From the Lone Survivor to the Networked Self.
Social Networks Meet the Digital Holocaust Archive

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Abstract

Although concentration camps constituted a densely populated social world, historians still largely approach them as being composed of isolated individuals. This interpretative premise is sustained by the inherent linear organization of most audiovisual archives and the prominence of the individual survivor testimony as their organizing unit. However, taking the social relation rather than the individual and his/her testimony as the organizing principle of a rethought digital Holocaust archive leads to a more historically faithful understanding of the Holocaust survivor as a networked self. A pilot digital reconstruction of social networks of Jewish Holocaust survivors from the Greek city of Salonica/Thessaloniki demonstrates how the linear digital audiovisual archive can support the digital documentation of the multiple forms and structures of relatedness, thus helping historians better understand how Holocaust survivors managed to reconstruct a social universe in the camps and navigate within it under extremely adverse circumstances.

Introduction: Rethinking the Logic of the Holocaust Audiovisual Archive

Digital Social Networks Meet the Audiovisual Archive: The Pilot Project "Bonds of Survival"

Conclusion: Networking the Holocaust Audiovisual Archive

Paris Papamichos Chronakis

Introduction: Rethinking the Logic of the Holocaust Audiovisual Archive[1]

Since the early 1980s, the image of a Holocaust survivor bearing witness on camera has been so inextricably linked to the audiovisual archive that it has become near impossible to imagine any other way of capturing, archiving, and conceptualizing the lived experience of the Holocaust in all its vivacity, complexity, and horror. The individual interview has sustained the emergence and consolidation of a powerful conceptual framework organized around the key notions of "witness," "testimony," "survival," "trauma," "truth," and "memory."[2] It has also generated a sustained discussion on questions of representation as numerous studies have challenged the realism of the audiovisual interview, highlighted its performative and dialogic aspects, foregrounded the relation between the verbal and the non-verbal, pointed to the role of the camera in blurring the distinction between form and content as well as in creating secondary and tertiary witnesses, and dissected the manifold narrative arcs the interview follows from the aporetic to the redemptive.[3] Today,

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[2] The list is long. Seminal works that shaped the field include Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, (New York: Routledge, 1992); Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, transl. Jared Stark, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). For an innovative study of the multiple receptions of Holocaust testimonies by scholars and artists (though not 'ordinary' viewers) see Thomas Trezise, *Witnessing Witnessing. On the Reception of Holocaust Survivor Testimony*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). Jeffrey Shandler incisively notices the concomitant emergence of video testimonies and the consolidation of the term 'survivor' to define those who lived through the Holocaust. Jeffrey Shandler, *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 46.

[3] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 57-74; Caroline Wake, "Regarding the Recording: The Viewer of Video Testimony, the Complexity of Copresence and the Possibility of Tertiary Witnessing," in *History and Memory* 25/1 (2013): 111-44; James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History*, (Westport: Praeger, 1998); Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony*, (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2010); Amit Pinchevski, "The Audiovisual Unconscious: Media and Trauma in the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies," in *Critical Inquiry* 39/1 (Autumn 2012), 142-66; Noah Shenker, "Through the Lens of the Shoah: The Holocaust as a Paradigm for Documenting Genocide Testimonies," in *History and Memory* 28/1 (2016), 141-75; Henry

Holocaust-related audiovisual archives continue to fuel a lively discussion on the elusive essence of the digital archive, its relation to past archival regimes, its non-material nature, and its multiple and often contradictory functions as a site and a form of knowledge production and consumption.[4]

Once marginal, audiovisual archives have today established a firm presence in the Holocaust archival landscape. According to Maria Ecker, out of the approximately 40,000 survivor testimonies recorded in the United States, only 13% were collected before 1978, compared to 87% after 1978. These are now organized into no fewer than sixty-nine archival collections.[5] The sheer size of University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive and its continuous aggrandizement through the ongoing addition of audiovisual archives relating to other pre- and post-Holocaust genocides is evidently turning the Holocaust testimony into a canon, even if it is one, as Noah Schenker has shown, that can be turned against its own logic.[6]

Precisely because the Holocaust audiovisual archive nowadays holds the high status of a model to be either explicitly copied or implicitly challenged, it is perhaps not far-fetched to argue that it has created its own regime of truth.[7] In particular, its fundamental organizing premise, the individual interview, has

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Greenspan, "Collaborative Interpretation of 'Survivors' Accounts: A Radical Challenge to Conventional Practice," in *Holocaust Studies* 17/1 (2011): 85-100.

[4] Shenker, "Through the Lens of the Shoah;" Noah Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Shandler, *Holocaust Memory;* Martha Straud, "Digital Approaches to Genocide Studies," https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2017/12/20591-digital-approaches-genocide-studies-summary (accessed 20 December 2017); Minhua Eunice Ma, Sarah Coward, Chris Walker, "Interact: A Mixed Reality Virtual Survivor for Holocaust Testimonies" (paper presented at the 27th Annual Meeting of the Australian Special Interest Group for Computer Human Interaction, Melbourne, Australia, December 2015).

[5] Maria Ecker, "Verbalising the Holocaust: Oral/Audiovisual Testimonies of Holocaust Survivors in the United States," in *How the Holocaust Looks Now. International Perspectives*, eds. Martin L. Davies and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 41-49.

[6] Shenker, "Through the Lens of the Shoah."

[7] I here follow the analyses of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida on the archive as a complex site of knowledge production, ideology, power, and control, of erasing as much as of salvaging the "past." Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," in *Diacritics* 16/1 (1986): 22-27; Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever, A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a recent discussion on the elusive nature and power politics of the digital archive, see Tara McPherson, "Post-Archive: The Humanities, the Archive, and the Database," in *Between Humanities and the Digital*, eds. Patrik Svensson and David Theo Goldberg, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 483-502.

become as common-place as to pass unnoticed.[8] Indeed, more than a mere technique for extracting information, the individual interview has shaped a large part of our conceptual framework and has determined the analytical categories we broadly apply to the study of the Holocaust and its memory. The format entails casting the interviewee into a "witness," the "interviewer" into a "secondary witness," and the viewer into "humanity." It transforms the interviewee's account into a "testimony," a "representation" of the past, unstable and liminal enough to expose the very limits of "representation" itself.[9]

The individual interview constitutes the nucleus of the audiovisual archive and as such, it also determines its logic. Data collection rests on a series of successive encounters with survivors; data organization always refers back to the individual interview; and finally, data usage for research or teaching entails watching the interview in part or in its entirety.[10] This pattern shows no signs of stopping. Engaging with the recorded testimony of the individual survivor is still the preferred mode of learning about and from the Holocaust as the new, hyper-realistic hologram technologies demonstrate.[11]

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[8] Hence, note how Assmann discusses the genre of Holocaust video and oral testimony with reference to other instances and contexts of individualized testimonial giving such as the courtroom, while completely neglecting more collective forms of bearing witness or narrating the past. Aleida Assmann, "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," in *Poetics Today* 27/2 (2006): 265-266.

[9] Laub, "Bearing Witness." Wake, "Regarding the Recording;" Geoffrey Hartman, "The Humanities of Testimony: An Introduction," in *Poetics Today* 27/2 (2006): 249-60; Zoë Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Alessandro Portelli, "Oral Memoir and the Shoah," in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. Alan Rosen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 193-210.

[10] See the detailed accounts of the collection strategies the two most important audiovisual archives used (i.e. the Fortunoff Archive for Holocaust Testimonies and the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive), in Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, and Shandler, *Holocaust Memory*.

[11] On the "New Dimensions in Testimony" project currently pursued by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, see "New Dimensions in Testimony" https://sfi.usc.edu/collections/holocaust/ndt (accessed December 4, 2017). Steven Smith, "Oral History Turns Holographic," in *Blog: Through Testimony* (March 28, 2014), https://sfi.usc.edu/blog/stephen-smith/oral-history-turns-holographic. (accessed July 19, 2017). Panel on "New Dimensions in Testimony" International Conference Digital Approaches to Genocide Studies, Los Angeles, October 23-24, 2017, https://sfi.usc.edu/cagr/conferences/2017_international/schedule (accessed December 20, 2017).

The format of the individual interview is in fact so ingrained in public history and academic research that we often forget how uncanny it can be. Consider this Yad Vashem video of two identical twins, Iudit Barnea and Lia Huber (nees Csengeri), who survived Auschwitz-Birkenau.[12] Contrary to current practice, the sisters are interviewed not separately but together. And yet, in conformity to the current testimonial format, they morph into one person. By responding in unison, completing each other's sentences, echoing each other's words, and above all, by being dressed in the exact same way, they become one person, testifying to the power of the testimonial format while divesting it of all its ethical content, its humanizing force and its ability to salvage individual subjectivity. Ironically, rather than restoring their humanity, the very format of the interview divests the sisters of their hard-won individuality by following a logic uncannily similar to that which shaped the Nazi doctors' fascination with twins in Auschwitz.[13]

Being the normative mode of approaching the experience of the Holocaust and any other subsequent genocide, we often overlook how recent, let alone western, the individual interview is. In 1913-1914, international committees examining the atrocities committed during the Balkan Wars were among the first to interview persecuted civilians. However, these "interviews" were conducted in a court-like setting: the "witness" would appear in front of the entire committee itself seated behind a table and conducting the examination in plain sight, usually in a village square in the presence of a considerable audience.[14] In the 1950s, researchers from the Centre for Asia Minor Studies roaming over Greece to collect oral testimonies of life in Ottoman Anatolia, followed a similar research protocol, interviewing (male) refugees in the coffeehouses of the refugee settlements rather than in more private venues.[15] These otherwise plainly

