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Stephanie Fagin-Jones

Columbia University Teachers College, drstephanie@drstephaniejones.com

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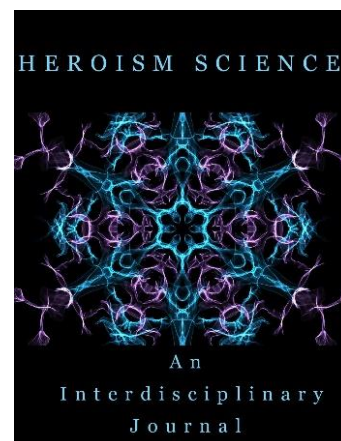
Book Review: Unlikely Heroes: The Place of Holocaust Rescuers in Research and Teaching

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STEPHANIE FAGIN-JONES¹

Columbia University Teachers College

drstephanie@drstephaniejones.com



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1 INTRODUCTION

January 27, 2020 will mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation from Auschwitz. Yet, as the editors of *Unlikely Heroes: The Place of Holocaust Rescuers in Research and Teaching* rightly note, knowledge about the Holocaust is fading, with only roughly a third of millennials reporting awareness of what the Holocaust was. In addition, the global rise of authoritarianism and the persistence of ethnocentrism, prejudice, and xenophobia in the United States and abroad necessitates a renewed focus, not only on factors associated with evil and genocide, but also on understanding the very rare phenomenon of heroism undertaken by the very few morally courageous individuals under life-threatening conditions. The vital aim of this volume is thus increasing both awareness and the incidence of heroism in the 21st century and onward.

Representing the first in a new series, *Contemporary Holocaust Studies*, from the University of Nebraska Press, this valuable book is the result of a collection of papers presented at the Sommerhauser Symposium on Holocaust Education in April 2017 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This biennial symposium, generously supported by third-generation survivor siblings Peter Sommerhauser and Eileen Sommerhauser-Putter, along with The University of Nebraska, focuses on the integration of research and teaching of Holocaust scholarship. The editors thus seek to address an urgent need to bring past and present academic knowledge on the subject of Holocaust rescue into the classroom in a manner that is both scientifically sound and pedagogically effective.

Given this transdisciplinary aim, the editors structure the book into two parts: the first focuses on research on Holocaust rescue, and the second focuses on teaching about rescue during the Holocaust in high school and university classrooms. An additional and particular strength of this volume, veteran Holocaust educators Liz Feldstern and Donna Walter provide

excellent, stimulating discussion questions and additional resources throughout intended for students in middle and high school and undergraduate college classes aimed “to facilitate the exchange of thoughts and to deepen the understanding of the materials presented.” Their broadly comprehensive lists of questions prompt students both to self-reflect and to reflect more deeply on areas including but not limited to the overlapping domains of history, politics, social and moral psychology. For example, students are asked:

- *Historians believe that less than 1 percent of people who could have helped during the Holocaust actually made an effort to do this. Are you surprised by this small percentage – why/why not?*
- *If upbringing and family environment are influential in an individual’s likelihood to be a rescuer, what should society do in order to encourage this type of behavior/personality?*
- *What does it mean to hide in “plain sight”? What aspects of one’s identity does this require one to deny?*
- *The example of medical teams choosing not to treat those who were least likely to survive is an example of a moral dilemma posed by the Holocaust. Lessons and materials regarding “choiceless choices” in the Holocaust can be found at www.facinghistory.org.*
- *Bureaucracy was a deliberate tool that hindered the escape of Jews from Nazi control in the late 1930’s. Those in Nazi Germany were faced with almost impossible requirements to obtain a visa. The obstacles encountered by the War Refugee Board in their rescue efforts proved to be very similar. How do contemporary immigration laws impede escape from dangerous situations? How does balancing national security with humanitarian needs impact a nation’s decisions on immigration?*
- *How is “neutrality” defined? Does it surprise you that neutral countries “played the system”? How did the Swedish government aid the Nazis?*
- *How are group rescue efforts different from individual efforts? Are the motivations different? The risks?*
- *If the majority of a student’s classroom experience of learning about the Holocaust is from watching “Schindler’s List”, what aspects of the Holocaust might they be missing? Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED talk on “The Danger of a Single Story” provides an interesting and related perspective.*
- *Which examples come to mind of individuals or groups, not connected to the Holocaust, that demonstrate moral courage?*

2 PART I: RESEARCH ABOUT RESCUE

In *Holocaust Rescuers in Historical and Academic Scholarship*, Roy G. Koepp offers an overview of the evolution of research on rescue during the Holocaust ranging from its

delayed start due to a preponderant focus on victims, perpetrators and authoritarianism, to emerging trends in historical and academic scholarship resulting in a recent focus on resistance as rescue.

