



# SOCIOLOGY CONFRONTS THE HOLOCAUST

*Memories and  
Identities in  
Jewish  
Diasporas*

JUDITH M. GERSON AND DIANE L. WOLF, EDITORS

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*Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*

EDITED BY

JUDITH M. GERSON

AND

DIANE L. WOLF

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**RECONSIDERING HOLOCAUST STUDY**



## INTRODUCTION

### Why the Holocaust? Why Sociology? Why Now?

JUDITH M. GERSON AND DIANE L. WOLF

Contemporary sociological research is marked by a profound silence in relation to the Holocaust (Bauman 1989; Kaufman 1996; Markle 1995).<sup>1</sup> The chasm is acute in the sociological literature written in English, the focus of our attention, though the lacuna is also evident in other fields such as anthropology and cultural studies. To rephrase Virginia Dominguez's (1993) critical scrutiny of anthropology, it appears as if sociology might also have a "Jewish problem" (621). Few sociologists, regardless of their religious or cultural identity, have focused their academic work on the Holocaust or post-Holocaust life. Those who have tend to be in Jewish studies programs, and thus their work is often regarded as marginal to most disciplines. But the question, of course, should not be limited to why more Jewish sociologists do not focus on the Holocaust or post-Holocaust life; rather, we should ask why not more sociologists in general are not taking up such research.

Comparable problems are apparent in the piecemeal study of immigration. Jews initially presented the ideal type for the concept of diaspora (Clifford 1994; Safran 1991), so much so that the term was initially more or less synonymous with the Jewish experience. Contemporary scholars have frequently lost sight of this earlier case and instead have explored the notion of diaspora among dispersed Third World peoples without appropriate reference to or comparison with the Jewish diaspora (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002; Gold 2002). Like previous scholars, we do not wish to suggest that a Jewish diaspora is or ought to be hegemonic. Yet there are dangers of "'transcend[ing],' evading or erasing Jewishness in cultural studies of the new diasporas" (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002:13).



Omitting the case of a premodern Jewish diaspora permits erroneous assumptions, such as that diasporas are twentieth-century phenomena or that Jews are questionable multicultural subjects. A broadened, more inclusive notion of the concept of diaspora “offers rich material for a reinvigoration of Jewish thought. But the converse is also true: analyses of non-Jewish diasporas will be most fruitful when they engage in dialogue with the specific Jewish context in which the term originated” (Boyarin and Boyarin 2002:7).

Similarly, contemporary discussions of refugees are increasingly represented in the literature as “first and foremost a ‘Third World problem’” (Malkki 1995b: 503). In immigration studies, numerous authors (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Portes and Rumbaut 1996) have argued how post-1965 immigrants or refugees from the Third World differ from earlier European immigrants due to the postcolonial context, the global economy, and the racialized nature of U.S. society. Yet the proposition that the same analytic models do not pertain to pre-1965 immigrant groups precludes analyses of similarities and differences between Holocaust refugees and more recent migrants. Furthermore, though many assume that transnationalism is a contemporary postmodern phenomenon, Jewish experiences before and after World War II were and continue to be transnational, yet they have not been analyzed in such terms. Given the multiple diasporic migrations of pre- and post-Holocaust European Jews, comparative analyses with, for example, Indians in East Africa or the Chinese in Vietnam (Bhachu 1985; Espiritu this volume) could enable important new understandings of immigration processes and outcomes when there are multiple cycles of displacement and resettlement rather than a single occurrence.

In Holocaust studies, the concept of survivor has increasingly dominated research and public discourse, precluding appropriate comparisons with other stateless refugees. Today in the United States, moreover, the term *survivor* can pertain to almost anything—from someone who was a victim of incest to someone who remains employed after a corporate merger—whereas formerly it had the specific connotation of referring to Jews interned in concentration camps. In other words, the intellectual isolationism that pervades studies of the Holocaust and maintains its marginal status vis-à-vis sociology has made it more difficult to draw appropriate comparisons with relevant phenomena; it also inadvertently permits inappropriate assumptions and conclusions.

Moreover, there are constructs central to the sociological enterprise—including race, ethnicity, minority group, assimilation, and insider/outsider status—

that have shaped Holocaust scholarship (Biale, Galchinsky, and Heschel 1998; Boyarin and Boyarin 1997). While these works appropriately draw on rich intellectual traditions, there are few sociologists directly connected with these endeavors, and thus some of the most recent and best work on race and ethnicity, for instance, remains absent from these projects. That said, it continues to be both significant and necessary that Holocaust scholarship was originally devoted to documenting the past, to developing the historical record of what happened, where and when it happened, and if knowable, how it happened. Yet increasingly writers have come to recognize that the historicity of the Holocaust must be understood both in and of itself and as a reflection of how we interpret and represent our knowledge of the past.

Collective memory, according to the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992), refers to the ways in which the present molds how and what we recall of the past—a quintessentially sociological project. We remember and forget as members of particular groups in particular social locations, and through these processes, identities are formed and reformed. To a considerable extent, groups shape their own memories (Novick 1999), and thus how a group remembers its past reveals the group's sense of itself and its understanding of the past. Similarly, Hirsch and Smith (2002) elaborate this concept with their reference to “cultural memory,” which they understand to be “an act in the present by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested norms, conventions, and practices” (2002:5). And yet curiously, though historians and others in the humanities have relied heavily on notions of collective and cultural memory to analyze the Holocaust, such endeavors have remained limited in sociology (see Bodemann 1996; Levy and Sznajder 2005; Olick 1999a; Olick and Levy 1997; and Olick and Robbins 1998 for notable exceptions).

The dynamic link between collective memory and collective identity constitutes an important focus of this book. It is generally accepted that the Shoah plays a crucial role in Jewish collective memory and, therefore, in the constitution of Jewish identity. Indeed, scholars note with concern the increasing prominence of the Shoah as the basis, and sometimes the sole basis, of contemporary Jewish identity (Goldberg 1995; Novick 1999). It is clear, however, that not every generation has the same memory of the Holocaust because of its respective historical positions and life experiences, and much of what we understand to be “the” memory of the Holocaust is actually *post-memory*: “Postmemory is distinguished

from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection" (Hirsch 1997:22). Thus the post-memory of the second or third generation differs considerably from the memory of Holocaust perpetrators or survivors because only survivors or perpetrators witnessed these events. For the rest of us, post-memory of the Holocaust is filtered through a variety of sources including records and documents, memoirs and narratives of the destruction written and compiled by survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders, and contemporary research, textual accounts, and artistic portrayals of the Holocaust.

Several of the authors in this volume rely on the framework of collective identity and memory to examine daily practices of identities. Similarly, other writers consider the differential relationships of survivors and the "1.5" and second generations to the diaspora, as well as to processes of collective displacement, resistance, and resettlement.<sup>2</sup> How do survivors of genocide experience their collective identities in the aftermath of trauma, and how does that vary among generations? Such questions intersect with several important themes in immigration, diaspora, transnational, and refugee studies.