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[12] "Twin Holocaust Survivors Describe Arriving at Auschwitz"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWJyjAYyF8E (accessed January 3, 2018).
[13] Notably the two sisters participated as a single torchlighter in the 2009 International Holocaust Remembrance Day at Yad Vashem
https://www.yadvashem.org/remembrance/archive/2009/torchlighters.html (accessed December 28, 2017).
[14] Keith Brown, "How trauma travels: Oral History's Means and Ends" in *Macedonian Matters: From the Partition and Annexation of Macedonia in 1913 to the Present*, eds. Victor Friedman and Jim Hlavac, (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2015), 65-86.
[15] See the telling photo of several Asia Minor refugee informants posing after a group interview session. They all sit together around a table joined by Ermolaos Andreadis, researcher and interviewer of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, and are surrounded by their neighbors and co-villagers who were also present during the interview sessions. Georgios A. Yiannakopoulos,

hierarchical settings might have nevertheless also fostered dialogue and incited interaction since the attending "public" of fellow victims of violence or uprooted refugees could and would intervene, thus forcing the individual testimony to confront collective memory. Closer to home, interviews of Greek Jewish Holocaust survivors from the early 1970s recently released by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem not only reveal a much less structured process and a completely non-sanitized aural environment, with the interview integrated into the time, space, and soundscape of the survivor-cum-urban dweller, but a more polyphonic conversation as well since the translator and the interviewer, a married couple, engaged the interviewees and their wives in lively discussions on- and off-tape.[16]

The individuation of the Holocaust audiovisual testimony rests at the convergence of several epistemological and non-epistemological trends. The current prevalence of the personalized audiovisual testimony can be traced back to the prominence of psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, and literary critics rather than historians, sociologists, or ethnographers, in setting up first the Holocaust Survivors Film Project and then its successor the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies in the late 1970s and 1980s. Coming from disciplines concentrating on the individual rather than the collective these scholars were epistemologically preconditioned to focus on the singular survivor and her testimony.[17] The influence the Fortunoff archive exerted over subsequent projects secured the reproduction of this model, whereas the Shoah Foundation

Refugee Greece. Photographs from the Archive of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, (Athens: A.G. Levenits Foundation & Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1992), 174.

[16] Particularly Interview no. (146)9A, "Meir, Haim," Holocaust Oral History Collection, The Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sk0mPk2Q63g (accessed September 25, 2017).

[17] Located at Yale University, the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies currently contains more than 4,400 videotaped Holocaust survivors testimonies conducted in the Americas, Europe, and Israel in the 1980s. Dory Laub, a New Haven psychiatrist, and Geoffrey Hartman, a professor of English and comparative literature at Yale University, were instrumental in spearheading the project and shaping its methodology which sought to foreground the agency of the witness as much as a historical subject as a narrator of her own story. "About the Fortunoff Archive," https://web.library.yale.edu/testimonies/about (accessed May 19, 2018). For a detailed history of the archive, see Joanne Weiner Rudof's, "A Yale University and New Haven Community Project: From Local to Global," http://web.library.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/local_to_global.pdf (accessed December 23, 2017). Geoffrey Hartman, "Learning from Survivors: The Yale Testimony Project," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9/2 (1995): 192-207.

Institute's adherence to a redemptive narrative further reinforced it.[18] Moreover, audiovisual testimonies have primarily been the subject matter of scholars in the fields of literary criticism, cultural studies, social psychology, and more recently, media studies, whereas history and other social sciences have either neglected them or randomly utilized them for anecdotal purposes.[19] The disciplinary politics of archival production and archival consumption were as important as the structural, serial logic of the testimonial archive itself in determining the conceptual and interpretative link between individuality, memory, and the study of the Holocaust.

Memory is however a deeply social process.[20] As we all notice beginning in our childhood (and ethnographers have long made use of), people most often reminisce collectively not in a controlled exchange with an interviewer, but in a spontaneous and often heated dialogue with each other. They evoke the past over a family table, in a local coffee shop, at a wedding banquet, or at a funeral. They, that is, mostly recollect in groups, and it is by sharing or debating their "common" past experiences that they eventually both frame and (re)shape their own individual memories. Consider how different Auschwitz-Birkenau would look if narrated not by isolated individuals but by groups of survivors conversing, interrupting, correcting, or even teasing each other as they participate in representing Auschwitz-Birkenau as a shared, collective experience. Instead of such encounters, the culture of the individual and individualized testimony has seeped into Holocaust commemoration rituals and practices so deeply that even when brought together to share the podium, survivors almost always recount their experiences, not in dialog with each other but one *after* the other.[21]

The serialized Holocaust audiovisual archive might have, therefore, widened our knowledge of individual experiences and their memory; however, it has done so at the expense of attending to the collective as constituted through relations

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[18] Shandler, *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age*. Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*.

[19] As notes Zoë Waxman, "Testimonies as Sacred Texts: The Sanctification of Holocaust Writing," *Past and Present*, Supplement 5 (2010): 340. Two notable exceptions in historiography are Christopher Browning, *Remembering Survival. Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, (New York: Norton & Co, 2010). Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018).

[20] James J. Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

[21] As an admittedly random survey of YouTube videos would demonstrate. An example: "Edith Adlam and Ruth Abrams: A Survivor's Remembrance," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7DrJjcaPGo (accessed December 15, 2017).

between Jewish prisoners in the camps. Such knowledge still remains sketchy. This historiographical lacuna is more the result of methodological and interpretative priorities (and blind spots) than of lack of evidence. In fact, even a cursory look shows how every Holocaust survivor's testimony is full of references to relatives and friends, fellow prisoners and guards, Jewish *kapos* and German officers, people who perished and those who survived. The collective experience of the camp is indeed refracted through the personal narrative as scholarship has repeatedly dissected.[22] Still, the survivor's trajectory is also deeply ingrained within a web of relations he or she has knit together. Consider how often survivor Jack Azous, a Sephardic Jew from the Greek city of Salonica/Thessaloniki, alluded to a widely diverse number of people while talking about himself as he recounted his days in Auschwitz-Birkenau: "All inmates were Greeks when I first came in," Azous mentioned at the beginning of his testimony. "I used to have a friend, another Greek guy who was a barber. … [And] the lagerälteste [camp senior] was a Jew, a Greek also," he continued. And further on he revealed: "I was singing in the nights for the Germans. We used to be three-four Jewish guys from Salonica. We got a guitar. One used to play it, and we sang Greek and Italian songs. The guys were Itzhak Saltiel and Alberto Giledi. They both died in Auschwitz."[23]

Such mentions and the astonishingly diverse sets of social relations they shed light upon most often pass unnoticed as scholars tend to rely on the generic and generalizing binary opposition between the "individual" (witness) and the "collective" (of a people or a community).[24] Historians have so far been reluctant to explore social webs as a means of making sense of life in the camps. Broadly speaking, Holocaust historiography has approached the camp world from two diverging perspectives. On the one hand, it has employed a top-down approach paying attention to the camp as a mechanism of extermination and focusing on its emergence, development, and functions. In the rare cases prisoners entered into the picture, it was either as numbers or as dehumanized entities, to

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[22] On Holocaust testimony as a healing narrative of a traumatic memory and as a means of reconstructing a fragmented self through narration, see the seminal work of Lawrence Langer and the perceptive thoughts of Alessandro Portelli. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*. Portelli, "Oral memoir and the Shoah."

[23] Jack Azous, Interview 36740, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive (hereafter USC SFI VHA (accessed online at Northwestern University January 12, 2015).

[24] Assmann, "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony," 167; Hartman, "Learning from Survivors," 192, 196. Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, 127.

document the extent and innermost workings of Nazi genocidal policies.[25] On the other hand, in the past three decades, historians have increasingly if hesitantly concentrated on prisoners themselves using written and oral testimonies to shed light on their individual and group experiences. In this case, it was not extermination but survival that constituted the fundamental research question, the primary analytical tool, and the dominant narrative trope. How prisoners managed to remain alive and in doing so, reclaim their humanity has been the primary focus of historical study.[26] Thus, when it comes to the history of the concentration camps, existing literature either focuses on the dehumanizing effects of camp life or approaches survivors primarily as individuals and considers

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[25] See especially Omer Bartov, "Ordering Horror: Conceptualizations of the Concentrationary Universe," in *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 99-121; Paul R. Bartrop, "Degradation in the Concentration Camp: The Nazi Assault on the Human Condition during the Holocaust," in *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, 6/1 (1992): 103-30; *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany. The New Histories*, eds. Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann, (London: Routledge, 2009); Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Nikolaus Wachsmann, "Looking into the Abyss: Historians and the Nazi Concentration Camps," in *European History Quarterly* 36/2 (April 2006): 247-78.

[26] Judith Tydor Baumel, "Women's Agency and Survival Strategies During the Holocaust," in *Women's Studies International Forum* 22/3 (1999): 329-47; Murray Baumgarten, "Primo Levi's Periodic Art: Survival in Auschwitz and the Meaningfulness of Everyday Life," in *Resisting the Holocaust*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich, (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 115-32; Browning, *Remembering Survival*; Nathan Cohen, "Diaries of the 'Sonderkommandos' in Auschwitz. Coping with Fate and Reality, in *Yad Vashem Studies* 20 (1990): 273-312; Shamai Davidson, "Human Reciprocity Among the Jewish Prisoners in the Nazi Concentration Camps," in *The Nazi Concentration Camps. Structure and Aims, the Image of the Prisoner, the Jews in the Camps: Proceedings of the Fourth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, eds. Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf, (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), 555-572; Terence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); Tuvia Friling, *A Jewish Kapo in Auschwitz. History, Memory, and the Politics of Survival*, (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2016); Henry Greenspan, Sara Horowitz, Eva Kovács, Berel Lang, Dori Laub, Kenneth Waltzer, and Annette Wieviorka, "Engaging Survivors: Assessing 'Testimony' and 'Trauma' as Foundational Concepts," in *Dapim. Studies on the Holocaust*, 28/3 (2015): 190-226; Gideon Greif, "Between Sanity and Insanity: Sphere of Everyday Life in the Auschwitz-Birkenau 'Sonderkommando'," in *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, eds. Jonathan Petropoulos and John Roth, (New York: Berghahn, 2005), 37-60; Bella Gutterman, *A Narrow Bridge to Life: Jewish Forced Labor and Survival in the Gross-Rosen Camp System, 1940-1945*, (New York: Berghahn, 2008); Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*. Jürgen Matthäus, *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Falk Pingel, "Social Life in an Unsocial Environment: The Inmates' Struggle for Survival," in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany*, eds. Caplan and Wachsmann, 58-81. Falk Pingel, "The Destruction of Human Identity in Concentration Camps: The Contribution of the Social Sciences to an Analysis of Behavior under Extreme Conditions," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 6/2 (1991): 167-184.

survival as the incidental result of extraordinary circumstances upon which survivors themselves had no control.

