Community Resilience and the Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting

18

Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia

That which does not kill us, makes us stronger. – Friedrich Nietzsche in *Twilight of the Idols*, 1888.

Introduction

Shortly before 10 am on Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) morning, October 27, 2018, Robert Bowers entered the Tree of Life building in the quiet Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill where three separate congregations, Dor Hadash, New Light, and Tree of Life, worship. Carrying four firearms including an AR-15-style assault rifle and shouting anti-Semitic slurs, he killed eleven individuals and injured four responding police officers and two other congregants [1]. Less than 1 year before, Robert Bowers opened an account on Gab, a site known to allow controversial speech [2, 3]. In the month before the shooting, written comments from that account addressed HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), a Jewish nonprofit organization that assists refugees from many areas of the world: "Why hello there HIAS! You like to bring in hostile invaders to dwell among us?" [2]. Shortly before the shooter entered the Tree of Life building, another message was posted from that account: "HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in" [2].

Robert Bowers was wounded during the police response. One of the cantors from a Tree of Life congregation stated that police intercepted Bowers as he exited the building, and later police expressed their concern that Bowers was leaving the synagogue at the time to go to another synagogue about 4 minutes away. The rapid police response is credited with saving lives and preventing further injury. At the

S. Vogel-Scibilia (✉)
Chatham University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA
e-mail: svs2u@hotmail.com

H. S. Moffic et al. (eds.), *Anti-Semitism and Psychiatry*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37745-8_18

time of this publication, Robert Bowers is awaiting trial on 29 federal criminal counts including firearm charges during commission of murder and hate crime designated obstructing the free exercise of religious beliefs. He also faces 11 counts of criminal homicide, 6 counts of aggravated assault, and 13 counts of ethnic intimidation which are state-level charges [2]. Bowers was brought back to court in February 2019 to face 19 further counts; he acknowledged reading the indictment and was aware that the prosecution was seeking the death penalty [4, 5]. This shooting was the largest mass murder against Jews in US history [6]. Robert Bowers had no prior criminal record.

Killed in the Pittsburgh shooting were 11 faithful individuals described by all as the mainstays of their congregations [7]. The youngest were two brothers, David (aged 54) and Cecil (aged 59) Rosenthal who had developmental disabilities but lived independently. They were weekly Tree of Life worshipers. Jeffrey Solomon, another lifelong Tree of Life congregant related to the brothers by marriage, recalled "they were what we call "shomerim," people who guard the religion even for the rest of us who don't go all the time" [7].

The rest of the victims from Tree of Life congregation included Irving Younger (aged 69) who was a retired real estate agent and former little league coach [8], Sylvan (aged 86) and Bernice Simon (aged 84) who died in the same synagogue where they married over 60 years ago, and Joyce Feinberg (aged 75), a grandmother and retired University of Pittsburgh researcher [9]. The oldest member killed that day, Rose Mallinger (aged 97), had survived the Holocaust and enjoyed life and her family. Her daughter, Andrea Wedner (aged 61), was wounded in the attack [10].

Killed among the worshipers at New Light Congregation were Daniel Stein (aged 70), a substitute teacher who had just welcomed a new grandson in that sanctuary [11], Dr. Richard Gottfried (aged 65) who was a beloved dentist assisting immigrants and refugees, and the always joking Melvin Wax (aged 88) who loved his grandson, the synagogue, and the Pittsburgh Pirates [12].

Fatally injured Congregation Dor Hadash member, Dr. Jerry Rabinowitz (aged 66), was a well-loved, respected family physician to many generations. He was also one of the first physicians treating Pittsburghers who had AIDS in the 1980s [13]. Daniel Leger (aged 70), a surviving Congregation Dor Hadash member and a University of Pittsburgh chaplain, was shot in the torso [9, 14].

Recent Increase in Anti-Semitic Incidents

Numerous articles in both academic and journalistic publications describe a recent rise in North America and Europe of anti-Semitic statements, demonstrations, and acts of violence [15–18]. The Anti-Defamation League in its 2017 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents in the United States describes a clear rise in overall incidents of harassment, vandalism, and assaults from 941 in 2015 to 1267 in 2016 and 1986 in 2017 [19]. The largest percentage increase from 2016 to 2017 was an 86% increase in vandalism and an 89% increase in college and university-related events [19]. Increases in vandalism are worrisome because the perpetrators are more secure advancing from harassment to breaking existing laws [19].

Current anti-Semitic rhetoric spues from such odd bedfellows as the alt-right, parts of radical left as well as Islamic extremists [20]. These groups often justify these statements by wrapping their commentary in an anti-Zionist message [21, 22]. One faction of US citizens often identifying from the radical left currently supports the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) strategy [23]. This Palestinian-led movement urges boycotts and sanctions against Israel and its supporters until Israel accepts the conditions of (1) withdrawal from occupied territory, (2) removal of separation for West Bank residents, and (3) acknowledgment of the rights of Palestinian refugees for returning their homes and properties in current Israeli areas [24].

At the core of BDS strategy is associating Israel with an apartheid-type policy while advocating for a one-state model for resolution [24]. The other perspective argues that BDS is inherently anti-Zionist and that apartheid does not apply to the Palestinian situation since Muslims and Jews live together today within Israel; BDS requirements would jeopardize the safety of Israeli inhabitants [25]. Others argue that the BDS movement is a weapon in the attempt to delegitimize Israel and its Jewish inhabitants and remove their ability for self-determination [26]. Many critics of BDS further assert that its purpose is anti-Semitism cloaked in an anti-Zionist message [27].

An increase in economic uncertainty and societal upheaval coincides with increased anti-Semitic rhetoric. History supports these social changes as a precursor to anti-Semitic surges [28]. Even more troubling is the increased visibility and acceptance of such speech in the mainstream media by prominent politicians [29].

