strategies.

The work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggests that problem-focused and emotion-focused coping are utilized at differing degrees of stress. It is suggested at low degrees of stress the two forms of coping are utilized at an identical or similar frequency. At moderate range of perceived stress, problem-focused coping appears to be more prevalent; and at high levels of stress, emotion-focused coping appears to be the predominate coping strategy. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) contend that in some situations there are few opportunities to utilize problem-focused coping strategies and that this may limit the utilization of that technique for adaptation. The limitation of options for manipulation of the environment, and the utilization of problem-focused coping is obviously a consideration

with females under massive traumatization during internment in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp setting.

It must be noted that emotion-focused coping strategies are “by no means passive, but have to do with internal restructuring” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 112). Emotion-focused coping is typically utilized when it is evaluated that avoidance of reality is considered more appropriate than direct confrontation within the environment. Techniques such as distancing, numbing, avoidance, denial, and other forms of emotion-focused coping will be compared to the incidence of problem-focused strategies such as acts of resistance, task-oriented skills, and other forms of manipulation of the external environment used to maximize the negative consequences of massive traumatization. Within the case study the incidence of the utilization of emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping strategies will be analyzed as it relates to the sample population of female Holocaust survivors interned at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The scholarly inquiry into the coping mechanisms and adaptation of female survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp raises a variety of questions concerning issues such as (a) the selection of subjects for the study, (b) the rationale for the utilization of the case study design, (c) the procedure for collection of data for the inquiry, (d) the analysis of the data which is gathered during the research.

#### Demographics of the Population at Large

It is estimated that there are more than 75,000 survivors of the Holocaust (Epstein, 1977, 1988). An aging population, most survivors are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. The demographics of survivors of European descent vary by factors such as location of birth, differing religious backgrounds, degrees of assimilation, degrees of financial status, occupations and technical skills, differing levels of experience with the effects of anti-Semitism. Therefore, each survivor has experiences and a



uniquely different “story” which bears witness to the atrocities of the Nazi domination and genocide.

### Criteria for Subject Selection

For decades, Holocaust literature defined a “survivor of the Holocaust” as a Jew who had been evicted, transported, and mandated to live in a ghetto or in an internment, working, or concentration camp during the Nazi occupation from 1940 to 1945. Within the last 10 to 15 years, the definition of “survivor” has come to include any Jew who survived the Nazi occupation whether they had hidden, utilized false identification, joined a resistance or partisan group, or successfully fled to unoccupied or protected countries which accepted Jewish immigration (Rappaport, 1991).

### Location of Survivors and the Structure of the Survivor Interview

The Oral History Department of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum actively collects and produces video- and audio-tape testimonies of Holocaust survivors, rescuers, liberators, resistance fighters, perpetrators, and bystanders in an effort to document the historical implications of the Holocaust for future generations of students, scholars,

researchers, educators. The Oral History Department's mission statement (Appendix A) details its effort to document and provide a real-life testimonial record of those who experienced or perpetrated genocidal policies and crimes during the Holocaust. The Oral History Archive is composed of the testimonies which have been produced by the Department, but also includes over 3,500 interviews which have been acquired through other Holocaust oral history projects around the world.

There are approximately 500 oral history interviews which have been produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Of these testimonies, 16 female survivors of Auschwitz were interviewed for baseline research and visual documentation to be included in the permanent exhibits within the Holocaust Museum. Each of the testimonies was secured in an effort to elicit unique stories which illustrated daily life in Auschwitz concentration camp.

The oral testimonies which were secured for these testimonies were approximately two to four hours in length. As the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (1995) interview guidelines state, the role of the interviewer

is not to show "the truth" to the interviewee, but rather to pose questions which will provide a setting in which someone will tell us about the source of the memories. As with the freed prisoner, one attempts to bring memories into the light without much trauma.

But usually there is no other way to get the memories out except through the re-experience of trauma, sadness, bitterness and loss, in addition to memories which represent resistance, survival, humor, and tenderness. The interview journey that the Holocaust, or other such tragedies, represents is a difficult one. (p. 3)

The guidelines from the Holocaust Museum suggest that the interviews are facilitated to provide a mechanism for the survivor to bear witness to what is remembered. Questions, used as a method of stimulating memories, are utilized as a means of creating a descriptive, non-intrusive insight from the survivor's eyes. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum guidelines suggest, "interviewing as an attempt to bring thinking and feeling out of this silence. We try to get beneath the surface memory, or the official memory, or the collective memory (p. 3)." The interviewer guides the interview but does not guide its process. The interviewer's goal is to stimulate conversation with little direction in an effort to bring the survivor's oral history to life.

Each Holocaust survivor was facilitated in an effort to attain information pertaining to his/her pre-war experiences (20% of interview focus), daily life during the time of occupation (60% of interview focus), and post-war experiences in his/her own personal point of view (20% of interview focus). Artifacts, pictures, documents, and memoirs are visually recorded at the end of each videotaping for preservation, documentation,

and cross referencing purposes to compile a collection which will be accessible to researchers and educators worldwide.

### Rationale for the Selection of Case Study Format

Patton (1990) believes that the purpose of qualitative case studies is to contribute to the scholarly knowledge base. The research under study was investigated in an effort to illuminate societal concern, as well as to form a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge surrounding a particular concern, situation, event, or focused area. Merriam (1988) suggests that a descriptive case study is utilized when the prevailing goal is to create a detailed account of the phenomenon relating to a specific event or occurrence. Descriptive case studies in Merriam's viewpoint provide the data base for future theory building, as well as for comparison and contrast of theory. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) believe that qualitative phenomenological case studies are not only descriptive, but also allow the researcher to acquire the perspective of reality from the subject's point of view. This naturalistic, holistic approach is unobtrusive and sensitive to the subjects, while the research develops "concepts, insights, and understanding from patterns in the data" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 5).

Basic research in the area of Holocaust studies is exemplified by the utilization of oral histories, video testimonies, archival records, and is predominately interpreted through case studies. Patton (1990) suggests that case study assists in “investigating a phenomenon in order to get at the nature of reality with regard to that phenomenon. The basic (researcher’s) purpose is to understand and explain” (p. 152).

Understanding the implications of living under massive traumatization in Auschwitz is unimaginable to those who were not interned in Auschwitz. The vivid descriptions, the horrifying stories, the testimonies which defy the human mind’s perception of reality only touch the surface of what was experienced by those who survived. Scholars, theologians, clinicians, historians, and researchers search to understand what is perhaps not comprehensible to the human mind. A survivor of the Holocaust, Cecilie K.’s testimony states, “ We lost so much. Nothing can make this ever right. We as survivors, we survived; but our lives were destroyed. Because though we look like you, we can never be like you.”

A purposeful “thick” inquiry into the lives of Holocaust survivors can offer a semblance of intellectual understanding of the implications of the effects and impact of massive traumatization upon those who are willing to “bear witness” to the atrocities of the horrors of the Shoah.

Their stories told through oral histories, video testimonies, poetry, autobiographies, and art compose a descriptive overview from those who are living testimony to the realities of the dehumanizing genocide of man against man.

### Description of the Sample

The specific population targeted in this study was that of female survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp. The complete “comprehensive” collection of testimonies of female Auschwitz survivors, which has been produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, was used in the research study. This “comprehensive” sampling procedure was utilized in an effort to facilitate a rich and descriptive investigation of the testimonies available for research study. Each of the female survivor’s testimonies was part of a collection which was produced for use in the permanent exhibits within the Museum. The stories of the testimonies in this research study contain the complete collection which was produced during the years of 1989-1991 at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The case study sample represents geographic areas of Europe which were heavily involved in the early years of Nazi occupation, racial

legislation, immigration, and deportation of Jews and “undesirables” to ghettos and concentration camps. The survivor’s testimonies contain varying dates of birth which are concurrent with rising European anti-Semitism, the popularity of the racial ideologies, and the rise of Hitler’s influence and power in the Third Reich. The case was also representative of 16 unique stories which are “thick” in description, laden with illuminating testimonies concerning problem and emotion-focused coping which are the focus interest of this study.

The female survivors targeted in this study include all those who have reported being deported and transported to Auschwitz Concentration Camp. These female subjects are targeted regardless of age, demographics, home of origin, time of internment, marital status, or “privilege or unprivileged ranking within the camp location.” The females are represented by survivors who served internment during the years of 1942 to 1945. The years of internment for women are limited due to the fact that women were not sent to Auschwitz in its early conception; and when sent, they were generally liquidated immediately.

### Gathering the Data for the Case Study

All female survivors whose testimony has been produced by the Museum were selected as part of the case study (Appendix B). The total collection consists of sixteen females within the case. Each survivor was referenced by her first name and first initial of her last name in an effort to protect confidentiality for the research study despite the fact that each survivor had signed a release form granting permission for full use of their identify by name (consent forms of survivors in Appendix C).

Included within the study is the inclusion of supportive telephone interviews with the female survivors used within the case. A cover letter from the Oral History Department at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum accompanied the researcher's request in an effort to explain further the premise of the study to the 16 female survivors (Appendix D).

With confirmation of survivor interest in further study, the researcher arranged a telephone interview in an effort to build a "thick" descriptive case study. The telephone interview (Appendix E) was utilized as a method of triangulation to validate the results of the responses gathered through the transcription from the original survivor's testimonies within the collection.



### The Structure of the Telephone Interview

1. A pilot test using the telephone survey was administered with a sample group of five survivors preceding the actual telephone interview used with the participating. The reliability of question clarity was guaranteed before it was administered to the purposive sample population of this study.

2. The information gathering portion of this inquiry was accomplished by use of an open-ended telephone interview which solicited open-ended responses to gather relevant information as it related specifically to adaptation and coping strategies during internment in Auschwitz.

3. The researcher's telephone script was used to assure consistency within the interview process (Appendix F).

4. The participants had been made aware that the study involved coping strategies used during internment in Auschwitz. Each participant, however, was blind to the inquiry which was focused on determining the incidence of gender-related coping strategies, as well as the incidence of problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies.

The intent of the telephone interview was to elicit personal narratives as they relate specifically to coping strategies and adaptation. Other

information had been added to the interview which would assist in data verification, establishing rapport, and gathering a meaningful overview of the background of the participant. Facilitation of gathering information from the survivor during the interview involved open-ended structuring of questions from the researcher such as, “Tell me more about that...” The goal of the open-ended format was to allow the survivor the opportunity to tell their own “personal story” from their own viewpoint and perspective.

#### Structure of the Testimonies

Survivors of Auschwitz were asked to “bear witness” to the atrocities of the Holocaust in an effort to create a volume of eye-witness accounts which would be utilized in the permanent exhibit within the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Conducted by trained researchers of Oral History at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, each interview was structured in an effort to elicit an oral and visual archival record of the survivors from their unique eyewitness account. The visual testimony centers around three areas of concentration: an overview of life in pre-war Europe; the period of Nazi occupation including deportation to ghettos and work camps, transport and internment in Auschwitz; liberation and immigration to the United States.

Each oral history was approximately two to four hours in length. Held in repository in the archival Oral History Department of the Museum, the collection of sixteen female survivors is available for viewing by researchers, scholars, and educators. The visual oral histories had been transcribed and permission for their utilization was granted by the Director of the Oral History Department and noted scholar Dr. Joan Ringelheim.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the utilization of clustering as a means of inductively forming categories to discover patterns or themes within a population or phenomena under investigation. This design allows the researcher a process for moving from complex entities, which have many attributes, to create an over-view or a means of segregating the data to discover the familiarities and patterns. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that clustering analysis assists the researcher by moving to higher levels of abstraction to create families within a matrix. Sorting and coding of adaptation and coping strategies will aid in the analysis of the transcribed testimonies of the survivors. Relevant information concerning coping strategies and adaptation will be reported on clustering sheets from

the transcribed testimonies of each individual female Holocaust survivor in the sample (Appendix G).

The clustering sheets were coded by the researcher and an assistant researcher independently recorded the incidence and occurrence of the coping strategies reported in the 16 female survivor's transcribed testimonies. The use of two independent researchers assured validity of the results and utilization procedures of triangulation. A comparison of the two researchers' results was synthesized in an effort of analyzing the data results.

In an effort to sort the data into smaller sub-groups, a layered clustering sheet was utilized to separate the data into smaller categories as a means of eliciting patterns or repeated themes (Appendix H). The sub-groups were established as another method of clustering the responses to analyze the results as they related to the study.

The clustering sheet which had been developed included a basic overview of commonly reported coping strategies which had been reported in the prevailing Holocaust literature (Dimsdale, 1978, 1980; Frankl, 1984, 1988; Kahana, 1988). Categories were added to the tentative clustering list as needed.

The specific clustering topics chosen for usage in this research study have been noted in research concerned with coping strategies of Holocaust victims. Des Pres (1976), Frankl (1984, 1988), Dimsdale (1978, 1980), and Perl (1948) suggest the coping strategy of discovery of a purpose, meaning, or will to live. Holocaust survivor, Des Pres (1976) suggests that numbing, personal resistance, and focusing on daily survival were used by concentration camp victims. Krystal (1968) believed that numbing, denial, and depersonalization were used as strategies. Benner, Roskies and Lazarus (1980) agree that numbing and denial were used often and add that the ability to make personal choices in daily life was a coping strategy. Bettelheim (1943) and Schmolling (1984) concur that numbing was used for coping but suggests that identification with the aggressor was used by many other survivors. Lipman (1991) suggests that humor was used by many as a means of adaptation and depersonalization from daily atrocities. Schmolling also contends that religious faith, rage, and friendships were coping strategies used by many during the Shoah. Lewinska (1993) contends that maintenance of dignity and resistance were means of coping. Jackson (1993) contends that a belief in luck or destiny was a coping mechanism for some survivors. Affiliation with others was noted in the work of DesPres

(1976), Klein (1980), Ringelheim (1984, 1985, 1993), Heinemann (1986), Schmolling (1984), and Chodoff (1970, 1981, 1986) (Appendix I).

The data results were transcribed on the clustering sheets, categorized by words, counted for the incidence of the sub-grouping terms, and then ranked from the highest to lowest incidence of occurrence by the targeted sample population. The interpretation of results, presenting discussion, and conclusions was added to the knowledge base available concerning the “voices” of females and their perceived gender-related coping and adaptation at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

#### Introduction

*The young children and the babies that were taken out of mothers' arms and put on to these trucks; and the mothers running after them. And the crying and the screaming, "My baby!" And they were told they would see them later...The old people, the cripples--whoever couldn't walk, these were put on trucks. The young people needed to line up. Women and men were separated, as were children. My mother and I stood on the same line when they told us to line up, and then they started to call age. Mother was a young woman. They called, "age!" And I told my mother she stood in the wrong line. My mother went into another line. I found out several hours later that the line she went in went directly to the gas chambers. (Crying) I'm sorry.*

*How does one describe the walking into Auschwitz, the ...the smell? And someone pointing out to you that those are gas chambers, that your parents went up in smoke? When I asked, "When will I see my mother?" I was shown the smoke. How do I describe fear? How do I describe hunger to someone that has probably had breakfast and lunch today? Or even if you're dieting, or even if you're fasting for a day. I think hunger is when the pit of your stomach hurts. When you would sell your soul for a potato or a slice of bread. How do I describe living with the lice in your clothes, on your body? The stink. The fear. The selections. The "appells." The being told when to go to the toilet, not when you needed to use it. The using of the morning coffee to wash your face with. Mengele. And mostly, mostly death and the gas chambers. (U.S. Holocaust Museum archival oral testimony of Fritzie F., quoted partially in The world must know: The history of the Holocaust as told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1993, p. 134)*

Auschwitz has become synonymous with Nazi tyranny, systematic annihilation, dehumanization, torturing daily labor, and, ultimately, the genocide of over six million Jews from Eastern Europe during the Holocaust. The Auschwitz concentration camp was not the first Nazi concentration camp which also served as a death camp, but it is the most infamous. Built in Oswiecim, 50 kilometers southwest of Krakow, Auschwitz was the largest of the Nazi concentration camp complex with over 40 subcamps or satellite camps under its auspices. The Auschwitz-Birkenau complex served as a forced labor camp as well as an extermination center from May 1940 through January 27, 1945. Over 450,000 men and women were incarcerated, registered, and numbered within the camp complex with over 200,000 registered prisoners recorded as perishing as part of Hitler's "final solution." According to best estimates, it is reported that more than one million other Jews were murdered in the gas chambers upon arrival into the camp without being processed and registered (Gutman & Berenbaum, 1994).

### Creation of Auschwitz Concentration Camp

On April 18, 1940, SS Hauptsturmführer Rudolf Hoss visited



Oswiecim, Poland, and reported to SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler concerning the applicability of this site as a concentration and extermination camp complex. On April, 27, 1940, Himmler ordered the establishment of the camp and named Hoss the commandant of the camp complex. Originally, Auschwitz was intended to serve as a concentration camp for political prisoners, generally Polish dissidents in origin. But, with the additional conquests of the third Reich, as well as the determination of Hitler's policy of deportation and annihilation of "unwanted" undesirables, the camp quickly grew in number far exceeding its original intent. The first prisoners to be sent to Auschwitz were a group of 728 political prisoners, including five Jews. Arriving from Tarnow on June 14, 1940, they were quickly joined by Czech, Soviet, and Yugoslavian prisoners. Originally, Himmler classified the camp in the same category as Dachau and Sachsenhausen, which was considered a complex for those whose offenses were light and correctable. With the ever-increasing transport of prisoners, the construction of Birkenau camp, which was later to become Auschwitz II, started in October of 1941. With the proclamation of Hitler's "final solution of the Jewish question" at the Wannsee conference in 1942, Auschwitz concentration camp was determined to be the primary location for the extermination of Jews. In

February of 1942, the first transport composed entirely of Jews arrived at the gates of Auschwitz. Jews were brought from almost every part of Europe. Inhumanely overcrowded into cattle cars, they traveled for days in these transports without sanitary facilities and without food or water. Selection doctors, headed by Josef Mengele, decided who, categorized by their appearance and age, was fit for work and who would be sent to the awaiting gas chambers. Those selected who were not murdered immediately were used as slave labor within the camp complex. Those who were deemed “unfit” (children, elderly, pregnant women) were sent to their fiery death amongst the screaming horror of separation from family, friends, and loved ones. “Few lived longer than six months; they died from starvation, disease, the rigors of hard labor, beatings, torture, and summary execution--by shooting, hanging, or gassing” (Swiebocka, 1993, p. 17).

#### Conditions and Daily Routines in Auschwitz

Placed in the line which was chosen for “life,” the prisoners, in a dehumanizing and degrading manner, were forced to remove all clothing and were shaved of all body hair. They were then registered and tattooed on their forearm, suggesting their entrance date to the camp. Prisoners “selected” to live were crammed into barracks in which wooden bunks

were infested with lice. Sanitary facilities were primitive, and prisoners were not allowed to care for daily elimination needs. Clothes were distributed soiled, filled with lice, and purposefully given in the wrong size to the inmates. Prisoners many times were forced to run naked from barracks to delousing showers and parade in front of prison doctors and guards for “selektion” (selection).

Each day faded into another. The roll call at 4:30 each morning was not completed until every single prisoner was accounted for by the kapos. A missing person or an escapee might be punishable with multiple killings of prisoners, torturous beatings, or hangings performed in front of the captive traumatized prisoners. Even dead bodies had to be presented for numbering and accounting before the completion of the roll call. As a means of additional torture for prisoners, the “appells” or roll calls were known to take up to 19 hours in sub-zero temperatures. With the completion of roll call, a piece of bread (300 grams), a pad of lard, and watery coffee were distributed to the masses. The morning food allotment was followed with the prisoners being marched, many times to German music, to strenuous slave labor in factories, mines, and road construction. No rest was allowed, and those who did not comply were beaten, shot, or literally died from exhaustion. “Night brought little rest from the tortures

of the day. The bunks were so overcrowded that prisoners were unable to move, and fleas and lice made rest impossible” ( Swiebocka, 1993, p. 19).

Fritzie F., a Czechoslovakian survivor of Auschwitz, reported,

*we knew the trains were coming in; and we watched the people marching. And we knew many of the barracks were being emptied out, day in and day out, to make room for the new people that were coming in. We never knew when our turn would come next. So one always lived in fear, and one always tried to get through these selections for one more day.*

Table 1

Brief Overview Of Survivors In Case Study

Name	Date of Birth	Origin	Arrival in Auschwitz	Age at arrival
Madeline D.	1930	Czech.	1944	14
Fritzie F.	1929	Czech.	1944	15
Alice C.	1929	Hungary	1944	15
Nina K.	1929	Poland	1943 (Jan.)	13
Ruth M.	1929	Germany	1943 (April)	13
Helen G.	1928	Czech.	1944	16
Lily M.	1928	Belgium	1944 (Spring)	15 (almost 16)
Kate B.	1927	Hungary	1944 (May)	17
Cecilie K.	1925	Czech.	1944 (May)	19
Guta W.	1924	Poland	1944	20
Margaret K.	1923	Germany	1942	19
Barbara F.	1920	Romania	1944	24
Toby S.	1920	Romania	1944 (Spring)	24
Eva S.	1919	Poland	1943	24
Magda B.	1916	Slovakia	1942 (June)	26
Helen W.	1909	Germany	1944	35

## Case Studies

### Story of Madeline (Mady) D.

Mady D. was born on April 29, 1930, in Berehobo, Czechoslovakia. Living in a very tight-knit family within a small city, she and her older brother were raised in a middle-income family. Mady's father was a businessman who worked out of his home and her mother was a homemaker.

Brought up in family which valued education, she attended both formal schooling during the day and also a religious education in the afternoons. In 1938 Mady remembers that anti-Semitic sentiment was rising in the world. Her father was an avid reader of the newspaper and he also listened to the radio concerning world events. Mady reports that they had heard about what was happening in Poland, but that many believed that the stories were nothing more than horror stories which were being exaggerated. The stories were basically disregarded by the general community of Jews.

In November of 1938 Hungary took back the area in which Mady lived in Berehobo. Educational opportunities began to dwindle and teachers were becoming increasingly anti-Semitic. Doctors and lawyers were not allowed to practice their profession and the Jewish doctors were limited to

working only with Jews. Businesses were slowly being taken over by the Hungarian government and Aryan businessmen.

In March of 1944 Hitler invaded Hungary when Mady was 13 years old. All Jews were ordered to wear a yellow Jewish Star and were recognized as second-class citizens. In April of that year the Jews were rounded up and told to leave their houses with a small satchel of belongings. Forced to live in a small ghetto where there were no beds or cots, the families lived in covered areas similar to carports.

Forced to give all of their valuables and money to the German police, Mady's father narrowly escaped being shot when he forgot about some money that was in one of his vest pockets. This occurred on Mady's 14th birthday, and she recalled that it was one of the happiest moments of her life when her father was released and not shot as threatened by the Germans.

Mady reported that the Hungarian gendarmes and the police were much more brutal than the Germans. It was reported that they were rewarded for beatings and cruelty to the Jewish prisoners. Mady reported, "We didn't have any guns. We had nothing to protect ourselves with. So when we were herded out of our homes and into this ghetto, all we had with us (was) that little change of clothing and nothing else. So we had no

way of protecting us and we had no way...it just made no...no sense to really protect although we tried, and those that did were beaten up something terrible. But we had no way of protecting against all these guns and against these SS and against these soldiers...you know the police and the gendarmes.”