These two otherwise opposite historiographical trends in Holocaust research, together with the linear, serialized logic of the Holocaust testimonial archive discussed earlier may have expanded and diversified the spectrum of our knowledge on individual experiences and their specific memorialization, but they have also diverted our attention from studying the kinds of relations Jewish prisoners established in the camps. Such knowledge remains still sketchy and impressionistic. In the public and scholarly imagination, extermination camps (and Auschwitz-Birkenau in particular) are predominantly represented as laboratories of death, mass graveyards in the making. Still, Auschwitz-Birkenau was a densely populated place, inhabited at any given moment by a transient population ranging in the hundreds of thousands.[27] A complex social world, it is often viewed as composed of isolated individuals, instead of being treated as a city designed by perpetrators but enlivened by the presence of "victims" too.[28] Consequently, what the place of certain Jewish groups was within Auschwitz-Birkenau and how it changed over time remains a largely uncharted territory. We still know relatively little about the size and nature, reach and overlap, uses and purposes of the social networks prisoners forged, the factors that facilitated communication, imposed boundaries, or promoted social trust. Much is also unknown about the gender dimension of these social networks, whether men and women developed different patterns of social interaction, or how the vocabularies of gender and sexuality informed the cultural meanings of relatedness.[29] This historiographical lacuna is at odds with the importance

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[27] At its peak, in January 1945, Auschwitz-Birkenau accommodated a population of 715,000 inmates and personnel. Karin Orth, "The Concentration Camp Personnel," in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany*, eds. Caplan and Wachsmann, 45. For a highly incisive history of Auschwitz-Birkenau that highlights its constitutive place at the crossroads of human mobility and border making, see Annette Wieviorka, *Auschwitz, 60 ans après*, (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2005).

[28] See the pioneering rethinking of Auschwitz as a city of perpetrators that a digitally informed and spatially sensitive approach can offer in Paul B. Jaskot, Anne Kelly Knowles and Chester Harvey, "Visualizing the Archive: Building at Auschwitz as a Geographic Problem," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, eds. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, Alberto Giordano, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 159-92.

[29] However, see the incisive analysis of Lawrence Langer on how gender shapes memory. Lawrence Langer, "Gendered Suffering? Women in Holocaust Testimonies," in *Women in the Holocaust*, eds. Dalia Ofer, Lenore J. Weitzman, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 351–63.

prisoners themselves attributed to networking. Not only did they appreciate the emotional relief intimate relations provided or the vital alimentary benefits close connections ensured as studies usually stress, but they proactively sought to maximize collective survival by strategically positioning group members in prominent camp positions as the case of Jacques Stroumsa reveals. Upon arrival to Auschwitz and after selection and tattooing, his "comrades," the surviving male members of his transport, prodded Stroumsa, an experienced electrical engineer by training but an accomplished amateur violinist by hobby, to join the orchestra since this "could be good for everyone."[30] To reconstruct such multi-purpose networks and pin down their cultural significations and practical usages is therefore necessary if we are to understand interpersonal relations and power dynamics in the concentration camps from the point of view of the victims and eventually rethink the relationship between individual survival, collective belonging, and a liminal sense of selfhood.[31]

Such a turn to the social requires new cross-disciplinary epistemologies. Holocaust Studies have emerged as an off-shoot of history, psychology, literary criticism, and memory and trauma studies, but a turn to the study of social relations necessitates a rather sacrilegious engagement with far less noble fields, such as the anthropology of incarceration and the sociology of criminal networks, fields which focus on social relations among clandestine groups and examine

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[30] Jacques Stroumsa, *Violinist in Auschwitz: From Salonica to Jerusalem, 1913-1967*, (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 1996), 45.

[31] Despite their rich insights, the following studies share a fundamentally sociological approach to social relations, rarely consider specific networks and their cultural signification, and finally, fail to take into account changes in time and space during the period of internment. Judith Tydor Baumel, "Social Interaction Among Jewish Women in Crisis During the Holocaust: A Case Study," in *Gender and History* 7/1 (1995): 64-84; Anna Bravo, "Italian Women in the Nazi Camps: Aspects of Identity in Their Accounts," in *Oral History* 13/1 (1985): 20-7; Judith Buber Agassi, "'Camp families' in Ravensbrück and the Social Organization of Jewish Women Prisoners in a Concentration Camp," in *Life, Death and Sacrifice: Women and Family in the Holocaust*, ed. Esther Hertzog, (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2008), 107-19; Shamai Davidson, "Group Formation and its Significance in the Nazi Concentration Camps," in *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* 22 (1985): 41-50; Mary Esperanza, "Españoles y judíos en el campo de concentración de Gurs (Bearn)," in *El Olivo* 31 (1990): 73-97; Felicja Karay, "The Social and Cultural Life of the Prisoners in the Jewish Forced Labor Camp at Skarzysko-Kamienna," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 8/1 (1994): 1-27; Anna Reading, "Scarlet lips in Belsen: Culture, Gender and Ethnicity in the Policies of the Holocaust," in *Media, Culture & Society* 21/4 (1999): 481-501; Maja Sunderland, *Inside Concentration Camps: Social Life at the Extremes*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); *Interpreting in Nazi Concentration Camps*, ed. Michaela Wolf, (New York: Bloomsbury 2016).

trust in liminal environments and extreme circumstances.[32] Employing the concept of sociality further allows a shift away from the individual, her survival and her subjectivity, to identity construed through social interaction. Sociality denotes the cultural schemes that organize interpersonal relations, invest them with meaning and thus shape the symbolic content of relatedness.[33] These schemes are employed by historical actors themselves. As such, although potent, they are never fixed. Rather, they are subject to negotiation and contestation, or else, prone to change. Sociality emphasizes the symbolic content and cultural significations of relatedness and hence situates the historical production of albeit fragmentary identities, of the "witness" or the "survivor," beyond the individual or the collective, the binary that underwrites most current literature. Sociality is therefore a more theoretically rigorous, historically grounded, and analytically flexible category than the rather descriptive notion of "community," or the inadequately historicized concepts of "solidarity," "survival," or "humanity" currently employed to account for relations between prisoners.

Digital Social Networks Meet the Audiovisual Archive: The Pilot Project "Bonds of Survival"

This conceptual reorientation can benefit digital humanities as well as benefit from them. Note for example how the Visual History Archive does not thoroughly tag all the persons interviewees mention. Its serial logic (at once reflecting and sustaining an individualistic approach to Holocaust experience) seriously constricts our research strategies. Such tagging could however facilitate a move beyond the individual-*and*-the-"group" approach to the audiovisual

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[32] Works that have helped me rethink the intertwined formation of social relations and social identities in the concentration camps include Coretta Phillips, *The Multicultural Prison: Ethnicity, Masculinity, and Social Relations among Prisoners*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Coretta Phillips, "Negotiating Identities: Ethnicity and Social Relations in a Young Offenders' Institution," in *Theoretical Criminology* 12/3 (2008): 313-31; Philip Goodman, "'It's Just Black, White, or Hispanic': An Observational Study of Racializing Moves in California's Segregated Prison Reception Centers," in *Law & Society Review* 42/4 (2008): 735-70; Emma Kaufman, "Finding Foreigners: Race and the Politics of Memory in British Prisons," in *Population, Space and Place* 18 (2012): 701-14.

[33] On the concept of relatedness, see *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, ed. Janet Carsten, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). On the importance of studying the cultural meanings of sociality and how they determine action, affect, and relatedness, see *Conceptualizing Society*, ed. Adam Kuper, (London: Routledge, 1992).

archive and the widespread institutional and scholarly use of particular audiovisual testimonies as a means of shedding light on collective experience that has primarily informed the interviewing strategies of the Visual History Archive and the curatorial thinking of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.[34] It would enable a multi-directional research itinerary, which by combining interrelated testimonies, would effectively situate the individual within a specific network rather than subsume her in a generic, externally defined collective, be that a deported "community" or a specific camp unit, such as the *Sonderkommando.*

Conversely, social network software can substantially increase the research potential of the Holocaust audiovisual archive and generate new ways of organizing its material. What if the organizing principle was not the individual testimony but a social relationship? Our ongoing digital humanities project "Bonds of Survival" tackles this question by tracking down the types, strength, duration, and extent of social relationships Sephardi Jewish survivors from the Greek city of Salonica (present-day Thessaloniki) forged in Auschwitz-Birkenau.[35]

Among the different groups of prisoners, Salonican Jews might superficially appear to constitute a liminal case. Yet, their distinguishable cultural outlook and distinctive historical experience can actually facilitate wide-ranging research on the extent and nature of social networks in the concentration camps.[36] In the spring and summer of 1943, nearly 46,000 Salonican Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where their distinctiveness left an indelible memory on no other than Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi.[37] Not belonging to the dominant

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[34] Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, 90, 127.