Though not necessarily related to the rise of BDS, there is a simultaneous proliferation of nationalistic sentiments and anti-immigrant policies in North America and Europe. Robert Bower's comments on Gab suggest that part of his targeting of the Tree of Life congregations may have come from a warped association on his part about refugees and Judaism. His verbalized slurs at the time of the shooting suggest he also had internalized anti-Semitic beliefs.

Interviews for this Chapter Within the Pittsburgh Jewish Community

Ten Jewish individuals from Pittsburgh participated in interviews for this chapter with open-ended discussion where spontaneous themes were noted and tallied about anti-Semitism and resilience – two interviews were only ½ hour; others lasted 2 or 3 hours. Seven out of ten interviewees allowed me to tape the interviews for accuracy of comments. Releases were obtained for five people who discussed their personal experiences. Others discussed a more narrow focus involving anti-Semitism in Pittsburgh, past and present, and reactions to the Pittsburgh shooting or providing support to the Jewish community, including family members who lost loved ones or the survivors. The sample, though small, was diverse – spanning millenials to octogenarians, survivors at the building that day to survivors of the Holocaust, and therapists/administrators involved in the post-incident counseling to religious leaders in the community – all connected to the three congregations worshipping at the Tree of Life building.

Resurgence of Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionist Rhetoric in Recent Years

Several respondents described a belief prior to the recent events that anti-Semitism did not exist in Pittsburgh as it did in the twentieth century. They discussed how Jewish individuals were more integrated and accepted in American society. But after the recent US surge in hate crimes and racism followed by the recent synagogue shootings in Pittsburgh and then the 2019 attack at the Chabad of Poway, California, people described feeling more vulnerable. One therapist stated: "We used to say it could not happen here, but now we don't say that. We say it has happened and it could happen (again). That is something we are still trying to wrap our heads around."

Even antiquated anti-Semitic fearmongering about a Judeo-Bolshevism network of financial control and antidemocratic intrigue common in the mid-twentieth century has resurfaced in the current US milieu [30, 31]. Interviewees almost universally commented on these developments as unsettling. One older individual who was a Holocaust survivor likened some of these developments to propaganda campaigns during the early days of Nazi rule.

There were worries verbalized by two individuals that Holocaust deniers will become more vocal since Holocaust survivors are passing away or becoming more frail. One Rabbi stated: "Every day we lose more Holocaust survivors and that brings more strength to the deniers." In many areas of Europe where Jewish life is almost completely obliterated, Holocaust deniers now accuse the Jewish people of attempting to benefit from memorials or symbols in these areas that reflect the losses from the Holocaust. Those who deface Jewish synagogues and cemeteries present another form of anti-Semitism that seeks to negate the human suffering involved. Every one of the Holocaust survivors interviewed emphasized the importance of Shoah testimony (describing in detail one's personal experience of the Holocaust in permanent form) to address this. Several have already participated.

Societal Response of Non-Jews to Anti-Semitism

In environments where anti-Semitism is overt, society-wide denial, acceptance of marginalization, and even discrimination are unfortunate common responses from the non-Jewish populations. The degree of moral resistance, both transparent and discrete, from the non-Jewish population often is a factor in preventing escalation of anti-Semitic actions. While the individuals whose views are on the extremes are often vocal participants in advancing or mitigating anti-Semitic rhetoric, there is much to be said for people in the middle of the political spectrum speaking up and demonstrating that anti-Semitic behavior is unacceptable.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Judge David Wecht publically discussed anti-Semitism after the Pittsburgh shooting. He noted this tragedy at the synagogue where he was married and previously worshipped: "For a time after the Holocaust, the sheer horror and magnitude of the slaughter tended to tamp down the most vocal anti-Semites. But something's changed both on the right and the left. People are

increasingly willing to voice anti-Semitic sentiments. And when people, particularly leaders, don't publically oppose anti-Jewish speech, hatred against Jews festers and grows. And that's why I think this is a critical time in America" [32].

Historically, speaking out against anti-Semitism can be fraught with great risk when the government involved in these actions represses human rights of all individuals. An example is the outcome of the White Rose passive resistance by medical personnel and students in Munich, Germany, in 1943 [33]. Governmental policies and legislation vigorously addressing anti-Semitism along with grassroots community support from a consortium of non-Jewish and Jewish citizens can restrict the propagation of anti-Semitic culture in societies at risk.

Responses from Members of the Jewish Communities in Pittsburgh

Many interviewed members of the Pittsburgh Jewish community commented on the shock that such a thing could happen within an area of Pittsburgh known as a safe neighborhood for all individuals. Interviewees identified Squirrel Hill as both the historic and current center of the region's Jewish life. This is verified by 2017 Pittsburgh Jewish Community Study describing the greatest concentration of Jewish households in the Squirrel Hill section of Pittsburgh, including 48% of the Jewish children under the age of 18 [34].

At the same time, many of these same interviewees referenced the long history of oppression, violence, and discrimination that Jewish people have experienced even within those civilizations where they had the appearance of cordial relations with the non-Jewish majority. Despite this uncertainty, the interviews show uniform themes of resilience and survival, partially due to an understanding of Jewish historical adversity. One therapist described a "Judaism 101" class provided by their Jewish counseling agency to non-Jewish employees, where an encapsulation of the Jewish holidays was summed up as: "They tried to kill us; we prevailed; let's go eat." The repetitive theme portrayed is living in a disadvantaged place in society, being attacked, struggling, and surviving with celebration.

Interviewees verbalized uniform understanding of the persistent anti-Semitism that Jewish people have experienced which transcends any one area, time, or culture. They also noted the precarious status of the Jewish people as minorities within most countries where they have lived throughout recorded time and the constant cycle of relative societal acceptance followed by increased restrictions and discrimination, even pogroms. The creation of the word pogrom supports this belief. Of Russian/Yiddish origin about 1882, pogrom first described the violence and murder perpetrated on Russian Jews after Tsar Alexander II's assassination by a non-Jewish individual [35].

