

IN PURSUIT OF JEWISH PARADIGMS OF MEMORY:
CONSTITUTING CARRIERS OF JEWISH MEMORY IN A SUPPORT
GROUP FOR CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

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With the decline of traditional religious ceremony, liturgy and recitals of commemoration considered to have preserved the archetypal paradigms and sequences essential to the survival of Jewish memory, Yerushalmi warned that the past would no longer be personally and collectively made present nor would it be transmitted from generation to generation. In response, scholars of present day Jewish practice have asserted that contemporary “policies of memory” or adapted “channels of memory,” perform the functions of traditional ritual and liturgical memory work. Turning to the culturally complex and ethically loaded domain of Holocaust memory, the paper asks whether psychologically framed Holocaust memory work resonates with traditional Jewish paradigms of memory. An ethnographic account of a psychosocial support group for children of Holocaust survivors is examined as representing a contemporary mnemonic practice to determine whether therapeutically framed “policies” of Holocaust memory and the traumatized survivor as “channel of memory” can in fact perform the functions of traditional ritual and liturgical memory work. Person centered support group narration and secularly framed interpretations of traumatic memory are shown to embed culturally Jewish key values, scenarios and mandates as mechanisms to educate both the individual and community as carriers of memory obligated and valorized to achieve traditional objectives of remembrance.