

**TRAUMATIZED HOLOCAUST CHILDREN OVER 60
YEARS AND RELEVANCE TO OTHER
TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN**

SYMPOSIUM ON CHILD SURVIVORS WC 2000

In this paper I will compare child survivors of the Holocaust with their documented traumas and consequences over 60 years, with the traumas of sexually abused children whose initial traumas are usually undocumented. If the latter group has similar manifestations to child survivors of the Holocaust over similar periods, their trauma based validity may be enhanced in the face of those who claim that their symptoms are mad or bad.

For simplicity child survivors of the Holocaust will be referred to as Holocaust children, while sexually abused children will be called abused children. This is not to say

that the latter did not have their private Holocausts, or that the former were spared any abuse.

A Child Survivor of the Holocaust Who Was Also Sexually Abused in the War

This patient both remembered and was unaware of the causes of her many physical and psychological symptoms over the years.

Both spontaneously and in therapy she kept remembering ever more events in the war which connected with some of her symptoms. For instance, a grey film which pervaded her associated with her index finger in a hole came to be connected with her having been hidden in a sack and trying to escape.

When she started to remember more vividly her sexual perpetrators, voices which eventually were identified as theirs from childhood appeared denigrating her sexually and threatening her with death.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHILD SURVIVORS OF THE
HOLOCAUST**

(CSH) AND SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN (SAC)

	<i>CSH</i>	<i>SAC</i>
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THREAT TO LIFE	90% CHANCE OF BEING MURDERED	OFTEN FEEL THREAT OF DEATH
PHYSICAL DISTANCE FROM PARENTS	ALMOST ALWAYS SEPARATION, FREQUENT BEREAVEMENT. ABANDONMENT PROBLEMS	EMOTIONAL SEPARATION BUT PHYSICALLY TOO CLOSE. ENGULFMENT PROBLEMS
MORAL DIVIDE	THOUGH EMOTIONALLY BLURRED, PERPETRATORS OUTSIDE, RESCUERS INSIDE THE FAMILY	PERPETRATORS, RESCUERS AND BYSTANDERS OFTEN INSIDE THE FAMILY
DOCUMENTATION	DOCUMENTED. PERSECUTION OVERT.	UNDOCUMENTED PERPETRATION SECRET.

Traumatic Situations and Early Responses to Them

	<i>CSH</i>	<i>SAC</i>
Type of Abuse	Spared nothing	Often associated with physical and emotional abuse and neglect.
Acute Responses		
0-3	<p>Fragmentation/dissociation. Emotional, somatic, action.</p> <p>Atavistic significance e.g., monsters, devil</p>	<p>Fragmentation/dissociation. Emotional, somatic, action.</p> <p>Atavistic significance e.g., devil monsters.</p>
4-7	<p>Extreme obedience, double identity, capacity to not feel and think. “This is how it is.”*</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Morality</p> <p>Guilt, self-blame, and shame. Suppressed resentment being left</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Significance</p> <p>Rejectable, unlovable, bad. Not in verbal consciousness. .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Resilience</p> <p>Extreme will to live. Symbol of good object preserved, with hope of return of real one.</p>	<p>Extreme obedience, double identity, capacity to not feel and think. “This is how it is.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Morality</p> <p>Guilt, self-blame, and shame. Rage often somatized, displaced.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Significance</p> <p>Rejectable, unlovable. Sex is only asset. Not in verbal consciousness. .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Resilience</p> <p>Extreme will to live. Symbol and real good aspect of parent preserved, with hope of constancy. Parents</p>

		severely split in the mind.
7+	Akin to little adults, able to help in survival of families. Yet bound by views of children.	Precocious little wives, mothers. Yet bound by views of children.

Latent (Unawareness) Period Following Trauma

	<i>CSH</i>	<i>SAC</i>
Period of Latency	40 years, till time to integrate one's life.	20-40 years, when marry, have children, children the age of abuse.
Coping, Resilience	Suppress feelings and significance of trauma period and subsequent disappointment. Carry hope forward. Purpose in work, family, helping others.	Suppress feelings and significance of trauma period and subsequent disappointment. Carry hope forward. Purpose in new relationships, work, helping others
Symptoms	Some psychoses, depression, anxieties, physical and emotional fragments. PTSD in older survivors. Insecure lifestyles.	Some psychoses, depression, anxieties, physical and emotional fragments. Anorexia, borderline, antisocial. Enacting through further abuse.
Identity	Limited sense of being victim or survivor. Parents were victims. Concerned with human rights.	Variable sense of being victim or survivor. Concerned with injustice. Feminism.

Transgenerational	Insecure, avoidant and engulfing parents, may be handed down to 3rd generation.	Often abused, insecure violent parents. Victim, perpetrator role handed on.

Memory

	<i>CSH</i>	<i>SAC</i>
Type of memory	According to age. 0-3 somatic, feelings, enactments. 4-7 iconic sometimes “crazy”. 7+ verbal and visual but severe traumas suppressed and repressed.	According to age. 0-3 somatic, feelings, enactments. 4-7 iconic sometimes “crazy”. 7+ verbal and visual but severe traumas suppressed and repressed.
Contiguity	Variable	Variable
Defenses	Dissociation, fragmentation, repression, avoidance, others.	Dissociation, fragmentation, repression, displacement, avoidance, drugs, others.
Ambivalence	Memories give life, and kill.	Memories give life, and kill.
Type of retrieval	Spontaneous, puzzled and initially resist. Rarely in psychotherapy.	Usually spontaneous, sometimes flashback, dreams. Horror and resistance. Sometimes in psychotherapy.

Association with retrieval	Distress, at times illnesses e.g., depression. / Relief.	Distress, at times threatening voices, psychoses and/or other illnesses. / Relief.

Memory (Cont'd)

	<i>CSH</i>	<i>SAC</i>
Attitude of others	Discounting, , disbelieving.	Horrified, blaming, disbelieving, denigrating.
Conspiracy of silence	Reevoke own and parents' traumas, judgements and meanings. Holocaust deniers.	Reevoke own and parents' traumas, judgements and meanings. Threat of punishment, breakup of family. False Memory Syndrome Foundation.
Verificat- ion	Witnesses and revisiting places confirm memories and explain "crazy" fragments.	Denial, but large minority confess, further corroborative or partial evidence.
Sense of retrieved memory	Revealed, always there on some level.	Revealed, always there on some level.

Treatment Issues

	<i>CSH</i>	<i>SAC</i>
Identity	“Coming out” as survivor. Tell story, groups. Cultural acceptance.	“Coming out” as survivor. Tell story, testimonies, write. Groups. Cultural acceptance.
Integrating memories and significance of trauma.	Readjustment guilt, shame, self and relationships. Grief, and real hope.	Readjustment guilt, shame, self and relationships. Grief, and real hope. Harder process. Psychotherapy may be necessary
Values, meanings, purpose	Respect the life force which helped to survive. Defeat evil by surviving as a good person. Use experience to help others and posterity.	Respect the life force which helped to survive. Defeat evil by surviving as a good person. Use experience to help others and posterity.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Child survivors of the Holocaust and sexually abused children demonstrated similar universal trauma responses at the time of trauma and over their lifetimes. This included retention, loss of and retrieval of memories.**
- 2. Differences between the two groups were a result of the different of the “culture” of the traumatic situations.**
- 3. It is likely that other severely traumatized children share these universal trauma responses over their lifetimes. More research is needed. Child survivors of the Holocaust can serve as a useful benchmark for comparison with other groups too.**