Elaborating on the nature of anti-Semitism historically, many identified societal acceptance of Jewish people as being fragile. This echoes the comments from an earlier discussion in this chapter that anti-Semitism could become more mainstream within a culture experiencing change in the controlling government regime or the general level of prosperity or security of the country they lived in. Three

interviewees commented on the knowledge not just within the Jewish people but within non-Jewish of the meaning of the word "pogrom" as evidence of a common realization of longitudinal historical violence and discrimination based on being of Jewish religion.

Respondents from the Pittsburgh Jewish community could relate many historical examples of past violence or repression referenced first in the Torah, continuing in the following centuries, transitioning to earlier European pogroms, and then spending more time discussing the twentieth-century Holocaust. Their individualized comments had a striking similarity suggesting that many Jewish people in Pittsburgh if not in a broader sample have learned in a culturally ingrained manner that the historical dangerousness of being Jewish is an ongoing risk. Follow-up questions led to the interviewees describing their families, elders, and religious educators as being instrumental in this perspective as well as further self-guided reading and learning on the subject.

Individual Responses to Anti-Semitism

Another area of the interviews focused on individual experiences of anti-Semitism in Pittsburgh both past and present, how individuals coped, and what coping skills were utilized. Again, interviewees described experiences of anti-Semitism as being more overt and accepted within the greater society at earlier periods of the twentieth century. Common examples given by the interviewees included personalized stories of the use of limiting quotas for graduate education, restriction of home ownership to certain areas, employment discrimination, and barring of individuals from membership in professional societies, guilds, swimming pools, or country clubs. They also cited problems when Jewish friends attempted to marry outside their religion.

Possibly because this author identified herself as a native Pittsburgh physician, three interviewees gave the example of the restriction banning Jewish physicians from having medical privileges at a major academic hospital in Pittsburgh for a large portion of the twentieth century. This led to the Jewish community building an equally large and esteemed hospital, Montefiore, on the next block which functioned with a separate medical staff, medical records system, and residency program until merging with the other hospital in 1990. This author was a Montefiore house staff member for a transitional internal medicine year in 1985–1986 and was impressed by the strong competition between the two hospitals in recruiting well-qualified University of Pittsburgh medical students who rotate through both programs.

When describing these specific personal experiences of anti-Semitism, multiple respondents described these events as part of the historical culture of being Jewish. They identified this as a barrier that they and their ancestors had triumphed over and would continue to do in the future. Many discussed these actions as being due to character defects in the aggressors, not something the Jewish people have brought upon themselves. One person referenced the Jewish valued principles of family, education, and altruism directed in the Torah as drawing jealousy from others.

Others talked about the association of family life as integral to the Jewish religion, providing a sense of strength and resiliency for themselves. They provided

examples of Kosher food preparation, celebrating High Holy Days with home-based meals, lighting candles at home during Shabbat, funeral or marriage rituals, and specific instructions in Torah about the importance of marriage and family life as providing a sense of interpersonal strength and support for their human as well as Jewish identity.

Two respondents referenced their distinct Jewish culture, dress, and language along with possible legal statutes that restricted where Jewish people lived or worked as aiding identification as a recognizable minority subgroup within the larger population, making Jews a convenient target for societal anger and frustration. One therapist described Jewish individuals as having had their feelings of safety in their Jewishness being compromised by the Pittsburgh shooting. Then the Poway, California, synagogue shooting "amplified the feeling that they were being targeted. Their personal history of anti-Semitism and any family history of the Holocaust were brought front and center."

One therapist interviewed described how since the shooting many loosely observant Jewish people have expressed a desire or a need to be more active in the synagogue and share their religion with family members by increasing family time, lighting Sabbath candles, saying kiddush over wine, or giving parental blessings to the children. Several people noted the marked general increase in synagogue worship not just for Holy Days but for weekly Shabbat services. One therapist noted the importance of community in worship and gave as an example the minyan or need to have ten people over the age of 13 to conduct public Jewish worship. This trend of increased interest in religious observance, inside and outside of a synagogue, has been sustained for almost a year at the time of this manuscript submission.

There is a perception from many interviewees that the shooting brought members of the Jewish community closer together. One person commented that the shooter wanted to impede the Jewish religion, incite terror, and kill the Jewish people, but despite the loss of 11 devout members, Judaism in Pittsburgh has been unbroken and possibly more ardently practiced since the tragedy. Rabbi Jeffrey Myers from the Tree of Life congregation wrote in an Ideas Op-ed in *Time Magazine*: "Yet my deep abiding faith grew even greater. I turn to God daily for support, guidance and inspiration. It was apparent from the beginning that my being spared had to lead to action, that the 11 must not have died in vain" [36]. Another interviewee echoed those sentiments "when you survive a violent event because of your religion, your faith means more to you."

Four people also described feeling closer to their non-Jewish neighbors who presented a groundswell of support for the Jewish community after the massacre. Over 3000 Pittsburghers congregated later on the day of the shooting for an interfaith prayer vigil organized by Taylor Allderdice High School students which began across from the Jewish Community Center, at the Sixth Presbyterian Church. Sixth Presbyterian's Reverend Vincent Kolb was direct about the community response to this attack: "We gather because we are heartbroken but also to show zero tolerance for anti-Semitic speech, anti-Semitic behavior and anti-Semitic violence" [37]. Rabbi Keren Gorban of Squirrel Hill's Temple Sinai taught the crowd a Hebrew phrase that translates into English: "May you spread your shelter of peace over us" [37].

Many additional gatherings were designed to help the community heal and address the feelings of grief, vulnerability, and uncertainty [38–40]. Messages of zero tolerance for anti-Semitism and ending hate crimes were also prominent. Members of the Jewish community met with other US victims of religious hate crimes as well as survivors of other mass murder incidents [41, 42]. Ultimately the topic changed to how can people affected by this violence heal and how can incidents like this be prevented in the future?

The Role of Social Media and the Internet in Anti-Semitic Behavior

Many disparate groups have identified the Internet as changing the face of political and social discourse, but the Internet's anonymity and open access can create havens for people promoting hate speech. While the Pittsburgh shooter used Gab for his comments, 8chan, a message board on the Internet which is a bastion of the alt-right community, also offered anonymity and no supervision [43].