[35] The project began at Brown University in the spring semester of 2014. A team consisting of (then) undergraduate students Amelia Armitage and Jennifer Sieber, digital librarian Dr. Jean Bauer, and project coordinator Dr. Paris Papamichos Chronakis designed a pilot database and collected data from a handful of select audiovisual testimonies. Since June 2017, the project is jointly run by Paris Papamichos Chronakis at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Dr. Giorgos Antoniou at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and has been partially funded by the International Institute of Education Greek Diaspora Fellowship Program. Currently, a small research team of students from the two universities is data mining additional audiovisual testimonies of Salonican Jewish Holocaust survivors.

[36] On the history of multiethnic Salonica and its Jewish population, see Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, (London: Harper Collins, 2004).

[37] Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 85. Elie Wiesel, introduction to *Apo ton Leuko Pyrgo stis Pyles tou Auschwitz* [From the White Tower to the Gates of Auschwitz] by Iakobos Handali, translated from Hebrew by Elia Shabbetai (Thessaloniki: Ets Ahaim Foundation, 1995).

Ashkenazi ethnocultural group, these Ladino-speaking "Greeks," as the other prisoners dubbed them, were treated as misfits. Henry Levy recalled how "we, the Greeks, were more vulnerable than anybody else … because we were a minority, we were from a Mediterranean country. … We could not speak Yiddish, Polish, or German. Even our Hebrew was different than the others. We were treated differently by the Germans and by our inmates, our brothers from Eastern Europe. Until the very end of the war, they thought we were not Jewish because we could not speak Yiddish. There was discrimination."[38] By turning into a symbolic marker of Jewishness, language differentiation led to a double segregation of Salonican Jews dramatically reducing their chances of relating to other inmates. Their multi-layered alienation thus allows us to assess whether distinct cultural traits resulted in the formation of "closed," inward-looking networks, and fragmented the superficially homogenous social world of the camps into a set of disjointed micro-societies.

However, the exceptionally cosmopolitan pre-war Jewish identity also facilitated contact and thus allows for checking the extent and nature of "open," outbound social networks between Jews of different cultural and national backgrounds. Salonican Jews were multilingual, speaking French and occasionally Italian along with Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) and Greek. They were also culturally extrovert, having been exposed to French culture from a very early age and those belonging to the middle and upper classes having studied in the many schools the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a Franco-Jewish organization promoting the cultural uplifting of the Jewish communities of the Ottoman and Eastern Mediterranean, had been established in Salonica since the 1870s.[39] Once in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Salonican Jews utilized this rich cultural capital to interact, even bond, with Jews from other, particularly French-speaking, countries. The assistance of a French doctor, "friend of a Salonican friend," proved instrumental in saving Alfred

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[38] Henry Levy, Interview 26580, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on January 17, 2015).

[39] On the multiple layers of late Ottoman Sephardic identities, see Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "The Permeable Boundaries of Ottoman Jewry," in *Boundaries and Belongings. States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*, ed. Joel Migdal, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 49-70; Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). On a developing sense of Hellenic Judaism in the interwar period, Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica between Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

Haguel's life.[40] Bonding with "strangers" could, in fact, be as efficient a survival strategy as was sticking with one's own.

The case of Salonican Jews thus makes evident the operation of more complex networks, networks that expand beyond locality, kinship, and nationality on which existing historiography largely insists.[41] Their multiple cultural referents help us understand the poetics of similarity –how familiarity was established between strangers in the first place and how a liminal culture of relatedness was sustained in the camps. Their cultural outlook facilitates assessing the extent and nature of "open," outbound social networks between Jews of different cultural and national backgrounds. Conversely, it can also help determine whether distinct cultural traits resulted in the formation of "closed," inward-looking networks that turned the superficially homogenous camp world into a set of disjoint micro-societies. In short, the perceived "exoticism" of Salonican Jews renders them an exemplary case-study and turns their testimonies into an unusually rich set of context-specific data to evaluate the broader importance of several key identity markers (namely, language, kinship, and locality) as well as place-specific factors (such as proximity) in shaping social relations and survival strategies among Jewish prisoners in the camps.

Admittedly, testimonies constitute an inherently partial and skewed body of evidence, a notoriously "incomplete" dataset to mine. While ostensibly "complete" datasets (such as Jewish communal registers) have been successfully used to trace the links between individuals and families in a top-down manner, the bottom-up, testimony-to-testimony methodological approach our project adopts can only yield invariably fragmentary and partial data. This limits our ability to reconstruct a given group's social network in its entirety, reckon its full complexity, and by consequence give a definitive answer to one of historiography's (and survivors' themselves) most vexing questions, namely, what determined survival in the Nazi death and concentration camps. Audiovisual testimonies, conducted as they were according to very different research protocols, do not follow the same format let alone record a survivor's

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[40] Alfred Hagouel, Interview 1489, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on 21 February 2015).

[41] Browning, *Remembering Survival.* See also note 28 above.

social relations in their entirety.[42] More crucially, it is impossible to retrieve the camp experiences of two massive key groups, those who perished and those who survived but did not testify. Their own degree of inclusion or exclusion from social networks remains forever unknown thus rendering unfeasible the creation of a sufficiently comprehensive dataset to correlate accurately one's chances of survival with participation in a social network.

However, this "incompleteness" of the dataset does not limit the heuristic potential of social networks analysis for Holocaust Studies. Quite the contrary. The project "Bonds of Survival" works through these archival limitations by taking a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to social interaction. Specifically, the primary purpose is not to comprehensively measure (let alone "prove") the overall importance of social networks as effective survival strategies. Given our near-total lack of information about the camp experience and social interaction of those who were eventually murdered, correlating social networks to survival rates is downright impossible. Consequently, the project's objective is to offer a digital tool for determining the kinds of social trust sustaining these very networks. The project thus moves beyond the largely quantitative approach in data collection and offers a corrective to the latent determinism and mono-causality of network-based interpretations. By following an ethnographically-inspired methodology it offers Holocaust historians ways to assess the nature and extent of interpersonal relations at the concentration camps from the point of view of the victims, and, hence, it aspires to help them rethink the relationship between individual identity and group belonging under extreme circumstances.

So far, project members have collected data from twenty audiovisual testimonies. No distant reading approaches to data mining have been used or even tested given the limited and sometimes incorrect tagging of individuals mentioned in testimonies of the Visual History and Fortunoff archives. Instead, project members resorted to a close listening of individual testimonies one at a time. Our aim was to record all physical or imaginary relationships, no matter how trivial, as well as all the individuals mentioned, to then identify those social networks which involved at least three persons and to determine the specific places and periods of time at which these networks operated. Audiovisual

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[42] On the differing formats of audiovisual testimonies and of the testimonial genre more broadly, see Matthäus, *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor*.

testimonies were neither randomly selected nor solely chosen according to "objective," external criteria, such as the gender, place of origin, or the concentration camp where the interviewed survivor was interned. Rather, we sought to follow the leads witnesses themselves provided to create a pool of interconnected testimonies. We therefore sought to locate and analyze accounts of survivors who were specifically referred to in previously evaluated testimonies. This way we expected to reconstruct a network in all its breadth and depth, to get as much of a complete and multiperspective view on a given relationship as possible, and to eventually determine more faithfully the changing position of a survivor in a given social circle.

Overall, project members recorded 230 unique relationships which were then classified according to established criteria. All persons mentioned were catalogued by their first and/or last name. When this was missing, they were labelled by their position in the camp or, in extreme cases, as "anonymous" followed by a unique number. Sustained exposure and growing familiarity with the material allowed project members to even identify key individuals, like interpreters Salvador Kounio and his son Heinz Kounio and prisoners Saul Senor and Daniel Benahmias, who although referred by name in some interviews were not in others.[43] We sought to unveil the forms of communication and the cultural foundations of trust by documenting the languages used as well as the role of friendship, kinship, and locality in forging intra- and inter-group relations. We also attempted to determine the space and time of these relations in order to then consider whether and how certain circles of acquaintances might have emanated from shared spatiotemporal experiences. We thus linked every single relationship to a specific venue in Auschwitz-Birkenau proper (barracks or workspaces), and/or to one or more of the different labor camps after the evacuation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Additionally, we dated the relationship to the period of deportation, transport, internment, death march, and/or post-Auschwitz confinement. Finally, we tagged the imaginary as much as the physical relations.

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[43] Eliezer Sotto, Interview 26397, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on February 4, 2015). Mary Tuvi Oziel, Interview 133, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on February 24, 2015). Albert Jerassy, Interview 47366, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on February 15, 2015). Leon Calderone, Interview 22726, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on January 23, 2015). Dario Gabbai, Interview 142, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on February 12, 2015).

The preliminary, highly provisional results paint a richer, more diversified picture of the camps as seen from the bottom up. Concentration camps are often treated as a homogeneous space, but our comparatively more detailed spatial categories can help researchers nuance their analysis of camp spatialities as well as link network formation and operation to specific spaces. Specifically, in our own data gathering we detected a sizeable concentration of Salonican Jews in the *Sonderkommando* unit and an even larger number in the satellite camp of Warsaw. At the end of summer 1943, after the destruction of its Jewish ghetto, the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp administration sent a sizeable group of prisoners to the Polish capital to clear up the ghetto rubble and establish the Gęsiówka labor camp to be administered for the next year as a sub-camp of Majdanek.[44] The group sent was initially "99% Thessalonicans" as Henry Levy recalled.[45] "In Warsaw we were all Greek Jews. We were together, we stuck together."[46] Levy's words probably idealize a much more complex situation since relations could be tense especially when hierarchies of power were involved.[47] Be that as it may, our notes and collected data indicate that a subtle sense of community seemed to have nonetheless emerged. Testimonies reveal that several factors helped sustain it. To begin with, the concentration of such a large number of Salonican Jews within the same space for the first time since their arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau nurtured feelings of empowerment. In Birkenau, dispersed among Jews from all over Europe, Salonican Jews felt isolated. Contact, even awareness of the

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[44] "Clearing the Ruins of the Ghetto," http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/warsaw_ghetto_testimonies/gesia_camp.asp (accessed April 16, 2018).