Thus we recognize the need to expand intellectual exchange between researchers working on the Holocaust and post-Holocaust life with North American sociologists working in the fields of diasporic and transnational studies, immigration, and collective memory. We do not want to suggest that Jewish experiences are either unique or hegemonic, but instead seek to understand how our knowledge of immigration and transnationalism, for instance, would change if the case of a post-Holocaust diaspora were brought into that literature, and conversely, how that research tradition might complicate our thinking of post-Holocaust immigration. The current state of these intellectual separate spheres has helped maintain Holocaust studies as an area of inquiry onto itself, one located in an academic ghetto distant from sociological practices particularly in the United States and in Canada. Ultimately, this intellectual bifurcation impoverishes both Holocaust studies and sociology. Within Holocaust studies, this separatism has meant that research proceeds without comparative knowledge from sociological areas of study that might deepen our understanding of the precursors, dynamics, and consequences of the Holocaust, thereby buttressing the presumptive claim of the Holocaust's uniqueness without exploration.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the missing case of the Holocaust in North American sociology means that many theories and substantive generalizations have not been tested on what is arguably a defining moment of the twentieth century.

In addition to the issues emanating from the sharp divide between these areas

of inquiry, the virtual absence of a comparative study of the Holocaust introduces another set of problems for researchers.<sup>4</sup> Arguments about the uniqueness and incommensurability of the Holocaust actually assume a series of implicit comparisons and judgments about whether those comparisons are justified. In other words, claims for the uniqueness of the Holocaust or any other phenomenon are premised on comparisons. For example, the idea that the Holocaust is genocide derives from the knowledge that the Holocaust shares several properties with other genocides. Comparisons enumerate both similarities and differences. The Holocaust is not identical to other genocides, but it is sufficiently similar to be categorized as genocide. In other words, assertions about the Holocaust's uniqueness depend on implicit comparisons, while at the same time precluding the possibility for subsequent explicit comparisons by insisting on the principle of the Holocaust's incommensurability.

And yet it is the responsibility of social science scholars to analyze as well as document, and making these implicit comparisons explicit remains a central goal of this volume. We believe that studies of comparison and generalization enable a more sophisticated understanding of the Holocaust. Appropriate comparative study of the Holocaust does not diminish its importance, but instead enables a more sophisticated and refined understanding. This approach points to an intellectual agenda that includes questions about which comparisons about the Holocaust are made, contested, and refused, by whom and under what conditions. We also ask what forms of comparison prevail in popular and scholarly discourses and how they influence each other. In ethnographic research, we want to know how people use comparison and generalization in their speech and silence about the Holocaust. And to our presumptive critics, we want to make clear that adopting this approach will not diminish or defame the Holocaust or its legacy. Rather, it promises to widen and deepen our understanding and produce more sophisticated knowledge.

The authors in this volume thus refuse the practice of separating sociological inquiry, on the one hand, from Holocaust studies, on the other, and instead seek to further the richness of scholarly interchange by bringing these literatures together into comparative conversations. As a collection, these articles provide innovative approaches to studying the Holocaust and post-Holocaust life using the concepts, theories, and methods available to us working predominantly in sociology and in closely related social science fields. Primarily, we rely on recent research on race and ethnicity, immigration and assimilation, identity, collective memory and transnationalism in our studies of the Holocaust and post-Holo-

caust Jewish life. We seek to understand how these approaches might expand and contribute to a more complex understanding of the Holocaust. At the same time, the chapters of the current volume help move research on the Holocaust and closely related research in Jewish studies out from the academic margins onto center stage, providing new perspectives that enable us to rethink how our sociological knowledge might be revised to incorporate the insights available from studies of the Holocaust and post-Holocaust life. Indeed, the organization of this volume reflects this dual emphasis with authors who interrogate the Holocaust and its aftermath using the analytic tools prominent in recent sociological scholarship and other commentators who speak to how these works might contribute to ongoing questions in their areas of specialization in sociology and related fields.

The initial motivations behind this volume and the October 2001 conference from which it stems are simple: as feminist sociologists well steeped in the field of the political economy of gender and labor, we understood from our earlier work the need to place disparate fields of inquiry into dialogue with each other and realized that this type of interchange can yield many important insights unattainable through a more singular, solitary focus. When we began our individual research projects on the Holocaust and post-Holocaust Jewish life, we found, and continue to find ourselves wandering in what seems like a sociological desert. As we write about the Holocaust, we continually search for links with sociological constructs central to our projects. Just as academics often create the courses they wish they had had as students, we endeavor to join these different fields as both a template and a catalyst for other scholars.

While we asked authors to consider the role that sociology could play in their research, we conversely asked commentators to consider how Holocaust research might inform, expand, or challenge ideas central to their areas of study if it were more central to those areas of inquiry. The scholars in this volume incorporate a broad range of sociological theories, methods, and substantive findings into studies of Holocaust and post-Holocaust Jewish experiences, focusing attention on topics that heretofore have received fleeting consideration because of other disciplinary emphases. For example, sociologists are accustomed to considering the interface of macro social structures and microlevel interactions and thus are well positioned to articulate how state policies regarding immigration shaped collective identities as refugees, immigrants, and survivors. The content of these essays and the format of our book can only invite comparative analyses, an endeavor long overdue in reference to Jewish experiences and the Holocaust. We

have much to gain from dismantling the barriers that have for too long contained the study of the Holocaust and Jewish life in their academic ghettos.

Thus the chapters in this volume center on the themes of memory, identity, and diaspora in the Holocaust and its aftermath, which both draw on and contribute to ongoing work in sociology in these areas as they intersect with studies of race and ethnicity, immigration, globalization, and social theory more generally. We have argued for the importance of intellectual cross-fertilization by integrating work on the Holocaust and post-Holocaust life into English-language sociology and using the analytic tools of sociology to further our understanding of the Shoah. Through the research in this volume, we have already seen the intellectual advantages of relying on a broadly defined sociological approach to interpret the empirical research presented here. It is our hope with the publication of this volume that its presence will initiate many more engagements with the intellectual endeavors that bring together what until now have been distant fields of knowledge.

## Notes

1. We recognize the problems of language inherent in using the phrase *the Holocaust*, setting it up as the sole, most important holocaust and the standard for other holocausts. The term *holocaust* itself is a Greek word referring to a burnt sacrifice. Hebrew and Yiddish referents represent its location within Jewish life rather than in a world event (Young 1988). The Hebrew word *Sho'ah* means “disaster” or “catastrophe,” as do the less commonly used terms *hurban* in Hebrew and its Yiddish analogue *hurbn*. Yet both these terms do not directly name the Nazi genocide. Without an alternative available, we reluctantly reproduce the problem here. We use the terms *the Holocaust* and *Shoah* interchangeably.
2. While there is widespread recognition of the importance of generations to the study of immigration (Rumbaut [1976] 2004a, 2004b; Zhou 1997) and the significance of generations to collective memory of the Holocaust (Aviv and Shneer this volume; Hirsch 1997; Kaufman this volume; Suleiman 2002), there is no consensus on how best to define and measure the concept. The term *1.5 generation* was originally developed by Rumbaut ([1976] 2004a) to elucidate the differences between immigrant youth and their first-generation foreign-born immigrant elders, on the one hand, and their second-generation, native-born kin and friends, on the other. Rumbaut (2004b) operationalizes the *1.5 generation* to include those who were preadolescent children of primary school age upon immigration, thus distinguishing them from ideal typical first- and second-generation immigrants. Other scholars have either failed to recognize the *1.5 generation* or resorted to fuzzier age-based definitions.

