



Nationaal  
Psychotrauma  
Centrum

# Ouder worden met de oorlog - alertering

Updates 30 mei 2024

Voor veel mensen wordt het verleden belangrijker naarmate ze ouder worden. Voor mensen die de Tweede Wereldoorlog hebben meegemaakt kunnen ervaringen, herinneringen en emoties die men voorheen nog door bijvoorbeeld hard werken en vermijden verre van zich kon houden, nu alsnog naar boven komen.

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## 30 mei 2024

Barkai, O. (2024). Past Forward: Holocaust Testimony in Documentary Film. *Eastern European Holocaust Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eehs-2023-0003>

This paper addresses the use of oral history sources in my practice of documentary filmmaking as a second-generation Holocaust survivor. It examines how the filmic documentation of oral history sources can reflect aspects of testimony, memory, and postmemory, as they are theorized in the field of Holocaust Studies. In my film "Past Forward: Journeys to Transnistria," I document the challenge of relating an intergenerational and cross-cultural story while preserving historical accuracy. Filmed in Ukraine in 2002, it tells the story of my mother, a child-survivor of the Romanian Holocaust. Through oral testimony, the film captures my mother's survival story as she tells it to me and later to her granddaughter who documents it for a history school project. It then retraces my mother's journey between 1941 and 1944 from her hometown of Dorohoi, Romania to Transnistria as it was called then under German-allied Romanian occupation. Survivor's testimony combined with onsite witness interviews, and an archival military map, were used to trace the story of a little Jewish Romanian girl who survived the journey to Transnistria. Recently available archival sources have further validated her story. It has also contributed to locating the film within the broader context of the Holocaust in Ukraine.

Borhi, L. (2024). [Survival under Dictatorships: Life and Death in Nazi and Communist Regimes](#). Central European University Press. (Open Access)

A complex array of individual responses to the abuse of power by the state is represented in this book in three horrific episodes in the history of East-Central Europe. The three events followed each other within a span of about ten years: the deportation and murder of Hungarian Jews in Nazi death and labor camps; the Arrow Cross terrorist rule in Budapest; and finally the Stalinist terror in Hungary and East-Central Europe. Through the prism of survival, László Borhi explores the relationship between the individual and power, attempting to understand the mechanism of oppression and terror produced by arbitrary, unbridled power through the experience of normal people. Despite the obvious peculiarities of time and place, the Hungarian cases convey universal lessons about the Holocaust, Nazism, and Stalinism. In the author's conception, the National Socialist and Stalinist experiences are linked on several levels. Both regimes defended their visions of the future against social groups whom they saw as implacable enemies of those visions, and who therefore had to be destroyed for sake of social perfection. Furthermore, the social practices of National Socialism were passed on. And although Stalinism was imposed by a foreign power, some of the survival skills for coping with it were rehearsed under the previous hellish experience.

Cohn-Schwartz, E., Mannheim, I., & Meiry, L. (2024). Assessment of a digital intervention program with Holocaust survivors. *Aging & Mental Health*, 28(4), 587–594. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2023.2240263>

This study evaluated a digital intervention program with aging Holocaust survivors. Participants received a tablet device and were coupled with a volunteer who assisted them to use the tablet. The study aimed to assess which characteristics of the Holocaust survivors are linked with more frequent use of digital communication at the end of the program. Information was collected by telephone interviews with 91 survivors before and 54 after participating in the program. We combined this data with digital usage data from the tablets. Regression models examined the

characteristics of Holocaust survivors that were related to higher frequency of using digital communication technologies during the intervention. The Holocaust survivors expressed high satisfaction with the program. They increased their frequency of using digital communication technologies—text correspondence and video chats with friends and family. Regressions showed that Holocaust survivors who reported increased digital communication were characterized at the start of the intervention by having fewer post-traumatic stress symptoms, higher levels of flourishing (reflecting a more meaningful life and higher well-being), being lonelier, and were also more satisfied with the program at follow-up. The pilot program benefited the aging Holocaust survivors. Further programs should be developed to increase the digital communication of vulnerable older populations, such as trauma survivors.