8chan has been involved in postings by the shooter in three other recent mass murders: a mosque in New Zealand; the synagogue in Poway, California; and a Walmart that serves many Hispanic residents in El Paso, Texas. The pattern has been to post manifestos or political commentary, and then shortly before the crime, the shooter places an announcement of his intent and asks others to promote his actions. After the August 2019 massacre in the El Paso Walmart, 8chan promoted a vile, virulent thread celebrating the deaths of so many victims as well as the motives of the shooter. One response by another contributor urged 8chan participants to develop memes and original content (OC) to facilitate easy distribution of the "heroic" shooter's perspective throughout the Internet: "You know what to do!!! Make OC; Spread OC; Share OC; Inspire OC. Make the world a better place" [44].

Another problem with hate-filled sites is that they can radicalize people who otherwise would not be exposed to this ideology. The suspected murderer at the synagogue, Chabad of Poway, shooting in April 2019 wrote on 8chan before the attack that he'd been visiting 8chan for "a year and a half, yet what I've learned here is priceless. It's been an honor" [45].

Ms. Joan Donovan, the director of the Technology and Social Change Research Project at Harvard University's Shorenstein Center, describes how mass shooters have learned to send out messages online before the shooting to enhance the focus and the dissemination of their views [45]. Donovan further elaborates: "Mass shooters can control the public conversation about their motives, while at the same time provide the public with a clear explanation for their actions" [45].

After three mass shootings in 6 months were publicized by the alleged murderers, 8chan's decision to continue the site with nonexistent supervision created pressure against other companies who supported 8chan's presence on the web. Cloudflare, the Internet security and infrastructure company which prevents 8chan from being shut down due to distributed denial-of-service attacks by activists, first defended the presence of 8chan and then bowed to pressure and refused services to the message board. 8chan quickly announced it was transferring services to a smaller Canadian company, BitMitigate.

Two years ago, Cloudflare under similar pressure had cut loose a neo-Nazi site, Daily Stormer. Thus, Daily Stormer migrated to BitMitigate where Gab, the social network site used by Robert Bowers prior to the Pittsburgh shooting, was also hosted. Very quickly, Alex Stamos, a Stanford University researcher noted publically that BitMitigate's parent company, Epik, uses servers from another company, Voxility [46]. This public shaming of Voxility caused the lights to go off recently for both Daily Stormer and 8chan when Voxility removed Epik's access to their servers [47]. Tucows, another Internet service which assists in the registry of Internet addresses for 8chan, also removed its tech support [48].

In the immediate days after the shutdown, online messages suggest that both sites are trying to re-enter the Internet; there is also commentary suggesting that 8chan has moved over to the dark web [49]. The dark web is difficult for law enforcement to monitor and can only be accessed by specialized servers which are not easy to obtain. This presents a conflict. While access to 8chan's members' viewpoint will be more difficult and less people will be radicalized, the membership will be harder to monitor [49]. This represents the extreme difficulty in monitoring or eliminating social media sites that allow hate speech.

Ultimately monitoring and addressing hate speech and actions for domestic perpetrators in a way that allows government authorities more latitude particularly on the dark web could be helpful. It is not unexpected that the rise of domestic terrorism toward many groups has an eerie parallel to other terrorist organizations such as Islamic State, which has successfully used social media sites like 8chan and then progressed to the dark web for messaging and recruitment [50].

Characteristics of Anti-Semitic Trauma Compared to Other Violence-Related Trauma

Traumatic events are one of the most important environmental etiologies of mental illness. Lenore Terr identified four basic characteristics of childhood trauma symptoms which can continue into adulthood: (1) repeatedly perceived memories of the event, (2) repetitive behaviors, (3) trauma-specific fears, and (4) changed attitudes about life, people, and the future [51]. Terr also differentiated type I trauma which involved misperceptions and full, detailed memories from type II trauma that includes denial, numbing, dissociation, and rage [51].

Research on types of reminiscences involving Holocaust survivors in Israel documented three areas: self-positive (adaptive), self-negative (detrimental), and prosocial with common themes of horror, resilience, generativity, and gratitude [52]. An integrated review of 23 articles on life review or reminiscence functions in Holocaust survivors found that positive life events determined well-being, that using reminiscence positively was related to health, and that resilience and efforts to integrate the past into one's life review were ongoing [53].

While the experience of trauma from any source has universal manifestations and remedies, some aspects of trauma responses occurring from anti-Semitism are specific. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is known to be more likely with man-made traumas, with man-made PTSD episodes being of longer duration and necessitating extended time for symptom recovery [54].

One therapist working with Jewish community members in Pittsburgh commented that with other types of trauma, the response of the individual is often based on their personal trauma history in unique ways. With anti-Semitic trauma, the responses of people are very similar and centered around their safety as it relates to their Jewishness. Interviews with people who are aware of the Jewish community response in Pittsburgh concur. One religious leader described people continuing to receive therapy and are on a trajectory toward feeling better – they are in the process of "allowing themselves to cope." Rabbi Myers echoes that sentiment as a nonlinear process: "Healing is not a constant upward line on a graph, but more like the peaks and valleys of an oscilloscope" [36] One interviewee had concern that Robert Bower's trial with the death penalty attached "may be like ripping the bandage off quickly when the scab is attached."

Antonovsky – while studying female Holocaust survivors as a subgroup of other women in Israel – found that 29% identified their health as good [55]. This led Antonovsky to change his focus from identifying pathology to searching for what is termed "salutogenesis," or discerning what leads to health and well-being in Holocaust survivors [55]. He found that coping well with stress and trauma was correlated to a "sense of coherence" defined as:

> *a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring, though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement* [56].