3. A dearth of formal comparative research and extensive links among the Holocaust and relevant social science literatures helps secure the vexed and highly contested idea that the Holocaust was unique. Though it is not the major focus of our work here, we, like Bauer (2001), argue that the Holocaust was unprecedented yet not unique.
4. Fein's (1993) work on comparative genocide remains an important exception.

## Sociology and Holocaust Study

JUDITH M. GERSON AND DIANE L. WOLF

In this essay, we consider the scholarship in sociology that focuses on the Holocaust and its aftermath.<sup>1</sup> We confine our review to English-language sources that might most appropriately be categorized under the rubric “sociology of the Holocaust and post-Holocaust life.”<sup>2</sup> We begin with an overview of the field cognizant of the relative scarcity of sources.

In the opening pages of his book *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman (1989) laments that a “glaring paucity” (xiii) of sociological scholarship exists on the Holocaust. Indeed, our review of the literature confirms these persistent concerns about the dearth of a sociological understanding of the Shoah (Gerson and Wolf 2000; Kaufman 1996; Markle 1995). Yet it would be a serious mistake to overstate this claim, and thus we turn to the available literature in sociology to identify the most prominent sources.

We discerned two distinct approaches to the study of the Holocaust within the sociological literature. We discuss each of these clusters in turn, recognizing that they constitute neither exclusive nor exhaustive categories, and that they do not make for distinct stages either. Within sociology, the first and by far the predominant approach to the study of the Holocaust was distinguished by scholars’ reliance on macrohistorical methods to interrogate their subject matter. These researchers were likely to study the rise of fascism and National Socialism—specifically, mass society, propaganda, modernity, and German militarism—but tended to eschew any sustained analysis of the genocide and Judeocide in particular. In other words, the focus in sociology, much as in other disciplines, was on perpetrators rather than on victims as researchers grappled with the threat the Holocaust posed to Enlightenment ideals.



It is a commitment to positivism that most clearly distinguishes this group from the next. Researchers in this first group grappled both explicitly and comprehensively with how and why the Holocaust occurred, and they relied on a broad range of core sociological constructs such as social order and cohesion, racial ethnic prejudice and conflict, bureaucracy and modernization, and power as a means to try to comprehend the destruction and mass murder of the Holocaust. Within this cluster, there exists a notable subspecialization on the study of social movements and political sociology, and here researchers have documented and explained patterns of Nazi party membership.

In contrast to the work in this first cluster, a second, more recent cluster emphasizes interpretative approaches. Included under this rubric are microlevel approaches and meta-analyses—local ethnographies, case studies, autobiographical and biographical narratives often written from victims' perspectives. And yet our review begins with a group of scholars who challenged this dichotomy and instead understood their work in both positivist and political terms.

The preponderance of sociological scholarship on the Holocaust during the war and in the years immediately following it was to be found in the writings of refugee scholars, and among them, members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research were best known for their work on fascism. Initially the main areas of interest of Max Horkheimer, the intellectual leader of the group, Theodor Adorno,<sup>3</sup> and their émigré colleagues, many of whom were living temporarily in the United States, fell squarely within a Marxist philosophical tradition, but with the rise of Nazism and the scholars' escape to the United States, those interests took a decidedly more social-psychological turn and shifted increasingly to the relationship of personality to anti-Semitism and authority (Coser 1984). The group's research culminated in a series of empirical works, *Studies in Prejudice*, which included the renowned volume, *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). Although that volume was based on an earlier text, *Autorität und Familie* [*Authority and the Family*], which emphasized structural and particularly class factors, the newer book, written in collaboration with American colleagues, was more characteristic of liberal individualism (Coser 1984) as it sought to understand authoritarianism by analyzing personality. Personality alone explained ethnocentrism and fascism without any need to consider external conditions that might have produced this personality type. Consequently, for its authors, the world was cleanly divided between proto-Nazis and their victims. What remains notable today about *The Authoritarian Personality* is not its actual findings, many

of which its authors and other critics subsequently discounted. Rather, the text serves as an early template for how to study Nazi atrocities and for its absolution of everyone but the Nazis for these crimes. After the war, members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research ([1956] 1972) developed a sociological explanation of prejudice that analyzed anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany as an example of a more general instance of racial hatred. Some have criticized the work of the Frankfurt Institute as limited by its members' assumptions concerning the uniqueness of the Holocaust and their attendant failure to interrogate its historical and comparative links (Bahr 1984; Bottomore 1984:21,72). Yet members of the institute also need to be recognized for their use of multiple methods and theories in their search for an objective understanding of Nazism and fascism, which they pursued in hopes that their knowledge perhaps could help prevent future disasters.

Even before Germany declared war against Poland in 1939, a number of immigrant and native-born sociologists sought to understand the growing popularity of the Nazi party. In 1934, one year into the Third Reich, the American-born Theodore Abel convinced Nazi party authorities that he be allowed to sponsor an essay contest among early joiners of the party. Six hundred essays were submitted and analyzed, and Abel ([1938] 1986) described a wide range of motives, rather than argue the now more common interpretation that the earliest members were dissatisfied and lower middle class. Hans Gerth, a German refugee, analyzed the shift in Nazi party leadership in its earliest years from charismatic authority to increasingly one that fused charisma with bureaucratic power. With this shift came a concomitant change in party membership from earliest members, who tended to be young and economically disadvantaged, to subsequent members who were more likely to be older and civil servants. Published in 1940, his words are prescient: "The anti-Jewish riots of November, 1938, the swift efficiency in raiding synagogues, offices, business establishments, and homes of Jews revealed the increased rationalization of the terror as compared with the Kurfürstendamm raid in the summer of 1935" (Gerth 1940:541). Rudolf Heberle ([1945] 1970), an émigré sociologist, was also interested in understanding Nazi party membership. Concentrating on the largely rural state of Schleswig-Holstein, he used an ecological approach to map the growing acceptance of the Nazi party in the region. Support came particularly from the middle strata that included small farm owners and small entrepreneurs, groups at the margins of an industrializing economy. In the introduction to the book's second edition, Heberle notes the connection

between his work and “certain recent political tendencies and movements (somewhat vaguely called the ‘extreme right’) in the United States today” (Heberle [1945] 1970:vii).