Ezeani, Ignatius; Rayson, Paul; Gregory, Ian; Cole, Tim; Steiner, Erik and Frank, Zephyr 2024), [The Geography of 'Fear', 'Sadness', 'Anger' and 'Joy': Exploring the Emotional Landscapes in the Holocaust Survivors' Testimonies](https://ceur-ws.org/Vol-3671/paper8), CEUR-WS.org/Vol-3671/paper8

Holocaust survivors' testimonies provide a rich source of evidence about the personal experiences of survivors who witnessed and endured horrors during the Nazi genocide of Jews and other persecuted groups. The narratives contain references to the emotions experienced when describing memories of people, places, and events. Analysing the spatiality of these human emotions enables us to understand how they are connected to the places around them. We focus on *fear*, *sadness*, *anger*, as well as *joy* to examine the interplay of these emotional experiences by multiple individuals at different places and times and in different circumstances. Understanding these complex emotional landscapes, especially from very large collections of textual data requires a carefully designed technique that can effectively and efficiently apply existing and new technologies. In this work, therefore, we explore the possibility of extracting and analysing these emotions as well as their related geographies by applying a combination of natural language processing methods including large language models.

Heissler, Radek, et al. "Historical Trauma in the Former Czechoslovakia: Insights from Focus Groups with Survivors of State Oppression." *European Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, May 2024, p. 100418, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejtd.2024.100418>.

From 1948 to 1989, former Czechoslovakia was ruled by the Communist Party that persecuted active citizens and political figures who organized under initiative Charter 77. During the 1970s and 1980s, Operation Asanace (meaning "cleansing") took place as a systematic way to expel Charter 77 activists and other totalitarian regime adversaries from the communist country by implementing physical, psychological, and systemic abuse. This qualitative study explored the experiences of seven primary victims of Operation Asanace by conducting focus groups and analyzing the emerging themes. Results show that various changes in national identity, feelings of hopelessness, otherness and alienation were present, together with several losses and diverse reactions from individuals in their vicinity. Our study also highlights enduring traits of entrepreneurship and activism, resilience, adaptation to adversities, alongside evidence of post-traumatic growth, contributing to the body of knowledge regarding the psychological consequences of confronting an authoritarian regime.

Huang, S.-M. (2024). Memory, borders, and justice: The emerging morality competition over the wartime documentary heritage of Jewish refugees in East Asia. *Memory Studies*, 17(1), 103–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231214627>

This article brings attention to the moral aspect of remembering by examining the emerging interest in wartime documentary heritage in East Asia, particularly epitomized in recent competitions and disputes over nomination processes of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Memory of the World. It examines China and Japan's attempts at pursuing MoW registers and leading the commemoration of Jewish passages in wartime East Asia, through which they wish to gain an international reputation for morality derived from the Holocaust. This study demonstrates that memory politics in East Asia, instead of only reinforcing the image of innocent victims of wars, has moved toward featuring the righteous figures who preserved humanity against violence. It also sheds light on the limits of MoW—an institutional practice that is not designed to accommodate entangled memory but to confine and govern memories.

Ifergan, M., Keydar, R., Abend, O., & Pinchevski, A. (2024). *Identifying Narrative Patterns and Outliers in Holocaust Testimonies Using Topic Modeling* (No. arXiv:2405.02650). arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2405.02650>

The vast collection of Holocaust survivor testimonies presents invaluable historical insights but poses challenges for manual analysis. This paper leverages advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to explore the USC Shoah Foundation Holocaust testimony corpus. By treating testimonies as structured question-and-answer sections, we apply topic modeling to identify key themes. We experiment with BERTopic, which leverages recent advances in language modeling technology. We align testimony sections into fixed parts, revealing the evolution of

topics across the corpus of testimonies. This highlights both a common narrative schema and divergences between subgroups based on age and gender. We introduce a novel method to identify testimonies within groups that exhibit atypical topic distributions resembling those of other groups. This study offers unique insights into the complex narratives of Holocaust survivors, demonstrating the power of NLP to illuminate historical discourse and identify potential deviations in survivor experiences.