About two weeks later the ghetto was liquidated and Mady and her family were moved in box cars to an unknown destination. Packed into limited quarters, with no food or sanitary conditions, countless people died in the cattle car along the way to Auschwitz. Upon entering the camp in the dark, Mady remembers vividly the odor that filled the air and the flames that were seen in the distance. The dogs were howling and the group heard German voices as they waited in the train until daybreak. When the cattle car doors opened, they saw barbed wire fences which were electrified. People in German uniforms, dogs, and people in striped uniforms began forcing them out of the trains. “We just saw them take off these dead people, and we were still to stand in line there because the police...I mean the SS at this point already was there with their police dogs and we were standing there because anybody dared to move, they just released the dog who teared people apart.” Men and women were separated while people in striped uniforms whispered to the group that they



were in Auschwitz where “all your parents and your grandparents and your babies were killed and will be killed.” Reassured by the SS, the prisoners were told to stay calm and that they would be cared for while the striped uniform inmates warned them that they would never make it out of Auschwitz alive. Mady’s father and brother were taken to one side and Mady and her mother to another line. Directed along the ramp the healthier people were being separated from the older people and little children. “But my mother was a very, very intelligent woman...And when she saw this well dressed officer who had a couple of...assistants near him...and when she saw that this officer was directing the older people to go in one direction and the younger people in the other direction, she must have had some kind of intuition...” Instructed to stand tall and, while pinching Mady’s cheeks so she would look healthy, Mady’s mother informed the officer, Dr. Josef Mengele, speaking in perfect German that she was 43 and that Mady was 14. Mady and her mother were then directed to the line of those who would live and sent to the showers. Mady, along with the rest of the group was told to enter the showers where they were washed and disinfected. Unknown to the survivors, the other group was exterminated in the gas chambers nearby. All body hair was shaven after the women exited the showers; and Mady remembers the humiliation

of men conducting these acts as the women stood naked, trying to cover their bodies. Completely shaven, each women was given a dress and exited the showers. Mady remembers that everyone was unable to distinguish their family members and people had to call out names to find their missing significant others. Moved to a crowded barracks to sleep on wooden bunks, women were packed into the space so tightly that it was impossible for one person to turn over.

Due to the dehydration many people had desperately grabbed for a little water from puddles or a fountain not knowing that the water supply was contaminated due to the fluids of the dead seeping underground into the water system. Many were poisoned by the water and others became very sick and unable to stand. Many women assisted others in the roll call lines in an effort to create an illusion that they were strong enough to continue through the day.

Mady and her mother were transferred one week later to an ammunition working camp factory in Breslau. The work camp had approximately 500 or 600 women who mainly had been taken from Poland. The greatest majority of the Polish women had been imprisoned for many years and had also been taken from Auschwitz. Mady retells that they were awakened at five in the morning, counted, and given a small

piece of moldy, dark bread and some luke-warm brown water. Her mother was fearful for Mady's health and rationed the bread during the day. Mady discovered only later that her mother had not only been giving Mady her own portion of the bread each day, but she had also been giving her a portion of her own bread to increase the chances of her daughter's survival. Mady remembers that her mother would do anything possible to protect her daughter from harm and suffering. On many occasions Mady's mother would encourage her to try harder to continue working. "Try. Make believe you are doing it even if you...you're unable to...Try a little harder...Maybe we'll get out of here soon. Maybe we're gonna see your father and brother...Maybe we'll see your grandparents and aunts and uncles when we come back...Just hold off a little bit longer."

Mady reported that she knew that they were making parts that were used in bomb settings for airplanes and other ammunition pieces but that they had no choice except to do as they were told. "And we were working in this factory and you have to understand what we were...what we had to do in order to survive because whoever resisted was killed on the spot so there was no if...it was a choice. Either to live or to die. If you did what you were told, then temporarily you know that you are alive...We had to make...help manufacture that if we wanted to survive. And human nature

is very funny. We all want to live. The oldest and the sickest person in this world wants to go on living. That is human nature.” Mady and her mother remained in this factory called Peterswaldau for almost one year working in the ammunitions factory.

One morning, upon arising, there was quiet in the small camp; and it was discovered that the SS had fled during the night of May 8, 1945. Later the group was liberated by the Russian solders who cared for the prisoners for two or three weeks.

Mady and her mother tried to regain their strength in an effort to return to their family once again. Hoping that their father and brother would still be alive, they traveled home to discover that their homes, businesses, and valuables had all been taken by their neighbors. Waiting in their hometown, hoping to reunite with their family, Mady and her mother were told that both the men had perished in a labor camp. Reported to have witnessed the death of his son in front of his eyes, Mady’s father gave up all hope when he was told that all the women had been killed by the Germans.

Mady and her mother stayed in a displaced persons’ camp for four years and immigrated to the United States in 1949.

### Coping of Mady D.

Affiliation with her mother and belief that she would be reunited with her family from which she was separated played a large part in Mady's emotion-focused coping. Always protective of her daughter and extremely intuitive, Mady's mother was very supportive and encouraging to her daughter. Constantly pushing her to try harder, to think of the eventual reunion with loved ones, pushing her to stay healthy and emotionally strong, Mady's mother was a driving force in Mady's coping and adaptation. Without Mady's knowledge, her mother also sustained her daughter by cautiously rationing her food supply, as well as adding to the quantity by giving portions of her own food to her young daughter.

Mady incorporated her mother's emotion-focused coping when she turned the tables on her mother after they learned of their father and brother's death. When her mother wanted to commit suicide because she believed that there was no reason to live, Mady responded "and I told her that I had just turned 15. I was so young. I wanted to go on and see if there is something beautiful in this world...if there are some good things in people...if there are some good things in this world to where people lived...not just suffering and ugliness that we have seen. I just wanted to go on and see some goodness and beauty. And she told me that if I wanted to

go on living, her duty as a mother was to go on to help me survive and go on.”

The hope and belief that one day they would be reunited with their families in Czechoslovakia gave Mady and her mother a purpose and a will to survive despite the atrocities of Auschwitz and the working camp. Mady remarked, “...what kept us alive all this time was thinking about and dreaming about them and hoping that we will meet again, that they’ll survive as well. And then we’ll be one happy family again. And this is what my mother kept me alive with.”

There was no mention of any type of problem-focused coping strategies utilized by Mady. It was obvious in her testimony that the ability to manipulate the environment was restricted and that the methodology to live from one day to another focused around helping each other and believing that tomorrow would bring the end of the trauma.

#### Telephone Interview with Mady D.

Mady was very insistent that there was no technique for coping or surviving. She stated that there was no technique or active strategy that anyone could use to enhance survival rate; much of what occurred was basically due to luck. The human drive to live was the determining force

in her survival, and she reported that her mother and others protected her during the times of adversity. Mady reported that “we were still human beings...still we tried to help each other” survive the atrocities of the concentration camp and working labor camps. “We just tried to hold on to each other as much as we could.” At any time, Mady stated that she could choose suicide and throw herself against the wires, but she maintained hope. Her mother’s will and her constant encouragement drove Mady each day to continue to live with the hope of being reunited with her family once again.

Despite the humiliation, the atrocities, and the horrors, Mady reported that she wanted to live so very badly. She believed that she used fantasy as a powerful tool to escape from the reality of the atrocities. By using fantasy and dreaming, she imagined that she would return to her family once again in her homeland. Mady reported that she hoped that they would be reunited with her loved ones and return to a normal life with her family after the war.

#### Story of Fritzie F.

Fritzie F. was born in 1929 in Klucarky, Czechoslovakia, which was near a town called Munkacs. Her home of origin was a very small town

with a few Jewish families who were very close and tight-knit. Fritzie reports that there was a comfortable mixing of Jews and non-Jews within her community. Fritzie reports that “we lived in peace with our neighbors...my very best friends were not Jewish as well as Jewish.”

Fritzie reported that her father emigrated to the United States after the Great Depression and did not have time to arrange for their emigration before the outbreak of Nazi occupation. Immigration at that time was extremely strict, and she reported that immigration of a family was not permitted unless an alien could illustrate financial stability for the family in America. Fritzie reports that she has few memories of her father and ironically reports that her mother was afraid to take her remaining family to the United States during the early stages of occupation for fear of danger.

Fritzie reported hearing horror stories of Jews being persecuted in Poland and Germany in 1939 and knew that her family had hidden many young Jews and assisted in their escape into parts of Czechoslovakia. She remembers helping her grandfather with underground activities in an effort to assist escaping Jews who would soon also be persecuted under the occupation of the Third Reich.



Fritzie's first recollection of the effects of occupation was when she was denied access to her continued education by her school teacher. She remembers being told that she was no longer allowed to attend her school because she was Jewish. "A teacher--who was my teacher--who took out a white handkerchief from his pocket the week before to wipe a smudge off my face, turned to me one day and told me I must not come to school anymore." Within a day's time, Jews were labeled as different, inferior, and something that must be segregated and regulated. There were rules established by the government for the access to educational institutions, time limits for doing shopping or walking on public streets, the limitation to work, banning of Jews sitting on public benches, and the mandate of wearing a yellow star indicating that one was a Jew. Fritzie reported each day brought about another legislated rule, another edict, or a new law to restrict freedom and dignity. "If someone came towards us that was not a Jew, the Jew needed to step off the sidewalk to allow the next person -- who of course was not Jewish--to walk by. I recall our neighbors turning their backs on us. Spitting on us. Neighbors who lived in peace with us, who were our friends the week before."

In 1944 Fritzie reports that the Jews were told to gather their belongings and were told they were being relocated. Taken to a ghetto

within their own town, they quickly realized that they had mistakenly believed the lies of those they had trusted. Hoping that they would be relocated in a “safe place,” they quickly dispelled their hopes and realized their impending fate and imprisonment. The SS converted the town grammar school into a ghetto lodging and brought guards and dogs to herd the Jews into this building. Sleeping in crowded conditions, the Germans would come each day and mandate the young Jews to perform forced labor. Most were returned each night until they were all cleared from the ghettos and placed on a cattle car heading to Auschwitz in 1944.

Fritzie reports that there was no place to sit down in the crowded traincar. Traveling to an unknown destination, a bucket of water was pushed into the car each day to divide amongst the prisoners, and another bucket was to be used as a public toilet. Fritzie reports that it is impossible to explain about “dignity that is taken away from you when you need to use a bucket as a toilet in the middle of a compartment on a train, in front of everyone. About sharing water with every single person...about the mothers holding on to hungry children who cried. The stink. The fear. It’s strange, fear gives out a certain smell. And that mixed with open bucket--it’s a smell I don’t believe one can ever forget...”

The words on the entrance gate to Auschwitz, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, translated to “Work will set you free.” When the train stopped in Auschwitz, the prisoners were greeted by soldiers, barking dogs, whips, screaming, and confusion. People were beaten, forced into separate lines; and babies were ripped from mother’s arms. Children were separated from parents, husbands from wives, and family from family. Instructed to state that she was older than her age, she was told to stand in a line next to others. Tragically, Fritzie reported that she instructed her mother to move to a different line during the chaos and that Fritzie went into the line of “life” and her mother into the line of “death.” Later she discovered that her two brothers had gone directly to the gas chambers. When asking when she would see her mother, she was shown the smoke coming from the chimney and told that that was her mother!

Fritzie remembers that her aunt held her hand through the time of internment and that she survived the months of Auschwitz only with her assistance. Stories of Mengele, selections, daily uncertainty, torture, and endless roll calls were prominent in the testimony. Survival was accomplished through means of emotion-focused coping and adaptation which centered around hope and affiliation. “My thought was always of

tomorrow. And I believe that's what...maybe youth...but my hope was always of tomorrow."

After several months of internment, Fritzie's barracks were emptied and she was marched toward the gas chambers. Her aunt was taken upon a truck to be sent away and pleaded for Fritzie to join her on the truck. "Six of us were pulled out of line; and I was literally in the door of the gas chamber. I will never know the reason why. The small group was pulled out and put onto another truck, with several other women, to go to work in a factory...I was the youngest of 600 women...I was their hope... I was their hope to carry the message to the world."

Because of the Allies' approach, prisoners were forced to move eastward on a "death march." Fritzie reported they marched through streets literally covered with bodies. People were dropping dead from hunger, from disease, from exhaustion, or because they literally gave up hope. During that forced march in 1945, Fritzie and a friend ran into the forest and escaped until they were liberated by the Russians.

#### Coping of Fritzie F.

Through investigation of the oral testimony, it appears that Fritzie F. utilized techniques of emotion-focused coping by the use of hope and

affiliation with others. “None of us really know the kind of energy we put in every day to survive, unless we’re faced with this...my thoughts were always of tomorrow.” Fritzie’s comments within the testimony suggest that she believed that the future would be better and that her affiliation with others (her aunt and the 600 women in the working camp) provided a basis of emotion-focused coping that was attained through the caring and nurturing of others around her. There was no mention in the testimony of any coping techniques that illustrated the utilization of problem-focused strategies. This may be due to the fact that Fritzie was young and that others cared for and protected her.

However, it should be noted that Fritzie’s comments concerning her post-war years suggest that she was affected with post-traumatic stress disorder. She states that she utilized problem-focused and emotion-focused coping as a means of dealing with her life after immigration to the United States. She reported, “I could not live with my memories of what had happened. I couldn’t handle them. So I had taken all my memories and put them in a little box and put them on the very bottom of my brain.” These statements illustrate the techniques of emotion-focused coping through repression, denial, and avoidance. Problem-focused coping was also illustrated by her isolation from other survivors, abstinence from Jewish

organizations, refusal to discuss anything related to her experiences in the Holocaust, and the avoidance of any questions which were asked by others concerning her experiences. “These things we don’t talk about,” she reported in her testimony. “This is how I lived for many years. This was my way.” (Researchers call this the “conspiracy of silence.”)

#### Story of Alice C.

Alice was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1929. Memories of her childhood include the description of her community as very family-oriented. Alice reported that her grandfather was a self-made industrialist who was well-known within the community. Alice had a sister Edith who was two and a half years older and also two younger brothers. The youngest brother was “mothered” and cared for by Alice. She remembered that Jewish strangers would come to Budapest and discuss what was happening with the German occupation, but Alice’s family did not believe that these atrocities could occur in their country. “But we always felt so very protected...maybe that happens in Poland, in Czechoslovakia. But Hungary is civilized. We are very good taxpayers. They need us here. It will not happen. And then one day, they (Germans) say that you pack up 25 kilo.” Disbelieving that this could actually happen

to them, her family was ghettoized within the city. Receiving special treatment because of her grandfather's stature in the community, Alice remembers that she always created ways of working around the rules to accomplish her goals. Perhaps because she was a child, Alice was able to discover many methods of escaping the ghetto and to move within the community at large. Alice reported that her father escaped from the SS and gained assistance and protection from Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest.

Alice remembers the transport from the ghetto to the railroad station with her mother and siblings. "Marching through our town was like a scene out of the Bible...I could not tell you the humiliation I felt; carrying our baggage, passing our house, looking into our window, seeing the people who occupied our house looking at us, and nobody stopping." Shocked that the townspeople were bystanders to this travesty, the Jews were transported by cattle car in June of 1944 to Auschwitz.

Describing the sorting of people into the line of life and death, Alice told of being separated from her mother and brothers who were sent to the gas chambers. Her sister Edith was separated and sent into another line and Alice was unsure of her fate. "Seconds...everything, seconds. It was like...like in a mirage because first your eyes was not even used to the light after this darkness in the cattle train; and then this sunlight...this strong

sunlight and the shouting....And I stepped aside, realizing in a few minutes that I don't see Mother. I don't see my brothers. I don't see Edith. I'm totally alone." At the age of 15, Alice was introduced to Auschwitz with the constant goal of finding her sister, Edith. Discovering she was still alive, Alice was determined to be with her sister. Through creative efforts a note was passed to Edith, housed within another Lager barrack. In the weeks that followed, Edith and another prisoner exchanged barrack positions during the transport of food to the opposite Lager and the two sisters were brought back together. "And so Edith and I were reunited in Auschwitz. It was such a miracle. I just knew that I never want to be without her ever, ever. And we cling to each other; but it was very risky because it was started to be selections."

Constantly protecting each other, the sisters created many plans and deceptions as a means of staying together. During Edith's hospitalization in the infirmary, Alice manipulated her environment to visit Edith in the hospital. Willing to do jobs such as carrying dead people from the barracks, these favors gained her access to her sister. In an effort to bring hope to her sister and the patients, Alice would make up stories of impending saviors from the atrocities. Her goal was to create hope for her



ailing sister and for all the others in the hospital in an effort to increase their resiliency and survival.

Edith recuperated and returned to the barracks but very quickly the Blockältester selected a group of children for liquidation. Telling them that they would receive warm clothes, the children filed into the showers in hopes of getting disinfected and then receiving new clothes. “But it turned out that the shower did not work, that it was really the gas. And the tragic...the realization came only after; when we came back, and this Blockältester couldn’t believe that we are alive. And she looked at us and she started to scream, ‘How could it happen? Why are you back? You’re not suppose to be back.’ I think that was the only time in Auschwitz that the gas did not work.”

At the time of another selection in Auschwitz, the two were selected to go together to Guben, a subcamp of Gross-Rosen. Once again through means of problem-solving, the two manufactured a means of staying together and being transported to labor in an ammunition factory. Placed in a children’s barracks, Alice reported that the sub-camp labor was strenuous and difficult.

In February of 1945 the camp was forced on a death march. During the forced march Alice, her sister Edith, and a friend hid and escaped from

the group by hiding in a hay pile. Turned in by people in the town, the threesome were sent to the police station despite their pleading. The trio devised a story relating that they had mistakenly overslept and did not know that the group was leaving the area during the march. Sentenced to be shot due to the escape, the trio escaped by creation of a story to move into the cattle car which was departing. Once again escaping the grips of death, they discovered a means of gaining access to the cattle train and were sent to Bergen-Belsen. "Nothing ever in literature could compare to anything what Bergen-Belsen was. When we arrived, the dead were not carried away anymore. You stepped over them. You fell over them, if you couldn't walk. There were agonizing people, begging for water...it was hell."

At the time of liberation, Alice and her sister were fearful of being separated because Edith was violently ill. In an attempt of remaining with her sister, Alice pretended she was also sick to keep the sisters together. Separated from her sister by the liberators, Alice never saw her sister again. Constantly struggling to find Edith, Alice went to Sweden in hopes of finding her sister, to no avail. Alice was contacted in Sweden with the news that her father was alive and she eventually was reconnected with her

father with the help of rescuers. Alice emigrated to Israel, and later to the United States, and to this date has never found her sister Edith.

### Coping of Alice C.

Very grateful for the assistance from others, Alice utilized techniques of problem-focused coping as a means of protecting her sister and herself. Constantly looking for a means of remaining together and escaping the inevitable, Alice and her sister were able to avoid the grips of death on many occasions. The affiliation between the two sisters was so strong that it was the primary source of adaptation and coping for survival. Promising that they would never be separated again after that first day in Auschwitz, the sisters created all sorts of strategies to manipulate the environment. Creating stories such as the one used to hide in the cattle car after their capture from the death march, the two girls were able to adapt to the situation and within minutes look for options for their safety. Constantly surveying the environment, the two formed a bond which was their meaning for survival. Clearly these two sisters exhibited the adaptation strategies of both emotion-focused coping through affiliation, supporting each other through words of hope and compassion, as well as through problem-focused coping to manipulate their environment.

Story of Nina K.

Nina was born in Grodno, Poland, on April 11, 1929. The family of four lived in a beautiful apartment near the river Niemen. Living in a small town, Nina, her sister, and parents were active within the community where her father was a forester. Nina's sister was a champion skater and swimmer, and Nina was a soloist, musician, and interested in theater. Educated in Jewish and Catholic schools within Poland, the children viewed their childhood as a "free, delightful existence" filled with love and lots of attention. Nina reported that there was an anti-Semitic attitude, but that she was not targeted because she was blue-eyed and blonde. Nina reported that in 1938 and 1939, with the rise in anti-Semitism, there were some incidents of rocks being thrown against their apartment windows during Passover. During that time period her father was imprisoned for three or four months for political reasons by the Communists who ruled the traditional northeastern part of Poland.

In September of 1941 Nina reported the occupation of Grodno by the Nazis. "I was playing with dolls one day, and the next day I was asked to be a grown-up, it hadn't quite sunk in, what the tragedy of the entire period meant...I was in a vacuum." Shortly after the occupation, two

ghettos were established in Grodno. The upper ghetto became the home as Nina and her family were uprooted, as was the entire Jewish population within the community at-large. On one occasion some peasant families suggested to Nina's father that the two children go into hiding with Polish families because they did not appear to look Jewish. Nina remembers that she and her sister had a discussion and the two decided that they were not willing to be separated from their parents.

Nina reported that life in the ghetto was bearable because she was with her family. Nina and her sister Sala would play and improvise. In 1942 Nina and her sister were separated from their parents who were taken to Auschwitz. Remaining in the ghetto, the two girls worked in a tobacco factory. They were able to escape several selections and "we continued to give ourselves some kind of moral support by saying look, we'll probably leave here and I'm sure we'll be with our parents again." In January of 1943 the ghetto was liquidated and Sala put her mother's coat on Nina to make her appear much older and stronger. "A long coat, and I think that coat may have been responsible for my going into the camp rather than to the crematory right away. My sister was very bright. She was very clever." Instructed by her sister not to say a word, Sala watched the selection process and told Nina to walk over to a small group of people

which were being separated from the larger mass. "There were eighty-five women and a hundred and twenty men out of something like twenty-five hundred who were then brought into Auschwitz. The rest went directly to the crematorium." The two girls entered Auschwitz on January 24, 1943, to the smell of flesh burning and the chimneys bellowing with smoke and fire. Nina was tattooed with the number 31386 and her sister with 31387. They were shaved and taken to a block within the camp.

Nina described her first months in Auschwitz, "These were probably the most horrendously difficult months, the first three months. If you survived the first day, maybe you survived a second. If you made it through a week, chances are you might make it to the second week. Time had no meaning." After those three months, Nina's sister became very ill. Never sick a day in her life Nina pleaded for her sister Sala, who had never been sick a day in her life to keep moving. "It was a Friday, and I said I don't care whether you can get up -- you've got to get up, because if you don't they will take you to Block 25 (hospital)." Unable to get up, Sala was taken to Block 25 with typhoid. Nina visited her sister in the hospital; and Sunday, on April 10th, Sala died in Nina's arms. "Watching this incredible drama was a woman that I did not know she...came up to me and she said in German, which I did not understand very well then, she said I don't have

any children. I'm not married, but if I had a little girl, I would like her to look just like you and be just like you." The woman named Martha was a nurse who cared for Nina for the remainder of their stay in Auschwitz. Nina reported that Martha was about 20 years older and that "she saved my life about four or five times. Four from the crematoria and others when I was deathly ill with typhoid or God knows what else, and she would steal injections and save me that way." Humanity was not lost amongst the inmates, Nina remembers. "People did care for each other. People did give each other moral support. People did commiserate with each other and tried to help. There was very little because people were dying and the suffering was so intense that it was very difficult to give strength to someone else, but Martha is a perfect example."

There were no hospitals, and Jews who were sent to Block 25 generally did not return. On one occasion, Martha smuggled Nina into a Christian hospital, perhaps able to pass in this environment because she appeared to look non-Jewish. Targeted by Dr. Kliner during a selection for death, Martha reported that her name was "miraculously" erased from Kline's list and that she was not going to be exterminated in the crematorium on that day.