Travel, study, military or governmental service in Europe enabled a few U.S. sociologists to have firsthand knowledge of Germany. Though most of the work in this genre was empirical and concentrated on the Nazi party in its early years and subsequently the perpetrators and bystanders in the aftermath of the war, all of the articles seem to respond to the authors’ implicit questions about how the destruction could have happened. In 1935 and 1936, Edward Hartshorne used his firsthand observations of Germany, and British and German statistical data, to study the effects of National Socialism on German universities. He reported the attrition of many faculties, with the worst losses in the social sciences given the dismissal, harassment, and/or exile of many professors. Academic governance and collegial relations were terminated as well, thus destroying the fabric of free inquiry and liberal learning (Hartshorne 1937). Serving as an intelligence officer after the war, Morris Janowitz (1946) interviewed a hundred Germans and found that even though most had basic knowledge of the concentrations camps, they nonetheless denied knowing the specifics or the extent of the atrocities, repressed such knowledge when confronted with it, and deflected blame for the genocide on the Nazis and the ss. While today the complex relationship of the perpetrators to their crimes is better understood, Janowitz must have been among the first to propose it. Janowitz also collaborated with the chief of intelligence of the Psychological Warfare Division in a study of German prisoners of war and their loyalty to Hitler (Gurfein and Janowitz 1946). In addition, Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz (1948) studied the structure of the German army and found that strong social ties within a soldier’s company best explained infantrymen’s behaviors and beliefs. In the summer of 1945, Clifford Kirkpatrick (1948) also conducted a survey of the reactions of “well-educated Germans” to their defeat. These responses revealed considerable confusion about how to assess Nazi responsibility, and also distress about both the concentration camps and the Allied bombings. Kirkpatrick was explicit about his concerns about the limited utility of sociology in understanding the war and concluded that only afterward, “unclouded by war hysteria” (1946:67) would sociological thinking about Germany prove appropriate. He derived ten sociological generalizations about guilt, responsibility, bias, and in- and out-groups, which seemed most relevant for Americans rethinking their peacetime relations with a defeated Germany—propositions that appear not to have inspired further research.

Talcott Parsons's work on National Socialism is probably better known to readers today than many of the above-cited works, but even his nine articles on the subject are not as widely read as are his other texts.<sup>4</sup> Parsons's approach to the rise of National Socialism derived in part from his interest in understanding structures of authority and power in political systems. He was troubled by the ways in which racialized laws and practices had replaced individual-based evaluations of merit and represented a rupture of universal standards of rational knowledge, human rights and liberties common in democratic life (Parsons [1942] 1993a, b).

Uta Gerhardt, Parsons's biographer, traces his strong stance against National Socialism to his belief in liberal learning and universalistic religion, both of which he considered linked to modern capitalist economic structures and crucial for Western civilization (Gerhardt 1993a, 2002). Unlike other democratic nations, Weimar Germany had retained a significant landed aristocracy with elements of feudal and traditional societies, resulting in both a formality and patriarchal authority in social life that Parsons associated with that democracy's demise. Although Parsons ([1942] 1993a) also acknowledged the importance of external factors such as the treatment of Germany by the Allies in World War I, economic crises, and so forth, he reasoned that domestic social patterns made it harder for many to become more fully integrated into an increasingly urban, industrial society, which consequently kept Germany a divided society rather than a unified, rational one (Parsons [1942] 1993c).

Parsons also argued for the usefulness of basic sociological principles to comprehend fascism. Within a culture or subculture of deviance, Parsons found that compulsive conformity developed. He viewed Nazi Germany as the extreme case of deviance at the state level. In Parson's opinion, anti-Semitism, a form of group prejudice, and crime relied on similar mechanisms, although their outlets differed. Anti-Semites in Nazi Germany belonged to mainstream society and scapegoated one particular group, whereas criminals rebelled against the broader society. He called for dissecting the roots and meanings of fascism as a revolutionary movement, arguably "the most dramatic single development in the society of the Western world in its most recent phase" (Parsons [1942] 1993d:203). In addition, Parsons published three articles in *Psychiatry*—the first on propaganda and social control in which he argues for a more generic understanding of propaganda, defined as any technique used to achieve a goal (Parsons [1942] 1993c). In March 1944, Parsons was invited to the Conference on Germany after the War, at which its participants tried to articulate a social and cultural rather

than a political and economic response to Germany's anticipated defeat (Gerhardt 2002:110). Parsons outlined a program of necessary changes, which included ending the high degree of hierarchy, authoritarianism, and formalism evident in German institutional structures.<sup>5</sup>

Although sociological writing on the Holocaust in the 1940s and 1950s was not extensive and those writing confined their work to the rise of fascism and militarism, by the 1960s, the seeds of a more expansive sociological inquiry had become evident. Everett C. Hughes (1962) published "Good People and Dirty Work," a frequently cited article that explores how the ss, the inner fanatical sect of the National Socialist government in Germany "perpetrated and boasted of the most colossal and dramatic piece of social dirty work the world has ever known" (1). Concentrating on the Final Solution as a case, Hughes does not single out Germans from others as more culpable for committing dirty work. Instead, he argues that dirty work is a phenomenon evident in all societies, be it the lynching of blacks in the United States, worldwide disease and hunger, crimes in South Africa, and so forth. Visiting Germany in 1948, Hughes found it remarkable that rather than remain silent, ordinary Germans, whom he considered "good people," actually discussed the atrocities.<sup>6</sup> But how do good people enable dirty work to happen? Hughes reasoned that they increasingly defined Jews as a problem, categorized them as out-group members, and distinguished themselves from the Jews. Yet good people were not the perpetrators of the Final Solution; that was a fanatical core in a militant social movement legitimated by the state and eventually by the general population. All societies, Hughes concludes, have "smaller, rule-making and disciplining powers . . ." (1962:11) including the family, religious orders, political parties, and so forth. The Nazis wanted to replace these other institutions with their own laws and forms of control. The problem for civil society remained how to sustain these other institutions to ensure a social and moral order.

In addition, several sociologists in the postwar years considered fascism and Nazism in their work, often as counterevidence in their more general writings on democracy. Certainly this is evident in Seymour Martin Lipset's (1960) *Political Man*, in which he analyzes electoral support of various political parties in order to understand the rise of fascist parties to power. To a lesser extent, this is also the case in Jessie Bernard's (1949) *American Community Behavior*. More generally, the popular sociological writings of the period focused on questions that troubled postwar democracies—questions of community, civil society, and anomie. While

often understood as a response to worries about the Cold War, it seems eminently reasonable to us that these texts might also be read as a response to the aftermath of the Holocaust, even though it remains a tacit, unspoken rejoinder.

It was not until the 1970s that sociologists began to grapple more fully with the mass murders and atrocities of the Holocaust. Among the earliest sociological studies of concentration camps was Anna Pawełczyńska's ([1973] 1979) *Values and Violence in Auschwitz*. Written by a Polish member of the resistance and a political prisoner at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the work remains remarkable for its detailed analysis of the social organization of this camp. Though Pawełczyńska recognizes the importance of the larger political context of the Third Reich and is unequivocal in her condemnation of the regime, she reserves her most forceful and nuanced analyses for the routine structures and patterns of interaction that defined prisoners' existence. Camp prisoners were strategic rather than passive in their conformity. They sought to retain as many of the shreds of their values as possible, realizing that they had to adapt. Inmates adjusted norms of caring to attend to the person physically or emotionally closest to them or the one most in need. Pawełczyńska concludes that camp prisoners relied on a diminished set of human values to sustain themselves biologically and retain "their attitude of protest against force and violence in relation to the human person" ([1973] 1979:137). Writing at a time when there was heightened public interest in the ostensible absence of Jewish resistance to the Nazi reign of terror, Pawełczyńska's analysis of conspiratorial and resistance organizations in Auschwitz is particularly noteworthy.