In his reflections on the very late emergence of the research on rescue two decades post WWII, Koepp rightly notes both rescuers' own humility in recounting their stories (for example British rescuer Nicholas Winton's rescue activities went unknown until years later when his family discovered archival materials in his attic) as well as a public attitude that a focus on the rescuers might detract attention from the victims themselves and might lessen people's willingness to confront the truth of the Holocaust.

So, Koepp notes, it was not until 1962, with the creation of the Commission of the Righteous by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyr's and Heroes' Remembrance Authority founded in 1953, whose mission was to determine whether proposed rescuers met established criteria for recognition and honorific "*hasidei umot ha'olam*" or "Righteous Among the Nations," that a focus on understanding the rare phenomenon of rescue in which the light of human goodness pierced the darkness of human evil, was born. Koepp enumerates Yad Vashem's stringent criteria for rescue:

1. *Active involvement of the rescuer in saving one or several Jews from the threat of death or deportation to death camps*
2. *Risk to the rescuer's life, liberty, or position*
3. *The initial motivation being the intention to help persecuted Jews: i.e., not for payment or any other reward such as religious conversion of the saved person, adoption of a child, etc.*
4. *The existence of testimony of those who were helped or at least unequivocal documentation establishing the nature of the rescue and its circumstances.*

Much of the early research, the author notes, stemmed from Yad Vashem and its own efforts to honor verified rescuers, the efforts of individual authors to highlight the stories of individual rescuers, and from the publication of rescuers' memoirs. The archives of Yad

Vashem would become especially important for the development of particularly social psychological research on rescuers and bystanders.

However, it should be noted that another important source prompting early research into Holocaust rescue such as that conducted by Perry London in 1970 came from the late American Rabbi Harold Schulweis who founded The Institute for Righteous Acts to search out and conduct interviews with the rescuers in an attempt to identify their motivations.

In keeping with his theme, Keopp focuses this chapter on three main motivations that scholars, whose interdisciplinary academic research began in earnest in the 1980's, have identified as underlying heroic Holocaust rescue: altruism, religion, and resistance. Arguing for distinct but overlapping categories, Keopp provides an overview of the social psychological research on rescue as altruism (notably Samuel and Pearl Oliners' landmark, and to date, largest systematic study of over 700 rescuers, bystanders, and nonrescuers: *The Altruistic Personality Project* in 1988). He also gives examples of research on religiously motivated rescue and offers several examples of resistance engaged in by various groups including both non-Jews and Jews.

It is the latter focus where the strengths of this chapter on rescue research emerges, perhaps given that its author Keopp is an historian and provides exceptionally detailed accountings of acts of resistance. For example, Keopp examines Stoltzfus' study of The Rosenstrasse Protest in February 1943 by the non-Jewish wives of Jewish men who were detained by the Gestapo in Berlin. Keopp argues that Stoltzfus' case for resistance to the Nazi regime as the motivation underlying the wives' protest is valid given their common cause, their geographic proximity, and the collective action which forced a change in this one instance, the release of their husbands. (Keopp, in academic fairness, cites German Historian

Wolf Gruner's objection that the Gestapo never intended to hold the Jewish husbands in the first place, while not detracting from the courage of the non-Jewish women and wives).

Still, while Koepp provides some analysis of the social psychological findings underpinning rescuers' altruistic and religious motivations to act on behalf of the "other" slated for destruction, it is this reviewer's opinion that Koepp overlooks some of the more recent, important findings from the field of Holocaust rescue research. Admittedly, he acknowledges that not all of the academic work on rescue can be discussed, but more recent research importantly examines more closely and systematically not only motivations but also the *dispositions* of the rescuers and does so in the context of other potentially important situational and demographic factors. In the spirit of full disclosure, and with recognition of potential bias, this reviewer is among those social scientists whose academic work on Holocaust rescue was inexplicably overlooked by Koepp.

This more recent empirical research is based on a study by Elizabeth Midlarsky (1985) which examined correlates of Holocaust rescue among a sample of 80 verified rescuers and 73 bystanders, building upon the Oliners' pioneering study by (1) including subjects who had not yet been honored for their heroism; (2) deepening the focus on the dispositions of the participants; (3) utilizing more psychometrically valid and reliable instruments to assess constructs predicated on the findings of numerous laboratory studies on altruism; and (4) including a comparison group of 43 demographically similar pre-war immigrants who emigrated to the United States and Canada prior to the onset of the Second World War.

