One of the most violent periods in human history was the genocide of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. Over six million Jews were murdered including 1.1 million children. Psychologists, artists, theologians, historians, educators and political and social scientists have conducted studies related to the Holocaust attempting to understand the reasons behind this massacre and how it has on the survivors. Post-traumatic stress and other negative psychological impacts have been the focus of a number of studies. This qualitative study addresses the ways in which survivors have coped with trauma during and after the Holocaust. Survivors experienced post-traumatic growth, which is characterized by positive change in perceptions of relationships and quality of life in the aftermath of trauma (Tedeschi, 1999). Research indicates that resilience, social support, and optimism, are crucial in post-traumatic growth for Holocaust survivors (Cohen, 2001; Guasch & Kral, 2010). Researchers have also found that social support and quality of life in the post-traumatic period are critical factors in resilience and post-traumatic growth (Survivors of the Holocaust Association, 2005). These factors, along with others, have been identified as important in the process of coping with trauma and post-traumatic growth (Stone, 1984; Zimet, 1990).

**Results**

**Social Support (Other Survivors)**

Relationships during and post-Holocaust were identified as helpful in coping with trauma and creating their lives in the U.S.

- **During the Holocaust**: We became friends very fast. You deal with the situation at hand. We’ll be hungry, we’ll all be in the same boat, we’ll all be hoping to get out of there. We are a sisterhood of necessity, we are all one. (Naomi)
- **The STRANGERS became my family. And I cherish it, you know. They’re interested with what goes on in my life. I am interested in what goes on in YOUR life, and I think that’s ok. You know you from your own family. (Sandy)**

**Post-Holocaust**

- **My community.** We are survivors who don’t have advanced education and I made it my business throughout to get my education. (Barbara)
- **I am very happy that I am associated with the Museum and I can enlighten so many kids and adults as well. (Sandy)**
- **I feel that I’m doing for my mothers, my father, my sister, my… I really don’t know. It’s just that I’m in constant motion, uh, people my age are different than I am. (Naomi)**
- **We just hope for a better world… We called it the Messianic world… we try to teach our children to think like that and to follow it like the (Leywi)**
- **After the Holocaust, so we lost everything, and yet we did like the King David. We start singing. We create new families. (Paula)**

**Optimism/Future Orientation**

- **I had a thick in my throat that didn’t allow me to talk. I never knew why I was talking.**
- **I know that it’s running out, or I think that there’s so much to do. I don’t know whether I’m doing anything for myself.**
- **I don’t know whether I’m doing anything for myself.**
- **I don’t know whether I’m doing anything for myself.**

- **I’ve gotten a secular education and I’ve evolved and acculturated much easier than other people. So uh, I see myself as a different person.**
- **We just hope for a better world… We called it the Messianic world… we try to teach our children to think like that and to follow it like the (Leywi)**
- **We have to cope with life and whatever God left us. We coped. (Paula)**
- **We lost everything. We have to cope with life and whatever God left us.**

**Procedure**

- **Structured interview guide was used including questions related to coping, meaning, relationships, legacy, worldview, mission/purpose, role, identity, agency, and transgenerational issues.**
- **Interviews transcribed and verified.**
- **Three research team members independently coded each transcript using a constant comparative thematic analysis.**
- **Three members met to discuss the formulation of consensus codes that were entered into Atlas-ti.**
- **An auditor, external to the research team examined a selection of coded transcripts to check the data integrity.**

**References available upon request.**

**Coping with Stress During and Post Holocaust: Stories of Survivors**

**Jacqueline Yi, Bokyung Kim, Gurjinder Singh, and Meredith Talibon**

**New York University**

**Table 1: Description of Participants**

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</table>

**Discussion**

**Social factors associated with the war created social bond among Holocaust survivors with their family and friends regarding coping through community support (Ayalon, 2005).**

**Survivors coped by engaging in hard work and taking care of their families (Fridman, et al., 2011).**

**Through social support, survivors were able to establish interpersonal contact and emphasize their role of life (Port, 2012).**

**Through disclosure, survivors are able to create a personally and historically meaningful narrative (Finkelstein & Levey, 2006; Krell, 1985).**

**Individuals who speak about their traumatic past have better mental and physical health outcomes than individuals who are silent and disengaged from their experiences with the Holocaust (Buks & Papp, 2009, Finkelstein & Levey, 2006).**

**Survivors’ report the importance of bearing witness to those who died and working to fight hatred and oppression (Armato, 2010).**

**Optimism moderate distress and led to more adaptive coping strategies in meeting adult challenges (Brodgaten & Wise, 2009; Port, 2012).**

**Themes of hope and optimism were embedded in narratives focusing on the future (Koranska & Luby, 2014).**

**Survivors of the Holocaust are similar to survivors of natural disasters as they found peace through their religious faith (Fass, et al., 2011).**

**Positive religious coping and positive images of God were mentioned in the context of positive emotions such as happiness, satisfaction, empowerment, hope, gratitude and optimism while negative religious coping and negative images of God were stated in the context of negative emotions such as anger, confusion, apprehension, rumination, frustration, disappointment, and powerlessness (Armato, & Schutten, 2011; Tam et al., 2012).**