Pawełczyńska was not the only sociologist with firsthand knowledge of the concentration camps. Paul Neurath, a Jewish political prisoner, was arrested on April 1, 1938, sent to Dachau and, a few months later, transferred to Buchenwald. After being released from the second camp in May 1939, he made his way to the United States, where he won a predoctoral fellowship to study sociology at Columbia University (Fleck, Müller, and Stehr 2005:279–311). He wrote his dissertation based on his concentration camp experience using ethnographic methods, recalling from his recent memory what daily life in the camps had been like. He also interviewed ten other inmates. They all readily concurred with his account including almost all of the specific facts, disagreeing, as Neurath tells his readers, only in the slightest of details. Although he successfully defended his dissertation before a committee of ten in June 1943, he did not seek a publisher for two more years. By that time, in Neurath's words, "publishers didn't want to

print any more about concentration camps without gas chambers” (qtd. in Fleck, Müller, and Stehr 2005:297). Neurath’s text is a precise social account of daily life in the two camps, including his initial impressions of the camps, the daily routine, different prisoner groups, the guard system, and the organization of work. The intensity of these descriptions is followed by a chronological record of increasing forms of harassment and brutality. Neurath refuses to rely fully on description and grapples with the vexed issue of minimal inmate resistance. He considers how prisoners’ spirits were broken during their transport and analyzes the camps as sites without meaningful civilized life. He recognizes that when prisoners personalized their conflicts with the guards, resistance proved more effective (Fleck, Müller, and Stehr 2005; Neurath 2005:245–67).

Most sociological research was not, however, based on firsthand evidence. As we will see, writings in the postwar period tell us as much about the Holocaust as they do about the state of sociology. Barrington Moore Jr. (1978) recognized the importance of a comparative historical approach to the Holocaust, as is evidenced by his volume titled *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, the hallmark of a sociological approach to the study of inequality, injustice, and moral codes. Moore identifies the conditions that either evoked or precluded moral outrage against social injustice. Focusing on the dual processes of atomization and cooperation that operated among concentration camp inmates at Theresienstadt and among the Chamars or untouchables in India, he argues that either too much social support or support unsuited to the situation prevents people from resisting injustice. In his search for recurring patterns of resistance or its absence, he returns to the universal problems societies face—the distribution of goods and services. Ultimately, Moore’s explanation of the actions of Holocaust victims and perpetrators proves a deeply sociological one, emphasizing societal organization around mechanisms of reciprocity and social cooperation as key to understanding the occurrence of subversion.

Similarly, Helen Fein has developed an intrinsically sociological analysis of the varying “successes” of the Final Solution, which she argues must entail an explanation of “how Jewish victims were disintegrated from the social systems by which they were usually protected” (Fein 1979:33). She stresses the importance of studying the citizenship rights of Jews before the war, as well as the varied experiences of Jews throughout Europe. As such, the proper unit of analysis for Fein is neither perpetrators nor victims but the nation-state. Using a range of methods, she develops mathematical models to explicate where the Final Solu-

tion was more successful and where it proved a relative failure. Fein identifies the importance of the size of the prewar Jewish population and its concentration, the dominance of the Roman Catholic church, the success of anti-Semitic movements before 1936, warning time to extermination, native governments' degree of collaboration, and the activities of local *Judenräten* (councils of Jews responsible for enforcing Nazi rule and adjudicating Jewish communal affairs) among other variables as significant in explaining the outcomes to the Final Solution. In subsequent research on anti-Semitism, Fein (1987) analyzed its commonalities with other forms of inter-group conflict, studied its impact on Nazism and the Holocaust, and considered its effect on more contemporary issues of national identity, the state, and current forms of harassment. Today, Fein remains probably best known for her comparative work on genocide (1979), which she originally conceptualized as premeditated and organized state-sanctioned murder. In subsequent work, she expanded this conceptualization to include all purposeful acts to physically destroy a group through biological or social reproduction, perpetrated despite victims' surrender or lack of threat (Fein 1993).<sup>7</sup>

Other sociologists have also studied state-sponsored genocide and have done so within a comparative historical framework. Leo Kuper focuses on "domestic genocides," which he defines as internal to a society and not a direct outcome of a war (1981:9). These genocides, which include the Holocaust, occur in pluralistic or divided societies in which minority groups have recently been granted enhanced civil rights. Yet these are also societies with long-standing traditions of exclusion directed at these minorities, and increased integration also generates escalating hatred and violence. Irving Louis Horowitz concentrates on the nation-state and argues that state-sponsored bureaucratic apparatuses, rather than theological approaches, are essential to understanding the structural and systematic destruction of a people. For Horowitz, "totalitarianism is the essence of the genocidal process" (1982:202). Although he concedes qualitatively distinctive aspects of the Jewish Holocaust, Horowitz urges readers to adopt a sociological perspective that places the Holocaust in a cross-cultural framework.

Ranier Baum (1981) concentrates on cultural values as a mode of explanation and points to a moral indifference among German elites in government, academia, the economy, and the armed forces. Modern Germany had a long-standing desire to be an imperial power, but it was also characterized by fundamental regional and class differences in values. As a consequence, there were multiple and competing sources of moral authority, and a dearth of public discussions of



moral issues. With values and morality fractured and public discourse diminished, an unexamined amorality could more easily develop.

Exemplary of the macrohistorical approach is Zygmunt Bauman's (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*, in which he argues that only a modern bureaucratic state with norms and institutions that emphasized rationality, science, objectivity, planning, and efficiency could provide the necessary foundation for the Holocaust. Though such a state was capable of mass destruction, it also required leadership committed to a particular vision of an ostensibly perfect society, which necessitated destroying all those who threatened such a vision. Bauman's attack on modernity centered on his contention that systematic murder was made possible through modern bureaucratic society's destruction of human moral capacity through the production of social distance and the replacement of abstracted technical responsibility for individual moral responsibility (Bauman 1989; Smith 1999). In a subsequent work, Bauman reconsiders the idea of "categorical murder" in which "men, women and children were exterminated for having been assigned to a category of beings that was meant to be eliminated" (Bauman 2004:26). Mass killings of Armenians, Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Tutsis all amounted to categorical murder, which Bauman understands as a unidirectional consequence solely of their assignment to a group to be eliminated.

Adopting a similar approach of trying to understand how the social organization of mass murder routinely functioned, Wolfgang Sofsky studied concentration camps. Originally published in German in 1993, *The Order of Terror* (1997) offers an in-depth empirical investigation of concentration camps, looking specifically at the social organization of a camp in terms of time and space, the dynamics of absolute power, the organization of work or "terror labor," and so forth. His analysis provides readers with a thick description of the routine lived experience in the concentration camp, including how power and terror functioned.