[45] The number of the Greek Jews sent to Warsaw cannot be firmly established. Henry Levy speaks of 3500 "Greek Jews," while Yitzchak Kerem of more than a thousand Thessalonican Jews. Yad Vashem counts them to 1600. Testimony of Henry Levy, VHA USC SFI. Yitzchak Kerem, "The Sephardim Resisted Too!" (paper presented at the conference "Teaching the Holocaust for Future Generations, Yad Vashem's 50th Anniversary Conference," Jerusalem, August 2004), https://www.academia.edu/4595338/_The_Sephardim_Resisted_Too_Yad_Vashem_Jerusalem_2004 (accessed January 10, 2015). "Clearing the Ruins of the Ghetto." French and Polish Jews joined Thessalonican Jews only eight months later. Nissim Almalech, Interview 1258, VHA USC VHI (accessed online at Northwestern University on January 31, 2015; Benyiakar, VHA USC SFI). In May and June 1944, additional groups of mostly Hungarian Jews were brought from Auschwitz-Birkenau. "Clearing the Ruins of the Ghetto."

[46] Levy, VHA USC SFI.

[47] Nissim Almalech recalls with regret that his *blokaltester*, who was also a "Greek from Thessaloniki," "was very bad to the Jews" giving "a hard time to the Greeks." Almalech, VHA USC SFI.

existence of co-nationals, was non-existent to such an extent that a startled Jack Azous realized "that there were nearly five hundred Jewish Greeks in the barracks" only before his transfer to Warsaw when "doctors started examining [us]."[48]

Numerical strength was coupled with easier communication. Long separated, the transferred Salonican Jews now lodged together at Blok 5 of the Gęsiówka labor camp.[49] By classifying the time, space, and in particular kind of relationship, we could further notice that while established relations continued, it was now also easier to forge new ones. Several inmates were transferred to Warsaw together with their closest company in Birkenau (mostly a relative)[50] but others, like Leon Calderone, were reunited with their brothers or other family members for the first time.[51] Our data showed that relatedness was mostly based on kinship, but friendships were also forged.[52] Most importantly, groups that hitherto were minuscule, now expanded.[53] The rise of a widespread black market with Polish civilians and the absence of competition from other nationality-based Jewish groups were crucial in multiplying relations which quickly took the form of expansive exchange networks. In Warsaw, Salonican Jews organized among themselves to trade the precious artifacts they were discovering while clearing the ghetto rubble. They sold them for food to Polish civilian workers and locals with whom they regularly came into contact. Out of these purely utilitarian trade-offs, broader patterns of sociability emerged mostly centering on the collective consumption of food. Azous recalls how "we used to cook on Sunday in front of the post. Not only I, most of the Greeks were cooking food in front of the post." Out of the black market, in the relatively looser atmosphere of the Warsaw camp, a sense of broader community evolved, one that

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[48] Azous, VHA USC SFI.

[49] Testimony of Solomon Haguel in *Proforikes Martyries Evraiōn tēs Thessalonikēs gia to Olokautōma*, [Oral Testimonies of Thessaloniki Jews on the Holocaust], eds. Erika Kounio-Amariglio and Alberto Nar, (Thessaloniki: Etz Hayiim Foundation and Paratiritis Publishers, 1998), 403.

[50] Isaak Kapuano, Interview 1439, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on January 25, 2015. Almalech, VHA USC SFI).

[51] Calderone, VHA USC SFI.

[52] Solomon Haguel talks of his friendship with Pepo Karasso and "two comrades." Haguel in Amariglio and Nar, *Proforikes Martyries*, 400-403.

[53] Henry Levy speaks of a group of four friends as does Solomon Haguel. Levy, VHA USC SFI. Haguel in Amariglio and Nar, *Proforikes Martyries*, 402. On how participation in larger groups increased one's chances of survival, see Baumel, "Social Interaction among Jewish Women."

transcended the small-sized groups of friends and relatives. This community was further strengthened through bonds of solidarity, by assistance given to the needy. "We used to help a lot of other people," Azous concludes, "giving food to [those] who needed it [most]."[54]

Historiography has already acknowledged the large presence of "Greek Jews" amongst the *Sonderkommando* units of Auschwitz-Birkenau. However, their demographic predominance in the Warsaw Gęsiówka labor camp has by contrast so far escaped scholarly notice.[55] Methodological attention to space and movement, and development of classificatory schemes to better index the place- and time-specific development of social networks does therefore provide a corrective to interpretative generalizations about the experience of specific groups in the camps. In the case of Salonican and Greek Jews, a conventional rhetoric of victimhood (albeit one at times complemented with references to their resilience and heroic actions) has for long framed the "Greek Jews" as distinct from all other ethnic groups on the basis of utter sufferance and exceptional heroism.[56] However, as our social networks reconstruction shows, such generic representations disregard the specific temporality of this particular sense of collective self that characterizes the experience of Salonican Jews in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp only. In fact, with any sense of community resting on personal contact and interpersonal communication, in short, on social networks, group identities mainly sprang up in those places where a sufficient number of Salonican Jews gathered together. In a figurative or literal way, identities are always spatially produced.[57] Hence, in the concentration camps, the forging of a collective, "Greek" selfhood actually took place in numerous, distinct places inside and (mostly) outside the camp, chiefly, in the Warsaw-based Gęsiówka labor sub-camp.

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[54] Azous, VHA USC SFI.

[55] On Greek Jews in the *Sonderkommando* units, see Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears. Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

[56] Katherine Elizabeth Fleming, *Greece: A Jewish History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 147-65; Mary Adamopoulou, "Ellēnes Evraioi pisō apo tē monadikē exegersē sto Auschwitz" [Greek Jews Behind the Only Revolt in Auschwitz], *Ta Nea*, April 25, 2009; Fotini Tomai, *Ellēnes sto Auschwitz-Birkenau*, [Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau], (Athens: Papazisi, 2009).

[57] Simon Gunn, "The Spatial Turn: Changing Histories of S*pace* and Place," in *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850*, eds. Simon Gunn and Robert J. Morris, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 1-14.

While one set of our indexing categories sought to capture the links between space, network formation and group identity, a second set concerned the very nature of social networks per se, in particular their looseness or tightness and their inward or outward orientation. To this end, we identified and classified not only those "close" relationships pertaining to the two primary cultural systems of relatedness, namely kinship and friendship, but also more distant ones that fell within the more fleeting and situational categories of "workmate," "inmate," "colleague," "acquaintance," and "neighbor." Fig. 1 (and Fig. 5) both reaffirm the primacy of kinship (often stressed in the existing historiography) but also relativize it by suggesting a strong presence of other forms of non-hierarchical social interaction in the experience and memory of camp life among Salonican Jewish survivors.
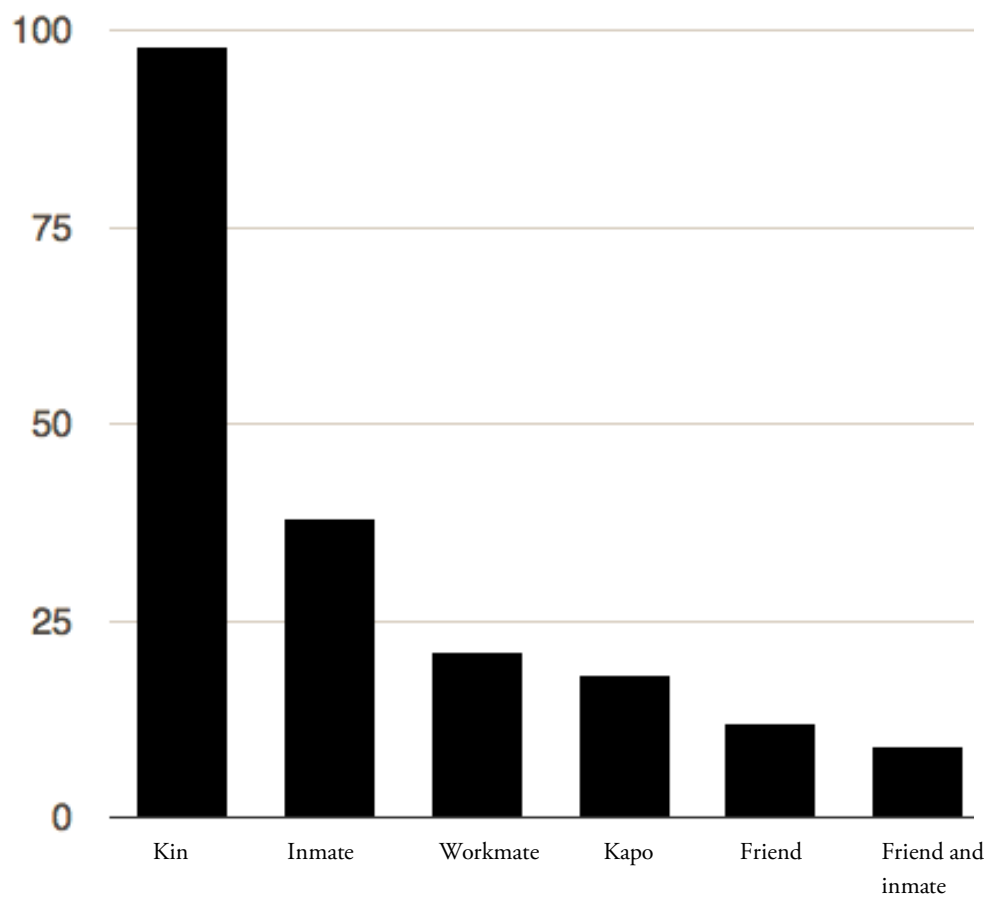
Fig. 1: Main types of relationships

Additionally, we used two interrelated parameters to document and compare the degree of interaction between Salonican Jews on the one hand and between them and other prisoners on the other: origin and language of communication (the variables being "Ladino" (Judeo-Spanish), "Greek," "French," "Italian," "German," and "hand gestures"). Organizing data according to these categories can potentially lead to a better understanding of the camp world by determining at a mass scale how "open" or "closed," isolated or interconnected, social networks were –if they brought together Jews from different cultural and national backgrounds or separated or even pitted them against each other.