Two Holocaust survivors interviewed for this article did verbalize features of this viewpoint:

1. Seeing what has happened to the Jewish people over many generations as expected, though not deserved, and explained by others' character defects.
2. There is help and support particularly from their Jewish community as well as with non-Jews who have helped them heal. One Holocaust survivor described a previously little known relative who helped her immensely when she immigrated to the United States after World War II. Then she received the support of the Jewish communities within the United States where she lived. Both mentioned that these resources have been present now and for their ancestors.
3. They and their ancestors have addressed anti-Semitism, including the Holocaust and the Pittsburgh shooting, with resilience.
4. Despite the trauma and pain, it is their duty to live a good life and survive for all those who were lost.

The Nature of Resilience to Anti-Semitism

Many risk factors decrease resilience in the face of trauma. Issues such as the overall health of the individual, presence of cognitive impairment, and current level of stress at the time of trauma are not circumstances easily changed. The presence of

past traumas including developmental trauma is a risk which cannot be changed but instead should be addressed.

One controversial risk is the concept of intergenerational trauma transmission. Epigenetic changes can be transmitted between generations either by DNA methylation, small noncoding RNA sequences, or histone posttranslational modifications and are recent avenues of research interest involving stress tolerance and PTSD risk [57, 58]. Methodological challenges and a dearth of extensive human studies of epigenetic mechanisms are limitations which should be remediated by future research efforts.

This chapter's focus on promoting resilience involves aspects that respond to therapeutic intervention and utilizes individuals' innate coping skills.

Resilience of Pittsburgh Jewish Individuals and Their Communities

The themes that support personal resilience by the Pittsburgh interviewees involved four areas: (1) identity, both personal and group, (2) mindfulness, (3) social integration, and (4) altruism.

Identity

Over half of the respondents spontaneously described a clear personal identity that embraced resilience themes – often fostered by their parents or extended family. This identity facilitated resilience behaviors in times of adversity. One respondent, a Holocaust survivor, described his mother's bravery and intellectual talents that allowed him to survive a concentration camp experience as a child, giving him a sense that she was able to control the arbitrary violence and frequent deaths that occurred around him. Another interviewee described an upbringing where parents and older siblings modeled a pattern of not backing down toward anti-Semitic intimidation or adversity. Other comments included the value of support from the broader Jewish community as mitigating negative emotional effects from anti-Semitism. The experience of anti-Semitism appeared to be acknowledged as wrong but something that people rose above. Multiple interviewees cited older relatives who modeled appropriate ways to address anti-Semitism when the Jewish interviewees were developing their personal identity as children or young adults that made coping more manageable. One respondent stated: "You see your parents and grandparents deal with it - you know what to do."

Mindfulness

It is not surprising given the body of evidence endorsing mindfulness as helping manage stress, anxiety, and adversity that anti-Semitic-based trauma improves

when using mindfulness strategies. Several respondents talked about using mindfulness after anti-Semitic violence to help ground individuals in reality and allow the healing process to start. One respondent recalled being released from medical treatment after liberation from a concentration camp and seeking a walk on the beach, feeling the sand between her toes, and associating this with a return to a normal existence. She felt this experience facilitated the process of her recovery. Another respondent described using instrumental music to focus on positive ideas and to destress after the Pittsburgh shooting.

Social Integration

Resilience is enhanced by having strong community support and daily activities involving others who normalize everyday functioning after anti-Semitic trauma. Many interviewees discussed as positive events the community vigils, spontaneous gatherings, and religious services that occurred after the shooting in Pittsburgh. Much as the rituals surrounding funerals and mourning serve to assist the grieving, the nature of feeling welcomed by friends and neighbors helps integrate the traumatic event into a personal recovery narrative. All the people interviewed mentioned the community support and outreach in the aftermath of the shooting as helping individuals focus on positive concepts and resilience themes.

Altruism

Several respondents described altruism as being a healing component of their recovery. One interviewee described the process of focusing on a greater good as assuaging the feelings of personal pain or uncertainty in the aftermath of the shooting.

Synthesizing the Resilience Themes from the Pittsburgh Interviews into a Psycho-Developmental Framework

These four themes related by the interviewees support the concept described by Antonovsky earlier in this chapter as a "sense of coherence" that promotes positive coping skills for stress and trauma. The value of constructing an integrated life narrative echoes the psychological concept of life review often associated with Erikson's later stages of human development [59]. Prior publications by this author also discuss the similarities between the concept of resilience and recovery from another traumatic experience, severe mental illness, and the human developmental model posited by Erik Erikson [60].

Based on the themes from the Pittsburgh interviews, how humans cope with developmental life trauma especially in later Eriksonian stages appears to parallel the process of resilience from anti-Semitic trauma. Erikson's seventh stage

of generativity versus stagnation has similarities to the interview themes of empowerment, identity, and altruism, while an integrative life narrative represents a successful positive resolution to Erikson's eighth stage of integrity versus despair. One striking observation from the interviews is that while aware that the focus of the interview was to be about anti-Semitism, the mass murder at Tree of Life, and resilience, all the older interviewees proceeded in the unstructured interview by recounting their views in the form of a longitudinal life narrative that started well before the Tree of Life shooting, often in childhood. Even with the focus of discussion being redirected to the more recent events, older interviewees had a common tendency to return to a sequential life narrative format. Often the interviews would extend well beyond the estimated 1-hour duration. This tendency was not observed in the interviewees younger than 40 years – though the sample size was very small. This small interview sample suggests that especially older individuals would benefit from open, unstructured life review therapeutic techniques that allow time to process anti-Semitic trauma into a coherent life narrative.

Where to Go from Here?

Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin posit that "Jew-haters begin with Jews but never end with them, as anti-Semitism is ultimately a hatred of higher standards….. Whoever sees anti-Semitism as only some aberrational hatred on the part of an otherwise morally acceptable group does not understand anti-Semitism" [61]. These authors also note that "It has gradually become clear that a hatred of Israel is a moral indicator of some precision. As the Christians of Lebanon, who have suffered far more from Muslim hatred than the Jews of Israel, have learned. Arab leaders who call for wars to annihilate Zionism are not otherwise tolerant, democracy loving gentleman (Syria's Assad, Iran's Khomeini, Libya's Gadhafi, Iraq's Hussein and Osama bin Laden are five examples given)" [62].