Whether or not the potential for comparison with other extremist political movements motivated scholars, years later the political-sociological interest in Nazi party membership witnessed a scholarly resurgence. A number of sociologists documented membership patterns in the Nazi party. Who joined, when did they join, who was most likely to remain, and who was the most apt to drop out or be expelled? Using party membership data, scholars argued that membership was more representative of the whole of German society than initially believed (Brustein 1998a). In Munich, Nazi Party membership between 1925 and 1930 was

evenly spread among city districts and generally proportionate to social status and most occupational distributions (Anheier and Neidhardt 1998). Economic self-interest, according to Brustein (1998a, 1998b), was a major motivator in party membership, making the early joiners of the Nazi party much like other citizens who choose parties or candidates according to their distinct economic interests. Based on careful data analysis of more than forty thousand party members, Brustein demonstrates the success of the Nazi party in crafting economic policies to meet the needs of ordinary German citizens. Others have argued for a more multifaceted explanation that underscores the importance of various social structural and political processes (Anheier 1997; Anheier, Neidhardt, and Vortkamp 1998). Some have investigated the effects of preexisting social networks on party membership (Anheier and Neidhardt 1998; Ault and Brustein 1998) and tried to understand gender differences in party membership (Anheier and Neidhardt 1998; Berntson and Ault 1998).

In his most recent book, Brustein (2003) returns to the question of anti-Semitism that Fein (1979) originally explored in her work. Both scholars examine national variations in anti-Semitism, which Fein concludes helped explain the different rates of Jewish victimization among nations. Brustein concentrates on the pre-Holocaust period and seeks to understand the foundations of European anti-Semitism and its varying formulations across five countries—France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Romania. An exemplar of historical comparative research, Brustein's work identifies empirical evidence for four strains of anti-Semitism between 1879 and 1939—religious, racial, economic, and political—each of which relies on a particular configuration of anti-Jewish beliefs that vary over time and space.

Studies of the post-Holocaust era are even scarcer than those dealing with the Holocaust period itself, which speaks to the enduring epistemological chasm between Holocaust studies and immigration research, and the ways in which the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust has effectively erased questions of diaspora, immigration, and resettlement in postwar inquiry. Yet several notable exceptions do exist: Davie's (1947) survey of European immigration to the United States, Berghahn's (1984) monograph on Austrian and German Jewish refugees in England, Helmreich's (1992) work on Holocaust survivors arriving in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as Rapaport's (1997) and Bodemann's (2005) studies of second-generation Jewish Holocaust survivors living in Germany. Research on post-Holocaust life speaks to a phenomenology

of surviving—that is, how people express their agency under genocidal conditions and their aftermath—thereby complicating assumptions about the universality and totality of the Holocaust genocide (Linden 1993).

Completed shortly after the end of World War II, the report of the Committee for the Study of Recent European Immigration (Davie 1947) examined hundreds of national and local refugee organizations in the United States, seventy-four of which committee members studied in depth; they surveyed a representative sample of 11,233 refugees, and collected over two hundred life-history narratives. Comprehensive in scope, the report covers refugee attitudes toward Americans, as well as American perceptions of the refugees, settlement patterns in the United States, problems on arrival and during subsequent years, and the contributions refugees made to the economy and social life. A significant portion of the analysis is devoted to specific occupational groups—businessmen and manufacturers, physicians, artists and writers, among others, and to young refugees, whom the reports characterize in generally positive terms. Berghahn (1984) interviewed first and 1.5 generations of immigrants, as well as children of the first generation born in Britain, about 180 people all together, concentrating on questions of assimilation and integration. Binary models of assimilation that posit either integration or its absence prove inadequate for Berghahn's data, which instead reveal new flexible forms of ethnic identity among the refugees and their offspring that combine elements of British, German, and Jewish cultures. While the formulation of ethnic, national, and religious identities forms distinctive dominant patterns for each generation, respondents indicated that they had frequently reconsidered the meanings and relative weighting of the various elements of their identities. Influenced by earlier studies of assimilation, Helmreich explains why most Holocaust survivors were relatively successful when measured by various personal, social, and economic indicators. To some extent, Helmreich's study mirrors a shift from viewing individuals as victims to seeing them as social actors with agency. This study counters a number of previous psychological studies of survivors, which focused almost exclusively on their resultant trauma and pathology (Krystal 1968; Niederland 1964).

Increasingly, scholarship on second-generation Holocaust survivors and perpetrators has become evident across disciplines, and sociology has also begun to contribute. *Jews in Germany after the Holocaust* is Lynn Rapaport's (1997) study of the vexed aspects of Jewish identity among eighty-three second-generation Jewish women and men living in Frankfurt. They vary in their affiliation to the

organized Jewish community, religiosity, occupation, class, education, marital status, and, furthermore, by their parents' wartime experiences of the camps, exile, or hiding. Using one extended family as his focus, Michal Bodemann's (2005) most recent book consists of narratives from interviews with the three brothers who survived concentration camps and their children. This Eastern European Jewish family ended up homeless, stateless, and in displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany after the war but stayed on, becoming an important part of the contemporary Jewish community in Germany. The reader is immersed into the lifeworlds of these younger Jews born in Germany who are there because the Nazis failed to murder their parents. Such intimate portraits expose the range of dilemmas and inner turmoil experienced by Jewish families in post-Shoah Europe, as well as how assimilation and anti-Semitism challenge the identities of the second generation. One of the several contributions of this particular approach is that Jews are normalized and seen as social agents, foibles and all. Although not intended to be a book specifically about the Shoah, Bodemann finds it was constantly evoked and present in the lives of this family, particularly among the second generation who confronted identity struggles not wholly unlike those of contemporary second generations elsewhere.

The interpretative turn in Holocaust and post-Holocaust studies has taken place largely outside the social sciences, but increasingly sociologists have been influenced by the interdisciplinary scholarship on gender and the extant literatures on culture, narrative, and collective memory. Here the emphasis shifts from the importance of evidence to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses and positivist arguments to the interpretation of evidence presented most commonly as case studies. This shifting focus is reflected in the sociological literature on the Holocaust and constitutes what we term the second cluster.

Among the most prolific sociologists writing in this tradition is Nechama Tec, who in addition to her autobiographical volume *Dry Tears* (1984) has published a study of Christians' rescue of Polish Jews (1986); a biographical account of Oswald Rufeisen, a Polish Jew who passed as a Christian and used his connections and power to aid victims of Nazism (1990); a study of Jews who helped rescue other Jews (1993); and most recently a study of gender and the Holocaust (2003). Largely social-historical and documentary, her work is important for the ways in which it appropriately complicates the analytic categories of *victim* and *rescuer*, and for its focus on the many Jews who were active not only in their own survival but also in rescuing other victims. Although Tec's work differs from that

described in the first cluster in that she is less interested in proving a claim or a particular pattern, it has clearly made an important and enduring set of analytical contributions to the literature.

Increasingly, gender scholarship comprises a significant element of this interpretative cluster. Since its inception, analyses of gender and the Holocaust have had to contend with the critique that attempts to define the catastrophe and its victims in gendered terms “will trivialize or banalize the Holocaust” (Ofer and Weitzman 1998:14) and “may lead to invidious comparisons and distract us from the real cause” (1998:15). But as many of these scholars have begun to show us through their research, rather than defile the Holocaust, analyses of gender contribute an important specificity to our knowledge of the Holocaust; without it, partial or distorted knowledge persists.