Transferred to Lager C, Nina was told to report to Irma Grese, the head SS female guard in Auschwitz. Nina reported that Irma Grese was standing in civilian clothes when she entered and that she was a vision to behold. "She took my little cheek and she said...they tell me that you look a lot like me, and I wanted to be sure that was really true. And I in my total naiveness said, oh, I said I don't think there's any, I've never seen anyone more beautiful, and I meant it. I mean she was like a vision." Grese took a liking to Nina and assigned her to be a watch-out and stand guard in front of the barracks while she made love to the most beautiful Jewish women. Given extra food for her job, Nina reports that Grese had total power to do anything that she desired to anyone, at any time.

Nina reported that Grese and the commandant Kramer were a "different breed of people" who were chosen because of their predisposition to evil. "They looked human, but these were not human beings. They...people, humanity as we know it, even in the worst possible way, cannot behave that way." Auschwitz was created for one purpose, Nina reported. It was created for the liquidation of Jews and other undesirables.

Nina survived two years in Auschwitz. This was a two-fold oddity because there were relatively no children in Auschwitz, and secondly, very



few people lasted two years of atrocities and horrors in the depths of Auschwitz.

Evacuated on January 18, 1945, from the camp, Nina was sent to Ravensbruck. Meeting up with Martha within the camp, Nina stayed in Ravensbruck for three weeks. Nina reports that the camp was filled with “masses of people, death, terrible starvation, no work.” Separated from Martha at one point, Nina gave up her desire to live and was sent to Retzof-am-Richlin which was not originally a concentration camp location. Described as a relatively nice camp, Nina was assigned as a “loifering” (gopher for anyone who needed her assistance).

Within this camp a young 19-year-old German soldier took a liking to Nina. During some conversations Nina discovered that he was a medical student from Luxembourg who reported that he had no idea of the brutality that had occurred. Determined to protect Nina, he created a scheme to smuggle Nina out of the concentration camp and stated that he was willing to risk his life for her. Contacting a woman in the village, Lucien, the young German, told Nina that “I will take you there when there is a break. I promise you. And I said why are you doing it. He said because I love you. Now you have to understand that here was a Jewish girl, 16 years old, speaking to a German, to a man wearing a German

uniform saying I love you and I'm not going to let you die. I'm going to help you." Lucien predicted the evacuation on May 2, 1945, and Lucien was sent to the Russian front where he has reported to have been killed.

Knowing that no family was left in Grodno, Nina went to Czechoslovakia in an attempt of finding Martha. Later Nina went to Prague and London and eventually immigrated to the United States where she is currently living.

#### Coping of Nina K.

Nina reported that you could not let your defenses down if you wanted to survive in Auschwitz. "It is not a question of strength. You don't ever know what's happening to you. What it is a sort of self, self-discipline by saying if I'm going to make it, I'm going to retreat from all that and emerge in a way into my own fantasy world." The world which was created in the mind was the emotion-focused coping mechanism that was utilized by Nina. She reported that she utilized humor in numerous occasions which was central to the heart of Jewish experiences. If you did not have a sense of humor, she believed that you would die experiencing all that occurred in Auschwitz. Nina tells people that she has "a Ph.D. from Auschwitz. That covers a lot of ground doesn't it."

The fact that Nina survived for two years, especially being a child within this camp, perhaps is partially due to being protected by Martha, Lucien the German soldier, and even Irma Grese. Nina believed that the protection and affiliation of Martha is the most essential force in her survival.

Still unsure what were the other factors in her survival, Nina reports she is uncertain why she survived Auschwitz. "Maybe there is some plan that the heavens, G-d, whatever, that I'm here. Maybe to bear witness...I don't think I could function as a human being and be as accomplished in many ways and continue on with my life if I had to live and remember what happened to me there. And I think again here the mind works some miracles."

#### Telephone Interview with Nina K.

The use of problem-focused coping was impossible, Nina believed, because there were no choices, no ways to manipulate your environment. She reported that in Auschwitz you had no control whatsoever in your life. There were no coping strategies which were active in nature. "I have a predisposition of being an optimist--you survive the day...hour to hour...If

you live for one day in Auschwitz, then perhaps for another day, for two days.”

You didn't “feel like you had any choices...you were thrown into whatever.” Nina believed that luck, fate, and “a hope, a dream, and fantasy” played a part in survival, but they were not active techniques which were consciously used for survival purposes in her opinion. Nina emphasized that emotion-focused coping through the utilization of fantasy was a dominant mechanism used in her survival. “Pain emerges and you go into another world of fantasy. With despair you go into fantasy. It is amazing how your mind regenerates itself.”

Nina believed that her affiliation with Martha was a dominant force in her survival. “She was very instrumental...she took care of me...she hid me...gave me injections to save my life.” Nina believes because she was very young, trusting, and naive, this may have aided in her survival.

#### Story of Ruth M.

Ruth M. was born on June 23, 1929, in Frankfurt, Germany. She and her older brother lived with their parents; their father was in the leather goods business. She remembers that in 1933 the country was in an upheaval and fear was rampant. Fearful that something would happen to

her parents when they left home, Ruth was constantly concerned that her parents would not be able to return to her safely. Ruth's uncle, faced with the realities of the rising Nazi political system, was a journalist who was "hunted down" because of his political views. He was reported to be captured in Czechoslovakia, placed in jail, and later executed.

Other changes within the country included the discontinuation of economic transactions in Jewish banks, beatings and harassment of Jews, restrictions of Jewish education, prohibition of listening to Jewish composers, seizure of Jewish businesses, and the discontinuation of protection and civil liberties of Jewish citizens. Ruth remembers one incident where a friend's father was disliked by Nazis; as a punishment, they took his daughter and had her sterilized. These memories surround some of Ruth's earliest thoughts of the Nazi police state in the early 1930s.

During these early years many Jews were transported out of Germany. Ruth's father had a choice of staying in Germany or being sent to the east and choose to stay behind with his family in an effort to protect them from harm. Ruth remembers Frankfurt "off-springs" (Michlinge) were sent to Theresienstadt when her family was sent on a transport to Auschwitz. She reported that her family was one of the last "full Jews" who were sent to Auschwitz with Polish prisoners in April of 1943. The

transport carried only 37 Jews, as well as non-Jewish prisoners. "We were taken away on the 19th of April which was Hitler's birthday or the 20th or something, it was...suppose to be a birthday present to the Fuhrer, that Germany would be Judenrein (Jewish free), and that was why they, uh, shipped, uh, gathered us on the 19th of April, and, uh, it took us about a week to get there"

Seeing her father for the last time in Auschwitz, at age 13, Ruth and her mother were taken to the women's camp while her brother was taken to the men's camp. Tattooed and shaved of all body hair, Ruth remembers the humiliation and fear of standing in the nude during the processing upon arrival. Forced to do road repairs within the camp, the women were given this work in an effort to demoralize the Jews and strip them of their strength and honor. "They were interested in having people get sick and having people, uh, die or be in such condition that they would take them to the trans...to the, uh, crematorium."

Ruth reported that she came down with typhus and that her mother protected her during the day at work. One day during a selection Ruth was placed in the line for extermination. "So, uh, my mother pleaded with him (SS) and said that, uh, well, I'm her child and she, can't she come with, can't I come with her and he said no, but if you're so concerned about your

daughter go with her...and one of the women who was working in the barracks...but she had some kind of, uh, protected position whatever that was worth, uh, she sort of grabbed me under one arm and my mother grabbed my other arm, and we managed to walk away.” Not stopped by the SS guard, Ruth and her mother proceeded into the general group without being noticed. To this day Ruth is unsure if the German SS guard just pretended not to notice that she had slipped into the group who were saved from extermination. On another occasion, Ruth remembers that a German soldier hid her brother and mother behind a pile of coal in an effort to protect her brother from a selection and extermination. Asking the reason for his rescue of the young man, the soldier told Ruth’s mother that he had witnessed a mass shooting in a village and a woman was forced to choose between her children. Faced with a “choiceless-choice” of which child would live and which would die, the woman had grabbed both children and jumped into the mass grave. Witnessing this experience, the German SS guard had sworn that if he could “ever save a mother and a child, he would make it his mission to do so. And he did that by saving my mother and my brother and hiding them for the day behind a pile of coal. I never knew who the man was...it was just a very strange and human gesture in a, uh, sea or in...a surrounding of inhumanity...”

Becoming good friends with two young Greek girls, Ruth faced punishment and bridged the language gap by speaking English to the girls. She reported that speaking English was forbidden and that the girl was an opera singer and many times sang for the prisoners. On one occasion Ruth's friend Nini was asked to move into an SS man's house to sing for him. Refusing the offer, despite the fact that it might mean an easier life, the sacrifice was tremendous. "She refused him. And, uh, among the next uh selections to the gas chamber, her number was prominently mentioned and there was no way that anyone could have erased the number. I mean he made sure that she was on that next transport to the gas chamber." Ruth noted that she was one of the "real unforgettable friendships" that was formed within the concentration camp.

Ruth was assigned to work in "Canada" (Kanada in German) which was the sorting center for all belongings which were brought into the camp by prisoners. Clothes which were in good condition were sorted and then shipped back to the Reich for use by the homeland citizens. Ruth noted that she remembers that she stole a belt from Canada. This act of resistance aided her in keeping her dress higher when she was forced to walk through the mud which caked on her clothes, weighing her down



physically. Ruth noted that she kept the belt as a reminder even after her liberation from Auschwitz.

Ruth also noted an experience where her mother risked her own life for another woman who had lost her children. Running through a multitude of bullets from the watchtower guards, Ruth's mother heroically pulled a woman away who was determined to commit suicide on the electrified wire from the fence.

On November 1, 1944, Ruth and her mother were placed on a transport to Ravensbruck and placed in the sub-camp of Malchow. Working in an ammunition factory, the prisoners were forced to make bullets and hand-grenades for the German army. Ruth reported that she tried on numerous occasions to "sort of squeeze it in a crooked way (bullets) so that it would close but not quite, and I was hoping that these bullets would mis-fire and I was hoping that in this way it would be my part of the war effort against the Nazis." Ruth was liberated in May of 1945 from the Malchow camp during a forced death march.

#### Coping of Ruth M.

Ruth's testimony is filled with examples of emotion-focused coping which is related to affiliation and protection from others. Throughout the

testimony there are numerous recounting of times when Ruth's mother assisted her survival, as well as the survival of other women in the camp. Ruth's affiliation with friends also was evident in her coping and she noted that her affiliation with Nini, the young girl who sang opera, was a "real unforgettable friendship" from the period of time in Auschwitz.

Within Ruth's testimony there are numerous examples of those who reached out to others to assist during the times of massive traumatization. The example of her mother saving the woman who was suicidal, and the gypsy families that aid other women illustrate this point. The poignant example of the SS guard who saved Ruth's mother and her brother from extermination is an amazing example of affiliation and protection of others, despite the fact that the aid came from a German SS guard who risked his life to save Jews.

Ruth reported that a pregnant woman who was hiding her condition was protected by the other women who risked their lives to conceal her pregnancy and maintain her survival. This act of concealment was a remarkable example of group affiliation. Ruth stated the woman had a child on Christmas day, and she believed that this was a sign that a miracle would happen and that one day they would all be free. Coping with the adversity through using hope, dreams, and fantasy, Ruth and others felt the

birth of the child was a sign that if they held on long enough they would be liberated.

Ruth's testimony illustrates some coping through acts of resistance and defiance in her choice to speak to other girls in English which was forbidden in the camp. Other acts of resistance were illustrated by Ruth's stealing of the belt when she worked in Canada, as well as her acts of defiance in putting the bullets together in a fashion so that they might misfire when she worked in the ammunition factory labor camp in Malchow.

#### Story of Helen G.

Helen G. was born in Volosyanka, Czechoslovakia, on July 9, 1928. One of seven children, she reported that her childhood was very happy until the occupation of the Hungarians and, later, the Germans in 1944. During the Nazi occupation the Jews were not allowed out of their houses at night and were restricted to shop during certain hours. Helen reported after six weeks of Nazi occupation, all of the Jews were rounded up and taken to a ghetto in Uzhgorod, which was in the capital of Carpathia. Four weeks after the ghettoization, Helen's brothers and father were taken away to a work camp. Helen stated that her grandparents, sister, and mother were left in the ghetto. She remembered that during the ghettoization her

grandfather, then 80 years old, had taken his Torah to the ghetto and that one day all the older Jews that had beards were told to report to a certain barracks. "So they made these men put on these tallisen, these prayer shawls, and they told them to start praying. And while they were praying, they started beating on them and they started cutting their beards...So this poor old man had to endure the pain not only the physical pain, the beatings, but also the cutting of the beard."

After six weeks the ghetto was liquidated and Helen was sent to Auschwitz with her family, packed into inhumane conditions, in the cattle car with only small windows on the top. Helen reported that she got on top of her sister's shoulders in an effort to look out and witnessed a horrifying sight. "I saw farmers showing to me like this (fingers across throat). I...I really didn't know what they were saying. And...and a young adult it just didn't sink into my head that they're telling me something...I told my sister. I told my mother that's what they were showing me. Well, anyway when we got to Auschwitz it sort of didn't sink in."

Upon arrival Helen's family was separated. Helen's brother was ripped from her mother's arms; screaming, she ran after her son and was beaten by the guards. Helen's mother pleaded to have her six-year-old child returned. Many of the mothers put up a fight to keep their children

and were beaten, while the innocent children were grabbed and thrown haphazardly into trucks. Helen remembers that her mother was beaten by the guards and pushed into the line to the left. Helen and her sister were the only two family members that were sent to the right, to the line of life. Walking towards the showers, Helen remembers that there were so many people that they could not kill them fast enough in the crematorium so they were burning people in huge pits. "There was a man telling us that they are burning people because they can't burn them in the ovens. They can gas more than they can burn. And here we hear music! It was very, very confusing to us..." Forced into a room, Helen and her sister were forced to undress. Many of the girls put down their heads and Helen reported that the SS would take their whips and pull the women's heads and then begin to beat them. Processed during the night, they were then placed in a barracks.

In the morning Helen remembered that she looked through the cracks of the barracks, and "I saw people hanging on these wire fences. It was such a terrible sight...They were electrocuted because many of them...some of them were aware of the electric fences and some of them thought maybe they want to escape or to go look for their parents or go look for their family. So they...they were hanging there." During that

first day Helen was beaten until she was black and blue because she was told that she took too long to go to the bathroom.

After five weeks in Auschwitz Helen remembers that there was a selection and whoever appeared to be strong was taken into the separate line. She and her sister were put into another barracks and taken out of Auschwitz. Helen reported that “we felt we were going to get out of this place; because, as you know, I mean...getting out from Auschwitz by a gate and not by chimney, I was lucky.” Approximately 1000 girls were transported by cattle car to work in a German ammunition plant in the midst of an Allied bombing attack.

Helen remembers that the girls in the working camp began to be poisoned by the gunpowder. Their eyes became yellow, as did their bodies, and their hair grew in red. Due to the lack of circulation within the factory, many of the girls died from the poisonous materials and contaminates.

Helen remembers that she had been working in the ammunition plant for a few months and told her sister that she could no longer go on and continue to live. “I just felt mentally I can’t go on anymore.” Helen’s sister supported her and screamed that “You’re not gonna leave me here alone. You’re not gonna die...So I was trying to hold on to my life because

I saw what she cared...you know, the way she carried on.” Pushed to stay alive, Helen and her sister continued to work as the numbers of girls dwindled to 500 and eventually to fewer than 200.

Helen remembers that the girls attempted to help each other, but that all of them were experiencing weakness and loss of strength and hope, trying so desperately to survive. On numerous occasions Helen remembers that her sister would hold her up during appells and would literally drag her to work and do not only Helen’s work, but also her own.

Approximately nine months later the factory was bombed, and the remaining 200 women were taken outside to build a road. They were then transported to Bergen-Belsen which was a mountain of dead corpses. Within a month Helen’s sister, becoming infected with typhus, became delirious with a fever. “She was the strong one and I was the sick one and she got sick.” Soon after this the camp was liberated in 1945 and Helen’s sister was taken to the hospital.

Unsure if her sister had survived, Helen remembers that she would search through the mountains of dead corpses trying to find her sister. After a week or so Helen was told that her sister survived and they were reunited and remained in Bergen-Belsen until they felt stronger. They were then transported to a hospital in Sweden.

Suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder, Helen remembers that she suffered with constant nightmares and despair. She reported that she had lost all of her family except for her sister. “I couldn’t talk about it for a long time...But sometimes I would just go in and cried for weeks...I know I cannot bring my family back, my little brother, the million and a half children that were destroyed, that were gassed, but perhaps maybe I could reach some people that make them understand that this did happen and it can happen again if we are not going to be if we are not going to be aware of our surroundings.”

#### Coping of Helen G.

The affiliation with Helen and her sister is a prime example of the powerful motivation to survive through emotion-focused coping. Determined to live and support each other, the two faced each day in an effort to survive. Helen’s sister was reported to be a very powerful influence who encouraged Helen to continue to live, despite the fact that many times she wanted to give up hope. Helen was also very powerful in her sister’s survival during internment.

Helen reported that a person wants to survive, to have a purpose or a will to live. The relationship between the two sisters was a motivation for



survival of the atrocities that surrounded their internment in Auschwitz, working camps, and Bergen-Belsen. Helen did report that her survival involved luck and chance. She also reported that denial played a vital part in her coping and adaptation during internment.

### Story of Lily M.

Lily M. was born in 1928 in Antwerp, Belgium. Raised in a Jewish neighborhood by her grandmother, her early childhood memories include being separated from her older brother and sister who lived in Brussels with her mother. Her father had immigrated to the United States before the war, and Lily was cared for by her grandmother because it was difficult for her mother to raise three children alone and continue working.

As a child Lily heard rumors about Hitler's treatment of Jews in Poland. Her grandmother proclaimed that she would rather die than live through another pogrom like the ones she had endured in Poland. But, in 1940, after Lily had lived with her mother in Brussels for one year, the Germans invaded Belgium. Lily reports that the targeting of Jews and rising anti-Semitism slowly infiltrated through various legislative edicts within the city. Unsure of Belgian reaction, the German Reich moved slowly with their new laws, first requiring a curfew for Jews, and later the

wearing of the yellow star. Passports were collected, and Jews were required to register with the town governmental bodies. Jews were offered jobs in nearby towns, and those who volunteered for work were never heard from again. By 1942 the Germans began raiding sections of the neighborhoods and Jews were being collected and transported to ghettos and transit camps. Treated for tonsillitis, Lily remembers that during her hospitalization, a friend of her mother offered to hide Lily's older sister with a family in the country. Having resisted sexual relations with the rescuing man, Lily's sister was denounced and transported to a transit camp. "When she was, um, taken out of, um, to transport from Belgium to, um, the camp, she had slipped a postal card through...through the cracks of the cattle wagon. And, um, early in the morning as people were going to work and the farmers were going to work in their fields, they would pick up notes and cards that people dropped from the, um, wagons. And, um, this is how we got our card from my sister, saying, 'Beware of this woman, because she took me to this man who wanted to have relationships with me. And I wouldn't give in, and I got denounced.'"

After that incident, Lily's mother and brother were denounced by the woman who had suggested that Lily's sister be sent to the country. Lily was warned that after her operation she should stay with her aunt for

protection in the outskirts of Brussels. She remained in hiding with her aunt and uncle until 1944. All around the area Jews were being discovered and gentiles who knew Lily suggested that they change her name to appear non-Jewish. "Lily, let's call you Lilliane from now on...nobody will know that you are Jewish." Upon that recommendation Lily hid her identity and worked in a little factory doing part-time work. "As the years...in... 1940...from 1942 to 1944, at the end it was getting real tough on us. And, um, as we were struggling to survive, one day I came home from work and the people downstairs told us that we have to get out." Denounced by new gentile tenants in the buildings, the following day the German soldiers came to arrest Lily, her aunt, and uncle. Fortunately, they had been pre-warned and were hidden by other gentile rescuers. Harbored in safety by a friend, Lily remained in hiding separated from her aunt and uncle until she visited them two weeks later and was captured by the SS. Gathered with other captured Jews, Lily and her family were placed in Malines (Mechlin in English), a small town between Brussels and Antwerp. Lily and her family remained in this transit detention camp for approximately six weeks until enough "undesirables" were gathered for transport. "I was the 25th transport that left Malines. And after that, there was one more transport; and then Belgium was liberated." Taken by cattle car, they arrived at

Birkenau, and the transport was divided into lines sent to the “right or to the left...And at that time I did not know what that meant. And he told me to go to the right, (Mengele) and he told my aunt to go to the left...But I never saw her after that again...I was 15 years old, and I was all alone in this Hell.”

“They tattooed me; and they told us from now on, this is my name...This was the second time. The first time, they made a mistake with the whole transport. So they called us back and they scratched the first number out, and then they gave us the second number...And the delusion, the disappointment, the discouragement that I felt. I felt like I was not a human person anymore. They had shaved our heads; I felt so ashamed. And also when they told us to undress and to shower, they made us feel like...like we were animals. The men were walking around and laughing and looking at us. And you take a young girl at the age, who was never been exposed to, um, a person...to a man, and you stay there naked...I wanted the ground should open, and I should go in it.”

Unable to make sense of the inhumanity, the atrocities, and the evilness, Lily decided to make the “best out of everything. Try to survive in the jungle.” Forcing herself to eat, she held hope of survival to return to her aunt in Belgium. Living in Birkenau for six weeks, Lily

volunteered with a group of other young girls from Belgium for a work detail. "We had made a pact that we should stick together, because all the parents was taken together in the gas chambers." The group of 25 or 30 girls were taken to Auschwitz to work in the kitchen in a new Lager (Zwei-B Lager). Remaining in the kitchen for six months, Lily reported that she smuggled food one night to Hungarian transports who were not fed. Caught by the Blockältester, Lily was saved from death and sent back to her barracks. She discovered the next day that the entire transport was liquidated. "They were all gone. And I could have lost my life. I didn't realize what I was doing. But I felt in my heart that I wanted to help these people, and this is all I could do."

Helped by her friends after being badly scalded by burning coffee, Lily feels her affiliation with other girls helped her escape the grips of Dr. Mengele's selection. Lily reported that many Jews gave up, and others threw themselves against the electric wires, but she remembers that she would sneak behind the barracks and look at the night sky. "And I would see the sky...I would see the stars. And I would talk to myself; and I would say, 'I can't believe that these stars are looking down at us in this Hell, in this camp, and the same stars are shining at the outside of the world. And other people are looking at the same stars, and they are free. And they are

free to do what they want to do. And they are living a good life. And we are here in Hell- human beings worse than animals.” After a long cry, Lily would return to the barrack and face the next morning appell.

Learning that Belgium had been liberated, Lily regained hope that she would eventually return to her aunt in Belgium. With the approaching Russian soldiers, Auschwitz prisoners were sent on a forced death march. “I don’t know how many days we walked. We walked. and then we took cattle cars, and then we walked again...We saw people laying all over: on top of hills, behind trees...it was really like a war zone. And this is how we finally arrived in a camp called Bergen-Belsen.” Lily reported the dehumanizing conditions and that Bergen-Belsen had no showers or sanitary facilities.

Within the camp Lily protected a young girl named Christiane and the young child became a meaning or purpose to survive. Christiane was infected with typhus and began screaming out of control. Lily reported that she tried to feed and calm her, but the young child died in Lily’s arms. Christiane’s body was thrown into a pile of dead bodies decomposing before Lily’s eye’s each day. Lily became disillusioned and unwilling to fight for survival. Becoming quite sick and weakened, Lily developed typhus and could not walk at the time of liberation. Lily was transported at

the time of liberation to a nearby camp and later the Belgian Red Cross sent her back home to Belgium where she reunited with her aunt. Eventually she immigrated to the United States at the insistence of her aunt who had always dreamed of coming to the United States.