Anti-Semitism has been the most global, long-standing, and societally sanctioned hatred in history, with further evidence that hatred of the Jews is "the lightening rod for evil in every culture in which it lived" [63]. Despite this clear data, many societies experiencing any form of anti-Semitism often excuse incidents as being a "Jewish problem." It behooves non-Jews in any society to address anti-Semitic actions quickly and thoroughly to avoid escalation of sanctioned hate certainly for Jews but also for all members of that society.

Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund's website described suggestions for coping with anti-Semitic actions in ways that foster resilience [64]:

1. Find solidarity at a local synagogue.
2. Find solidarity outside the synagogue; you could become involved with Hillel or join/start a Moishe House. Moishe House's website states "Seeking out young professional or graduate students between the ages of 22 and 30, to live together and create their ideal Jewish community" [65].

One participant in Europe gave a testimonial about the Moishe program:

> *Since being involved with Moishe House, I really understand what it means to meet Shabbat in a "home" setting. And it is so inspiring! And now I understand that I can gather my friends from the community and help them feel inspired and comfortable in a Jewish home, sharing the atmosphere, knowledge and tradition with them. Alexandra Gorbataya, Moishe House Chisinau (Moldova) Resident* [65].

3. Attend Shabbat at OneTable event.
4. Celebrate Jewish learning and living.
5. Pursue social justice or Tikkun olam described as acts of kindness meant to repair the world, while connecting with peers [66].
6. Show your solidarity online.
7. Support those affected by the shooting.
8. Support organizations combating hate and violence.
9. Receive help for trauma, fear, and anxiety.
10. Access resources to help have conversations with children and adolescents.

Aftermath

In the wake of the shooting, Tim Hindes developed a symbol by changing one of the three diamonds in the Pittsburgh Steeler logo into a Star of David and attaching the words – Stronger than Hate. Apparel using this symbol sold very briskly, while social media uploads occurred frequently [67].

The Tree of Life building has not reopened as of December 2019. The three congregations are worshipping at other locations in Pittsburgh [69]. As mentioned previously, clergy from the synagogues who were interviewed for this chapter state attendance has increased in the congregations affected by the shooting.

Administrators of the Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue building asked teenage artists to submit "original, uplifting works that express messages of peace, love, community, hope, healing and resilience" that will be placed in fencing outside the building to strengthen the community feelings of support [68].

There is visible evidence that Robert Bower's intent to wound HIAS has been unsuccessful. After the Pittsburgh shooting, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, a national organization founded in 1881 and serving people immigrating to the United States from all countries and of all religious backgrounds, reported increased visibility and donations [69].

On August 17, 2019, members from two of the three congregations worshipping at the Tree of Life building, Dor Hadash, and New Light wrote letters asking for a plea deal for life in prison without parole for Robert Bowers [70]. The groups arguing against the death penalty cite religious reasons and avoiding the need of testimony which would be traumatic for surviving victims and their families. The justice department has rejected this request as discussed earlier and is proceeding with a death penalty case against Robert Bowers.

Members from Uganda's Tree of Life synagogue visited Pittsburgh on August 19, 2019 in order to foster greater connections between the two congregations. The

leaders of the Ugandan synagogue adopted the Tree of Life name with the Pittsburgh congregation's approval after the October 2018 attack. Rabbi Jeffrey Myers commented that the Pittsburgh congregation will be sending prayer books to Kampala, Uganda, and stated "it's a dream one day to bring a Torah scroll to the Kampala congregation" [71].

Pittsburgh's newspaper, the *Post-Gazette*, won the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for breaking-news reporting of the Tree of Life shooting. In April 2019, the newspaper donated the $15,000 prize to the Tree of Life synagogue [72].

Several members belonging to Tree of Life (L'Simcha) congregation toured the Calvary Episcopal Church in Shadyside on September 9, 2019, to familiarize themselves with this location where they would celebrate the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in 2019. The membership has been worshipping since the 2018 attack at Rodef Shalom Congregation in Shadyside but accepted the offer from the neighboring church. During the visit they used a ram's horn or shofar to test the acoustics for the typical Jewish new year greeting [73].

Rabbi Cheryl Klein from Congregation Dor Hadash found that her quote from the post-shooting vigil – "We will never let hatred be the victor" – was transcribed onto a Squirrel Hill street. Just as a shooter's comment can be virally dispersed over social media, Rabbi Klein's quote on the sidewalk was photographed by another individual and disseminated widely over the Internet [74].