Although research on gender and the Holocaust is most prominent in social history and literary studies (Baumel 1998; Bridenthal, Grossman, and Kaplan 1984; Kaplan 1998; Koonz 1987; Zerubavel 2002), sociological scholarship in this area has become increasingly visible and instructive. Among the first sociologists to focus on gender was Linden (1993) who adopted a postmodern approach to study female survivors, thereby compensating for an earlier emphasis on men and the marginalization of women in Holocaust studies. Unfortunately, like some other postmodern researchers, she inserts herself *vis-à-vis* her own history, reflects on the interviews, and as a result, the reader sometimes learns more about her than her subjects.

A central collection on gender and the Holocaust edited by Ofer and Weitzman (1998) avoids the traps of gender essentialism and in many instances goes beyond mere description of women and men. Weitzman, the lone contributor who is a sociologist, eschews these pitfalls as she effectively analyzes why women, given a gendered division of labor and their duties as household providers, found themselves in a better position to live successfully on the Aryan side and survive the Nazi regime in Poland. Unlike circumcised men, women were less easily identified and thus more confident of their abilities to pass. Women were more likely to have attended secular schools and were consequently more assimilated, less religious, and had more Catholic friends. In addition, gendered patterns of socialization had taught women to be more sensitive to others, a functional skill when trying to pass. Weitzman considers the ways in which daily survival constituted a form of resistance, albeit an invisible one. Moreover, she analyzes women’s participation in organized resistance activities that despite their real

dangers, tended to go unnoticed and unrecognized because the work was assumed to be helping male leaders.

Diane Wolfs (2002a) oral history of a male camp survivor furthers a gender analysis as she demonstrates that some male inmates of the death camps were as caring if not perhaps more caring than some women. Her case study of a camp survivor, Jake Geldwert, raises the question of whether both women and men who survived the camps and their aftermath had available to them, and used, a greater range of skills and knowledge typically associated with either men or women than they might have had living under normal conditions.

Nechama Tec's (2003) recent book, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men and the Holocaust* is replete with evidence of women's and men's behaviors and responses to Nazi policies, the accelerating brutalization of Jews, and survival strategies in hiding and in ghettos and camps. During the early years of the Third Reich and in the ghettos, Nazis prohibited Jewish men from fulfilling their masculine obligations to provide for and protect their families, and as a result, they were often demoralized. Recognizing the void created by the constraints on men's lives, Jewish women sought to compensate by expanding their work for their families and communities. Social class appeared to exacerbate gender differences as working-class Jewish men, for example, were better able to cope with the demands of physical labor and the deprivations of war than more economically privileged Jewish men. While Tec argues that women and youth were often the ones to urge their families to confront the inevitable doom of the Nazi regime, there is conflicting evidence about whether women or men were better able to survive, and Tec refuses to make what she considers a premature conclusion about gender and survival. She demonstrates how survival in the death camps required cooperation and caring among inmates—more traditionally feminine behaviors. Women appeared to be better able to endure the suffering than men, but men also seemed to have experienced more brutal treatment than women.

Israeli-born and Ireland-based Ronit Lentin has crafted a compelling book about the Shoah that stands out in the literature as a model of feminist sociological imagination. In *Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah: Reoccupying the Territories of Silence*, Lentin (2000) proffers a gendered analysis of the Shoah and its role and image in Israeli society. While Israeli society and the ideal *sabra* (a native-born Israeli) constitute highly masculinized images, she explains how the diaspora (*Galut*) and the Shoah were feminized, thereby stigmatizing and emasculating its survivors. Her book focuses on the personal narratives of nine Israeli

daughters of Shoah survivors—writers and filmmakers—as she analyzes national discourses of Zionist and Israeli ideologies. She then links a gendered examination of the nation and the Shoah to the ways in which these discourses are utilized to justify Israel's sense of entitlement to the occupied territories. She returns to the gendered memory and narratives of the daughters of Shoah survivors in subsequent writing, questioning if these accounts are beginning to unsettle the dominant masculine codes of an imagined Zionist community even as the Zionist narrative remains intact (Lentin 2004a:59–76). Summoning several interdisciplinary approaches, including most notably postcolonialism, Lentin charts a sophisticated theoretical understanding of gender and the Holocaust within Israeli society.

The importance of gender scholarship to interpretations of the Holocaust is fully realized in Jacobs's exemplary ethnographic research on the collective memory of Holocaust memorial sites in Eastern Europe. Focusing on how memorial sites at concentration camps visually depict inmates, Jacobs (2004) contrasts the tendencies to remember genocide in religious terms through male ritual practices to the commemoration of ethnic genocide “through images of the subjugated female body, photographs of naked and starved women whose memory has come to represent the worst of Nazi atrocities” (231–32). Jacobs avoids the problems inherent in reproducing female and passive representations of Holocaust victims by understanding the insufficiencies of relying on descriptive ethnographic reports. Instead, Jacobs asks that she and others “interrogate not only the gendered realities of ethnic annihilation but the problems inherent in representing the victimization of women through the lens of sociocultural objectification” (235).

Particularly in the more recent works cited above, the importance of a gendered analysis of the Holocaust and post-Holocaust life is apparent. These projects surpass a descriptive and essentialist approach of merely bringing women and men into evidence and consider how gender both shapes and is shaped by the conduct, atrocities, and remembrance of the Holocaust. These texts challenge the assumption that a gendered understanding detracts from alternative approaches of Holocaust study, and they conversely demonstrate that analyses of genocide are incomplete, distorted, or limited without it.

Similarly, integrating research on Roma or Gypsies, as well as on lesbians and gay men, would arguably also advance our understanding of the Holocaust. More inclusive scholarship stands to complicate a unified narrative and promises to yield more sophisticated and nuanced knowledge of the subject. That said, the

existing scholarship on Gypsies and the Holocaust in the social sciences remains sparse, and an apparent void exists in sociology. Among the social science contributions is Barany (2002), a political scientist who examines the changing statuses of Gypsies in the modern period across different political regimes and six Eastern European nations. He attributes the dearth of research on the Gypsy Holocaust to unreliable demographic information and a paucity of Nazi records on Gypsy deportment and death due to their extreme marginality. While he refuses to argue based on “precise numbers,” Barany demonstrates the importance of Nazi policies in promoting anti-Roma practices in some but not all the nations studied. Concentrating on Germany, Margalit (2002) finds that in some regions, treatment of the Gypsies did not vary significantly between the Weimar and early Nazi years as practices were already restrictive and harsh before the Nazi rise to power. Importantly for social scientists, Fraser (1992) and Margalit (2002) compare Nazis’ racialized policies toward the Gypsies and the Jews, but they differ on the extent to which Gypsies, assumed to be marginal to social and political life, were the objects of sustained political attention in Nazi writing and policies. Nonetheless, Gypsies particularly from Eastern Europe were deported and killed in massive numbers. Unlike the Gypsies living in Germany, who retained their romantic existence in the minds of many Third Reich leaders, Roma in Eastern Europe lacked such cognitive protections and the Gestapo collaborated with local leaders to exterminate them (Margalit 2002:25–55).