#### Coping of Lily M.

Lily utilized emotion-focused strategies demonstrated by her affiliation with her aunt, the group of young girls from Belgium with whom she traveled to Auschwitz from Birkenau, and her protection of Christiane, the young girl who was also on the forced march to Bergen-Belsen from Auschwitz. She reported “I had promised the other girls that I was going to take care of her, because we were separated from the other group, from the other Belgian people. So I felt like a duty, that she was part of me; and I kind of protected her. And, um, I guess that gave me the strength to carry on, because I kind of worried about her.” The affiliation with others was mutual in that Lily protected other women, as well as being protected by others who assisted her at times of need. Commenting on the affiliation and protection from her friends, Lily reported that she escaped the Mengele’s “death claws” due to the assistance of others. “And if it wouldn’t have been for those two girls who were holding me, I would

have collapsed. And I thought any moment he (Mengele) was going to shoot me or tell me to get on his jeep. I thought he was going to put...take me away." These relationships with others were evidence of concern, protection, and caring for each other and also served as a motive for survival and adaptation. The coping strategy of affiliation was also connected with Lily's valiant act of compassion when she stole food from the kitchen to feed the starving Hungarian Jews who were placed in the family camp. This act might have been an act of resistance, but surely it was a gift of hope and caring for others.

Lily also reported that she utilized the strategies of emotion-focused coping with her thoughts of hope and believing that she would eventually return to her aunt in Belgium. Pulling upon techniques such as intellectualization and faith that the situation would soon be better, Lily discovered means of adaptation. She also reported that she used techniques of questioning the "meaning" of the atrocities under which she lived and that she found some relief in crying and struggling to "face the morning" after sneaking out of the barracks at night and gazing at the stars. Perhaps this means of coping suggests fantasizing that things might be better, but it also indicates that Lily strove to understand (meaning) how God could allow such pain and genocide in a world in which others lived in freedom.



Telephone Interview with Lily M.

Lily reported that she believed that she coped by living one day at a time. There was no “future” and coping could only occur from hour to hour. “You never knew what the next hour would bring...Never knew what the future was.” Lily reported that she was certain that she did not want to die, and each day that she could maintain her strength moved her one day closer to liberation.

Lily reported that it was “friends who were with you that kept you strong.” She said that she and other girls had formed a group in Mechelen and were determined that they would assist each other. All of these girls had lost their mothers and only had each other to depend on for support and encouragement. “We were like sisters.”

Lily spoke of the importance of being “with her own thoughts.” Dangerous as it was, she sneaked out of the barracks at night and crept behind the buildings in the back corner where it was quiet. She reported that it was dark and safe from the lights of the watchtower, and she would stay there and be with herself and look at the sky and talk to the stars. Lily reported that she tried to reason with G-d and thought about those who

were free, wondering if they knew about the suffering and horrors of Auschwitz.

Lily spoke of her protection of Christiane and the promise that she had made to “keep an eye” on the frail girl. “If you were by yourself, you would lose the battle.” Taking care of someone else gave Lily the strength to preserve and continue to survive. The affiliation and support that she gave to others, as well as the support of others for her, were vital in her resiliency.

Lily reported that she believes that she is a strong woman who was raised to care for others. She noted that she still wonders why the atrocities of the Holocaust happened and that she has never understood the meaning of the senseless suffering.

#### Story of Kate B.

Kate B. was born on August 27, 1927, in Szikszo, Hungary, to a middle-class Jewish family. One of three children, she remembers that her childhood was happy and that she always felt protected and shielded by her parents. She reported that her family heard rumors about what was occurring during the occupations by the Nazis; but her family, like many others, thought the rumors may be an exaggeration. The family believed

that the Nazis would never harm the Hungarians because they were loyal citizens and because their grandfather had fought for the country.

In March of 1944, the Germans occupied Szikszó and all Jews were mandated to wear the yellow star of David and were restricted in travel, business ventures, schooling, and were given curfews. Within a few weeks all the Jews in her town were rounded up and sent to the ghetto in the town of Kassa (Kosice, Czechoslovakia). The Jewish families were not allowed to bring very many personal possessions; and many believed that without food or money, they would have no future. Kate reported the family spent four weeks in the ghetto in Kassa.

Living in the ghetto, the Jews attempted to make the best of a bad situation. Kate became “semi-officially engaged” to a young man and soon the ghetto was liquidated; three days later the family arrived in Auschwitz on May 18, 1944. Kate reported that the train ride was “so humiliating and...horrible. So all they can do is cry or pray or to try to soothe each other and, and sitting down on the floor and mothers with their children and...resting in their heads in their lap...least we were together.” Upon entrance to Auschwitz the men and women were separated. Kate remembered that a German officer asked her mother her age and she reported “Vierzig” (40) and was “sent to the other side. But at that point

we thought we going to see each other yet. I mean we had no idea of, of, uh, what was waiting for us. And then they told us that you're going to see them later, that you're going to see them at night."

While Kate was taken to the showers, Kate's mother was placed in the line of death and was exterminated in the gas chamber. The Blockältesters in charge of the barracks where Kate was sent were Czechoslovakian. Attempting to orient the young girls, Kate remembers they told them of the camp routine and reported that they would never see their parents again. "You might as well forget about it because they are already in the, marched into the gas chambers. We just couldn't believe them you know in our wildest dream that something like this could happen. We thought they were just, uh, being rude to us. They...wanted to punish us for, for not being here the same way like they were for so many years already." Kate remembers that they were told that if volunteers were requested that they should get out of Auschwitz because this was a death camp. Three days later Kate was moved to the Plaszow camp in Krakow because there was not enough room for all the newcomers into Auschwitz.

Kate remembers that Plaszow was worse than Auschwitz and that they were worked very hard physically. Appells were done in the freezing cold, and they were forced to carry big wooden planks up a very steep

mountain at a very quick pace. If the prisoners did not work quickly, they would miss the food which was limited in supply. "From the other camp-mates who were, who were not, uh, not good to us because they felt that we were, uh, spoiled or, or we just coming from, from our, our, uh, homes and they were already suffering for years and years and they thought we're not even Jewish, Jewish, uh, prisoners because you don't speak the language (Yiddish). We don't belong."

With the nearing Allied troops near Plaszow, Kate was transferred back to Auschwitz on August 5, 1944. After three days in transport Kate reported that she was thankful to be back in Auschwitz. She was placed in Lager C, shaved, and tattooed. "We really didn't care at that point. We didn't think that...we really ex...ceased to be human beings. We were just a number already." Kate remembers trying to avoid the selections but that she and her cousin volunteered for a selection. Five hundred women were needed and Kate and her cousin were selected, while two of her other cousins were not taken and remained in Auschwitz. The remaining cousins, she later discovered perished in Auschwitz.

Kate and her cousin were sent to work in a factory in Augsburg, Germany. The factory was said to belong to Messerschmidt. The camp was very different because they were living in the factory building and

were not locked up. Kate reported that this work camp was a little more humane, but each night there was an air raid. The prisoners were rushed to the barracks because the German guards were fearful that the Jews might signal the airplanes. On one occasion a bomb fell in the courtyard and the Germans believed that the end was in sight. Kate reported that they attempted to make some alterations within the factory with the chemicals and the parts. She said they sabotaged the materials a little and “manipulate(d) a little that it shouldn’t be so good, but I don’t know.”

Kate remembers that everyone tried to keep each other’s spirits up during these times. The use of fantasy was common and the discussions centered around what would occur when the girls were liberated. “I never thought for a minute that I’m really going to die. I, it just did not sink in. I mean with all these horrors around me I...I always thought that we were dreaming of, of things--when I got home I’m going to do this and I’m going to do that and I just want to see this, this war end and just live for the day when we see the Germans defeated.” Suicide was always an option, but Kate said that she always hoped that she would be reunited with her parents.

Towards the end of the war, Kate was transferred to various camps which were full, and she ended up in Muhlhof which was under the

jurisdiction of Dachau camp. Remembering the bombing, Kate reminisced that she was happy that the Germans were being bombed. Transferred on other occasions the group was eventually liberated by the Swiss Red Cross on May 1, 1945.

Kate returned home to Hungary after the war in September and discovered that her one brother had survived the war. Kate's older brother was reported to be killed in the last days of the war. Kate was also reunited with her fiancé and they were married in Germany in a displaced persons' camp. The couple later immigrated to the United States.

#### Coping of Kate B.

Kate reported that she believes that her affiliation with her cousins and friends were very vital in her coping during the Holocaust. She reported that hope was an essential element of her emotion-focused coping. Viewing herself as an optimist, she believed that a person must never lose hope, even in the face of atrocities. "I always felt that no matter how much, uh, front we're going to put up, they...at the end they're going to kill us. And...but we did not give up hope. We didn't go around--I'm going to lay down and die."

Kate also reported that she coped by imagining and fantasizing that the war would soon be over. Kate relished in the belief that the Germans would someday lose the war. She believed that she would one day be reunited with her friends, her parents, and those that she loved.

Determination and inner perseverance is illustrated when Kate reported in her testimony, "It was so easy in Auschwitz. All you had to do is reach out for the barbed wires...we will not do them the favor. We said if they want to kill us, they'll have to kill us...because if we knew that our parents would be alive...we can do it...we are going to stay alive."

Kate noted that she had become numb during her internment. She also stated that luck and chance played a role in her survival.

#### Telephone Interview with Kate B.

Kate reported that there were no specific coping strategies, but everyone was in the same situation. She and her friends would fantasize about the old days and hope that they would eventually wake up from the horrors and return home to Hungary. Kate reported that she was aided by her cousins and friends and that it was important to have the affiliation which strengthened their survival. She reported that it was common for



the girls to assist each other by keeping each other optimistic and not allowing each other to become depressed and negative.

Kate suggested that she “went along with the flow...I was young and pretty strong and did not ever give up.” She believes that her childhood instilled her self-confidence and that her religion and culture aided her belief that she was “good, no matter what they did to us.” Believing that she was strong physically and emotionally, Kate’s inner perseverance was a driving force in her emotion-focused coping.

She did mention that at times that she did not consider what would occur and became somewhat emotionally numbed during the massive traumatization. In light of all that was mentioned, Kate was very emphatic in stating that luck and fate played a large part in her survival during the Holocaust.

### The Story of Cecilie K.

Cecilie K. was born in Yasinya, Czechoslovakia, on April 13, 1925, the youngest of six children. Her father was a German and math teacher within the small community. Her parents also owned a grocery store which was run by her mother. The family was of orthodox background and very close knit. When she was nine, Cecilie’s father passed away; and

when she reached the age of 14, her town was occupied by Hungarians. The Jews were not allowed to go to school; and one day when she returned from a friend's house, she realized that her mother and sister had been imprisoned and sent to a prison in Budapest. With no citizenship papers except the record of her father's origin from Poland, her family was considered Polish and mandated to imprisonment. Fourteen years old and alone, Cecilie went to live with a married sister six miles away. After the release of her mother and sister, Cecilie was forced to live in hiding for one year knowing that her family would be deported to Poland and placed in a ghetto if they were discovered.

At the age of 17 Cecilie's sister was arrested, and a plan was concocted for Cecilie, appearing non-Jewish, to travel on a train to Budapest. This would be accomplished by purchasing a first-class ticket (which was not allowed as seating for Jews) and by purchasing a known anti-Semitic newspaper and reading it on the train. The goal of the trip was for Cecilie to gain legal assistance from a lawyer in Budapest to help her sister. Upon arrival in Budapest, she learned that her sister had been transported to Backa Topola in Serbia. Working to earn money, once again Cecilie manufactured a means of travel and went to find her sister in Backa Topola.

From one near miss to the next, Cecilie continued to escape arrest and deportation in an effort to save her family members through 1944 when the Nazis occupied Budapest. Leaving this area she traveled back to her family and was thereafter mandated to move to a ghetto in Khust with her family. Together once again, they all believed that they would have a chance for survival, believing that the Nazi horror could not go on forever.

Upon deportation from Khust, unknowingly, Cecilie and her family were placed in cattle cars being sent to Auschwitz. Cecilie stated that no one attempted to escape because there “was absolutely no way, or no chance” to get away. Disbelieving that they would be transported for annihilation, they believed that they would survive.

Upon arrival in Auschwitz, they thought that nothing could be worse than what they had experienced in the ghetto, but quickly they were told by whispering kapos that women with children, the elderly, and the unfit would be exterminated. In a “choiceless-choice” for survival, Cecilie’s mother quickly took her grandchild in her arms and was pushed into the line assigned for death. As Cecilie’s mother was pushed into the “line of death,” she yelled to Cecilie “not to worry and to take care of your sister.” Cecilie reported that she felt an obligation “and a double challenge to keep

my sister alive” because eventually her sister would realize her child’s fate, as well as their own.

Retelling the horrors and dehumanizing conditions upon arrival at Auschwitz, Cecilie spoke of the demoralizing conditions and of the kapos telling them that their mothers, sisters, and fathers were being burned in the smoke filling the skies above their heads. Telling her sister that this was a means of scaring those who were vulnerable, she momentarily protected her sister from the traumatic truth.

“The things that we have witnessed is...is unbelievable what human beings can do to other human beings. Even animals have a tendency to kill only...they would kill only for food, but they (Nazis) killed for pleasure.” Continually becoming weaker and weaker, her goal was to keep her sister alive in an effort to “bear witness” to the atrocities which occurred during internment. Despite her sister’s constant desire to commit suicide, Cecilie viewed that it was her responsibility to convince her sister to live for another day.

Favored by one of the Blockältester, she was taken into the children’s block with her sister. Protected from selections by the Blockältester, she and her sister were hidden during these time under blankets in an empty room in the block. But one day Cecilie reported they cleared out the entire

block and everyone was marched to the gas chamber. Cecilie remembers that she heard a guard say that the “gas chambers were full” and that members of the SS decided to “switch their group” with a group deporting to an ammunition work camp in Nuremburg. As Cecilie remembers, the SS guards decided to “make a switch. We’ll take these to work, and the other group we will take to the gas chamber.” Cecilie believes she lived on that day purely due to luck.

Cecilie and her sister were sent to a subcamp of Flossenburg and worked in an ammunition factory. When the Allies began bombing that area, they were sent to Holleischen, another ammunition factory, until liberation by the Russian partisans.

#### Coping of Cecilie K.

Cecilie’s testimony is filled with reports of problem-focused coping strategies. Her oral history reveals a variety of situations in which she believed that she could effect the environment and create change. These included examples of problem-solving strategies such as riding a train to save her sister, stealing bread and potatoes for survival, withstanding beatings to assist her depressed sister, and hiding from the selections in Auschwitz.

The purpose of keeping her sister alive and the continuation of her relationship with her sister was primary in Cecilie's testimony.

Determined to keep both alive, Cecilie and her sister demonstrated the adaptation strategy of affiliation as a means of survival.

Cecilie, on a few occasions, spoke to the issue of luck and hope which illustrated her utilization of emotion-focused coping. She reported that she was designated to "be the hope" of the 600 women who were sent to the subcamp and that luck saved her from the gas chamber in Auschwitz.

#### Telephone Interview with Cecilie K.

Cecilie believes that she remained alive because of her dedication to keep her sister alive. She believed that you could cope "if you had someone...my attention was on her." Cecilie reported that her sister wanted to commit suicide and she felt responsible to assist her sister's survival. She also stated that the protection of the Blockältester was vital in her survival. Because of her affiliation with the Blockältester she believes that she was able to avoid a selection in which she would surely have been exterminated. She also reported that the Blockältester assisted in helping her move to her barracks for protection.

Cecilie reported that you “had to stop thinking about the past and your family. You could only survive if you think that I want to live.” She said that she thought of nothing except to protect her sister, her friends, and herself. “You had to have someone to hold on to!”

Cecilie remembered one young girl who was a talented dancer. Forced to dance “in this hell,” she was taken away for three days, returning unrecognizable . The young girl had been beaten, raped, and tortured. Cecilie reported that she protected the young friend by placing her between herself and her sister during a selection. Cecilie remembers that the friend was chosen to die in the selection and that Cecilie wrote a poem in memory of her.

The poems that Cecilie wrote were not only an emotional outlet, but they were also a means of connecting with the Blockaltester who encouraged her talent and protected her as much as possible. She was asked on occasions to read her poems in front of an SS guard at the request of her Blockaltester. This favored status aided her in her survival.

“Auschwitz was a different world.” The dehumanizing conditions, the beatings, the mistreatment only led to a hardening of survivors. Cecilie reported that it was difficult to feel once again and become “human” after liberation.

### The Story of Guta Blass Weintraub\*

Guta W. was born on January 22, 1924, in Lodz, Poland. Guta remembers that she had a wonderful childhood in a loving family where her father was a pattern-maker of uniforms for schools and the boy scouts. This upper middle class family was able to send Guta and her younger brother to attend private schools as well as Jewish public schools.

Anti-Semitism was prominent in Poland, but Guta reported that she only occasionally heard about incidents where someone was beaten up or a synagogue was burned or vandalized. Guta reported that she was sheltered from the news of those incidents by her parents while she was growing up.

In September of 1939 the Germans occupied Lodz. They began occupying and taking over school buildings, offices, government offices, and settled themselves in Guta's private high school. Fearful for the safety of the girls, the school was closed when it became clear that the Polish army was running eastward in an attempt to avoid encirclement by the approaching German army. Guta remembers that the Polish army actually retreated through Lodz when they were not successful in their attempts to harness the Germans' advances.

\*(survivor has requested her name is used)



Guta's family remained in Lodz until December of 1939 when they moved to her mother's hometown of Wierzbnik-Starachowice. Hidden for protection, the family needed to pretend that they were not Jewish to survive. Guta's father spoke perfect German, as did Guta who spoke with an authentic German dialect. The ability to speak in the native tongue assisted the family in appearing as if they were of German or mixed German descent. Later the family rented an apartment and Guta's father continued his work as a clothing designer and made military clothes, as well as sportswear. During this time Guta, at the age of 16, was able to open her own kindergarten and cared for children of parents who were still capable of working.

When the ghetto was established, Guta reports that they were able to move about freely inside the areas of confinement and that the most important aspect was that the family was able to be together. "Our lives were still sort of normal because we were able to get together with friends, with relatives, and amazing things that all through our confinements in the ghetto or in a work camp or even in a concentration camp is the fact that...the Jewish population always had a sense of wanting to learn...wanting to have knowledge, so we did not stop." Guta continued to

teach kindergarten inside the ghetto and others were able to teach Guta. She remembers that she took classes in Latin and French during the ghettoization period. "We were not torn apart, and therefore, uh, life seemed to be normal. It was very special...because we valued each other...we just understood it better because family ties were very close among Jewish families...We did not have a million things that we had before, but it did not seem to matter."

With the situation getting worse inside Poland, the family was preparing for evacuation and Guta's father packed knapsacks for each of the family with essential clothes and money for self-preservation if any were separated from the others. This preparation was necessary when the Germans came at 4 a.m. in the morning and gathered the Jews in the marketplace. Forced into a selection, the younger and stronger people remained in the city and were distributed into three work camps located in the city. Separated from her father and mother, Guta was reunited with them when a Jewish policeman, watching the selection, realized what was happening and took Guta's parents from another line and reunited the family. Guta's brother was told by the Jewish policeman that he and his son should volunteer to be stationed outside the city working as cleaning boys and helpers to Polish citizens. Guta, her father, and mother were

taken to a work camp which was a woodwork factory. At this camp Guta met her future husband who was very handsome, clever, and gathered food for the family. "He was...always able to...to manage things. He was very...how to say?...uh...innovative?"

During her time in the working camp, a Ukrainian soldier took a liking to Guta. Drunk one night this soldier named Schrot came running through the barracks calling for Guta and shouting that if she did not appear he would kill everyone within the barracks. Guta creatively talked to the drunken soldier and eventually he left with everyone unharmed.

Soon after, Guta and her family were taken to Majowka which was a work camp which housed a steel factory. The last ones to arrive in the camp, they were met by the same guard named Schrot. Forced to walk to a mass grave, Schrot demanded that the group divide with "women on one side, men on the other side. Make a line in fours. Then he stood at the end of the grave and said to us, 'You have one minute...' He said it in German, he said, 'You have one minute to say your prayers. You'll be shot'...But my utmost feeling and reaction was my concern, first of all, for my parents, for my brother, for my friends, for everybody there." Guta ran out toward the soldier and jumped on his back and put her fingers around his throat and began choking him. Falling to the ground the two were

pulled apart by German soldiers. The outcry of a young girl (who later became her sister-in-law) declared that someone needed to assist Guta who had fainted. The soldier took a gun and “he shot me it was from an angle coming here and going out this way. So it basically grazed my skin and part of my bone since my head was that way.”

Because of a Russian bombing, Guta left for dead, escaped, still bleeding profusely, and returned to a nearby barracks where her family had been transferred during the chaotic situation near the grave site. “Well, the only thing that I can do is just get under the barracks. Little by little, I got myself under the barracks and they were ever lower than my body could part...take it, so I had to possibly squeeze myself in. I felt, every time I breathed, I felt that I’m raising the floor of the barracks...”

In September of 1944, Guta and her family were transferred on wagons and sent to Auschwitz. Quickly separated into lines of males and females, Guta and her mother were sent to the showers. At the request of a friend, Guta hid gold pieces in a bar of soap for safe keeping. Exiting the showers naked, a selection was taking place outside the doors by Eichmann, Ukrainians, and two German women. Standing naked in front of the selection group humiliated and totally devastated the young teenager. Separated from her mother, Guta rushed to Eichmann, who was in charge,

and begged to be placed with her mother. Pleading that her mother was the only person left in her life and promising that she would be loyal and work harder next to her mother, she was placed with her mother. The line, however, was going directly to the crematoria. "Well, the girl (German girl in the selection group) somehow took pity on me. I don't...with this girl I had several other incidents too because I must say that as bad as they were I wouldn't want to say anything special for the Germans as a whole, but I ...I must say that on occasions, you found a person with feelings and compassion and they did special things." Pleading with the young girl, Guta desperately asked the German girl, "if this was happening to you, wouldn't you want to save your mother?" The German girl was touched by Guta and smuggled her and her mother to the line of life. Placed in the "Death barracks" the next morning, Guta was tattooed as numbers A-14028 and her mother was numbered A-14029.

The gas chambers could not work fast enough to liquidate all of the Jews and Guta and her family were kept in the temporary barracks. Forced into living quarters with 9 or 10 other women, there was no work which had any purpose. "Even though there was any work, it had no meaning. It just had the meaning of the work was to destroy us, to make us tired, to make us exhausted because in the beginning like, for example,

every morning we had to be waken up at 4 o'clock." Each day began with the morning "appell" and the counting of prisoners. Guta and her mother were assigned to a group which was told to move stones from one location to another. The moving of the rocks had no purpose except to exhaust and humiliate the prisoners. This process of physically torturing and exhausting the prisoners saved bullets but worked as efficiently.

Guta remained in Auschwitz from September of 1944 through January of 1945 when she and the other prisoners were sent on the Death March. Rumors at the time of the departure from the camp spread quickly about the assassination attempts on Hitler and that the German guards had poisoned all of the bread in the camp. "We heard of many other things and that's when they, instead of running themselves, they had to take us because they did not want to leave any evidence, especially evidence that can talk..." Chased out of the camp, Guta remembered that everything happened very quickly. Transportation, which was privately owned, was not available, and Guta and other prisoners were forced to walk in rows of 30 or 40 on a road covered with bodies of men who had been on the road before the departure of Guta's group from Auschwitz. "And we saw a leg or a hand or a nose sticking out from the...from the snow and we realized that this is what happened. So it made our journey that much worse because we

wanted to see when we saw somebody if it was not anybody, my father, my brother, or somebody else, whatever.”