Using Midlarsky's data set, a robust series of secondary analyses were conducted examining the relationship between rescue and family upbringing, prosocial and proactive personality characteristics, and the relative importance of positive personality traits examined

in the context of potentially important situational and demographic factors, respectively (See Fagin-Jones, 2017: *Holocaust Heroes: Heroic Altruism of Non-Jewish Moral Exemplars in Nazi Europe* in S. Allison, G.R. Goethals, & R.M. Kramer's *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership* for a comprehensive overview of the research; also Fagin-Jones, 2018; Fagin-Jones & Midlarsky, 2007; Midlarsky, Fagin-Jones, & Corley, 2005; and Midlarsky, 1985)

This more recent robust research on rescue offers several important findings, for example, that social responsibility emerged as the strongest predictor among a set of positive personality variables that correctly classified 96.1 percent of participants over and above situational and demographic variables. Overall, the research suggests that rescuers were a demographically heterogeneous population who possessed a strong dispositional trend characterized by care-based moral courage and a sense of social responsibility manifesting in heroic altruism. Such dispositional traits likely stemmed from childhood upbringing in which a deep sense of moral identity was cultivated by parental role models.

Rescuers' childhoods differed on average from bystanders, Koepp notes, but his understanding is limited. For example, Koepp interprets the Oliner's finding that rescuers and bystanders' parents differed in terms of discipline as the rescuers' parents being "*more lax*" in discipline than bystanders' parents, which is inaccurate. The rescuers' parents were not "*more lax*," rather their forms of discipline were more victim-centered and inductive, relying more on reasoning and less on power-assertive techniques than the bystanders' parents who were more likely to use gratuitous aggression. The implications on rescuers' and bystanders' development are vitally important, as the rescuers' parents modelled respect by the powerful over the more vulnerable, did not impute 'badness' into the child's character, and focused their interventions on the development of empathy and accountability. The bystanders' parents were more likely to use aggression and to instil fear and a lack of self-

efficacy in the child, which may have impacted the personality development of the bystander and the tendency for bystanders to exhibit “*a dispositional aversion to risk and avoidance of responsibility toward others.*” (Fagin-Jones, 2017). In Chapter 7, Lawrence Baron quotes

Dutch rescuer Marion Pritchard (p. 189):

I believe that courage, integrity, and a capacity for love are neither virtues, nor moral categories, but a consequence of a benign fate, in my own case, parents who listened to me, let me talk, and encouraged in every way the development of my own authentic self. It may be redundant to add that they never used corporal punishment in any form.

Certainly altruism, religion, and resistance played motivational roles in rescue, and Baron in a later chapter effectively illustrates how motivational categories arrived at empirically by the Oliners’ such as “*attachment, normative, and autonomous*” can be used to organize, explain, and teach the phenomenon of rescue to students in the classroom. In addition to these motivational categories, I argue that the role of personality and, in particular, moral identity should be added to the curriculum when teaching high school and university students about Holocaust rescue.

Regardless of whether one was motivated to act individually or collectively, by religious reasons or out of resistance to Nazi ideology, it seems most rescuers had in common an integrated moral identity that was established in childhood and predisposed the rescuer to act as a natural extension of one’s self because “*it was the right thing to do.*” Most rescuers would go on to say that they could not have done otherwise, wished they had done more, and indeed continued to engage in prosocial action over the course of and well into their later lives, leading to a stronger sense among rescuers of having lived “the good life” than the bystanders (Fagin-Jones, 2018).

In *The Saved and the Betrayed: Hidden Jews in the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia*, Benjamin Frommer takes as his launching point a debate among scholars with

regard to the extent of rescue efforts undertaken by non-Jews in The Protectorate during World War II, with some researchers arguing that the Czech people did more to rescue than scholars previously noted. Frommer concludes that while it is impossible to definitively determine the degree to which non-Jewish Czechs undertook heroic altruism during the Holocaust (due to a number of factors that he enumerates including the absence of many survivors and a dearth of documentation such as diaries), one can conclude unequivocally that of those Jews who ignored summonses for mass transport to extermination camps, only a mere handful survived. Only ten percent of the Protectorate's pre-war Jewry survived.

Frommer provides a detailed overview of the Bohemian and Moravian Jews' responses to the Nazi Occupation, focusing on their efforts to immigrate legally, to hide in plain sight, to rely on their status as *Mischlinge* to delay transport, to escape the death marches and go into hiding, and to ignore summonses and go into hiding in hope of survival with the help of non-Jewish rescuers.