Connected to this typology is the periodization of relationships into prewar, wartime (sub-divided into "deportation," "Auschwitz-Birkenau," and "Camps after Auschwitz-Birkenau"), and postwar. To our surprise, the number of prewar relations enduring during wartime and even continuing in Auschwitz-Birkenau was considerable, questioning the notion of the camp as a radical break (see Fig. 2 below and Fig. 4).
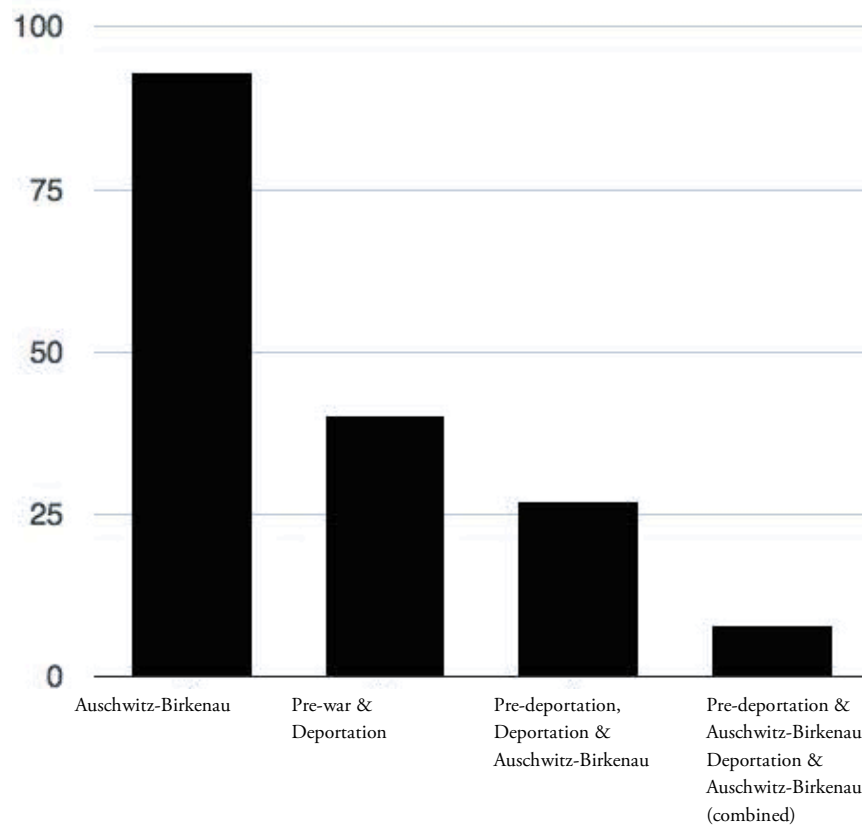

Fig. 2: Periods of relationships

Identifying the duration of a given relation thus helps reinsert the Holocaust into the broader temporal framework of Jewish social life and facilitates a more accurate, quantitative study of the relation between pre-war and wartime sociability, of resilient continuities but also abrupt breaks. Moreover, accounting for the relationships maintained after the war was over provides a retrospective, yet reliable, marker of their strength. As our first findings showed, while kinship-based relations in the camps were already well established before deportation, chance encounters at the workplace and barracks could also lead to strong and enduring bonds.

Arguably, the degree of intimacy constitutes a critical variable when estimating the significance of a given relationship. We thus tentatively attempted to measure the strength of each recorded relationship by correlating it to its duration using a 1 to 5 scale. Long-lasting, pre-war or post-war connections were treated as safe indicators of proximity and heightened intimacy between prisoners and graded the highest. Conversely, short-lived or extremely hierarchical relations received the lowest grade. At first glance negligible, these fleeting encounters nevertheless showcase in their totality the multiple and imaginative ways prisoners interacted with each other and thus merit to be recorded and classified. "Relationship strength" is, obviously, inevitably subjective but project members tried to maintain as much consistency as possible by conducting control tests and listening in turn to the same testimonies.

Project members further tagged the imaginary as much as the physical relations mentioned. Attention to imaginary relations revealed how survivors often referred to individuals they had never physically encountered. Thus, most of the survivors that passed through the Warsaw Gęsiówka labor camp recall the story of Saul Senor, a young, "handsome" Salonican, who fell in love with a Polish civilian girl. With her assistance, and that of Polish partisans, Senor attempted to escape. He failed, was arrested, tried, and eventually publicly executed. The story of Senor surfaces in numerous accounts of survivors who did not know him personally, thus making it perhaps the only recollection not directly related to their individual experiences.[58] Narrativized as a romantic story of love and death, standing for courage and humanity in the most adverse circumstances, it became

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[58] See especially the testimonies of Almalech, Calderone, Jerassy, and Kapuano, VHA USC SFI. Also, Salvator Beressi, Interview 16111, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on January 20, 2015).

a common memory shared by all in a way no other event did. As such, it eventually sustained a sense of community among the Salonican Jews in Warsaw based not solely on common practices but also on common symbols of humanity. Similarly, Doctor Leon Coenka, a physician and member of the Auschwitz orchestra, was head of a network credited with saving several Salonican Jews.[59] Such findings as those of Senor and Coenka not only reassert how a sense of community can be built through affinities both "real" and imagined in even the most abject circumstances; they also reveal an individual's "fame," helping us understand how status was attained among prisoners. They provide valuable information on who were the group leaders and hence how a different set of power relations than those between "perpetrators" and "victims" shaped (this time, positively) social life in the camps. In short, attention to networks of the mind moves analysis beyond the binary opposition of perpetrators and perpetrated and the attending grey zone of "privileged" prisoners.

To evaluate the 230 relationships recorded, create social data connectors, comprehensively map and layer the social networks of Salonican Jews we used the Gephi open graph visualization platform (https://gephi.org/). A different coloring of the edges according to such attributes as "friendship" or "kinship," as well as different combinations of attributes (say languages of friendships, or types of relations in Warsaw), offer a deeper mapping of social networks and the determinants of trust in Auschwitz-Birkenau. When combined with a width differentiation of the edges according to a given relationship's strength, such visuals additionally reveal the determinants of intimacy, be that language, origin, kinship, or friendship. By way of example, the four graphs below visualize the size, endurance, and types of relationships as well as the connection between language and intimacy.
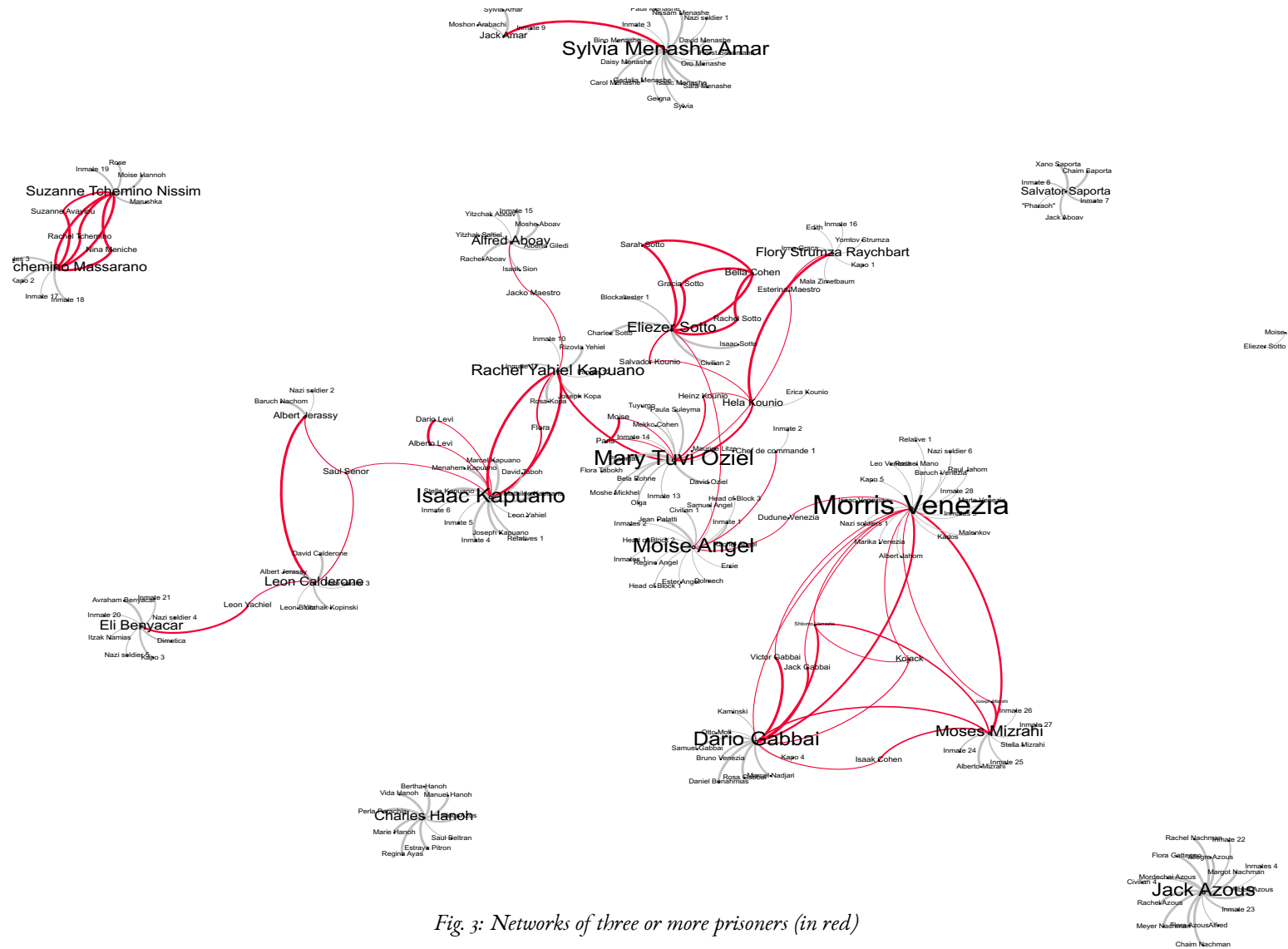
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[59] Handali, *Apo ton Leuko Pyrgo*, 107.