Komesaroff, P. A. (2024). It is Not Too Late for Reconciliation Between Israel and Palestine, Even in the Darkest Hour. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 21(1), 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-024-10347-x>  
The conflict in Gaza and Israel that ignited on October 7, 2023 signals a catastrophic breakdown in the possibility of ethical dialogue in the region. The actions on both sides have revealed a dissolution of ethical restraints, with unimaginably cruel attacks on civilians, murder of children, destruction of health facilities, and denial of basic needs such as water, food, and shelter. There is a need both to understand the nature of the ethical singularity represented by this conflict and what, if any, options are available to allow the reconstruction of communication between the warring parties. This article seeks to address these tasks by analysing the conflict as inherently an ethical one, in the sense that it exposes a rupture in the fabric of communicative relationships that has evolved systematically out of the deep cultural structures from which all protagonists have emerged. Drawing on the work of Levinas, Habermas, Arendt, and others, and referring to the specific circumstances in the region, it examines the ethical sources of the crisis and tries to identify conditions for its resolution. The possibility of reconciliation—that is, of refiguring relationships to open up a space for dialogue to create pathways to heal the ruptures—is examined. The dark legacy of the Holocaust is identified as an abiding cultural vulnerability for both societies. It is concluded, however, that the rich history of partnerships and collaborations between Jews and Palestinians provides a robust infrastructure on the basis of which a sustainable peace might be built, providing a much-needed source of hope.

Kurth, M., Witzel, D., Segerstrom, S., Choun, S., & PhD, C. (2024). Cohort differences in PTSD symptoms and military experiences: a life course perspective. *The Gerontologist*, 64(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnad129>  
BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: There have been major changes in military service over the past 50 years. Most research on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among combat Veterans comes from help-seeking Vietnam and WWII cohorts; results from more recent cohort comparisons are mixed. The present study addressed these gaps by exploring cohort differences among Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and Post-9/11 combat Veterans from a life course perspective. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS: We recruited community-dwelling combat and war zone Veterans (N = 167), primarily from Veterans' associations in Oregon from three cohorts: Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and Post-9/11. Online surveys assessed current PTSD symptoms, life course (demographics and cohort membership), and experiential variables (combat severity, appraisals of military service, homecoming, and social support). RESULTS: Cohorts were comparable in demographics and war experiences. Step one of a hierarchical regression found that PTSD symptoms were higher among Veterans of color and those with lower incomes,  $R^2 = 0.37$ ,  $p < .001$ . When cohort was added, Vietnam Veterans had higher symptoms than Post-9/11; income and race/ethnicity remained significant,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p = .13$ . The final model added experiential variables,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ; cohort and income were no longer significant, although Veterans of color still reported higher symptoms. Those with more undesirable service appraisals and who sought social support had higher symptoms, while desirable appraisals were protective. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS: From a life course perspective, the particular war zone that Veterans served in was less important than demographics and both service and postservice experiences, suggesting generalizability of risk and protective factors, as well as treatment modalities, across cohorts. [Author Abstract]