References

1. Pittsburgh's darkest day: a minute-by-minute account of the mass shootings at Tree of Life Synagogue. Cato J. www.archive.triblive.com. 2018 November 3.
2. Robertson C, Mele C, Tavernese S. 11 killed in synagogue massacre; suspect charged with 29 counts. The New York Times. 2018 October 27.
3. Hess A. The far right has a new digital safe space. The New York Times. 2016 November 30.
4. Fox News – The Daily Briefing. Pittsburgh synagogue shooting suspect pleads not guilty to charges in new indictment. Perino, Dana. 2019 Feb 11. https://video.foxnews.com/v/6000950687001/#sp=show-clip.
5. Justice department to seek death for Tree of Life suspect Robert Bowers. Ove, Torsten. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. 2019, August 26.
6. Anti-Defamation League. Deadly Shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue. www.adl.org/educator/education-resources.
7. Romero S, Medina J, Williams T. Tree of Life synagogue victims remembered as guardians of their faith. The New York Times. 2018 October 28.
8. Irving Younger, 69, remembered as devout father, grandpa, "beautiful soul". Lindstrom, Natasha. TRIB Live, Allegheny. 2018, October 28.
9. Names of deceased victims in Squirrel Hill massacre released. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2018 October 28.
10. Sostek A, Ward R. Synagogue victim Rose Mallinger was a young 97. Pittsburgh Post Gazette. 2018 October 28.
11. Daniel Stein shot in sanctuary where grandson was welcomed to Jewish community. www.forward.com. Pink Aiden. 2018 October 28.
12. Pittsburgh shooting victim Melvin Wax remembered as a devoted grandfather and selfless community member. Kaplan, Arielle and Sales, Ben. Jewish Telegraphic Agency. .2018,October 31.
13. CNN-go.com; downloaded 4-29-18.
14. Survivor of synagogue shooting, Daniel Leger, discharged from hospital. TribLive; Tuesday Nov 27, 2018. www.archive.triblive.com. Downloaded 4-27-19.
15. Anti-Semitism Today and Tomorrow: Global Perspectives on the Many Faces of AntiSemitism. Shainkman, Michael. Academic Studies Press, 2018. ISBN:978-1618117441.
16. Violent anti-Semitic Incidents Rose 13% Worldwide Last Year, Report Says. Tamkin Emily. The Washington Post. 2019 May 1.
17. Staggering Rise in anti-Semitic Attacks in New York in 2018, Reports ADL Ziri, Danielle. HAARETZ. 2019 May 1. Downloaded 8-5-19.
18. Surge in anti-Semitic Attacks Has Caused a "Sense of Emergency' Among Jews Worldwide, New Report Says. Roache, Madeline. Time. 2019 May 2.
19. Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents: Year in Review 2017. Anti-Defamation League.
20. Anti-Semitism is back, from the left, right and islamic extremes. Why? Kingsley P. The New York Times. 2019 April 4.
21. Liskowski, Sidney. U.N. Resolution on Zionism. American Jewish yearbook. vol. 77; 1977. p. 109. Editors: Fine, Morris and Himmelfarb, Milton.
22. Anti-Zionism is Anti Semitism. Sufi, Sherry. The Jerusalem Post. 2019, June 25. https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Anti-Zionism-is-antisemitism-593635.
23. What is BDS? BDS website. https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds. Downloaded 8/23/2019.
24. The Power and the People. Tripp, Charles. Paths of Resistance in the Middle East. Cambridge University Press. p. 125–6. ISBN 978-0-521-80965-8.
25. Israel isn't and will never be an apartheid state Los Angeles Times Staff. LA Times. 17 May 2014.
26. The Reut Institute. Contending with BDS and the Assault on Israel's Legitimacy. 2015, June 25. reut-institute.org/en/Publication.aspx?PublicationId=4224.
27. Is BDS Hate speech? The Jewish Daily Forward 14 Feb 2013 19 August 2019.

28. Anti-Semitism in Medieval Europe. Encyclopedia Britannica. Berenbaum, Michael. 2019 June 21. https://www.britannica.com/topic/anti-Semitism/Anti-Semitism-in-medieval-Europe.
29. Democrats Need to Oust Rep. Ilhan Omar from the Foreign Affairs Committee. Baron, Seth and Miller, Judith. The New York Post, 2019, March 5.
30. Hanebrink P. A specter haunting Europe: the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism: Harvard University Press; Boston, MA; 2018. p. 11–45.
31. The Death and Life of the Jewish Century. Balthaser, Benjamen. Boston Review. 2019 March 20.
32. Pennsylvania Judge David N. Wecht talks about anti-Semitism. Cohen, Joel. Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle. 2019, April 12.
33. 75 years since the White Rose siblings were killed for resisting Hitler. Haswell, Julius. The Local, Germany. 2018 February 22. https://www.thelocal.de/20180222/feb-22nd-the-day-the-white-rose-were-killed-for-resisting-hitler.
34. Boxer M, Brookner M, Aronson J, Saxe L. 2017 Pittsburgh Jewish Community Study. 2018, Brandeis University, Steinhardt Social Research Institute. Figure 2.4, Page 19, Table 2.9, Page 20. www.brandeis.edu/ssri. Downloaded 8-2-19.
35. Dictionary.com Unabridged, based on Random House Unabridged Dictionary, @ RandomHouseInc 2019. Downloaded 8-1-19.
36. I Am the Rabbi of Tree of Life Synagogue. Here Is a Simple Thing We Can all do to Help Stop the Next Christchurch. Myers, Jeffrey. Time Magazine. 2019 April 2.
37. Thousands Gather for Vigil HonoringVictims in Squirrel Hill. 2018 October 27. Pitz, Marylynn and Smith, Peter. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2018/10/27/Two-vigils-planned-pittsburgh-mass-shooting-tree-of-life-synagogue/stories/201810270084.
38. Community, Religious Leaders Say Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting 'Will Not Break Us' At Vigil. Gajanan, Mahita. Time. 2018 October 29. https://time.com/5437299/pittsburgh-tree-of-life-shooting-vigil/.
39. The Latest: Vigil at Tree of Life after California shooting. AP News staff. AP News. 2019, April 27. https://www.apnews.com/873c777008e347dea01588ce5fb5db40.
40. 'We'll all struggle together for answers': One week after synagogue shooting, Pittsburgh tries to heal. Stanglin, Doug. USA Today. 2018, November 3. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/11/03/pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-shabat-service-vigils-tree-life/1871835002/.
41. Parkland survivors visit Tree of Life to help community find voice. Guza, Megan. Trib Live. 2019, April 5th. https://triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheny/parkland-survivors-visit-tree-of-life-to-help-community-find-voice/.
42. Tree of Life Survivors Meet With South Carolina Church Shooting Survivors. CBS Pittsburgh Staff. CBS Pittsburgh. 2019, January 21. https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2019/01/21/tree-of-life-synagogue-emanuel-ame-church-shooting-survivors-meet/.
43. The Weird Dark History of 8chan. McLaughlin, Timothy. Wired. 2019, August 6. https://wired.com/story/the-weird-dark-history-8chan/ downloaded 2019, August 21.
44. After several mass shootings this year, 8chan's founder calls this site a terrorist refuge. Harwell, Drew, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Aug 5 2019. https://www.post-gazette.com/business/tech-news/2019/08/04/El-Paso-8chan-founder-mass-shooting/stories/201908040204.
45. Three mass shootings this year began with a hateful screed on 8chan. Its founder calls it a terrorist refuge in plain sight. Harwell, Drew. The Washington Post. 2019, August 4. https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/08/04/three-mass-shootings-this-year-began-with-hateful-screed-chan-its-founder-calls-it-terrorist-refuge-plain-sight/?utm_term=.954705f235cb.
46. 8chan said it was coming back online. Now another internet company appears to have blocked it. Kates, Graham. CBS News. 2019, August 5. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/8chan-down-forum-tried-to-get-back-online-bitmitigate-but-voxility-appears-to-have-blocked-it/.
47. 8chan, the infamous message board linked to the El Paso shooting, was briefly back up before getting taken down again by another service provider. Leskin, Paige. Business Insider. 2019, August 5. https://www.businessinsider.com/8chan-el-paso-shooting-daily-stormer-cloudflare-bitmitigate-voxility-2019-8.