This last rare group, Frommer notes, was difficult to identify, as so few were able to escape transport to Theresienstadt, and he goes into great details about how to potentially identify more Jews who were on the lists but failed to appear for transport. Frommer cites in painstaking detail the difficulties encountered even by Yad Vashem to correctly identify the number of rescuers and rescued within the Czech Republic. In all, he concludes, there are 27 clearly documented cases of Righteous who risked their lives to save Jews.

Frommer recounts one of the best documented cases of rescue of Jews who ignored summonses, that of Heda Kaufmannová and her brother Viktor, who was later hanged by the Gestapo in 1945. Heda's memoir details an account of having to relocate several times and of having to live much like Anne Frank, in hiding. In order to survive the many moves, Heda and her sister-in-law relied on the care-based courage of her old friends in Prague, Hana

Málková and her daughter Eva. As a member of the resistance, Heda had developed other resources and sources of support that aided in her survival. Without these networks, most Jews who were in hiding, were forced to move from place to place, Frommer notes, and were often denounced and eventually caught and killed.

Further complicating the situation was the timing of the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the SS chieftain of the Protectorate who was shot down by Czech parachutists and mortally wounded. The Germans initiated a massive search to discover the perpetrators. Thus Jews in hiding tragically were discovered as a by-product of Germans searching for members of the Czech resistance who aided in the assassination. Frommer highlights the contradictory role of the resistance in Holland, where resistance fighters and networks meaningfully aided in the rescue of numerous Jews, with the negative consequences of the actions of the Czech resistance who inadvertently brought danger and death to Jews in hiding.

One example he cites is Erich Geiger, a 45-year-old lawyer who had converted to Catholicism but failed to show for deportation and was being hunted by the Nazis. Geiger went underground and travelled a distance of nearly 170 miles in two months only to be denounced by a teacher who that same day had agreed to turn into the Gestapo any people suspected of being in coordination with the resistance. Geiger was handed over to the Gestapo and was executed by the Martial Law Court in Brno on June 17, 1942. Hence, Frommer's chapter offers detailed historical evidence supporting his conclusion that however many or few cases of rescue actually occurred, the circumstances under which Jews in the Protectorate hid predisposed the vast majority of them to be betrayed, captured, and killed.

In *The Final Rescue?: Liberation and the Holocaust*, Mark Celinscak raises the question of whether liberation should be viewed as equivalent to rescue, a "fourth" category added to perpetrators, bystanders, and victims of the Holocaust. Celinscak argues that while

both liberation and rescue saved Jewish lives, “both the elements of choice and risk reveal stark differences between the two activities,” adding that “drawing distinctions between liberation and rescue can help us better appreciate the challenges and complexities faced by actors operating in either capacity.

The author explains that individuals who engaged in liberation did not engage in activity that met the criteria established by Yad Vashem: that the motivations for rescue must be altruistic, with the individual putting his or her life and the lives of those around them in jeopardy. Nevertheless, Celinscak argues, deeply navigating the liberation experience of Bergen-Belsen, exploration of the context, process, and individual encounter as liberator is highly warranted.

By situating his examination of liberation in “The Horror Camp” of Bergen-Belsen, Celinscak immerses the reader in the tragic context of an extermination camp where more than 50,000 people died, with more than an estimated 35,000 murdered between January and March 1945. Although Rudolf Kastner successfully negotiated the transport of more than 1600 Hungarian Jews out of Bergen-Belsen, only 2,560 out of the approximately 15,000 who were granted “exchange” status and temporarily exempted from extermination, survived as a result of international exchange efforts. The author supports the belief had the Allies prioritized the rescue of Jews during the war, perhaps more Jews could have been exchanged instead of hoping to survive until the liberation on April 15, 1945.

Distinguishing the liberators from the rescuers, the motivation to rescue Jews was markedly different. Most British personnel, including Jewish born Scotsman Alan Rose who, as a sergeant in the Seventh Armored Division from the Third/Fourth County of London Yeomanry participated in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, did not enlist in the military to save Jewish lives. “Nobody set out to liberate a concentration camp,” he explains.

Moreover, while the liberators were not risking their lives as the rescuers had, danger was clear and present various forms. Liberators focused on urgent care had to contend not only with the outbreak of typhus and the physical toll of the removal of dead and near-dead bodies, but with the emotional and psychological trauma of bearing witness to the inhumane atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis. Most horribly, short-staffed and under-resourced liberators such as Brigadier Hughes and Lt. Col. Mervin Willett Gonin were forced to engage in the agonizing, heart-wrenching moral dilemma of triage and created a system of deciding whose lives to save by prioritizing those whose reasonable chances of survival upon receipt of simple nursing and suitable feeding were highest.