Lubel, S. Y., Dichtiar, R., Sinai, T., & Keinan-Boker, L. (2024). Exposure to Holocaust is associated with chronic morbidity in older adults : Results from national health and nutrition surveys. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 72(5), 1491–1500. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.18875>  
Background Although studies have suggested that Holocaust survivors are more likely than their non-Holocaust-exposed counterparts to suffer from mental and chronic morbidity, methodology differences and potential confounders often compromise result replicability and external validity. We examined associations between Holocaust exposure and chronic morbidity, as well as overall risk of mortality. Methods Sociodemographic, health-related behavior and nutritional-intake data from two representative National Health and Nutrition Survey Ages 65 and Over—the 2005–2006 MABAT ZAHAV 1 (MZ1) and the 2014–2015 MZ2, including face-to-face interviews and anthropometric measurements—were analyzed. Demographic, health, nutritional and lifestyle characteristics, and exposure to the Holocaust were self-reported. Longitudinal data on overall mortality were obtained by linking the MZ1 population to the population registry dataset. Associations between Holocaust exposure and prevalence of chronic morbidity and risk factors were estimated by multivariable logistic regression analyses, and to risk of overall

mortality by Cox regression analysis, both adjusted to significant covariates. Results Among 2096 study participants aged  $75.7 \pm 6.1$  years, 47.0% male, 518 were Holocaust survivors. In the fully adjusted model, Holocaust exposure was associated with increased prevalence of heart disease (odds ratio [OR] 1.40, 95% confidence interval [CI] 1.07–1.83), metabolic syndrome (OR 2.28, CI 1.23–4.21), and stroke (OR 1.77, CI 1.17–2.69), but not cancer or osteoporosis. Holocaust exposure did not substantially affect the overall risk of mortality (hazard ratio 1.10, CI 0.92–1.32). Conclusions Further research is needed to understand the mechanisms governing long-term outcomes of exposure to acute physical or mental trauma.

Michlic, J. (2024). Jewish Child Survivors in the Aftermath of the Holocaust. *Polin Studies in Polish Jewry*, 36(1), 390–398. <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/105/article/917644>

The last two decades have been marked by a steadily increasing interest in the history of children during and in the aftermath of the Second World War; this might be described as the children's turn in Holocaust studies. Today, we have a wide range of case studies of Jewish children under Nazi occupation in both western and eastern Europe, studies of children in concentration camps, and child survivors' early post-war lives. Other important areas which have been the subject of research are the resettlement of Europe's unaccompanied and displaced children in the aftermath of the Second World War, the (transnational) reconstruction of Jewish families, mental and medical problems among young survivors in the aftermath the Holocaust, and the memories and self-representation of child survivors. Over the past two decades, scholars and wider audiences have also paid more attention to the wartime diaries of older Jewish children and teenagers. One currently growing area is the history of hidden children during the Holocaust, whose wartime and post-war experiences and memories were barely known to historians in the early 1990s.

Michlic, J. B., von Saal, Y., & Ullrich, A. (Eds.). (2024). *Childhood during War and Genocide: Agency, Survival, and Representation*. Wallstein Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.46500/83535599>

Child survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Jewish child survivors of the Holocaust, non-Jewish Slavic children, and war children of the Second World War EHS Volume 5 presents child-oriented research approaches by scholars from the fields of Holocaust Studies, Genocide Studies, and Second World War History. The authors highlight key concepts of Childhood Studies, arguing that children are historical actors with their own ideas, identity-forming experiences, and agency. The contributions demonstrate the importance of children's accounts of war and postwar experiences for deeper understanding of the history of war and society in the twentieth century. The volume showcases a variety of children's voices including child survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Jewish child survivors of the Holocaust, non-Jewish Slavic children, and war children of the Second World War by utilising testimonies from lesser-known archival and oral history collections. Includes: Edita Gzoyan: Forcibly Transferred and Assimilated: Experiences of Armenian Children during the Armenian Genocide. Dieter Steinert: Echoes from Hell: Jewish Child Forced Labourers and the Holocaust. Oksana Vynnyk: Surviving Starvation in Soviet Ukraine: Children and Soviet Healthcare in the early 1930s.

