Applying gender analysis to the field of Holocaust Studies has yielded important results. Whereas before the 1990s, most Holocaust scholarship focused almost exclusively on the experiences of male victims, expanding to include women’s experiences has both opened up new areas of inquiry and raised critical questions about established areas. And yet this developing scholarly conversation has limitations as well. As Joan Ringelheim, an early adopter, pointed out in her later work, scholarship about women during the Holocaust easily becomes essentializing; at times even suggesting that women were somehow more capable of facing the Nazi onslaught. More recently Pascale Rachel Bos has argued that many of the perceived differences between the experiences of men and women may have more to do with the way the different genders were taught to express themselves than with actual differences. Even more fundamentally, however, examining the Holocaust and its aftermath through the lens of gender requires breaking up the Jewish or Roma family.

While there is no question that the Nazis sought to destroy the Jewish and Roma family, it is equally clear that Jews and Roma continually resisted this effort, sometimes in surprising ways. Thus to divide men and women into separate categories is to privilege gender above what may have been an even more crucial element of their identities. Jews and Roma of all genders and ages, and in all of the contexts of the Holocaust, made decisions about flight, passing, hiding, joining together and separating based on calculations of their own survival, but also based on perceptions of the greater good of their families.

About the conference

Organizers

Eliyana R. Adler (Pennsylvania State University)

Kateřina Čapková (Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences)

Ruth Leiserowicz (German Historical Institute, Warsaw)

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The Holocaust and Its Aftermath from the Family Perspective

Villa Lanna, Prague, 15-16 March 2017
WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH

9.00 Welcome

FIRST PANEL
Family and Genocide
9.15 – 11.00
Chair: Eliyana R. Adler (Pennsylvania State University)
Dalia Ofer (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
Narrating Families' Daily Life in East European Ghettos: Concepts and Dilemmas
Michal Unger (Ashkelon Academic College, Israel)
Separation and Divorce in the East European Ghettos
Volha Bartash (Hugo Valentin Centre, University of Uppsala)
Romani Family in the Holocaust: Ethnographic Field Notes from the Belarusian-Lithuanian Borderland

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee

SECOND PANEL
Family Correspondence
11.15 – 12.30
Chair: Kateřina Králová (Charles University, Prague)
Joachim Schlör (University of Southampton)
'I could never forget what they had done to my father': The Absence and Presence of Holocaust Memory in a Family's Letter Collection
Rony Alfandary (Bar Ilan University)
Family Letters from Thessaloniki: Real and Imaginary Consequences

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch

THIRD PANEL
Family and Choice
14.00 – 15.45
Chair: Ruth Leiserowitz (German Historical Institute, Warsaw)
Kiril Feferman (Ariel University)
Changing Roles: Flight Decision-making in Mixed Families in the Soviet Union, 1941
Alina Bothe (Free University of Berlin)
'This was the last time I saw my mother' – Families Responding to the First Mass Deportation in October 1938

15.45 – 16.00 Coffee

FOURTH PANEL
Children's Perspectives
16.00 – 17.45
Chair: Clara Royer (CEFRES, Prague)
Boaz Cohen (Western Galilee College, Akko, Shaanan College, Haifa)
Family Survival Strategies as Seen by Survivor Children in Their Early Testimonies
Sarah Rosen (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem)
The Survival of Deported Families in Transnistrian Ghettos as Reflected in Diaries of the Youth
Joanna Beata Michlic (University College London)
Grayer Shades of Jewish Identity: Atypical Histories of Child Survivors from Mixed Polish-Jewish Families in the Aftermath of the Holocaust

18.00 – 19.30 Dinner
20.00 – 22.00 Guided tour of Prague Castle with views of the city.

THURSDAY 16 MARCH

FIFTH PANEL
Imagined Families
9.00 – 10.45
Chair: István Pál Ádám (CEFRES, Prague)
Natalia Aleksut (Touro College, New York City)
Uneasy Bonds: On Jews in Hiding and the Making of Surrogate Families
Rita Horvath (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem)
Hasidic Families under Pressure: An In-depth Analysis of the Holocaust Testimonies Collected by Yaffa Eliach
Viktória Bánya (Hungarian Academy of Sciences)
The Impact of the Joint's Assistance Strategy on the Lives of Jewish Families in Hungary, 1945-49

10.45 – 11.00 Coffee

SIXTH PANEL
Post-war Dilemmas
11.00 – 12.45
Chair: Stephan Stach (Institute of Contemporary History, Prague)
Laura Hobson Faure (New Sorbonne University)
Siblings in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath: Rethinking the 'Holocaust Orphan' in France and the United States
Marcos Silber (University of Haifa)
Migrations, Gender and Family: Bottom-Up Perspectives on Migrations and Nation Building in 1950s Poland and Israel
Kamil Kijek (Wrocław University)
The Jewish Family Confronting the Holocaust Aftermath and Demise of Modernism: The Case of Polish Lower Silesia, 1945-57

12.45 – 14.00 Lunch

SEVENTH PANEL
Rebuilding the Family
14.00 – 15.45
Chair: Kateřina Čapková (Institute of Contemporary History, Prague)
Robin Judd (Ohio State University)
'Experiencing Family and Home': Jewish Military Brides, Allied Soldier Husbands, and the Centrality of Kinship, 1944–50
Anja Reuss (Independent historian)
'Return to Normality': The Relevance of Motherhood and Family for Sinti and Roma Survivors in the Aftermath of World War II
Sarah Wobick-Segev (Koebner Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
Looking for a Nice Jewish Girl ... : Personal Ads and the Creation of Jewish Families in Germany during and after the Shoah, 1938-53

15.45 – 16.15 Coffee

16.15 – 17.45 Concluding round table
Eliyana Adler, Kateřina Čapková, Ruth Leiserowitz Sharon Kangissre Cohen (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem)

18.00 – 19.30 Dinner, Villa Lanna