On January 22, 1945, which was Guta’s birthday, the group was placed on open platforms at the train station and transferred to Ravensbruck. Guta reported that her mother’s physical health was worsening. Too weak to leave the barracks one morning, Guta’s mother was held up during roll call by Guta and her girlfriend. Once again Guta was aided by the young German girl, who instructed Guta to take her mother into the barracks. “I picked up my mother in my arms like a baby and I walked with her into the barracks and I sat in the chair and I was just holding her, like a baby.” Guta’s mother eventually had a stroke and was taken to the hospital (the “Revier”). In the afternoon Guta brought her portion of food to her mother in the hospital and was informed that her mother was dead. “I was just like a ...like a puppet doing things and the first things were I took all her belongings, her shoes, her little scarf, her garter belt, her comb and whatever else she had there, and...uh...still I knew that this was not enough of her that I wanted to take with me. And I asked for scissors and I cut a great part of her hair--and I did it, amazingly, only from the left side because I said, ‘It is from the heart side’--and I cut her hair, and I still have it.” Mourning her mother, Guta

returned to her dead mother's body the next day to once again say her final good-byes. In an effort to maintain her silence during the visit to her mother's corpse, Guta stuffed her fist in her mouth so that she would not scream out loud in her agonizing suffering.

Later Guta was forced to work in an area where human waste was being prepared as fertilizer for the German agricultural farmers. Made to stand in narrow ditches, Guta and others were forced to stir the waste with large sticks or shovels. "...(T)he smell was horrible. Uh...people sometimes fell up to their necks and nobody bothered taking them out. So it was...uh...unforgettable. It was a horrible, horrible...if you had to imagine a horror story, you couldn't."

Emotionally depleted, Guta volunteered to be placed on a list which was reported to be a rescue group from the Swedish Red Cross. Many times deceived by the Germans in other situations, volunteering many times meant certain death. "But I didn't care. I did not care to live anymore. I couldn't live with the memories and I certainly could not see the future, so I put myself on the list." The list was actually the Swedish Red Cross liberation group and Guta was transported to Denmark and thereafter to Sweden.



### Coping of Guta W.

Guta's undying devotion to her mother was a prime example of emotion-focused coping which centered around affiliation and relationships with others. Clearly, the dedication to her mother was her primary motivating force in her survival. On numerous occasions Guta put her life at risk in an effort to save her loved ones. "... (M)y concern first of all for my parents, for my brother, for my friends, for everybody there." Willing to place herself at risk, even jumping upon an SS guard's back, she saved her mother and the other prisoners standing in front of their impending death at a large grave site. On an earlier occasion Guta had protected the members of her group from the SS soldier Schrot when she placed herself in a position of calming the drunken Schrot who threatened to kill the entire barracks of Jews in the work camp if Guta did not do as he asked.

There were no illustrations of problem-focused coping reported by Guta, who suggested that assistance from others was gained from other Jewish prisoners, girlfriends, as well as the young German girl who saved her from the grips of death on a couple of occasions within the Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

Telephone Interview with Guta W.

Emphasizing the importance of understanding the “Auschwitz mentality,” Guta reported that the goal of Auschwitz was to dehumanize the Jewish people. “The mentality of the camp can not be understood...under any circumstances. The Holocaust was not simple at all...the mentality you cannot tell, unless you tell everything.” She spoke of the mentality being related to a growing fungus which was built by Hitler and the Nazi ideology.

Guta reported that she was determined and very lucky to survive. She did report that she believes that the Polish women were very strong physically and were strong and optimistic in character. Dedicated and devoted to her family, which she believes was the standard of life in Eastern European Jewish families, she reported that she was willing to do anything to protect her family from harm. Guta minimized her heroic deed at the edge of the mass grave where the entire group was to be exterminated. “I do not doubt that these people survived because of me. I did it like an impulse...because of my mother...it was just natural.” Guta believed that she survived because she did things that she would not normally do, in a effort to protect her mother.

Pleading with the SS Eichmann at the selection line, with the SS guard Schrot, as well as with the young German girl, Guta coped with the extreme massive trauma with the maintenance of her relationships and protection of her loved ones. The dignity and respect for family was the primary motivating force for survival and adaptation.

Guta reported that she became emotionally numbed and depleted after the death of her mother in Ravensbruck which was only three weeks before the liberation by the Swedish Red Cross. "I lost my will to live when my mother died."

#### Story of Margaret K.

Margaret K. was born on June 8, 1923, in Rogazin, which is a province in Posen. The family adopted Germany as their homeland. The youngest child of ten, Margaret's childhood was very happy. She reported that her family was not very religious and that her father was a butcher and her mother did not work. Margaret remembers when Hitler came to power that her brother Max was taken by the Gestapo and the family could not discover what happened to him. Six months later the family was informed that Max had died in Sachsenhausen from a reported "infection."

Margaret remembers that she was at her sister's house when the Germans came and took Margaret to the police station. Interrogating her about the whereabouts of others who might be hidden, Margaret stated that she knew where other Jews were, "but I don't think so that I will tell you one, because you got me and this is enough." Angered by her resistance, the police placed her in a jail in Berlin where she stayed for months. The decision was made that she would be transported to Auschwitz and Margaret reported "my mind was made up. I didn't want to go...I opened the window and I jumped out. I jumped out---it's the second floor. I don't want to die. I just thought I could run away." Margaret, requesting to use the lavatory on the second floor, heroically jumped from the second floor of the camp jail and broke her arm and leg in the attempted escape. Captured outside the building, an SS man wanted to send her on the transport to Auschwitz and the other SS man (who Margaret reports was a "nice Nazi") decided that she would be placed in a hospital instead. "So I got...I got lucky. So they brought me to---this was in Berlin, it was a Jewish hospital" which was in a Jewish camp where she stayed for nine months.

At the end of that time Margaret and 39 other Jews from the camp were transported to Auschwitz. Upon arrival in Auschwitz, Margaret and

two other girls were chosen from the group and survived the transport. Margaret reported that she believed that she was “plain lucky” escaping the selection and was taken to the showers, shaved, and placed in the barracks with many others from Holland. In crowded conditions, the group was forced to drink from one bowl and many died very quickly from malnutrition.

On one occasion Margaret was caught laughing during roll, and she was beaten by Irma Grese and lost three teeth in the exchange. She also remembers that Mengele often watched the prisoners march out and that the Jews were forced to “sing happy songs when we are marched through...this door” to work in the potato fields.

Margaret reported that she lived in Auschwitz for two years watching the crematorium ovens working morning and night. The ovens worked 24 hours a day and the skies were red with the flames of those who were condemned to death. Determined to make it through the atrocities of Auschwitz, Margaret stated, “I have to get out of here. From there, I will never get out (ovens); because nobody came out of there alive.”

Emotionally depleted after two or more years in the camp, Margaret decided that she would stop an SS man on the streets of Auschwitz camp complex and ask to be sent to work in Germany. Begged by her friends

not to proceed with this plan, Margaret remembers that she said, “Well, what is the difference? I’m here so long. If I am...get killed today, it’s okay. I’m dead anyway.” Addressing the SS guard and conveying that she was German and had worked in an ammunition camp before she was told that she could be transported, Margaret told him that she had heard that German girls were being sent to Berlin to work. Asking to take two of her friends along with her, the three women were told to come to the SS barracks. Told to give blood to the doctors in charge, the SS man reported that the three women were doing a “good deed. I say, ‘Why?’ He said, ‘This is for German soldiers.’ I say ‘German...soldiers? I am Jewish.’ So he preaches the...blood is no good, and the Jews are no good. He takes this blood for you do a good...deed.” Then the women were taken in the dark to another block, unsure if they would be taken to the crematoriums. Instead the three were taken to Czechoslovakia to work in an ammunition factory for one year until their liberation in May of 1945.

Margaret reported that she was the only child within her family who was sent to the concentration camp and survived. She reported that she lost 24 family members when she returned to her home in Berlin.

Coping of Margaret K.

Margaret estimates that her internment beginning with the capture from her sister's house and placement in the jail, attempted escape, policed hospitalization, internment in Auschwitz, and the transport to a working camp in Czechoslovakia covered four years. During her internment in Auschwitz, Margaret utilized a combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies. Reported to use problem-focused mechanisms to create and manipulate the environment by asking the SS guard to be transferred is an example of the means that Margaret utilized to create opportunities for change. She admitted that she wanted to find a way "out" of Auschwitz and was not willing to sit and wait to leave through the chimneys of the oven crematorium. Margaret illustrated emotion-focused coping by her affiliation with other women and the protection of them when she found a means of escaping the camp setting in Auschwitz. The relationship with the other women was a motivating and supporting force in her survival within the camp. Margaret also notes that luck played a large part in her process. This is typified in her statement that it was luck that she was chosen from the group of thirty-nine others to be saved from the selection of those who were exterminated. She also believes that it was luck that the SS guard allowed her to go into the Jewish hospital

when she was captured after her attempted escape versus being placed on a transport to Auschwitz.

Telephone Interview with Margaret K.

Margaret believes that she survived because of her determination to live through the atrocities of the Nazi occupation and internment. “I didn’t want to die. I’m a very, very tough cookie.” Her determination and will to live were so great that she was willing to persevere in an attempt to survive internment. She also believed that she coped because she was willing to be a “hard worker” in the potato fields. Margaret believed that she also coped through the support of friends in her barracks. The friendship between these women was very important to Margaret, and she reported that she spoke to the SS man in an effort to gain passage out of Auschwitz for herself and also for them. She reported saying, “Well, I’m here long enough. If I’m going to die in their hands (the Nazis), then let me...then this is what I want.”

Margaret also illustrates the use of emotion-focused coping when she described that she became numb and determined that she “didn’t care anymore” and was willing to take a risk by talking to the SS man on the motorcycle about transport to a working camp in Czechoslovakia.



Story of Barbara F.

Barbara F. was born on May 4, 1920, in Beliu, Romania, in North Transylvania. Living in this very small Jewish community, she reported that there were only 30 to 35 Jewish families who were very close. The community had a rabbi who taught Sunday mornings where the children were taught Hebrew and the Jewish prayers and blessings.

Living in Beliu until 1937, her parents owned and operated a grocery store. The community at this time was friendly to Jews and Barbara reported that there was little anti-Semitic treatment within the community at large. In 1937 the family sold their house and moved to Oradea which was approximately 75 miles from Beliu. Within this community, the family once again owned and operated a grocery store.

Barbara excelled in school within her community and received many awards (medals) for her academic achievements. In 1940 she graduated from Romanian schools and was refused entry into the university due to anti-Jewish laws implemented by the Hungarian government which controlled the area in which she lived. Barbara reported that her family had heard about the rising anti-Semitism in nearby European countries, but they were “a little bit, uh, scared, but everything happen far away from

us...We had radios, and we hear what is happening; but we said, 'This can't happen to us.' We very...we were very optimistic, a little bit. Very fool optimistic."

In September of 1940 Barbara went to work in the Jewish hospital in Oradea trained as a laboratory assistant. She reported that she worked in this hospital until March of 1944. In March of that year the Nazis occupied the country and beginning in the next month, the Jews were required to wear a Jewish star on their clothing. May marked the beginning of ghettoization, and a ghetto was established in Oradea around the orthodox synagogue. A hospital was set up within the ghetto and Barbara began to work within the hospital despite the fact that there was very little equipment.

On May 26, 1944, the liquidation of the ghetto began and many people within the community were taken and transported to their death in Auschwitz. Barbara and her family were deported in June of 1944 and were taken by cattle cars to Auschwitz despite the fact that they were told that they were going to work in the puszta (the Hungarian prairie).

Upon arrival men and women were separated and Barbara reported that Polish people warned the arrivals to "Give the children to the old people, old womans." Unable to say good-bye to her father, Barbara and

her mother were sent into different lines. Directed by Mengele to be separated from her mother, she was placed in a different line. "I didn't have time to kiss my mother, or to see...to say something to her. I was terrible shock. And after that we find out that the people, they...I mean, the women, they...all the people--I mean, mother and all the others--they then direct to the crematorium. And they...when we were around one, uh, hundred or maybe more on the right side, they take us to the bath." Processed and shaved, Barbara was moved to C Lager in Block 15. She reported that everyone was in shock and that there was crying and screaming, as the women realized the terrible reality of the situation.

Forcing herself to eat, Barbara tried to survive and in July volunteered to carry containers to Lager B being told that she would receive some extra food at the completion of the task. During the transport of containers filled with food from one Lager to another, Barbara reported that some food spilled; she and two other girls were tortured for hours because of the spillage.

Barbara was later sent to B Lager during a selection in which 300 women were chosen. Kept in quarantine for three weeks, she was then taken to Weisswasser, which was a subcamp of Gross-Rosen. The working camp was very close to Breslau, and Barbara reported that they made

airplane lamps. First assigned to work in the chemistry lab, Barbara was later transferred to the Cathode Workshop. She reported that she was interned in the working camp from October 1944 to February of 1945. Due to the approach of Russian troops, the camp was evacuated and Barbara and the others were transported through many camps in an effort to avoid the Allied troops. Barbara was liberated near the German-Danish border at Padborg in 1945, the Red Cross assisted with food. At liberation Barbara reported weighing only 60 pounds. Barbara was transported to Malmo, Sweden, and later returned to Romania where she studied from 1946 to 1951. Barbara graduated and became an industrial pharmacist and emigrated to Israel and later to the United States.

#### Coping of Barbara F.

Very little is reported in the testimony concerning problem-focused or emotion-focused coping. It was apparent that Barbara volunteered to transport containers of food as a means of increasing her chances for survival within Auschwitz. This illustrated a strong will to survive and the utilization of problem-focused coping.

No other reports were mentioned within the testimony concerning survival coping systems or emotion-focused strategies for survival or adaptation.

### Story of Toby S.

Toby was born on July 15, 1920, in Mittelwischo, Transylvania, Romania. She was the youngest of six children and the only girl. Toby's childhood was a struggle with her father dying four months before her birth. Toby reports that her mother was only 28 at the time of her husband's death and that her grandmother and relatives in America would help out economically.

Toby attended a public school, and she worked as a dressmaker. In 1939 she married a businessman and reported that she was the happiest woman in the world with her husband. After three months of marriage, the Communists began to torture the Jews within the community. Jews were not allowed on the streets or to ride on trains, and when captured on the train, they would be punished by the loss of their tongues, hands, eyes, or they would be killed. During that time period the Jewish stores were occupied and the Jews eventually lost their businesses.

Toby reported that she had an uncle who was a Rabbi. Forced to decide which of his two children he loved the best, he had his child killed in front of him; then the SS killed the father and then the other child. The atrocities continued in the community, and the Jews were forced to hide in the woods or go into hiding aided by others. Toby reported that she and her husband were hidden by Gentiles and placed in a cellar. Soldiers discovered their whereabouts and Toby and her husband were captured. Bribing the soldiers with money, they were allowed to escape.

Then Toby's husband was captured and taken for six months. Toby was pregnant with her first child and was believed to be a widow. In 1940 the Romanians were taken over by Hungary, and Toby's husband returned home safely. Her child was born in March of 1940 and the family lived safely until 1942. Toby became pregnant in 1942, her husband was captured again, and she miscarried her second child in the eighth month of her pregnancy.

In 1944 Toby and her child were taken to the ghetto and she remained in the ghetto with her grandmother, aunt, and her child. Struggling to survive within the ghetto, Toby reported that they had no money and very little food. One day she was encouraged by a friend to sneak out of the ghetto and to return to their homes and get jewelry to be

placed in hiding. Placing her jewelry in a friend's basement for safekeeping, she reported that she never found the jewelry after the war because the woman would not tell her the location of the hiding place and died in Auschwitz.

In 1944 the ghetto was liquidated and Toby and her family were sent to Auschwitz with her mother and her child who was three years old. Upon arrival into Auschwitz, a man took Toby aside and told her to give her child to an older woman. A second man also told Toby to give her child to an older woman as their line neared the selections of Mengele. "My...I used to live with my mother, so I give the baby to my...to my mother. And I hear right now how he cried, 'Mommy, I want to go with you. I want to stay with Mommy.' So I was by Mengele, and he told I should go this side. My mother with my child the other side." Hearing the screaming of her child, she ran after her mother and child but they disappeared. Reassured by her family that they would soon be reunited, they stated "they told us we gonna to work, and all the people with children and they go...you know, they're going to mind the children, and we're gonna come every Sunday to see them. (Crying) But that Sunday never came."

Toby was taken to Lager C and remained there for three months. Toby reported that her cousin would constantly tell her to eat and that she must survive so they could remain together. Refusing to allow Toby to give up hope, her family encouraged her to maintain her strength and will to live. Transferred next to Lager B she noticed that there were family camps where children were with parents. One night she was awakened by screaming and discovered that everyone in the family camp were selected for the crematorium for extermination.

Once again encouraged by friends within the camp, Toby was told that the children were being protected and that no harm would come to her child. "We wanted they should live...For six months we didn't know what to think. We saw. We heard. We knew everything, but we didn't believe it. We didn't want to take it in our heads."

During a selection Toby was chosen and taken to the showers. Unsure if water or gas would come from the faucets, the group survived to be placed in a forced labor group. Toby was placed in the camp's tailor shop and made uniforms. Every four weeks they were taken to the baths and given new clothes and disinfected. Toby reported that on one occasion there were no clothes remaining and she returned to her barracks naked,



with only a blanket. Toby remembers, "I wanted to survive. I wanted to see my baby. I wanted to see my husband. And I tried."

Determined to discover the fate of her child nine months after her arrival, Toby spoke to a man who laughed at her and called her a "dumb Hungarian." He continued laughing and told Toby she was ridiculous to believe that the Germans would feed Jewish children who might grow to have other Jewish children after the war. Toby was informed that her child was killed the day that she arrived in Auschwitz. "Don't you see the fire. Don't you smell the...the smell. What you think is there. This is your children. This is your parents."

On January 18, 1945, Toby was forced into a death march from Auschwitz to Ravensbruck. She remembers that half of those who were forced on the march did not survive the walk. Surviving with her cousin, Toby was in Ravensbruck for four weeks and then forced to work with her friends specifically for the SS soldiers. Toby remembers that she stole food from the soldiers to feed some of the sick and weaker people within the camp.

Remaining in Ravensbruck for a few months, Toby was then transported to Mauthausen where she remained until her liberation in May of 1945.

### Coping of Toby S.

Toby survived utilizing emotion-focused coping strategies which centered around her will to live to be reunited with her child. With the encouragement of her friends, family, and friends, she continued to survive, despite her weakened condition, in an effort to discover the whereabouts of her child, mother, and family. The affiliation and support of others within the camp was vital to her survival.

It is clear that Toby also utilized emotion-focused coping of denial and intellectualization during her term of internment in Auschwitz. Numb to the reality of her child's death, despite witnessing the extermination of others, the selections, the flames, and the smell, she continued to believe that her child was alive and well.

During her internment after the forced march from Auschwitz, Toby's affiliation with others was important to her survival. She reported that she also assisted others in their survival by stealing food to help those in need.

Telephone Interview of Toby S.

Toby S. reported that she survived because of her hope of reunion with her child and her husband. She reported that her child was separated from her at the gates of Auschwitz when her mother took Toby's infant from her arms. Toby reported that the soldiers had promised that they would be reunited with their children and that the older people were caring for the infants in another part of the Auschwitz concentration camp complex. Wanting to believe their deceptions, she hoped to be reunited once again with her baby, her mother, and her husband. "They told us every Sunday that we would see the children...we hoped for six months." Sobbing, she reported that "we didn't know...we wanted to believe." Denial was a powerful tool of coping, believing that human beings would not kill innocent children and infants. She stated that they knew that people were being burned in the crematorium, but she and other mothers who had lost their children hoped that they were burning those who had died, not that the Nazis were killing the children and the babies to burn.

Toby also reported that she did not care about living without her child. "I didn't want to eat." Toby stated that her cousin noticed that she was not eating and forced her to begin eating. "She said we gonna eat together...she saved me."

Clearly, the coping and survival of Toby were based on her affiliation with others who assisted her survival, as well as the hope of reunion with her child and her family

### Story of Eva S.

Eva S. was born in Krozience, Poland, in January of 1919. Raised in a middle class family, she was one of five children. Being the oldest, she was many times responsible for some of the younger children within the family. Eva's father sold leather within the city and, because of his travels to Radom, he heard of the Nazi's rising power in 1933. "We would read the paper. We knew it's going to come, something. Just nobody believed, nobody believed." Eva's family was cognizant of Kristallnacht in Poland, the destruction of the Jewish property and synagogues, and the treatment of fellow Jews in other areas of the country; but knowing that they were law-abiding, the families in the community mistakenly concluded that they would not be punished or scapegoated.

In 1939 Krozience was occupied by the Nazis, who placed the Jewish citizens in a ghetto within the city proper; the SS took many the men to a concentration camp near Radom. Others were taken to work on digging patrols in nearby communities. Many of the men that remained were old

and unable to resist, while other men were psychologically beaten down in subservience. The women and children were left in the town to live in the ghettos. "We were already very scared. Very, like stopped living. In one time we were a middle-class family. We were fairly...and we stopped living. We had to fight for the every day, for to get the food on the table." A curfew was established and each day became a struggle. Believing that the persecution would not continue, the denial of the atrocities and their eventual fate became overwhelming.

Eva's family was aware of the liquidation of the ghetto which was being planned by the SS in October of 1940. Fearing being separated from her parents, Eva bribed an official to have her family's names placed on a list of Jews being transported to Sharzysko to do ditch digging during the liquidation of the ghetto. Eva reported, "I was ready to do everything for...for my sister or brother to live, even get shot. It didn't bother me."

After the move Eva managed to move her family to Szydlowiec and later to Pionki where the family worked in an ammunition factory for two years. Pionki was difficult but the family survived, believing that things would be all right as long as they were able to remain together. "Like I say, my life wasn't worth anything with that...Just we were together still, four of us. And this gave us some kind of, uh...you know...we're going to

make it...Was every day struggle. People were good one to each other, one to another. I think we helped one another how much we could under these circumstances.”

In 1943 the Allies began bombing Pionki, and the transport from the concentration camp began late in that year. Transported to Auschwitz with her mother and her sisters, her father and brother were deported to Mauthausen and were exterminated in late 1945. On the arrival in Auschwitz, Eva, her mother, and sister were placed in selection lines. They were spared when placed in the “death line” for liquidation and the gas chambers did not work. Eva reported, “We were taken...and we were sitting there, sitting there; and we were like already dead people. We didn’t care so much about life anyway. We was just sitting and waiting; and one person said, ‘Oh, they going to gas us’ And one person said, ‘Oh, what you talking about?’ Was like no interest in life anymore. Was like, really, we got to a point that’s what they did to us all the time. They made us not...we got to a point we didn’t care anymore. How much can a person take? You see, it was every time somebody you love so much you see taken away...your father, your brother, you know. I was happy I still had my little sister near me and my mother.”

Eva, her mother, sister, and aunt were transported from Auschwitz to the Birkenau camp for two or three months. "I was begging to see an airplane bombarding us. 'God please let...let be finish.' We couldn't go uh restroom, just once a day they took us. Everyday was Jewish girls, kapos, she said, 'Today you're going to go to the ovens.' You saw the nicest music, Beethoven, playing; and we didn't know then that a group of people and this was going to the oven. We smelled. We smelled. We could smell the...the burning, the flesh."