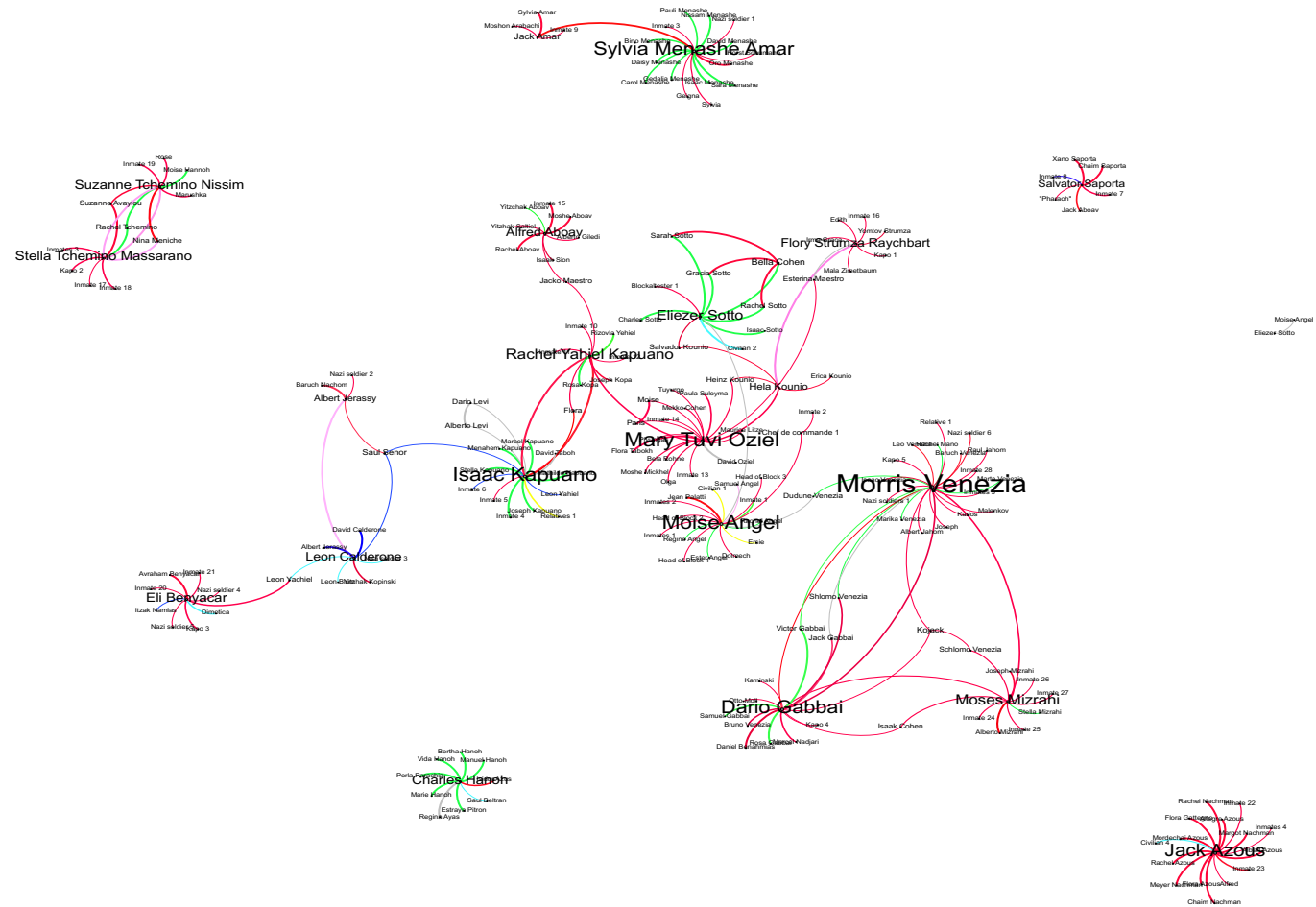*Fig. 3: Networks of three or more prisoners (in red)*

Fig. 4: Periods of relationships (mauve: pre-war, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and post-Auschwitz in any permutation; green: prewar/pre-deportation; orange: deportation; blue: Warsaw and Auschwitz-Birkenau; red: Auschwitz-Birkenau but not Warsaw; teal: camps after Auschwitz-Birkenau)
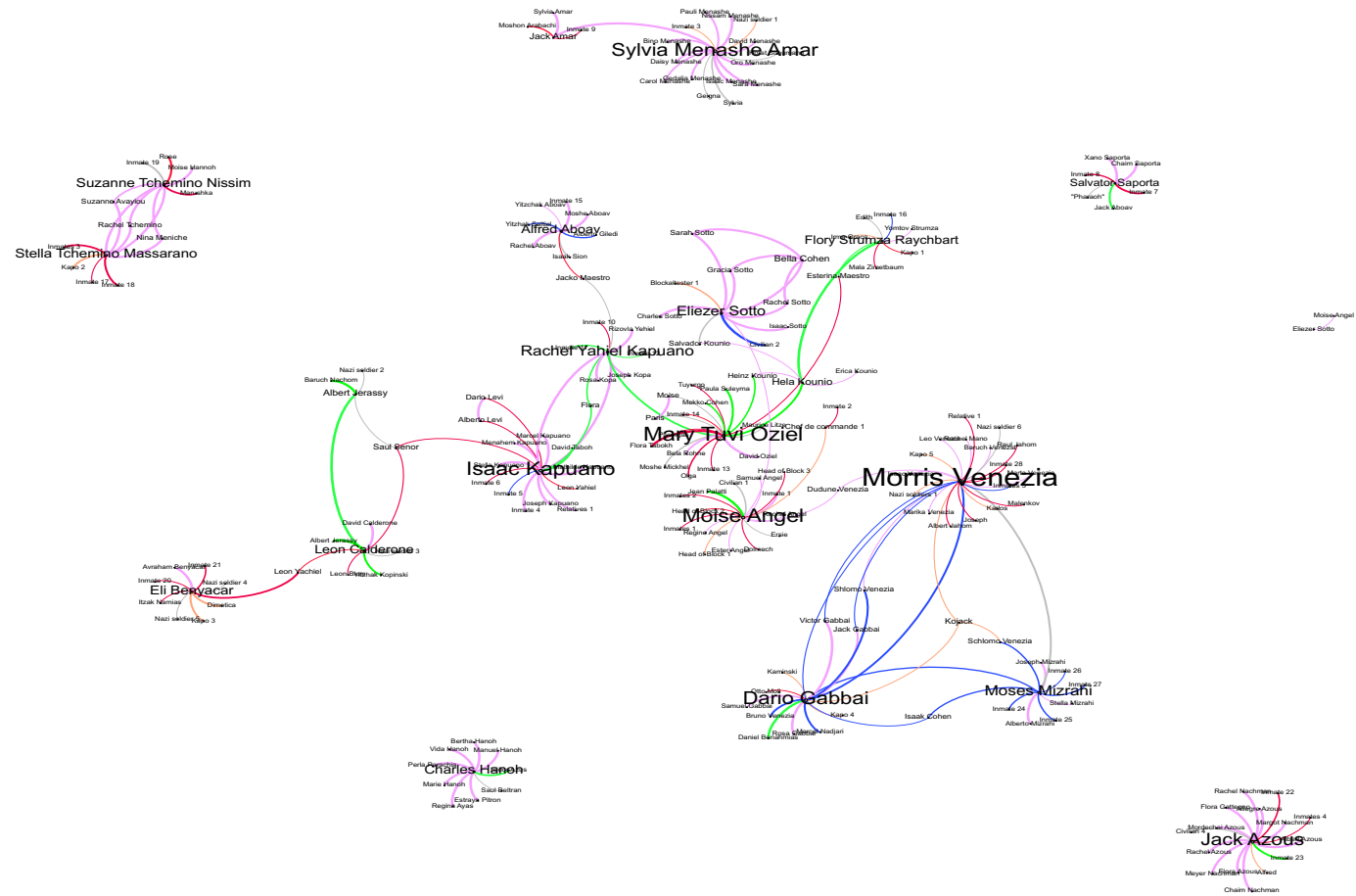
Fig. 5: Types of relationships (mauve: kin; blue: workmate; light green: friend or inmate/friend; red: inmate/higher rank inmate; orange: Kapo)
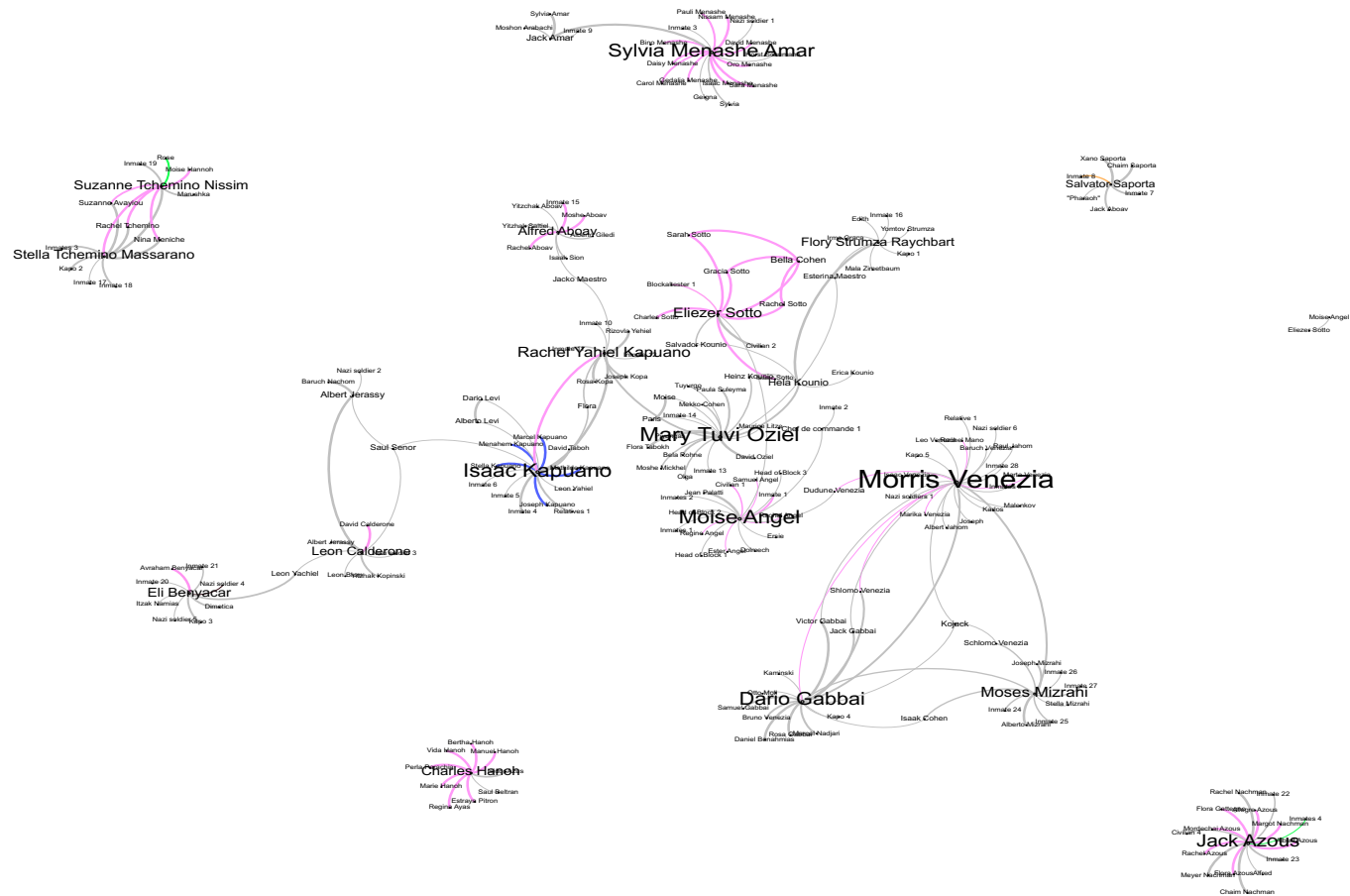
Fig. 6: Languages spoken in strong (intimate) relationships (blue: Greek and Ladino; mauve: Ladino/"Spanish"; orange: Greek; green: French; black: German)