An important conclusion to this chapter is, paradoxically, the lack of a conclusion for survivors and liberators, as even after liberation, Jews were not free. Bergen-Belsen was now a Displaced Person (DP) camp where Jews remained behind barbed wire, lumped in with non-Jews based on their nationality, and now guarded by the very same people who had liberated them. The living conditions for the remaining 60,000 people were horrendous, with many Jews further traumatized by receiving treatment from German doctors still wearing army uniforms. Although the Jewish survivors were eventually released from Bergen-Belsen, Celinscak wisely notes that their harrowing journey as DP's had only just begun and continued for many for years after the war officially ended. Approximately 90 percent of more than 70,000 Holocaust survivors illegally immigrating to Palestine were seized by the British and placed in internment camps in Cyprus (including the Kindertransport member discussed below), where they faced extreme negative conditions and were at times guarded by the very men who had been their liberators from concentration camp. Hence, the chapter on liberation presents a story well worth reading – a beginning, a middle, and in certain cases, an interminable ending. For some soldiers whose roles shifted from liberator to captor, their

crisis of conscience would be added to the psychological trauma of liberation that they would have to live with for the rest of their lives.

On a bit of a lighter note, who knew that Raoul Wallenberg was a University of Michigan graduate? Go Blue! In fact, Michael Dick incorporates many fascinating details in *Raoul Wallenberg: The Making of an American Hero* offering strong support of his thesis that Wallenberg was celebrated in the United States for his Holocaust humanitarianism *and* served an American political schedule. Dick asserts, “*The American memorialization of Wallenberg, while duly informing of his humanitarian rescue work, reminds us that the politics of public memory can and does utilize the past to promote a contemporary agenda.*” He rightly criticizes the politicization of Wallenberg’s memory throughout and beyond the Cold War. As recently as summer, 2014 several U.S. senators and representatives convened to honor the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, and Senator Lindsay Graham (R-SC) brought the politicization of Wallenberg into the Post Cold War era when he said, “*Will we be the Raoul Wallenberg’s of the 2014 period? Will we speak up and say no to the Iranians desire to get a nuclear weapon? Are we going to stand by Israel as the rockets fly?*”

The manner in which Dick articulates Wallenberg’s dramatic journey, for example from his privileged Swedish banking family, to his adventures among American youth during his college era, to his chance meeting at the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair of Swedish Count and humanitarian Folke Bernadotte who would be assassinated in 1948 by a radical Israeli group and largely forgotten by the U.S., Dick argues, because “he did not fit the emerging Cold War narrative” renders the American politicization of Wallenberg’s Holocaust heroism and haunting disappearance all the more relatable and thus disturbing.

Readers will find this chapter powerful and enlightening, opening new insights into Wallenberg’s evolution, harrowing participation, and American memorialization as rescuer.

The reader will learn in great detail of the complex historical and political machine operating between the U.S., Sweden, Hungary, and Wallenberg, as well as the reasons why neutral Sweden was at best ambivalent and at worst grossly negligent in its post-war efforts to investigate Wallenberg's disappearance. Dick writes that Wallenberg, despite pleas from his friends and colleagues to leave the Soviet liberated Pest side and move to the safer Buda side of the city, refused and rode east to meet with the Soviets on January 17, 1945. This reader was particularly horrified to learn in the preceding chapter, *The War Refugee Board: Formulating Rescue from Washington*, by Rebecca Erbelding, that the American WRB, who sponsored Wallenberg's rescue efforts, received their last communication from him on December 22, 1944 written two weeks earlier, and they did not even realize that Raoul Wallenberg had disappeared until early April of 1945.

In that chapter, Erbelding provides a detailed historical overview of the WRB, asserting perhaps controversially, that those who argue that help deriving from the WRB was "too little, too late" fail to understand that "after the war began, mass rescue was an impossibility without delaying military victory. The Nazis were determined to murder as many Jews as possible, for as long as possible -- far more determined, we must be clear, than any Allied government, including the United States, was to save them."

One important element in this chapter is the depiction of the drastic and sudden reversal of conditions in Budapest following the takeover of Hungary by the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross in mid-October 1944. Erbelding explains how over a period of three days, Wallenberg's optimism that Jews with Schutzbriefs would be exempted from deportation prior to the takeover on the shifted to panic when his Jewish staff disappeared on October 17, and although he found most of them, ten missing Jews likely joined the fate of the few thousand who had already been systematically annihilated.