The group was later transported to Bergen-Belsen and remained there for nine months. Eva reports that she didn't care much about her life, and on some occasions she would risk her life in efforts to assist others in need. Later Eva was transported to Elsnig, a subcamp of Buchenwald in Germany. On one occasion the Gestapo came into the concentration camp and wanted to take Eva's sister, five other young children, and a pregnant woman back to Auschwitz. Eva decided that she needed to talk to the Gestapo soldier and told him she was also pregnant in an effort to remain with her little sister and protect her. Enraged, the SS soldier took a shovel and beat Eva until she could not walk. Dragged into the barracks, she forced herself to prepare for work detail. Eva reported, "I knew I'm going to come back and my sister is not going to be anymore." Knowing

that she might never see her sister again she went to a camp engineer's office and tried to bribe him with a diamond ring in an effort of saving her sister. Seeing the ring the engineer said, "If you going to bribe me, if you thinking I am a person like this, I...I'm not going to help you." Three hours later a German officer came to Eva and said "I wanted to help you. And I can help you. Just tell me what's going on." Crying so hard that she could not speak, Eva told the officer of her sister's fate and the five young children. Later that day Eva discovered that he, indeed, did save the six young children from transport back to Auschwitz.

Eva was liberated by the Russians in April of 1945 after she had been aided by Italians who assisted her and her family in the woods while in hiding. Eva returned to Lodz, Poland, after the war. In 1949 Eva decided to emigrate to Israel and later she emigrated to the United States in 1959.

#### Coping of Eva S.

Eva exhibits a combination of coping strategies utilized for survival during the Holocaust. During the pre-concentration camp experiences, as well as during internment in Auschwitz and other camps, Eva illustrated the importance of affiliation with others. She maintained her efforts to create any means possible to keep her family together. On numerous



occasions she bribed and pleaded with officials in an effort to keep her family safe from harm and remaining a solidified group. Coping with the atrocities, she reported that she found herself emotionally numbed but continued to find opportunities to use problem-focused coping mechanisms if openings arose to manipulate the environment in any given situation. On various occasions Eva was willing to place herself in many situations which were very risky and dangerous in an effort to save not only herself, her family, but also others who were in need. "I always risked my life. I didn't care so much." An example of this is illustrated when she was occasionally given extra food by a female Gestapo officer in the sub-camp. Eva reports that she would smuggle out the food to share it with her family and others in need.

Emotion-focused coping strategies are suggested by maintenance of hope that the family would survive the atrocities. Eva reported, "we couldn't think anymore, I think, to a point. And not care. Just still care about the family; the family was mine (life)."

Luck and chance also appeared to play a large part in Eva's report. The escape from the gas chambers illustrates the unimaginable destiny to be saved from the liquidation. Eva does not point to this event as luck but

states that it was important to her that the family was together, even if that meant going to the gas chambers.

#### Telephone Interview with Eva S.

Eva reported that she could not explain the reason for her survival. “To be honest with you, there is no explanation for surviving.” Eva stated it is impossible to understand how they were taken to the gas chambers and then let out. She stated that perhaps some of her survival had to do with luck.

Eva discussed that her family was the most important thing to her. She told a story of how she attacked a Blockältester when she was harming her mother. Eva was not killed for the action and reports that is very unexplainable to her. She also told a story of Mengele’s selection in Auschwitz when she was to be separated from her mother and sister. Bribing a German woman, she was allowed to take her sister and mother by her hand and walk them over to the “line of life” while the German woman pretended to look the other way.

It was obvious that Eva was concerned with the safety of her sister and her mother, and was willing to do whatever necessary to protect them from harm. “I knew that I didn’t want to live without my family.” The

incident of her brave act to save her sister from being transported back to Auschwitz illustrated that Eva was willing to protect her family at all cost.

### The story of Magda B.

Magda B. was born on August 19, 1916, in Michalkovice, Slovakia (Austria-Hungry). The only daughter of five children, Magda reported that her childhood was very happy. Her father was a Jewish history teacher and her mother instilled in her the values of caring for others, especially those who were in need.

As a very young child Magda was very athletic and very skinny. She reported that she was very concerned about the poor and was always willing to give up her food so that others might have food for the Sabbath. "I grew up helping people and helping neighbors. And I always said I will be a doctor, because this is also helping the people." Remaining very concerned about others, Magda was very active in raising money for the Zionist Organization for the establishment of purchasing land in Palestine for a Jewish settlement. Dedicated to the cause, Magda organized numerous activities to raise money and postponed taking her examinations to become a kindergarten teacher.

In her early teens she established a kindergarten to care for the children within the community. Protected from early transports, she was gathered to be sent to Bata factory but was given exception papers. Magda, however, was deported a few days later in the summer of 1942. She was transported in a crowded cattle car to Auschwitz.

Upon arrival in Auschwitz, they were placed immediately in barracks. Greeted by German female prisoners in the barracks, they were warned that the tea which was being distributed was poisoned. “So here we been dehydrated and hungry, and we didn’t know what to do. So I volunteered. I said, ‘Listen, girls, we have to do something. We can’t last so. We are dried out.’ ” Bravely deciding that she would be the test case, Magda tested the drink in an effort of protecting the other woman. Also, during the processing Magda helped other women who were collapsing from the cold. Shaved and tattooed, the women were disinfected and placed in large bins of murky water. “Naked, wet, we stood that freezing cold wintry day ‘till we got the remnants of Russian prisoner of wars uniforms, which was cotton top and cotton pants.”

Together with approximately 600 women, the group was placed under a female German political prisoner, who was in charge of the barracks. In a effort to gain respect from the German woman, Magda

offered help bringing drinks to the prisoners. Magda carried the heavy containers to the barracks to prove her strength and competence. Gaining the acceptance of the German woman, she was protected by this woman who arranged that Magda would work inside and scrub floors. Magda argued with the German woman and believed that it would be better if she worked outside in an effort to condition herself to the environment of Auschwitz. Arguing with Magda, the German woman, insisting that Magda would not last three days working outdoors, told her that she must help her clean the floors because she needed her assistance. During those early years, Magda also began to encourage others to organize and steal food, medications, and rags. Using these materials to aid others, she aided those who were in need. Starving, she many times did not eat her ration of food because she was concerned for others instead of herself. Magda was confronted by a woman who told her “enough is enough. Now you are going to sit down and have your meal. So that’s where it started, that togetherness to help each other in the girls where the misery was.”

The beatings, the malnutrition, and the lice took the lives of many young women. In August of 1942 the group of surviving women were taken from Auschwitz to Birkenau. The sanitary and living conditions were much worse than Auschwitz, and the women were tortured

sadistically. Dedicated to live through the atrocities of Birkenau, Magda remembers that she thought, "Every day when you are alive, maybe...maybe there will be a chance that something will happen and prolong the life. Maybe some miracle will happen and the war will come to the end, and then they will recuperate." But on one occasion Magda was selected to be taken to the gas chamber. Saved by the German woman kapo that she had worked with in the barracks, she was pulled from the truck taking other women to the gas chamber. Magda reported that the female kapo tricked the SS guard in charge and grabbed Magda from the truck headed to the crematorium. Pulling her aside, she told Magda to run and escape.

During a showering in Birkenau, the entire group of women in Magda's barracks were going to be sent to the gas chambers because women were tearing their blankets for protection from the cold. Magda reported that she stepped forward and told the commanders that they would be doing all that was necessary to survive if they exchanged places with the prisoners. The SS guard began to scream at Magda for her insolence. Amused by her antics, the commander gave the group new clothes and saved them from death. "And this is what we did, what we helped each other."

Assisting other prisoners was not limited just to Jewish women. Magda remembers that during a selection a woman who was keeping the record (Report Schreiberin) was writing as the selection was being performed. When the SS man left, "She sends the girls back to the barracks. And so she saved about 300 girls from immediate death. How long they will be alive, this nobody could guarantee." Magda reported that this woman saved many prisoners from extermination when she found the opportunity to create a diversion in the record and pretend that she was writing down numbers. It was later discovered that the woman had written down numbers from the death list and this trickery assisted hundreds escape extermination. Magda reported that this type of diversion from potential death was accomplished by being courageous and by trickery. "We are just going once through the chimney, sooner or later. But 'til we arrive, we have to help each other. And that's how we helped each other."

Magda's testimony revealed numerous examples of assisting others in need, as well as other women assisting Magda. When she came down with typhoid, the women protected her by bribing the German woman who was in charge of the barracks. Promising that they would look after Magda, the women carried her out to work. Returning from the work detail, there was a selection and her friends protected Magda by holding her up and

placing her between women who were healthy. “Lucky, the girls from both sides which carried me, they been in better shape so they didn’t saw me in between. Which saved me.”

During her internment in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Magda was made the assistant to the Blockältester (block elder or oldest). Dedicating to help others, her mission was to minimize suffering if there was any possibility of manipulating the environment for other women. If nothing could be accomplished in a physical fashion, Magda was determined to be a source of support and encouragement as well as a calming force for other women in the barracks. Trying to save as many women as possible, she attempted to trick the SS during selection by placing the weaker women in the middle of rows in an effort to save them from being noticed. “So I arranged the girls so that in the front and in the back was a strong girl, and everywhere; and in the middle was the weaker ones. And I pushed the girls together.” Confronted by the SS guard who called her on her scheme, Magda used her intellectual creativity to create a diversion for the situation, promising that these worker women could be useful to Germany by assisting in the “recycling” of clothes. Magda suggested that the women could wash and repair the clothes and she guaranteed that she would produce favorable results if the women were allowed to live.



Constantly working to organize food and schemes, Magda was busy creating means for survival from the atrocities. In 1943 she was named the block supervisor of Barracks 10 which was used for medical experiments and was the protégé under Hauptsturmführer Dr. Wirths who was in charge of all medical personnel at KL Auschwitz. Attempting to assist the women in whatever means possible, Magda offered physiological support and encouragement to the women in the experimental barracks. "I tried to help them; well, because either you try your best or you don't care. But I cared. Wherever I could, I helped."

Magda spoke of her relationship with Irma Grese, the SS female soldier who was called the "Angel of Death." Magda reported that she met Irma Grese in the early days of internment in Auschwitz in August of 1942. "I was a Stubendienst--a helper...just like a little helper who went...carried the bread and the food...She was in charge as a SS woman." Grese reportedly noticed that Magda was different than the other women. Grese asked her name, and Magda informed Grese that she would encourage the women until her last breath. On numerous occasions Magda reported that she accompanied Grese to meet some of those with whom Grese had affairs. Magda was many times used as a diversion as well as someone who Grese reportedly asked about her selection of partners. As the years passed,

Grese became more powerful in the SS system, as did her record of brutality to female prisoners. Known for her cruelty, sadism, raping, and torturing with whips, she was feared by every woman in the camp who knew of her brutality and passion for beautiful women. Magda remembered, "This was Grese. She could talk to me like...like a friend; and the next minute she was a devil. That...that's what she was. A real devil. A sadistic devil. But she was so pretty, you know? That's why they called her 'Angel of Death.' "

Magda was later made camp commander of the Hungarian Jews who were being transported to Birkenau from Budapest. Magda was named Lagerälteste under Kommandant Josef Kramer in the summer of 1942 while the Hungarian transports arrived from May through December of that year. Being unafraid to speak her mind, she told Kramer that if she was to be Lagerälteste that she must have supplies such as blankets, straw, utensils, and spoons. Magda also reported that she told Kramer that she needed 30 women, whom she must choose, to assist her with the Hungarian arrivals. "So again, miracle of miracles, they thought--you know, the news traveled--that I am the protégé of Kramer...I couldn't do...I couldn't just save everybody." She reported that she demanded that the thirty women be chosen to assist other prisoners as much as possible.

During that final year Magda was given a job in the lager kitchen counting potatoes and later was also a camp supervisor in a fabric production facility. On January 18, 1945, she and others were forced on a death march to Malchow, a subcamp of Ravensbruck located near Mecklenburg. Witnessing that those who lagged toward the back were at greater risk for being shot, Magda reportedly gathered prisoners to move to the front during the march to escape death. She and the other survivors were liberated by the Soviet army. After liberation Magda settled in Prague.

#### Coping of Magda B.

Magda is an example of a survivor who utilized both emotion-focused as well as problem-focused coping mechanisms. Constantly surveying her environment for means of manipulating and creating options, she found many means of organizing items for survival. Willing to stand up, despite the risk to her own well-being and safety, her resistance many times created an opportunity to bring about needed motivation for change. Her determination, will to survive, and morale boosting personality was a valuable source of encouragement and support.

Seeing the reality of the situation Magda was willing on many occasions to watch for ways in which to create deceptions and trickery to aid survival of herself and others within the Auschwitz concentration camp. Able to appear strong and determined, she was stood up to many SS guards and commanders and negotiate options for survival.

Her protection of others was something that she reported to have learned from her mother in her childhood. Always concerned for others, her affiliation and concern for others was demonstrated many times in her testimony. It was also obvious in her testimony that many others assisted her at her time of need. Magda reported that she was concerned with others' survival and professed that "life here is not a pleasure. But I am going to try to make your life as easy as possible, with your help. We have to communicate. We have to manage to help each other, because typhus is raging." She reportedly was determined to save as many lives as possible during her internment in the camp.

Her leadership capabilities and strong will illustrated Magda's abilities to look for means of creating opportunities for survival in an environment which was filled with horrors, atrocities, brutality, and trauma. Encouraging others to always retain their hope, Magda was

capable of establishing what Frankl described as a “meaning” or “purpose” to continue to survive within the massive traumatization of Auschwitz.

#### Telephone Interview with Magda B.

Magda strongly emphasized that Auschwitz was a horrible experience, and that there was no special technique for survival except the will to keep each other alive. “It was such a hard life...you couldn’t describe it if I told you for hours...How can you put three and a half years in a talk?” Magda reported that perseverance, commitment, and split second decisions were the determining factors between life and death in her opinion.

Magda said that her entire life was filled with the purpose of serving others. “ I tried to help whatever I could.” She reported that she tried to encourage others and that many were willing to listen to her. She also reported that she not only helped others, but that many others also cared for her safety and survival. She reported that she was saved by others on many occasions, including the times she was taken by a German woman from the truck being sent to the crematorium, saved from death by her friends when she had typhus, and aided by men within the camp that respected her for her caring (menschlichkeit) and concern for others.

Realizing that “we go only once through the chimney,” Magda was determined to help others at all risk. She was very active in organizing and stated that she was willing to risk her life for others, and they were willing to do the same for her.

#### Story of Helen W.

Helen W. was born in a small town across the river from Frankfurt, Germany, in 1909. Her family was not very religious but attended the High Holidays at the synagogue. Helen’s mother was of German descent, and her father was born in Lithuania, which made it difficult for the family to live in certain areas of the country. In 1914, during WW I, the family “became all of a sudden Russians because Lithuania belonged to Russia at the time. And as Russians, we were the enemies of Germany, and we would have been interned if we couldn’t live with my grandparents who at this time came from a very small town in Germany.” Because the family was not of German descent (attributed to the father’s line of ancestry), the family could not be registered at the police station, which necessitated that the family live underground. Unable to attend a public school, Helen attended a liberal Jewish school to which she was admitted without a birth certificate. She continued her education until she was 18 years old.

Helen did not view the world as Jewish and non-Jewish in her childhood. “In some way I was not aware that the children I was playing on the streets with were neighbors that they were not Jewish, because all the children I knew were Jewish...I was thinking I was living in a Jewish world.”

Able to maintain financial support of herself, and assisting her family, Helen traveled to a nearby island which was limited to Jews. At this island she met her husband who was quite persistent in pursuing her. Married in 1933, at the age of 23, they planned to leave the country and move to Holland. In 1934 the couple moved to Amsterdam.

Many other Jews choose to leave Germany during those years and immigrated to surrounding countries such as Holland which would accept Jews. Helen was active in assisting others who needed to find housing and assistance in Amsterdam. In 1937 she gave birth to her only daughter while living in Holland. In November of 1938, at the time of Kristallnacht (“Night of Broken Glass”), she was told that her father and brother had been arrested in Frankfurt. Luckily, however, before the invasion of Holland, her brother, and mother, immigrated to the United States.

In 1940 during the invasion, the Nazis occupied Holland. Two years later Helen, her husband Siegfried, and daughter Doris were ordered to

appear at the train station in Amsterdam with one suitcase each. “We didn’t understand what really would happen to us, and all our friends came and we gathered in the house and talked...We all had come from Germany, and each of us had a little girl about the same age...And, uh, we...my husband and I, we decided we go to the Jewish Council.” Instructed by the Jewish Council, they were told that they would be sent to a family camp to work and that someone would care for the children while the parents were in forced working camps. “We left this building and I decided to tell my husband that I am not going on the July 15th to get that train. And we, being brought up in Germany, which is a little different than other countries, um, had a hard time to accept that...Who knows what they will do to us if we don’t go? Who knows what they do to us when we are going?” Deciding to delay the transport, the couple found a surgeon who agreed to take out Siegfried’s appendix (which was healthy) in an attempt to delay their departure until the next order was given.

In early October of 1942, a friend told Helen that they could be assisted in living underground and that their child could be sent to a safe location. The rescuer (Joe V.), who was a non-Jew, aided by the members of a small liberal church, assisted the family with the plans. Helen and Siegfried were told that the rescuers would hide their daughter until the



end of the war. Agreeing to the plan, Helen, Siegfried, and Joe arranged for their daughter Doris to be housed with an anonymous family (later it was discovered that it was Joe's sister). "We did not know their name and we did not know where they were living."

The people from the church assisted the couple with the plans for living underground. Helen noted that there were over 20,000 people in Holland who were in hiding from the Germans. The couple lived underground from October 1942 to August of 1944 "in different homes because people got very scared very often. Sometimes wanted us to leave the same day. Some places were two or three months until they got so scared." The last place they hid was for 11 months at the time the Allies invaded France. It appeared that things were looking very optimistic with the liberation of Paris in August of 1944 by the Allies. Unfortunately, on that same day, Helen and Siegfried were arrested.

Brought to the Gestapo, Helen reported that they were fully aware of their potential fate. Having been kept informed of the radio transmissions on the BBC, she was quite sure that they would be transported to Auschwitz. Helen, standing next to a child, was told by the Gestapo, "If this is your child and if you have more children in hiding, we recommend that you take them with you because you are going into a family

camp...And you will be...they will be taken care of while you are working...We went completely without luggage, knowing that we probably would come to Auschwitz because this was in some way called a punishment that we did not follow the first time...that we had to be punished for that, so it could only have been Auschwitz.” After two straight days of interrogation by the Gestapo concerning the network of the underground, Helen was sent to Westerbork and then transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The train ride was a nightmare. Overloaded with people, the train had nowhere to sit, no food or water, no light, and no toilet facilities. During stops soldiers came in and forced the prisoners to give all of their belongings to the SS. As an act of resistance, Siegfried ripped up all of this money so that the SS would never take anything from them. “It was a physical step, also to rip it in little pieces. But we did. I don’t know.”

Arriving in Auschwitz, Helen remembered the ramp which appeared to go on forever. The women were separated from the men. Siegfried was directed to one location and Helen was directed to another. “It seemed endless and there was a man standing who made the decision who shall live or who shall die, but we did not know that.” The man on the ramp was Dr. Mengele, and “he sent me, it was the side of life, and the other was the side

of death, as I heard the next day also. And, uh, there were no Jewish children in Auschwitz, just a few Dr. Mengele wanted.” Helen told of a woman who allowed herself to be separated from her children knowing that she could not help them. The woman knew that she would be killed if she stayed with her children and she made the “choiceless choice” to allow her children to be taken away. Helen’s testimony spoke of the difficulty of living with a decision such as the one that the woman made in that moment on the ramp.

Helen told of the tattooing, being stripped naked, and the shaving of all body hair during processing. “Probably the most upsetting was this being changed into a different person with losing your hair, losing everything you had, just as you are born. I think that was the greatest shock. You couldn’t see yourself, but you saw others, so you knew what you were looking like. I think it was the greatest shock for all of us, because nobody menstruated anymore. That was over.”

Crowded into one bunk with 10 to 12 other women, sleep was almost impossible and morning brought the roll call. The number of people in attendance never matched the number in the books. Helen remembered that many of the Polish women appeared stronger than Eastern European Jews. Perhaps this was due to the fact that many of the Polish women had

been in other camps and ghettos from 1939 to 1944. Many of the Poles appeared to help each other, and Helen found a friend, a Hungarian, who was a keeper of the latrine and washroom.

Helen was determined to wash every day as a means of maintaining her dignity. Sneaking her way into the washroom, assisted by her friend, Helen was able to clean herself on a regular basis. "But it gave me a very good feeling that I had done that. I felt...I felt I needed that...It was not very comfortable climbing, but also the friendship I had with the...with the women from Hungary helped me to get in and have some time to talk to them...I could always get in. And, uh, we ...we became good friends." The support she gained from her friendship and maintenance of dignity was essential to her survival.

Helen remembered that Anne Frank, her sister Margot, and her mother were on the transport with them during their arrival to Auschwitz. Personally knowing the Franks in Holland, she remembered that Mr. Frank was a very bright man. Anne appeared to be closer to her father than to her mother, and she was a very shy quiet girl who loved to write.

Helen remained interned in Birkenau until October 28, 1944, when she was transported to work in the Kratzau factory in Czechoslovakia. "They didn't tell us it was Czechoslovakia. It was high up in the

mountains...was nice, and uh, it was a good feeling to be away from those killing places and from the chimney.” The camp was occupied with 1200 female prisoners who had women as SS guards. Helen reported that Kratzau had no running water, that it was never possible to wash themselves, and quickly everyone was full of lice. The work day lasted 12 hours, and the factory had a day shift and a night shift. Those who choose night shift were allowed an extra portion of food. Without blankets, and heat, the cold winter was devastating and many did not survive. As the war continued, the rations were cut and “we were on our way down physically, but when the International Red Cross came actually into the camp...there were four women coming in green uniforms, and we were standing in our five lines, and I heard the commandant in German tell them ‘you just saw our beautiful shower installations. Look at those filthy Jews. They do not want to wash themselves. Those pigs.’ And, uh, none of those women asked the question why we didn’t want to wash.”

Near the end of the war, Helen was taken to a POW camp where she was liberated and told to wait for the International Red Cross’s arrival. Helen refused to wait and traveled to a displaced person’s camp in Plezn. Upon her return to Holland, Helen was reunited with her daughter Doris. Siegfried never returned and it was assumed that he died in Auschwitz. “I

never have seen him again and there is no...there is no record for the dead. There's a record of the trains...the numbers of the trains and how many people were in the trains,...but they have no record of who died."

Reunited with her daughter Helen recounts that the meeting was difficult. Brought to the city in which Doris was living, the little girl of seven years old appeared scared. "I didn't come close to her. I didn't touch her." The transition was difficult, but friends assisted them by giving them a place to sleep. "We had nothing. We had no bed. Nothing. I, uh, felt I needed her. I needed her very much. We need our children more than they need us. That's something I learned."

#### Coping of Helen W.

The testimony of Helen depicts a utilization of problem-focused coping skills during post-war occupation, and the early years in hiding during the war. Those times appeared to allow Helen and her family more freedom and opportunity to manipulate the environment in ways which were conducive to coping through problem-solving strategies. The opportunity to give her child to a rescuer stranger must have involved a substantial, if not an extreme, amount of emotion-focused coping, but that discussion is not noted in the testimony. There are, however, comments

which suggest that Helen did have great difficulty with emotion-focused coping during internment. Trigger events such as children being ripped from mother's arms, the report that children would be sent to "family camps" with their parents, and the comments about seeing no children in Auschwitz except those "used" by Mengele for his own purposes were strong statements which correlate to her painful adaptation to the loss of her child.