Sternhell, S. (2024). Surviving the Holocaust. *Quadrant*, 68(1/2), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.T2024030700010900593932343>

The ordinary story of Jews in Germanoccupied Europe during the Second World War was simple (death), but the stories of survival are all extraordinary, full of coincidences and unlikely happenings. I think that my survival story was unlikely even by these standards. It was just one bloody unlikely and/or lucky thing after another. It was like tossing a coin and getting "heads" every time. Given that out of the 3,500,000 Jews in pre-war Poland at most 5 to 10 per cent survived and that most of them survived because the Russians deported them to Siberia or Kazakhstan between 1939 and 1941, it really did take extraordinary luck to survive. For my father, my mother and me to survive partly on independent trajectories (at one stage the three of us were in three different countries!) was totally improbable. If I were a believer, direct divine intervention via archangel Gabriel would offer the most obvious explanation.

Wagner, E., Keydar, R., Pinchevski, A., & Abend, O. (2024). Automatic Topic-Guided Segmentation of Holocaust Survivor Testimonies. *Journal of Computational Literary Studies*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.48694/jcls.3580>

In recent decades, efforts have been made to gather and digitize the testimonies of living Holocaust survivors. The challenge we now face is attending to those thousands of human stories, which while safely stored in archives, may nevertheless disappear into oblivion. Despite recent advances in narrative analysis in the fields of Computational Literature (CL) and Natural Language Processing (NLP), existing language model technology still faces challenges in analyzing elaborate narratives and long texts. One such challenge is text segmentation – a long-standing issue in the area of CL and NLP. In our work, we propose a computational method to approach this problem. Our research

draws on testimony transcripts from the Shoah Foundation (SF) Holocaust archive for supervised topic classification, which is then used as topics guidance for automatic segmentation.

Weiss, Y., Zarour, S., Kiselevich, Y., Abu Ghanim, M., Hikry, D., Sinai Brzezinski, I., Zac, L., Cohen, B., & Matot, I. (2024). Preoperative cognitive impairment and postoperative delirium among Holocaust survivors who achieved longevity. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, *n/a(n/a)*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.18836>

Background Holocaust survivors (HS) experience higher rates of physiological and psychological morbidities, increasing their vulnerability to perioperative complications. Limited information exists regarding their perioperative neurocognitive disorders. This study aimed to assess the rates of preoperative cognitive impairment, postoperative delirium, and other complications among HS aged 75+ undergoing elective surgery. Methods This is a single-center retrospective cohort study that analyzed prospectively collected data. All surgical patients born before 1945 who underwent elective noncardiac surgery at a tertiary hospital in Israel during 2020–2021 were included. The HS group was identified through the hospital's information system. Preoperative cognitive impairment was assessed using the Mini-Cog test. Postoperative delirium was defined as a combined outcome, which included a positive 4A's-Test (4AT) result during the postanesthesia care unit stay up to the second postoperative day, a positive 3-Minute Diagnostic Confusion Assessment Method (3D-CAM) test administered by the geriatric team, and identification through the medical records using the Chart-based Delirium Identification Instrument (CHART-DEL). We used multivariable regression to assess the risk factors for postoperative delirium. Results Out of 1332 eligible patients, 422 (32%) were HS, while the others served as controls. Both groups had a similar rate of preoperative cognitive impairment (24%,  $p = 0.89$ ) and postoperative delirium (16%,  $p = 0.95$ ). HS exhibited a higher risk of the composite adverse events (24% vs. 20%,  $p = 0.05$ , aOR [95% CI] 1.3 [1.0–1.7]), driven mainly by falls during hospitalization (4% vs. 2%,  $p = 0.03$ , aOR 2.1 [1.1–4.1]). HS patients were more likely to be childless (33% vs. 11%,  $p = 0.001$ ) and had higher rates of chronic antidepressant and benzodiazepine use. Conclusions HS achieving longevity do not face increased risks of preoperative cognitive impairment and postoperative delirium. However, special care is still warranted due to their elevated rate of other complications during hospitalization.