The WRB, Erbelding recounts, took action in the form of appeals to Vatican, called public attention to the threat against Hungarian Jews, and challenged the German refusal to accept protests transmitted through the Swiss, but “for the most part, they waited; with the Arrow Cross and Nazis in control, there was not much they could do.” Indeed, in a letter to Wallenberg, the WRB director, John Pehle expressed his deep appreciation as well as resigned frustration: *“I think that no one who has participated in this great task can escape some feeling of frustration in that, because of circumstances beyond our control, our efforts have not met with complete success. On the other hand, there have been measurable achievements in the face of obstacles which had to be encountered, and it is our conviction that you have made a very great personal contribution to the success which has been realized in these endeavors.”* Wallenberg, Erbelding notes tragically, likely never received this letter.

Indeed the WRB was established on January 22, 1944 by Franklin Roosevelt to pursue proactive rescue and relief of Jews and other persecuted minorities, so long as this work did not interfere with the “successful prosecution of the war.” Its primary aims were to move refugees away from the margins of Axis-occupied territory to safety, convincing would-be perpetrators not to commit crimes, and keeping those trapped in Nazi territory alive for as long as possible. These aims, Erbelding persuasively writes, were extremely difficult to achieve from Washington, and she provides examples of the WRB’s efforts to achieve the above aims in the face of numerous obstacles: the establishment of the Fedhala refugee camp established near Casablanca, deterring crimes by warning would be perpetrators in Slovakia; and the WRB’s relationship with Raoul Wallenberg.

First, she recounts the difficulty establishing the WRB, as politicians such as US Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long blocked legislation and had asked that the American legation in Bern cease sending reports about Nazi mass murder to the U.S. Shocked, the Treasury Department drafted a 17-page memo which Treasury Secretary Henry

Morgenthau along with John Pehle and Treasury General counsel Randolph Paul brought to Roosevelt's attention, prompting him along with public pressure to establish the WRB.

Unfortunately for the Jewish people and for humanity, the United States did not establish the WRB until January 22, 1944, more than three years after the horrors of Kristallnacht. This excruciating reality suggests to this reader that the U.S. engagement in the rescue and relief of Jews was indeed too late.

Once established, because the WRB international request for support was turned down by so many countries, it worked largely unilaterally to procure the rescue and relief of Jews. The author outlines these efforts as well as efforts to elicit support from agencies, some of which was received, so much so, she writes that the notion that the WRB was underfunded was unfounded. In fact, it returned \$640,000 to the federal government. While estimates of lives saved ranged from tens- to hundreds- of thousands, Erbelding underscores the "extraordinary success" in light of the many challenges and beautifully illustrates these challenges in the three examples she provides, including the months-long delayed transport of Jews by ship to the Fedhala refugee camp, due to the top-secret planned invasion by the Allies at Normandy.

When reading *The University in Exile and the Garden of Eden: Alvin Johnson and His Rescue Efforts for European Jews and Intellectuals*, by Gerald J. Steinacher and Brian Barmettler, most coincidentally, this reviewer, as a guest of two surviving members of The Kindertransport, happened to be at The New School for Social Research attending a viewing of Melissa Hacker's heartbreaking documentary film, *My Knees Were Jumping: Remembering the Kindertransports*, honoring the 80th anniversary of The Kindertransports. I hadn't known what the authors of this chapter recount in such excellent detail: that Alvin Johnson, a pioneering, humanist, intellectual Nebraskan, had co-founded (and eventually

directed) The New School, “to educate the educated “and to create a refuge for European scholars in exile from the claws of Hitler’s Final Solution.

Moreover, one of the members of the Kindertransport I had the honor to accompany had immigrated to the United States and recalled her time as one of the first students to graduate from Johnson’s originated Bachelor of Arts program at The New School where, she recalled, the majority of her professors too were European academic émigrés. In keeping with what the authors note was one opinion on the legacy on the United States of the New School refugee scholars: that it was their students who made the greatest impact on U.S. academia and expanding the American mind, this surviving member of the Kindertransport and New School graduate would go on to become the Director of JASA, The Jewish Association for the Aged, one of New York’s largest and most trusted agencies serving older adults.

Johnson, an ultra-liberal economics professor, became editor of the *New Republic* and attempted, unsuccessfully, to “*sway public opinion in favor of a fair peace settlement for Germany*” suggesting that, had he been successful, he might have remarkably contributed to the prevention of World War II. As Director of The New School, Johnson originally established The University in Exile which, the authors explain, later changed at the behest of the professors who resented the term ‘exile’ to The Graduate Faculty. Many renowned immigrant scholars comprised the Graduate Faculty, including German scholar Theodor W. Adorno who was among the earliest and most notable social scientists to examine authoritarianism.