The social science literature about homosexuals during the Holocaust is also quite limited, in part as a consequence of postwar stigmatization and the criminalization of homosexuality, which helped sustain an intellectual disregard of gay men and women (Elman 1999; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum n.d.). Nazi policies concerning homosexuality were intertwined with concerns about Aryan birth rates and popular prejudices about lesbian sexuality, which trivialized women’s same-sex relationships. These worries about reproduction resulted in some protection for both lesbian women, whom the Nazis reasoned could still bear children for the Reich, and for gay men living outside of Germany and the occupied territories whose sexuality could not augment Aryan births.

When read together, the texts on gender, Roma, and homosexuals demonstrate the advantages of studying specific groups—not only among victims but among perpetrators and bystanders as well. Such specificity helps generate an appropriately more complex understanding of the structures and processes of the Holocaust as these cases stand to complicate overgeneralized knowledge and



foster appropriate comparisons. The sources cited above make clear that gender, Roma, and homosexuals do not function as essential identities but that, instead, their meanings are particular to the situation, often constructed in tandem with other cultural values. The salience of social and cultural factors alongside comparative empirical analyses suggests, moreover, that both interpretative and empirical approaches are important, and distinctions between the two are less than absolute.

A major part of this interpretative trend is the work on collective memory, and among the most important contributions to the study of social memory in the post-Holocaust era is Jeffrey Olick's work. Broadly framed by a sociology-of-knowledge approach, Olick has articulated collective memory as a negotiated process of meaning production in political culture, thereby effectively challenging more commonly held assumptions that the Holocaust functions as an unchangeable constant (Olick and Levy 1997). In subsequent work, Olick (1999b) argues against more presentist approaches and persuasively for the importance of a context-specific approach to the commemoration of May 8, 1945, in the Federal Republic of Germany. He demonstrates the usefulness of a "genre effect" that concurrently evokes the past and present (Olick 1999b:384).

Comparing collective memories of the Holocaust in the United States, Israel, and Germany, Levy and Sznajder (2005) contrast particularistic memory forms that define a specifically Jewish tragedy with German perpetrators to a universalistic form that understands the Holocaust as a breakdown of human civilization and values. The authors trace the transition from national to cosmopolitan memory cultures, the latter term referring to the processes of internal globalization that invoke both transnational and local dynamics. They demonstrate that the sociological relevance of the Holocaust lies in its location between these two distinct configurations of modernity, shifting from a particularistic conceptualization of the Holocaust centered on German perpetrators and Jewish victims to collective memory cultures that transcend national and ethnic boundaries. In contrast to the dominant research tradition within Holocaust studies arguing that memories of the Holocaust are defined by the political and cultural imperatives within each nation-state, Levy and Sznajder provide a compelling case for a deterritorialized and reflexive understanding of the received meanings of the Holocaust based on a dialectical relationship between local and global configurations.

If people remember as members of various groups, it follows that collective identity would also interest sociologists studying the Holocaust. Bodemann

(1990) has pursued questions of ethnic identity specifically with reference to postwar German Jews. He documents and interprets the “ideological labor” German Jews performed after 1945 for the West German government, and compares those practices to Nazi definitions of Jewish ethnicity. In subsequent work, Bodemann grapples with the complex linkages between collective memory and identity in his analysis of the five-stage reconstruction of the Jewish community in West Germany (Bodemann 1996a) and tensions over competition for commemorations of the *Kristallnacht* and German reunification in East Germany (Bodemann 1996b).

Robin Ostow (1989, 1990) has pursued the study of identity by investigating the anti-Jewish policies that practically decimated the Jewish community in the German Democratic Republic in 1952–53. Comparing these measures to attempts to resurrect the Jewish community following Stalin’s death, Ostow documents the important role of the state in defining ethnic and religious minority groups. In later work, she examines how Jews in East Germany functioned as antifascist monuments in the 1980s but after reunification lost their unique status as “the ‘victims’ of German history” (Ostow 1996:241).

Intellectual memoirs and personal narratives, several written by sociologists, represent another form of collective memory. Reinhard Bendix (1986) describes his family’s life in Berlin and their exile during the Nazi period. Reflecting on his early years in the United States, he recognizes the importance of the university to easing his own resettlement. Guenther Roth (1990) came to the United States after the war to work on a study of de-Nazification. He reflects on the meaning of his early years in Germany for his life’s work on Max Weber. A second-generation Holocaust memoir writer, Anne Karpf (1996) speaks of her parents’ erasure of their past, her own feelings of marginality, and her obsession with death. Her understanding of the Holocaust changes with growing public awareness of it, which enables her to recognize that what she once considered personal experience is also the collective experience of many refugees’ children.

Probably nowhere is this interpretative turn more forcefully and poignantly articulated than in two recent volumes, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Alexander et al. 2004) and *Re-presenting the Shoah for the Twenty-first Century* (Lentin 2004b). Covering a range of topics that includes the Holocaust, slavery, postcommunist societies, and September 11, 2001, Alexander and his coauthors develop a cultural model of trauma, which they offer as a corrective to common-sense understandings of trauma. Their theoretical exposition of cultural trauma

argues that the meanings of any event cannot be taken for granted nor are they inherent in the events themselves. Thus the facts of a catastrophe, like those of any other event, need to pass through an “interpretative grid” to be understood at a collective level. Such grids are themselves located in time and space, and thus knowledge of the Holocaust would have been very different, for instance, had the Allies not been victorious. We cannot take for granted that the Holocaust would come to be understood as trauma or as evil, nor can we assume that its meanings would shift from primarily ones of Nazi atrocities to ones of its Jewish victims.

Lentin’s (2004b) collection also engages questions of how we understand and represent our understanding of the Holocaust in its aftermath. Although our historiographic knowledge of the Shoah is now quite sophisticated, a vexed confusion remains about how we can understand it. Tension revolves around persistent debates about whether the Holocaust is comparable to other phenomena, and about whether or not we have the analytic categories that would permit Holocaust study, speech, and commemoration. While some argue that we can never understand the Holocaust because its uniqueness deprives us of the necessary intellectual capacity to know it, others have persuasively shown that the Shoah is unprecedented as a consequence of modern social life (Bauman 1989:12; Lentin 2004c:5) and “must be accessible to representation and interpretation” (Lentin 2004c:2), however inadequate. Yet Lentin cautions readers against simplistic comparisons that invoke the Holocaust, which she believes can erase the Holocaust.

It is our purpose in this collection to expand the ways of interpreting the Holocaust and post-Holocaust Jewish life by bringing the analytic tools of sociology and related fields of inquiry into dialogue with recent Holocaust scholarship. Our collection goes beyond prior scholarship and makes a distinctive contribution by proposing that we open up the interpretative grid that defines Holocaust scholarship to include an emphasis on questions of identities, diaspora, and collective memory with attention to key factors such as transnational relations, disaster and trauma, gender, and ethnicity where relevant. Our expressed goal remains to provide a model of intellectual cross-fertilization that will inspire Holocaust scholars to take fuller advantage of the intellectual resources in sociology and encourage sociologists to bring the Holocaust as a case into their work. Since we call into question monolithic notions of identity and memory, we deliberately refer to identities and memories in the plural. Indeed, many of the essays that follow argue that ethnic, religious, and national identities