48. Inside the Dark Web Scramble to Get 8chan Back on Line, Led by Tech Companies Hiding in the Shadows. Conger K and Popper N. https://independent.co.uk. 2019, Aug 6.
49. 8chan struggles to stay online after links to mass shootings. CBS News. 2019, August 6. Kates, Graham. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/8chan-struggles-to-stay-online-after-links-to-mass-shootings/.
50. White Terrorism Shows 'Stunning' Parallels to Islamic State's Rise. Fisher, Max. The New York Times. 2019 August 5. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/05/world/americas/terrorism-white-nationalist-supremacy-isis.html?searchResultPosition=2.
51. Terr LC. Childhood traumas: an outline and overview. Am J Psychiatr. 1991;148(1):10–20.
52. O'Rourke N, Canham S, et al. Holocaust survivors' memories of past trauma and the functions of reminiscence. Gerontologist. 2016;56(4):743–52. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu168. Epub 2015 Feb 11.
53. Zimmerman S, Forstmeier S. From fragments to identity: reminiscence, life review and well-being of holocaust survivors. An integrative review. Aging Mental Health. 2018:1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2018.1525608. [Epub ahead of print].
54. Kessler RC, Aguilar-Gaxiola S, Alonso J, Benjet C, Bromet EJ, Cardoso G, Koenen KC. Trauma and PTSD in the WHO World Mental Health surveys. Eur J Psychotraumatol. 2017;8(sup5):1353383.
55. Antonovsky A. The sense of coherence: Development of a research instrument. Newsletter Research Report. Schwartz Research Center for Behavioral Medicine, Tel Aviv University, vol. 1; 1983. p. 11–22.
56. Antonovsky A. Unraveling the Mystery of Health. How people manage stress and stay well. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1987. p. 19.
57. Rodgers AB, Bale TL. Germ cell origins of PTSD risk: the trans- generational impact of parental stress experience. Biol Psychiatry. 2015;78(5):307–14. Pub online 2015 Mar 23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2015.03.018.
58. Cunliffe VT. The epigenetic impacts of social stress: How does social adversity become biologically embedded? Epigenomics. 2016;8(12):1653–69.
59. The Erik Erikson Reader. Erik Erikson, W. W. Norton and Company, March 17, 2001, ISBN-13 978-0393320916.
60. Vogel-Scibilia SE, et al. The recovery process utilizing Erikson's stages of human development. Community Mental Health J. 2009;45:405–14. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-009-9189-4.
61. Prager D, Telushin J. Why the Jews? The reason for Anti-Semitism, the most accurate predictor of human evil: Simon and Schuster; Boston, MA; 2016. p. 191.
62. Prager D, Telushin J. Why the Jews? The reason for Anti-Semitism, the most accurate predictor of human evil: Simon and Schuster; Boston, MA; 2016. p. 196.
63. Prager D, Telushin J. Why the Jews? The reason for Anti-Semitism, the most accurate predictor of human evil: Simon and Schuster; Boston, MA; 2016. p. 20.
64. https://jewishfed.org. Downloaded August 10, 2019.
65. https://moishehouse.org. Downloaded August 10, 2019.
66. The Pittsburgh Attack Inspired Calls for Tikkun OLam. What to Know About the Evolution of an Influential Jewish Idea. Lawrence Fine. TIME. https://time.com. 2019 February 25. Downloaded 2019, August 24.
67. The man behind the Tree of Life 'Stronger Than Hate' image says every posting is 'a WIN for love'. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Sciullo, Maria. October 28, 2018. https://www.post-gazette.com/new/crime-courts/2018/10/28/Stronger-Than-Hate.
68. Grieving Pittsburgh Synagogue Calls on Young Artists to Help Beautify Building. Carol Kuruvilla, Huffington Post. https://m.huffpost.com. 2019 April 16. Downloaded 2019, August 24.
69. After the Pittsburgh Shooting, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Receives an Outpouring of Support. Masha Gessen. New Yorker Magazine. 2018 October 31. https://newyorker.com/new/our-columnists/our-conversation-with-the-head-of-hias/.

70. Rabbi, other survivors urge no death penalty for synagogue killer. Peter Smith, Pittsburgh Post Gazette. 2019 Aug 17. https://post-gazette.com.
71. Uganda's Tree of Life leaders visit Pittsburgh namesake. Peter Smith. Pittsburgh Post – Gazette. 2019, August 19. https://post-gazette.com. Downloaded 2019, August 26.
72. 'Pittsburgh Post-Gazette' Donates Pulitzer Money to Tree of Life Synagogue. The Algemeiner, by JNS.org. September 9, 2019. https://algemeiner.com/2019/09/09/pittsburgh-post-gazette-donates-pulitzer-prize-money-to-tree-of-life-synagogue/.
73. Shadyside church to host Tree of Life's High Hold Day services. Peter Smith. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. September 9, 2019. post-gazette.com/news/faith-religious/2019/09/09/Tree-of-Life-Calvary-Episcopal-Rosh-Hashana-Yom-Kippur/stories/201909090141.
74. Photo provided by Rabbi Klein.