Less successful but no less admirable was Johnson’s efforts at establishing farming settlements for European refugees from the Nazi genocide. The authors recount a detailed and moving historical narrative and analysis of Johnson’s somewhat successful but largely

failed efforts to achieve his vision of a farming collective known as The Garden of Eeden. Based on his ideals and love for farming, Johnson thoughtfully planned the farming community and recruited families whom he believed would have the greatest chances of success based on the composition of the family unit and prior farming experience. However, one success story brought a couple with no farming experience, who learned and thrived in the agricultural colony. Unfortunately, Johnson's did not achieve his vision but, the authors highlight, took personal responsibility for the failure noting, "If I could have lived in the community, I think it would have succeeded." The authors are working on what I anticipate will be a well-received biography of Alvin Johnson who would posthumously receive numerous honors for his contributions, notably receiving several honorary doctorates including both The New School for Social Research and The University of Nebraska.

3 PART 2: TEACHING ABOUT RESCUE

In *From Saints to Sinners: Teaching about the Motivations of Rescuers of Jews through Documentary and Feature Films*, Lawrence Baron, Professor Emeritus of Modern Jewish History at San Diego State University contributes perhaps the chapter in the volume that best illustrates the book's overall purpose. He presents educators with suggestions for using film excerpts to illustrate holocaust rescue based on the framework of overlapping but distinct motivational categories drawn from Oliner and Oliner's 1988 landmark empirical study *The Altruistic Personality* in which Baron participated as an interviewer (One of the most intriguing aspects of his contribution is his story of personally interviewing Dutch rescuer Marion Pritchard).

Baron raises the issue of "proportion" in regard to both how much focus is warranted relative to other aspects of the Holocaust and how much time and how can teachers maximize the time allotted to the top of heroic rescue. Minimally, he asserts, educators who introduce

individual rescue narratives should provide an historical context and chronicle the heroic actions of the rescuers. Baron goes further, however, positing two general interpretative approaches to understanding the rescue phenomenon. Mordecai Paldiel, the former director of The Department of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, argues for the randomness of helping acts with little commonality among exemplary rescuers. In contrast, based on the findings from Oliners' (and other known psychosocial studies) of rescuers, nonrescuers, and bystanders, he asserts that patterns emerged to help explain both the rescuers' personalities and the motivations underlying their courageous acts.

(It perhaps bears repeating here that a subsequent psychosocial study of verified rescuers, bystanders, and a comparison immigrant group conducted by Elizabeth Midlarsky improved upon the Oliners' methodology and yielded numerous important secondary studies. For an overview of this and additional research on Holocaust rescue, see Fagin-Jones, 2017).

Baron cites three caveats for teachers who seek to educate students about Holocaust rescuers: (1) Many more individuals who shared the rescuers' sympathies did not take action due to the extreme circumstances and high likelihood of a dreaded outcome; (2) Rescuers cannot be reduced to types – there is much overlap in regard to motivations and personality; and (3) most rescuers viewed their actions as natural extensions of their identities and were extremely humble whereas films about Holocaust rescuers tend to “lionize their deeds, making them seem so heroic that it is difficult for audiences to imagine emulating them.”

A significant contribution to this volume, Baron pairs specific excerpts from specific films as examples of specific motivational categories of rescue. Rescuers such as Dutch rescuers Miep Geis, Polish rescuer Irene Gut Opdyke, and German rescuers Oscar Schindler exemplify “attachment” rescuers whose motivation to risk their lives on behalf of the persecuted other was based on empathy and the deeply felt bonds formed with between the

rescuers and the rescued. “Normative” rescuers were those whose actions were motivated to conform with the social group or collective “norms.” Network rescuers were included among this group who represented approximately 52% of the Oliners’ sample. A prime example of “normative rescue” was the collective rescue by the Danish of nearly all of the Danish Jewry, which is depicted in both documentary, feature films, such as Disney’s *Miracle at Midnight*. Baron cites scenes and snippets of dialogue that correspond to particular moral themes. For example, the “crisis of conscience” experienced by the Danes is depicted in a scene between Dr. Koster and his wife over whether they should risk helping their Jewish neighbors: “How do we live with ourselves if we don’t and what is the message we would give our children?”

According to Baron, another example of “normative rescuer” is Dutch Calvinist Christian Corrie ten Boom, who with the aid of her immediate and extended family, some of whom sacrificed their lives (ten Boom survived Ravensbrück concentration camp though her sister did not), succeeded in rescuing hundreds of Jews. The ten Boom family, depicted in the book and film *The Hiding Place*, were among 8% of the Dutch population which accounted for 25% of the rescued Jews in the Netherlands based on the Christian “norm” of *caritas*. Baron offers both historically detailed background and supporting resources such as online interviews and the film for educators to utilize in their classrooms.