Post-war comments suggest that Helen had difficulty reuniting with her daughter, now nearing eight years old. Helen appears to have suffered post-traumatic stress disorder due to massive traumatization and felt great pain and confusion in the time of reunion. "I don't think that I was aware of what I had done to take her out of this secure home in this life with a woman who wasn't completely normal. I'm convinced. I was the only one who didn't know. But I'm convinced. And, she, uh, ...I was only looking for a place for us to live that we were just like a family and that she would...she would be home and I'm the mother. But we never discussed it, practically all our lives...Maybe when she was...when she was still in Amsterdam, one day she did something which I said she shouldn't. She said, I wish you wouldn't have come. And that was the only time as a child."

Helen's testimony illustrated the utilization of emotion-focusing coping by the use of hope and intellectualization strategies. In a description of a conversation that she overheard between SS guards as they marched to the working camp, she reported, "You see, I was always, when we marched to the factory, always in the last row because there were two soldiers with us and they spoke German. I could hear what they were saying to each other. And it was just, uh, music in my ears, because they said they were terribly upset. They hadn't heard for weeks from their families, and they said that Germany is bombed and then all of a sudden I heard that the Allies are in Nuremburg. And I thought, in Nuremburg...in the middle of the country. And I told my friends and I said, oh that cannot take long at all anymore. That must be over soon. They are already in Nuremburg. But we were the ones who really suffered so much because it was so cold and we had so little strength left. We buried our women that died. We didn't know the names. We...we had no strength anymore to discuss, to talk, which we did in the beginning..."

In an effort of illustrating some of the healing which had occurred with Helen and her daughter, Helen's concluding remarks give a valuable insight into the struggle and pain of survivors and their children. After reading a book called I Never Said Good-Bye, Helen told her daughter,



“I’m only very much upset that all those people who say they were abandoned, say that still after they have children themselves. Don’t they want to protect their children?” Her daughter reportedly stated, “No...I can understand. I wasn’t abandoned.” Helen continued by saying, “It was the first time, and uh, I said I will never learn that, and never accept it. She uh, went to New York then, and then she found the book and she sent it to me and she put in there, thank you for giving me life twice. It wasn’t necessary to discuss it. Really. It would have made our relationship painful if we would have discussed it. If I would have constantly heard I see it from the wrong way then I never could. So that...um, that she has understood after all those years.”

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The poignant “voice” of female Auschwitz survivors in the comprehensive case study clearly delineates the importance and prioritization of affiliation and emotional bonding with other women as the primary coping strategy during the Holocaust. Thirty-one (31%) percent of the responses from the sample population indicated that affiliation and emotional bonding was the most influential element in their survival in Auschwitz. The coping strategy of affiliation with other women is the composite of affiliation with others through maintenance of a relationship (13.3%) and assistance from others (18.1%).

The results of the case study utilizing the comprehensive sample population of female Auschwitz survivors support the prevailing trend of Holocaust studies and gender-related research (Belle, 1991; Heinemann, 1986; Rappaport, 1991; Ringelheim, 1993; Rosenbaum, 1993). Female survival, during massive traumatization, is enhanced and nourished by human connection. The results of this case study indicate that females tend to use gender-related coping and adaptation through their connections with

others, which assists in their reconnection with their inner strength and purpose for survival.

### Statistical Conclusions from the Findings of the Study

The findings of the research data (Table 2) indicate the ratings of the incidence of reported utilization of coping strategies noted by the sample population on the clustering sheets. The results of the case study indicate emotional bonding and affiliation with other women was most frequently (31%) represented as the determining factor for survival. Sustaining relationships, assisting a significant family member or friend, or the hope of being reunited with family or friends appeared in **all** of the testimonies within the sample population. Clearly, the testimonies suggest the importance of maintaining emotional connections with others. During the composite testimonies of the Auschwitz female survivors, the incidence of affiliation with others was noted on 111 occasions (111/355). The results of the data illustrate the utilization of coping and adaptation through the assistance of others and affiliation and relationships with other women more than twice as often as the second rated coping strategy of manipulation of the environment (46/355).

Table 2

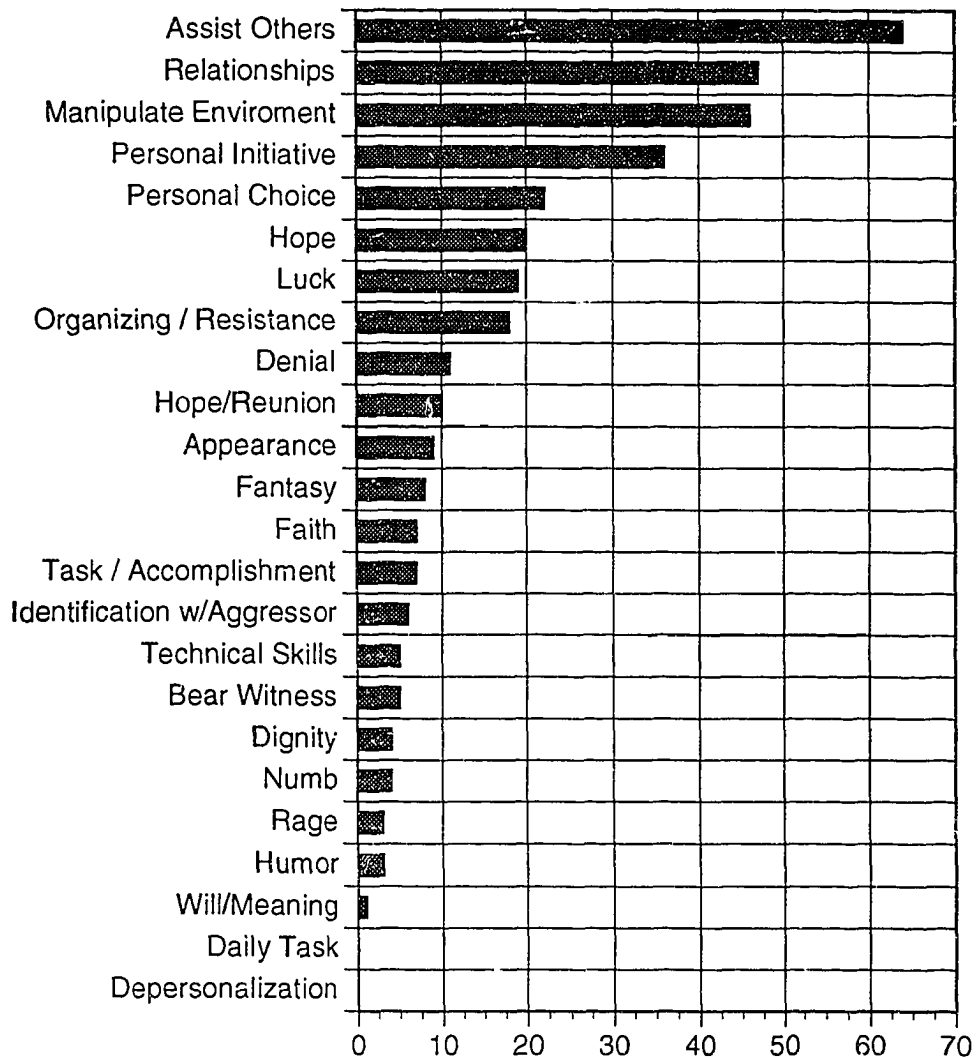
Female Survivors' Incidence of Reported Coping Strategies

Strategies	Survivors																Total	
	LM	CK	HW	AC	RM	FF	ES	TS	MD	NK	MK	GW	HG	KB	BF	MB		
Personal Initiative	2	1	4	3	1	5						2				18	36	10.1%
Luck		3		2	2	1	1	1	1		1	3	1	1	1	1	19	5.4%
Technical Skills	1	1													1	2	5	1.4%
Appearance				1		1		1	1	1		1			1	1	9	2.5%
Relationships *	3	4	1	3	7		2	1				2	4	3		17	47	13.2%
Assist Others *	2	5	4	7	3	6		6	2	8		3	1	2		15	64	18.0%
Hope/Reunion	2					1		4					1	1		1	10	2.8%
Organizing / Resistance	1		4		2	1							1			9	18	5.1%
Faith				1	1					1			1	1	1	1	7	2.0%
Bear Witness		1	1		1	1				1							5	1.4%
Humor										1	1					1	3	0.8%
Will/Meaning		1															1	0.3%
Task / Accomplishment																7	7	2.0%
Denial	2			1				2		1			2	1	1	1	11	3.1%
Personal Choice		2	2	1	1			3			2	1		1	3	6	22	6.2%
Rage	1	1														1	3	0.8%
Daily Task																	0	0.0%
Identification w/Aggressor																6	6	1.7%
Numb										2	1			1			4	1.1%
Depersonalization																	0	0.0%
Hope		2	3	3	3	2		1		1			1	1		3	20	5.6%
Dignity			1					1					1			1	4	1.1%
Manipulate Environment	3	2	7	6	4	2	2	3	1		2			1	1	12	46	13.0%
Fantasy		1	1	1	2					2						1	8	2.3%
Total:																	355	100%

Note: The 16 survivors' initials are denoted along the top of the chart.

Note \*: The combination of relationships with others and assistance to others is categorized as affiliation with others (31.2%) of total occurrences.

The raw data from Table 2 can be converted to illustrate the incidence of reported coping strategies by category.



**Figure 1.** Reported Incidence of Coping Strategies in Survivors' Testimonies

Conclusions of the Study Related to Research Questions:

Primary Coping Strategy

The results of this case study suggests that the primary coping strategy utilized by female survivors of Auschwitz concentration camp is that of their affiliation with other women. One hundred percent (100%) of the sample noted that relationships with others or protection from other women was essential in their survival of the atrocities and horrors during internment in Auschwitz.

The results of the research study suggests that females have a gender-specific bias to coping strategies as a means of adaptation. These findings suggest that Holocaust scholars such as Des Pres (1976), Dimsdale (1980), Etinger (1983), Frankl (1963), Krystal (1968) may lean towards a gender-biased male perspective of coping strategies utilized during the Holocaust. These findings suggest that a gender-neutral “blanket” interpretation of coping strategies for survival may not be accurate as it relates to male and female survivors of the Holocaust.

The components of the research study utilized the technique of triangulation by the utilization of supportive personal telephone interviews which were elicited as a means of insuring the validity of the findings in the study. The oral testimonies produced by the United States Holocaust

Memorial Museum were conducted between the dates of 1989 and 1991. Therefore, the telephone interviews created a procedure to directly target the issue of coping and survival by female survivors in the sample population. The use of personal telephone interviews was utilized as a method to validate, clarify, and enhance the responses reported four-six years previously by the survivors who voluntarily “bore witness” through oral testimonies produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

From the 16 female Auschwitz survivors, which comprised the comprehensive case study in the research, ten of the survivors voluntarily responded to participation in further research study. All (100%) of the 10 respondents noted that affiliation with others was an essential element in their personal resiliency, survival, and will to live.

The telephone interview script, which was developed for the research study, proved to be ineffective in the telephone interview process. Due to the importance of the phenomenological oral testimony in the interview, the “standardized” process of reading from the “script” proved limiting and intrusive. The survivors spoke very freely when they were allowed to respond to the open-ended questions in the telephone interview and allowed to determine the direction of their conversation. In an effort

of eliciting “their voice,” general open-ended questions relating to coping and survival were very useful in solicitation of survivors’ personal stories, insights, impressions, historical events, and emotional responses pertaining to internment in Auschwitz.

It is important to note, that due to confidentiality protection by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, it is unknown if the other six survivors, who did not respond to the research study, are indeed still alive at this date. It is also uncertain if the remaining survivors who did not respond to the research study are physically, mentally, or psychologically capable of providing further testimony.

#### Conclusions of the Study Related to Research Questions:

##### Relationship of Emotion-Focused Coping and Problem-Focused Coping.

The research data (Table 3) elicited from the sub-grouping clustering sheets suggest the utilization of emotion-focused coping strategies (229/355 occurrences, or 64.5%) were utilized more often than those of problem-solving coping strategies (107/355) occurrences, or 30.1%). The results of the research study concur with the theoretical research of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) which suggests that emotion-focused coping strategies are primarily utilized in situations or events in



which an individual appraises there is nothing that can be done to modify the threat, challenge, or the harm. As Lazarus and Folkman's theory suggests, emotion-focused strategies are appropriate when the individual believes that she can not manipulate external factors in a fashion that would be beneficial for adaptation.

Table 3

Clustering Sheet In Sub-GroupingsEmotion-focused coping strategies:

1.	Affiliation	
	A. Relationships	47
	B. Assistance from others	64
	C. Hope of reunion with family or friends	10
		<hr/>
		Total 121
2.	Theological or Philosophical	
	A. Faith / Spiritual connection	7
	B. Purpose or meaning / Will to live	1
	C. Goal of bearing witness	5
		<hr/>
		Total 13
3.	Psychological	
	A. Denial	11
	B. Humor	3
	C. Depersonalization	0
	D. Numbing	4
	E. Rage	3
	F. Personal initiative	36
	G. Hope	20
	H. Fantasy	8
	I. Identification	6
	J. Maintenance of dignity	4
		<hr/>
		Total 95

Problem-focused coping strategies

1.	Active Behaviors	
	A. Technical skills	5
	B. Tasks or accomplishments	7
	C. Focus on daily tasks	0
	D. Resistance or organizing	18
	E. Manipulation of environment	46
	F. Creating choices	22
	G. Appearance	9
		<hr/>
		Total 107

Other

1.	Luck, Chance, Fate	19
		<hr/>
		Total 19

However, the research data suggests that problem-focused coping strategies were utilized whenever the female survivors discovered an opportunity to create a change or alternative that might lend itself to the reduction or delaying of the threat, challenge, or harm. Due to the massive traumatization, females in our population appeared to have little room for manipulation; but it was indicated that 43% of reported incidents (46/107) utilized active behaviors of problem-focused coping strategies. These techniques were utilized in an effort of altering the environment through means of manipulation of the externals. Examples of these behaviors might include lying; creating diversions; bribing kapos or block elders; or any means to gain protection, exclusion from selections, or personal safety. Other examples of active problem-focused coping might involve creating diversions so one prisoner could exchange places with another; lying about age; protection of a sister, mother, or friend by physically supporting them during appeals; or by performing labor for a weakened survivor.

The results of this research study concur with the findings of Benner, Roskies, and Lazarus (1980) which suggest that concentration camp experiences differ from other massive traumas by limiting problem-focused coping strategies to minute manipulation of the environment.

Limited manipulation of externals might include decisions of whether to eat now or to eat later. Concurrent with the work of Cohen (1953) and Kahana (1988), the findings of the research study indicate those under extreme massive traumatization experience little choice in outcomes.

In many cases, it was indicated that the female survivors in the sample population utilized a combination of both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies when the environment allowed such means for adaptation and survival. The research data gathered from the clustering sheets suggests that many of the female survivors utilized a combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies. These findings concur with the theoretical implications suggested by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) which suggest a combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping is utilized in massive trauma if the situation permits.

Comparing and contrasting the research data collected from the telephone interviews with the survivors, the results indicate that the survivors suggest that there was little opportunity to manipulate the environment. Survivors Mady D., Nina K., and Kate B. specifically stated there were no active strategies or no "real" means to manipulate the environment. In fact, the three women began their telephone interview

suggesting strongly that there were no techniques for survival. Despite the high incidence of “manipulation of the environment” transcribed in the oral testimonies, the survivors in the telephone interviews believe that there were “no real choices” or means of altering the environment. This concurs with Benner, Roskies, and Lazarus (1980) who contend that only minute manipulation of externals is possible during extreme massive traumatization. With that in mind, “real choices” reported by the survivor’s telephone interview is placed in perspective.

The following table indicates the responses of the survivors who participated in the telephone interview relating to their interpretation of coping strategies during internment.

Table 4

Coping Strategies Reported by Survivors during Telephone Interview

Survivor	Coping Strategy
Madeline D.	"No technique or active strategy" Luck "Human drive to live" Assistance from others Encouragement Relationships with other women Hope of reunion with family Fantasy and dreaming
Nina K.	"No choices or ways to manipulate" Live for one day, perhaps live to next day, and then the next day..." Hope Dream and fantasy to regenerate Affiliation with others Luck and fate
Lily M.	Live one day at a time Desire to live Affiliation and relationships Assistance from others Time to be alone, dream, talk to G-d Caring for loved ones
Kate B.	No specific strategy for survival Fantasize about "old days" Hope Assistance from others "Optimistic viewpoint" Encouragement from others Self-esteem, a "confidence inside" Relationship with others Numbing Fate

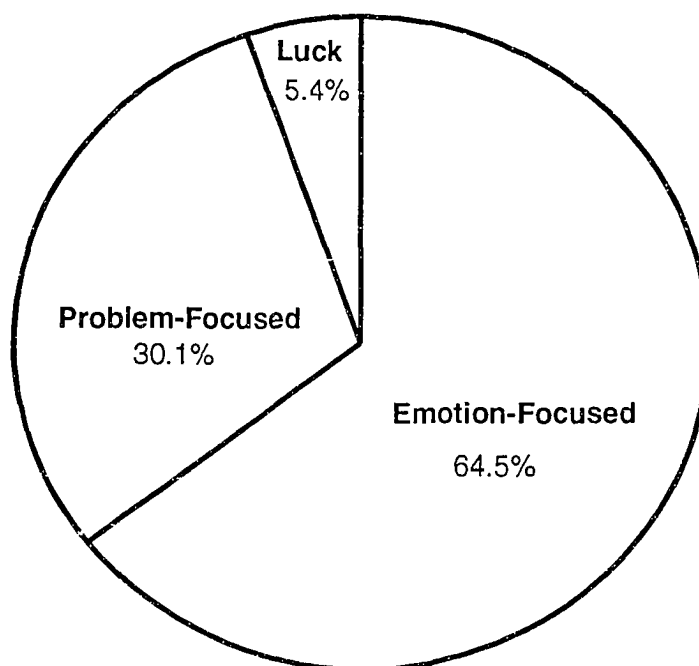
Cecilie K.	"Desire to live, a will to live" Writing poetry Affiliation and relationships Luck and fate Concern for family members
Guta W.	Luck "Strong," an "inner strength" Affiliation with other women Numbing Assistance from others Importance of family and protection
Margaret K.	Desire to live, "determination" Inner strength, "a tough cookie" Affiliation with others, friendship Assistance from others Numbing
Eva S.	Can't explain, unsure of why I lived Luck, fate Affiliation with others, family Assistance from other women
Magda B.	No specific technique for survival Assistance from others Taught to help others Organizing and resistance "Do whatever I could do"
Toby S.	Hope of seeing child once again Hope of seeing husband again Affiliation with others Assistance from others

Note: Transcribed telephone results procured 11/95-12/95.

The results of the research study indicate that 5.4% of the sample survivors noted luck or fate played a part in their survival. The results of the research concur with the work of Cohen (1953), Jackson (1993), Kahana (1988) which implied that luck and fate played a large part in survival.

This coping strategy, however, does not fall in either the emotion-focused or problem-focused coping strategy sub-grouping. The predominance of the incidence of luck or fate was noted in four of the ten telephone interviews (40%) of the female survivors of Auschwitz. As Cecilie K. stated, “How else can you explain that we lived?”

The following figure illustrates the results of the case study as it relates to the incidence of the utilization of problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping, as well as the incidence of luck.



**Figure 2.** Graphic Representation of the Percentage of Occurrences by Sub-Grouping Categories



### Conclusions of the Study Related to Research Questions:

#### Relationship between Sample Population and Affiliation as a Method of Emotion-Focused Coping

The research data compiled from the case study indicates that there is a connection between females from the Auschwitz Concentration Camp and affiliation as a form of emotion-focused coping during massive traumatization. The statistical data derived from the research study indicates the utilization of emotion-focused coping strategy, primarily in the sub-grouping of affiliation (121/355). The secondary emotion-focused coping strategy reported by occurrences was the sub-grouping of psychological defenses such as denial, humor, numbing, rage, hope, fantasy, personal initiative (“inner strength”), and identification. Within the sub-grouping of psychological emotion-focused coping strategies, it was noted that the highest frequency reported for adaptation was an “inner strength” (36/355), which enhanced the female’s resiliency and survival.

#### Implication of the study

The aging population of Holocaust survivors worldwide is a serious concern. Many of the survivors who “bear witness” to the atrocities and the realities of the Shoah are reaching their late 70s, 80s, and 90s. Soon

there will be no living witnesses to speak of the deliberate, methodical genocide and evil racist philosophies professed by the Nazi German Reich during the Holocaust.

Without the “witnesses” who have survived the horrors of the Shoah, we will only have historical records to document the depths of evil that was committed against society. These genocidal crimes against humanity will only be a memory with no living witness to warn others of the potential destructive capabilities of inhumanity fueled by prejudice, hatred, greed, and evil.

#### Future Research

Gender-specific Holocaust research is still in its infancy. Running against the biological clock, many avenues for further investigation and research have emerged from the research study. The phenomenological study of the Holocaust is hampered by the age and memory of the survivors who have been quiet for decades due to society’s “conspiracy of silence.” Opening the door to their “voices” is similar to a mighty river rapidly rushing through a small tributary. Filled with millions of feelings, thoughts, and insights, the survivors are willing to speak to those who are willing to listen. Their intensity and their dedication to speak, before it is

too late, is evident in their passionate desperation to have “us” hear what must be spoken before time runs out.

The research conducted in this case study suggests many opportunities for further investigations. Future research surrounding Holocaust studies may be relevant in the following areas:

1. A research study focused on gender-specific coping strategies of male versus female counterparts in a specific concentration camp location.
2. A research study which directs itself to specific coping strategies of survivors specific to home of origin or nationality, in an effort of focusing on the impact of cultural values and beliefs relating to coping strategies.
3. A research study directed to the utilization of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies for survivors of concentration camp related to age at the time of internment.
4. A research study focused on length of internment in Auschwitz and its relationship to the increased incidence for problem-focused coping strategies.
5. A research study which replicates this research case study as it relates to male coping strategies utilized during internment in Auschwitz.

### Concluding Remarks

The survivors who “bear witness” to the atrocities of the Holocaust demonstrate the amazing power of the human soul to survive within adversity and traumatization. The resiliency of the survivors of the Holocaust is captured through testimonies such as those under investigation in this case study. Through the testimonies it is possible to elicit valuable insights, interpretations, awareness, and step inside the feelings of those who lived under massive traumatization during the Shoah. Through the survivor’s eyes we are able to capture a small taste of the struggle for survival. The interpretations and “voices” of the valiant female survivors of Auschwitz are living testimonies to personal resiliency and the celebration of life. As Fritzie F. reported, “I think the first thought is, to survive...um...the seeing of death day in and day out. Not knowing when your turn was going to come. But I think the struggle to survive, (is) in all of us. And...and none of us really know the kind of energy we put in every day to survive, unless we’re faced with this.”

\*Note: Personal reflections of several survivors located in Appendix J.

## A Survivor

A survivor wears nice clothes with a matching smile, trying to recapture the forgotten pleasures of life, but is unable fully to enjoy anything.

A survivor will go on vacation and, while watching a show, will picture her mother, holding her grandson in her arms, grasping for breath.

A survivor will read about a fire and desperately hope that her brother had died from the fumes before the flames reached him.

A survivor will think of her sister with her three dead children and inhale the gas to feel the gasping agony of their deaths.

A survivor will go to a party and feel alone.

A survivor appears quiet but is screaming within.

A survivor will make large weddings, with many guests, but the ones she wants most will never arrive.

A survivor will go to a funeral and cry, not for the deceased but for the ones that were never buried.

A survivor will reach out to you but not let you get close, for you remind her of what she could have been, but never be.

A survivor is at ease only with other survivors.

A survivor is broken in spirit, but pretends to be like you.

A survivor is a wife, mother, friend, neighbor, yet nobody really knows her.

A survivor is a restless tortured person; she can only enjoy her children. Yet it is not easy to be the children of a survivor, for she expects the impossible of them--to be constantly happy, to do and learn all the things denied of her.

A survivor will awaken in a sweat from her nightmares, unable to sleep again. In vain does she chase the ghosts from her bedside, but they remain her guests for the remainder of the night.

A survivor has no fear of death, for peace is its reward.

Cecilie K. (1988), Sentenced to Live. New York: Holocaust Library.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

*USHMM Interview Guidelines, Page 1*

## **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Department of Oral History**

### **I. Mission Statement**

**The Department of Oral History is dedicated to the production, collection, and preservation of Holocaust testimonies. These testimonies serve as primary sources that will allow future generations of students, researchers, teachers, filmmakers, and other media producers to see and hear the testimony of those people who have witnessed or perpetrated the genocidal policies and crimes of the Nazis and their allies and collaborators. The Department of Oral History has as its goal interviewing Holocaust survivors, liberators, rescuers, resistance fighters, prosecutors, perpetrators, and witnesses. In keeping with the United States Holocaust Research Institute's interest in the study of genocide, the Department of Oral History also collects and produces interviews on genocides and genocidal acts other than the Holocaust.**

**To date, over 300 videotaped interviews have been produced by the Department of Oral History. In addition to these interviews, the Museum has also produced more than 130 audiotaped interviews for the Museum's ID Card Project and more than 30 interviews for the Permanent Exhibition's film, "Testimony." Relevant edited segments of the tapes are incorporated into the Museum's exhibitions, the Waxner Learning Center, and other programs.**

**Although nearly 500 of the interviews in the Oral History Archive have been produced by the Museum, most of the holdings in the archive are the result of an ongoing effort to collect audio or videotaped Holocaust testimonies from other Holocaust oral history projects worldwide.**

**The Oral History Archive contains over 3,500 interviews, most of which are in English. The interviews are of Jews, Polish Catholics, Roma and Sinti ("Gypsies"), political prisoners, members of the resistance and underground movements, hidden children, child survivors, Jehovah's Witnesses, rescuers, liberators, postwar prosecutors of Nazi crimes, and postwar relief agency workers, as well as other witnesses to the Holocaust.**

**The Oral History collection is expanding rapidly. Over 40 agreements have been signed with American Holocaust oral history projects, and negotiations are underway with many other institutions in the United States. Recently, collections have been acquired from Uppsala University (Sweden), Memoire et Documents (France), and the Imperial War Museum (Great Britain). The Museum has also cooperated with the Fortunoff Video Archives of Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University on video documentation projects in Israel, Ukraine, and Poland.**

## Appendix B

October 30, 1995

Dear Holocaust Survivor,

Raised in a small community, our Jewish survivor population was very small. Our rabbi and Jewish community leaders instructed immigrating Holocaust survivors to “put the past behind and never speak of what happened” during the Shoah. Both of my Hebrew school teachers were survivors of Auschwitz, but few would “break the silence” and bear witness to their experiences during the Holocaust. Throughout my childhood and adult life, I have searched to understand the miraculous strength that survivors utilized to cope and adapt to the atrocities during the Holocaust. My questioning has led me to undertake a research project in the area of coping and adaptation of female survivors of Auschwitz. As part of my research for my doctorate, I am using the testimonies of all the female survivors of Auschwitz who have given their testimony at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, including your unique experiences. As of this date, there is no research which looks specifically at the coping techniques of women from the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. I am hoping that, with your assistance, together we can add to the knowledge so future generations will understand the techniques used for survival during the Holocaust.

If you would be willing to participate, I would like to ask you a few questions about the techniques you used for coping and survival in Auschwitz. I have studied your testimony in great detail, but I would appreciate personal insights about survival from your viewpoint. If you



would be willing to assist me, I would only need about twenty or thirty minutes of your time. My research must be completed by November 30, 1995. If you would be willing to assist me, please contact me at my home address at

**Joy Erlichman Miller**  
**6610 N. Ridgefield Lane**  
**Peoria, Illinois 61614**

Or please contact me by telephone and reverse the charges. My telephone number is (309) 693-8255 or during the daytime at my office (309) 693-8200. Your assistance will be an extremely invaluable addition in the area of Holocaust Studies. I hope that I will be hearing from you in the coming days.

My deepest thanks and respect,

Joy Erlichman Miller  
Doctoral Candidate, Walden University

## Appendix C

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUMRELEASE FORM

Note of Explanation: Our primary concern regarding this videotaped interview is to respect your feelings. You will receive a copy of this videotape. to be used by you and your family in any way you wish. At the same time, this release form gives the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum permission to use your videotaped interview in many different ways, including fund-raising for the Museum, and to share it with other Holocaust centers as appropriate. The Museum will care and protect these videotapes so they will always be properly used with care and discretion.

RELEASE FORM

I hereby grant to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and its Museum the right to publish, exhibit, display, copyright, license, transfer, edit, or in any other way use in any form, without prior approval, any photographs, transparencies, motion pictures and/or television films or tapes, and any descriptions or transparencies thereof, which contain, in whole or in part, my image, name, voice or material spoken by me, for any purpose whatsoever, including without limitation educational, commercial,\* trade and pictorial art, with or without my name or any other identification and with or without the names of any other real or fictitious persons. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has my permission to show this videotape to raise funds for the Council and Museum.

I hereby release to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and its Museum their respective officers, directors, employees, agents, members and associates and their respective successors and assigns, from any and all liability for damages for libel, slander, invasion of privacy or any other claims based on the publication, exhibition, display, copyright, license, transfer, reproduction, editing, disposition or other use of such photographs, transparencies, motion pictures, television films or tapes, descriptions or transcriptions.

\* At the request of Holocaust survivors, videotaped interviews will not be used in commercial stores for profit.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

(Date) 10. of June 1990

(Witness) Leider / Kuzman

(Date) June 10, 1990

## Appendix D



November 7, 1995

Dear Mrs.

Joy Miller, a doctoral candidate at Walden University, has asked me to forward the enclosed letter to you. Ms. Miller has been researching your oral history testimony which you gave to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in order to incorporate it into her research.

As a policy we do not provide researchers with survivors' addresses and telephone numbers. This information remains confidential in order to protect your privacy. However, we will act as a liaison for researchers who would like to contact interviewees.

Enclosed you will find a letter from Ms. Miller. Please consider Ms. Miller's request for you to contact her. You are of course under no obligation to respond.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to call me at (202) 488-0434.

Sincerely,

Travis A. Roxlau  
Archivist

## Appendix E

TELEPHONE SURVEY FORM			
<b>PART A:</b>			
Name _____			
(Last)	(First)	(Middle)	
Maiden name _____			
(Last)	(First)	(Middle)	
Place of birth _____			
Were you in any Ghettos?			
Name	Country	Date arrived	Date left
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
Were you in any labor or concentration camps besides Auschwitz?			
Name	Country	Date arrived	Date left
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

When were you deported to Auschwitz?

Date of Arrival

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Were you part of a death march? \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B:**

What stands out when you think of Auschwitz?

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Survivors report using various coping techniques to deal with the atrocities in Auschwitz. What do you think you used to help you cope or survive?

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

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What do you think helped you maintain your own personal strength to survive or cope in Auschwitz?

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Did you maintain any close relationships with other women during your internment in Auschwitz? Please explain.

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## Appendix F

## SCRIPT FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Thank you \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_, for agreeing to participate in this research study. As you know, all of your answers in this interview will be coded to assure confidentiality. If you have any questions during the interview, please feel free to interrupt me at any time. This interview is being taped so your answers can be transcribed at a later date. This will assure accuracy in reporting your answers exactly the way you have described them within the interview. You may also refuse to answer any question you wish. Do you have any questions? Then we will begin...

We will begin with a few questions that will ask for some basic information about your experiences before transport to Auschwitz. Following the questions I will ask you about your interpretations of coping and survival strategies in Auschwitz.

ASK QUESTIONS FROM PART "A"

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FROM PART "B"

Each question will be asked and followed with the probe question...

TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT.

IS THERE MORE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

1. Following each answer given by the survivor, a restatement of the participant's answer will be paraphrased by the researcher to assure a valid understanding of the survivor's response.
2. Information will be transferred to the clustering sheets after interview.

Thank you so much for your assistance in this research project. I will be contacting you by letter in a few months to share the results of the study. If you would like a copy of the research study, I would be pleased to send you a copy at your request. Do you have any questions regarding our interview? If you would like to contact me, please feel free to write or telephone me at the following address:

JOY MILLER  
6610 N. RIDGEFIELD LANE  
PEORIA, ILLINOIS 61614  
309 - 693-8255

Thank you once again. Your participation will help educate others about the coping strategies of women during the Holocaust. I am very honored that you allowed me to "share your story." It is essential that we preserve your voice, so no one will forget what happened during the Shoah.



Appendix G

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**CLUSTERING SHEET FOR COPING STRATEGIES**

Personal initiative or a powerful strength within \_\_\_\_\_

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Luck \_\_\_\_\_

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Technical skills \_\_\_\_\_

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Appearance \_\_\_\_\_

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Relationships/Affiliation /Friendship \_\_\_\_\_

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Assistance or help from another person \_\_\_\_\_

Memory of a friend or family / hope of reunion \_\_\_\_\_

Resistance / organizing / moral opposition \_\_\_\_\_

Faith / religion / spiritual connection \_\_\_\_\_

The need to bear witness \_\_\_\_\_

Humor \_\_\_\_\_

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Discovery of a "meaning or will to live" \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tasks or accomplishments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Denial or repression \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Fantasy \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Making personal choices \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Rage \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Focus on daily tasks \_\_\_\_\_

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Identification with the aggressor \_\_\_\_\_

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Depersonalization \_\_\_\_\_

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Hope, positive thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

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Maintaining dignity through hygiene \_\_\_\_\_

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Manipulating the environment / deception or lying \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix H

**CLUSTERING SHEET IN SUB-GROUPINGS**Emotion-focused coping strategies:

1. Affiliation
  - A. Relationships
  - B. Assistance from others
  - C. Hope of reunion with family or friends
  
2. Theological or Philosophical
  - A. Faith / Spiritual connection
  - B. Purpose or meaning / Will to live
  - C. Goal of bearing witness
  
3. Psychological
  - A. Denial
  - B. Humor
  - C. Depersonalization
  - D. Numbing
  - E. Rage
  - F. Personal initiative

- G. Hope
- H. Fantasy
- I. Identification
- J. Maintenance of dignity

Problem-focused coping strategies

1. Active Behaviors

- A. Technical skills
- B. Tasks or accomplishments
- C. Focus on daily tasks
- D. Resistance or organizing
- E. Manipulation of environment.
- F. Creating choices
- G. Appearance

Luck, Chance, Fate

## Appendix I

Literature - Based Accounts of Coping in Concentration Camps

Benner, P., Roskies, E. & Lazarus, R. S. (1980)	Numbing, denial, making choices
Bettelheim, B. (1943)	Numbing (depersonalization, identification with the aggressor)
Chodoff, P. (1970)	Denial, friendship, identification, regression
Des Pres, T. (1976)	Will to live, splitting (numbing), personal resistance tasks, assisting others, focus on daily survival.
Dimsdale, J. (1980)	Survival through will or purpose, hope, affiliation, surrender to stress
Etinger, L. (1983)	Denial, numbing, decision making
Frankl, V. (1963)	Survival through will or purpose
Krystal, H. (1968)	Depersonalization, numbness, denial
Klein, H. (1980)	Creation of a new family (relationships), to share pain and share affiliation

Lipman (1991)	Humor
Schmolling, P. (1984)	Denial, rage, numbing, religion, identification with aggressor, friendships
(adapted from Kahana, et. al., 1988, p. 62)	

Female Literature-Based Evaluation Of Coping

Heinemann, M. (1986)	Suggests friendships and affiliation
Heilmann, A. & Meth, R. (1993)	Bear witness, resistance
Jackson, L. (1993)	Luck
Leitner, I. (1993)	Maintaining dignity
Lewinska, P. (1993)	Dignity through personal hygiene, resistance to desires of Nazis
Pawelczyn'ska, A. (1979)	Support and encouragement of others.
Perl, G. (1948)	Discovery of a purpose or meaning
Rappaport, S. (1991)	Emotional bonding with others.
Ringelheim, J. (1993)	Suggests friendships and affiliation with others
Rosenbaum, J. F., (1993)	Group affiliation, traditional gender- related roles, rebuilding, communal ties.



## Appendix J

## Personal Reflections

Through the Eyes of Cecilie K.

“We hope that future generations will never have the experience what our, what we went through will absolve all generations to come in the future. And all we hope is only that we are leaving behind, we the survivors, are leaving behind some meager tools--books, tapes, Holocaust museums. We want the future generations to know, to go to the museums; and when they look at those little shoes, that they will know that to us these are precious because they belonged once to our children. They belonged to my family. We lost so much. Nothing can make this ever right. We as survivors, we survived; but our lives were destroyed. Because though we look like you, we can never be like you. We wear nice clothes like you. We go on vacations like you. We make beautiful affairs. But affairs that I make, arrived a lot of friends; but the ones I wanted most, they never arrived. And we got to funerals and we cry for the ones that we ever buried...Remember the survivors. We are the last ones. Remember everyone because when we are gone people will say it never happened.”

Through the Eyes of Fritzie F.

“They tell us Hitler did this. Did Hitler really do this by himself? Are we forgetting the soldiers that gathered us? The people that took care of the ghettos? The people that drove the trains to Treblinka and other places? The men and women who were the guards in Auschwitz concentration camp? Our neighbors that turned us in? Are we forgetting all of that? Hitler didn’t do it himself. Hitler had lots of help. What about these men that were the guards in the camps, that would go home at night to play with their children and listen to their music and hug their wives while they were killing our parents and our sisters and brothers? Did they keep a secret? Can they keep a secret? How many people can keep a secret? We were told that they didn’t know. What about all the people that lived in the towns around Auschwitz and other concentration camps, that saw the flames day in and day out? That smelled the stink of the bodies burning, day in and day out? What about all the people that saw the trains passing by, and the people begging for water, for food to give to their babies?”

Through the Eyes of Helen G.

“ I know I cannot bring back my family, my little brother, the million and a half children that were destroyed, that were gassed, but perhaps may I could reach some people (and) make them understand that this did happen and it can happen again if we are not going to be aware of our surroundings. I think that every person...every person on earth should examine this, what has happened in the Holocaust because a thing like that can happen again and we need to watch that it shouldn't never happen again to no minority.”

Through the Eyes of Magda B.

“So I turn to you, all parents, to all the teachers, professors, scientists, preachers, priests, rabbis. Educate the children, the people, about the horrors that the German nation under the Nazi system did to all other nations, not only Jews...And who, for a lot of money, tried to persuade the world about the non-existence of the gas chambers. But would and you...forget it, if you would live through all the horrors which changed your life, your career? We're tormented by nightmares. When you close your eyes, you relive the misery again and again. So you don't even go to sleep. And how about the millions and millions of babies,

young, innocent children, people young and old? So please! Don't minimize the Holocaust as a old story. But try to work against it, that happenings like the Holocaust shouldn't have ground to happen again, ever!

Through the Eyes of Kate B.

"...People should be vigilant all the time not to, not to think that this really doesn't matter. All these...hate mongrels what come up in the world and people, if they're not personally marked they think that it's nothing. It will pass by. It will blow away. But, if you let it go (get) out of hand, then this, this can happen (again).

Through the Eyes of Alice C.

"Everybody can choose what they want to do in life with themselves, go right or go left. And the Torah says, 'choose life.' But the important thing is what life you're choosing. Not only the self-gratification, not only the self. But choose life. Look at the life of the others, and help and stand up where...where unrighteousness and evil is done. And stand up and be counted. We all have the ability, just like Raoul Wallenberg. This tape is for my grandchildren; but for all the grandchildren, for all the children

whom I will not meet. If they're looking for heroes, they have to look into their souls and found the hero in themselves.”

Through the Eyes of Lily M.

“But inside of us, we will never be the same as any other person who has never been in a concentration camp. It isn't possible. Because of what we went through. Because there's not a day that does not go by that we don't think of camp or of death. And of what we had to go through in life, which was then. It was just terrible. How we lived. It was so inhumane. Animals were taken care of better...had better love and care than we did. I remember when we...when I came into Auschwitz, it...such a Hell place. And when it rained, and...the ashes flew down from the crematorium on us. We were living with death all the time. And the smell, and the odor. It was impossible to describe it. And I cannot believe to think that the people in the outside of the camps, who lived around there, who claimed that they didn't know. I cannot believe that they say they didn't know what went on. Because they must. If we smelled it, they smelled it; and if the ashes fell on us, it must have fallen on them, too, when the winds carried it away...It is always in my heart. It always will be. 'Til I die”

And finally the Chilling Words of Cecilie K...

“Many years ago, I witnessed the massacre of my people and when my turn came, I wasn’t thrown into the flames like all the others, Instead, I was chopped up into small pieces, but I refused to die. I picked up all the pieces, put them neatly together, made myself look like a person, but in fact, remained a mummy.

I returned to the world in great anticipation, to witness the severe punishment the world would heap on the murderers. To my surprise, the world judged the victims.

Watching with my mummy eyes, I saw the unbelievable. People protesting that they did not want to see those horrible pictures, that this could not have happened in the 20th century, in civilized Europe.

Then came the witnesses, telling their experiences and echoes came to my mummy ears--Exaggeration: propaganda! So the victims were condemned for disturbing the peace and the case was closed.

We the mummies knew the truth, that no pictures can portray the real, that no book holds enough pages to describe and record the suffering and the ruthless murder of loved ones.

We, the surviving mummies, took the matter into our hands. We looked at the pictures ourselves, read the books in silence and decided to keep mum too. We had to fit into the world.

Even when my children would ask me, ‘Mommy, why are you crying?’ I would answer, ‘Just a headache, my dears.’

So, who am I? Cecilie K., living amongst you with a slight headache.”

(Cecilie K., (1988), Sentenced to live. New York: Holocaust Library.)

## CURRICULUM VITA

**JOY ERLICHMAN MILLER**  
**7820 N. University, Suite 207**  
**Peoria, Illinois 61614**  
**309-693-8200**

### **EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

- 1994 - 1996 Walden University, (awarded Spring 1996)  
Ph.D.(Human Services/ Professional Counseling)
- 1974- 1976 Bradley University: Peoria, Illinois  
Master's Degree -- Guidance and Counseling
- 1968- 1972 Southern Illinois University: Carbondale, Illinois  
B.S. Education -- Economics and History

### **PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING EXPERIENCE:**

- 1989- Present Owner/Director - Joy Miller & Associates. Counseling and Consulting.
- 1985-1989 Co-Owner / Director - Family Interventions, Inc. Counseling Center.
- 1980-1985 Private Practice: Counseling and Consulting.
- 1977-1980 Illini Bluffs High School, Guidance Counselor

### **PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATION EXPERIENCE**

- 1995-1996 Interviewer for Steven Spielberg's "Survivor of the Shoah Visual History"  
(International Holocaust Project)
- 1994-1996 Head Start- Peoria Citizen's Community for Economic Opportunity
- 1993-1996 Chairperson/Consultant- Peoria Holocaust Survivors Project
- 1992-1996 Psychological Consultant WMBD-TV. Peoria, Illinois.
- 1992-1996 Psychological Consultant WMBD 1470 AM Radio. Peoria, Illinois
- 1991-1992 Illinois Heart Institute Consultant. Stress Management Program.
- 1987-1992 Co-founder and consultant to Teens Need Teens Crisis Hotline, Peoria, Ill



**PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

- 1986-Present National Trainer and Presenter (Over fifty conferences nationally)
- 1993 Part-time instructor Bradley University: Techniques of Group Counseling
- 1981-1982 Illinois Central College, Instructor Conflict Resolution.
- 1972-1977 Teacher: elementary and secondary levels.

**PUBLISHED BOOKS:**

- 1994 Coming to the Edge: Transformational Therapy (pending publishing date)
- 1992 Celebrations for Your Inner Child: There is Joy in Recovery, Health Communications, Inc.
- 1990 My Holding You Up is Holding Me Back: Over-Responsibility and Shame, Health Communications, Inc.
- 1989 Addictive Relationships: Reclaiming Your Boundaries, Health Communications, Inc.
- 1988 Following the Yellow Brick Road : An Adult Child's Personal Journey Through Oz, Health Communications, Inc.

**FEATURED EXPERT IN MAGAZINE/NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:**

- 1994 First for Women: "Compulsive Overspending."
- 1993-1995 Peoria Women: " Stop in the Name of Love," (1993); "Over-Responsibility in the Workplace" (1994).
- 1993 Newsday: "Addictive Relationships."
- 1993 New York Magazine: Valentine's Day - "Addictive Relationships."
- 1987-1994 Peoria Journal Star ( assorted feature pieces)
- 1987-1992 Changes Magazine: Family Roles (1987), Addictive Relationships (1990 and 1991), Celebrations (1992).

**REGULARLY SCHEDULED SEGMENTS IN RADIO AND TELEVISION:**

- 1994 - Present Segment on CBS / WMBD Morning News (bi-monthly)
- 1995-Present Segment on CBS / WMBD Nightly News (bi-monthly)
- 1992-Present Weekly radio show CBS / WMBD 1470 AM

**TELEVISION APPEARANCES:**

- 1991-Present Expert on Assorted Mental Health Issues, Local ABC, NBC, CBS affiliates.
- 1993 Montel Williams Show: "Addictive Relationships."
- 1993 Geraldo!: "Addictive Relationships and Love Triangles."
- 1993 Jenny Jones Show: "People Pleasers, Breaking the Cycle."
- 1992 Oprah Winfrey Show: "Co-dependency, the Pros and Cons."
- 1992 Sally Jessy Raphael Show: "Addictive Relationships and Sexual Addiction."
- 1989 WGN Cable Network: "Focus on Children of Alcoholics."

**RADIO APPEARANCES:**

- 1992-1994 Weekly radio show on CBS Affiliate/ WMBD Radio 1470: "An Hour with Joy Miller. Host and producer.
- 1992-1994 Psychological consultant to WMBD1470 AM Radio and WKZW 93 FM..
- 1987-1993 20 city radio interview on Addictive Relationships.

**CERTIFICATIONS:**

- National Board of Certified Counselors (NCC) Certification Number 4258
- Certified Alcohol and Other Addictions Counselor (CACD) Number 3011
- Nationally Certified Addictions Counselor (NCAC) Number 10038
- Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) Number 180-000-345

**HONORS :**

- 1993 Peoria Woman; Peoria Woman Magazine
- 1992 Bradley University: Distinguished Alumni Award
- 1988 Baer Award: Mental Health Association of Illinois Valley: (Community service).
- 1988 Peg Burke Award. (Community Service and Professional excellence).
- 1976 Merle Kaufman Scholars Award: Bradley University ( Distinguished Academic and community affiliation award given in College of Education Master's Degree Program.)