Lastly, 11% of the Oliners’ sample subscribed to “autonomous principles based in justice and caring.” These “autonomous” rescuers, such as Raoul Wallenberg and Marion Pritchard are discussed as examples of individual rescuers who were fiercely independent and took the height of courageous action on their own to defy Nazis to save Jews. Baron recounts Pritchard’s story in which she felt compelled to shoot and kill a Dutch police officer to protect the family she was hiding, and he discusses the rugged individualism of Raoul Wallenberg who single-handedly commanded the Nazis to stop trains destined for concentration camps and release the Jews who would have otherwise faced certain death.

In *Complicating the Narrative: Oskar Schindler Schindler's List and the Classroom*, Holocaust educator Mark Gudgel shares his research findings based on survey of 420 U.S. teachers on the continued reliance on a two-to-one basis on Schindler's List to teach the Holocaust in the classroom. He discusses the tensions that arise when using the film. Gudgel notes the film's strengths that it covers a lot of ground; students respond to Schindler's change (Baron's chapter cites the scene he recommends teachers share with students that illustrates Schindler's moral evolution); and students' desire to talk about the moral ambiguity in the film. He also notes its limitations including logistics such as time constraints that teachers are allotted to teach the unit on the Holocaust as well as limitations of the film itself including the length of the film, its graphic content, romanticizing history, historical inaccuracies, the list itself, excluding Emilie Schindler, and philosophical objections.

Memorably, Gudgel underscores the importance of thoughtful preparation and reflection when using Schindler's List in the classroom through courageous self-disclosure of an unsettling personal incident in which Gudgel was showing the film to a group of high school students when the class period ended abruptly during the scene where Schindler witness the liquidation of the ghetto leaving his students with no opportunity to process their feelings and reactions about the violently disturbing scene. Consequently, Gudgel suggests activities for teachers, most importantly one based on his own Fulbright research that highlights the complexity of Schindler's character.

In *Teaching the Lesson of Moral Courage through Writing*, Liz Feldstern and Amanda Ryan present an essay contest: *The Tribute to the Rescuers High School Essay Contest*, which grew out of organizations inspired by the story of the Danish people's collective rescue of Jews during World War II. This high school contest, adjudicated by a

group of both Jewish and non-Jewish diverse professionals in the Omaha community, has received over 8,000 entries in the past 15 years and distributed over \$50,000 in prizes.

The contest asks students to adhere to a set of stringent criteria, most importantly perhaps requiring the writer to self-reflect on a personal connection to moral courage, defined as, “*The ability to take a strong stance on a specific issue and to defend it based on one’s personal beliefs or convictions regardless of danger or threats to personal safety – physical, emotional, or otherwise.*” While acknowledging that the prompts can pull for “flowery” language among this cohort, the authors share powerful excerpts from students’ essays that offer hope and optimism for future, socially responsible generations:

- We cannot always stop injustice entirely, but we have a duty to try.
- I realized that as much as I would want to believe I would be a hero in an emergency situation, I’m not so sure that I would have the courage.
- Someday I want to be a superhero-not because of any special powers, but because of the sacrifices I am willing to make for what I know is right. (Tragically, this student who wrote this winning 2016 essay was murdered in 2017, but her spirit lives on in her words).

Finally, the book offers an added benefit for Holocaust researchers and educators in a selected bibliography and filmography, including both documentaries and feature films. Resources in the bibliography are organized for the user by category including *bystanders and perpetrators, national rescue operations, psychosocial studies, rescuer narratives, attachment rescuers, diplomats who rescued Jews, and religiously motivated rescuers.*

The 21st century has already witnessed the proliferation of genocide perpetrated by the Buddhists against the Rohingya Muslims, and there is a reasonable possibility that the Chinese are interning Uighur Muslims with genocidal intent. Indeed, the increase of global ethnocentrism against Muslims has spread like wildfire across Western Europe and has taken deep root here in the United States of America. Perpetuated by presidentially and Republican-party sanctioned propaganda, authoritarianism, and the rise of right-wing White

Nationalism, the United States has seen an escalation in race- and ethnicity- based hate crimes since the 2016 presidential election for three consecutive years. We have witnessed the forced separation and internment of innocent children from their parents seeking asylum in the U.S. Clearly, the importance of educating our youth about the instances of moral courage during World War II on behalf of “others” targeted for destruction cannot be overstated. Thus, the release of *Unlikely Heroes: The Place of Holocaust Rescuers in Research and Teaching* could not have come at a more critical moment in the context of American and global history. I highly recommend this collection of detailed, fascinating essays compiled at the University of Nebraska’s April 2017 Sommerhauser Symposium for its meaningful contribution to the field of research and teaching of Holocaust Heroism.

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5 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.