Considering the experimental and intentionally illustrative character of these graphs it is precarious to draw any meaningful conclusions about the social networks of Salonican Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau especially before a much more representative set of relationships is obtained by data mining all interrelated testimonies –at least all those belonging to the clearly delineated group of Salonican Jewish survivors who passed through the Warsaw Gęsiówka labor camp. This is particularly true with regards to figure 3 which maps the size and outreach of social networks. We had consciously designed our data collection strategy with the aim of unveiling as large a number of overlapping networks as possible by exclusively mining testimonies of survivors connected by kinship or location. Instead, figure 3 reveals a rather fractured camp world composed of numerous but isolated ego-networks. More data feeding will determine whether this is not, in fact, due to the limited number of testimonies examined. Still, one network stands apart. It consists of brothers Morris and Shlomo Venezia; their distant cousins (but mainly "good friends"), Dario, Victor, and Jack Gabbai; an old friend from Salonica, Daniel Benahmias; and their fellow inmates and eventual friends, Marcel Nadjari and Moses Mizrahi
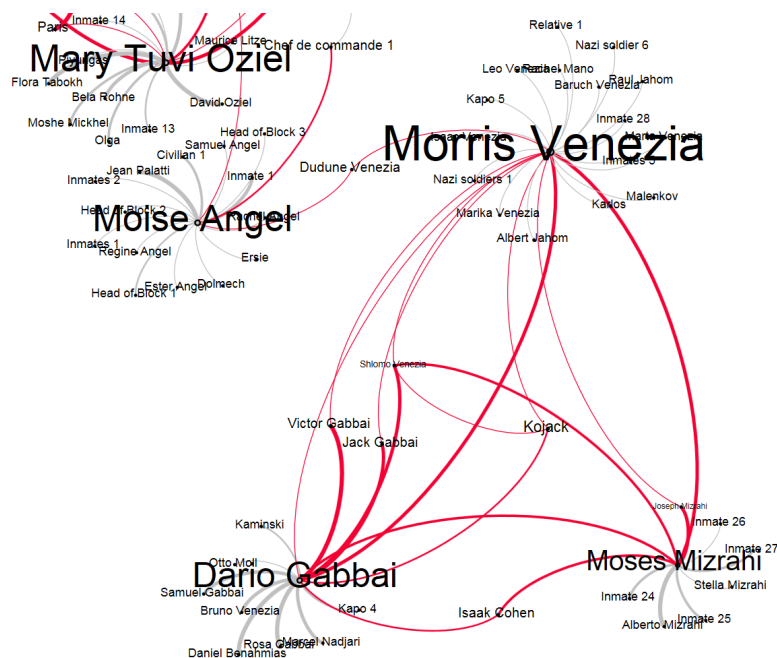

Fig. 7: The network of Morris Venezia, Dario Gabbai, Shlomo Venezia, and Moses Mizrahi

The Venezias and the Gabbais, together with Marcel Nadjari, had entangled pre-deportation trajectories. Of Italian citizenship, born and raised in Salonica, they were part of its last polyglot Jewish generation, fluent in Italian, French, Greek, and Ladino. Once the war erupted, they all fled to Athens, joined the leftist resistance, were arrested, and, after a period of imprisonment, finally deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. There, they all served in the *Sonderkommando* unit managing to stay close and assist each other. In January 1945, during the evacuation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dario Gabbai, the Venezia brothers, and Daniel Benahmias once again stuck together. Transferred to Mauthausen, they all eventually survived.[60] The graph thus powerfully illustrates the existence of a complex "close-type network" built around language, kinship, locality, nationality, and friendship, animated by a combination of pre- and wartime experiences, and eventually solidified through the common ordeal of the *Sonderkommando*.

Given Gephi's potential, we consider our project to be open-ended. The methodology and software developed can be applied to the study of social interaction within and between other groups of camp prisoners, or to other areas of Holocaust research, such as hiding and escape. In fact, our ongoing project will be expanding its scope and re-orient to a digital social network analysis of Holocaust testimonial material in order to map the webs of relations that made hiding or escape from Nazi-occupied Greece possible for Salonican Jews. Reconstructing the composition, nature, size, and mutability of these networks will make possible a systematic assessment of the importance of financial, social, and cultural resources in sustaining networks of hiding, escape and rescue and thus offer fresh insights into the old but persistent question of how social trust was maintained during the Holocaust. Hiding and escape during the war is an unwritten chapter in the history of the Holocaust in Greece as it is very much in the history of European Jewry in general where accounts are surprisingly scant, particularly from a microhistorical and network-theory perspective.[61] As the

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[60] Morris Venezia, Interview 20405, VHA USC SFI (accessed online at Northwestern University on 2 February 2015); Gabbai, VHA USC SFI; Shlomo Venezia, *Inside the Gas Chambers: Eight Months in the Sonderkommando*, (London: Polity Press, 2011); Marcel Nadjari, *Cheirografa, 1944-1947. Apo tē Thessalonikē sto Zonterkomanto tou Aousvits*, [Manuscripts, 1944-1947. From Thessaloniki to the Auschwitz Sonderkommando], (Athens: Alexandreia, 2018).

[61] A few, albeit macroscopic, exceptions to the rule: Pearl M. Oliner, *Saving the Foresaken: Religious Culture and the Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Michael L. Gross, "Jewish Rescue in Holland and France during the Second World War:

pioneering, albeit factual, work of Karina Lampsa and Yaakov Schiby indicate, reconstructing the social networks that sustained hiding and exploring the patterns of escape routes in and beyond Greece can have substantial theoretical and methodological ramifications, and, above all, critical interpretative consequences.[62] A focus on Jewish and Jewish-gentile social relations and their mutations over time and space through data mining of Holocaust survivor testimonies would offer a more accurate and infinitely more detailed view of the social world of hiding and escape in wartime Greece (or for that matter, any other occupied European country) and bring together the so far disconnected histories of the Holocaust, the resistance, collaboration and everyday life. It could also help address several key questions that remain unanswered: the logistics of survival and the importance of wealth in survival rates; social capital as measured in levels of education, in the participation of individuals in professional associations and institutions and its importance vis-à-vis wealth in forging enduring relations between Jews and gentiles. Additionally, such an analysis would move historiography beyond the static accounts of individual communities and their destruction and introduce the problematics of mobility studies to the study of the Holocaust. Finally, given the involvement of multiple national and international actors across the Eastern Mediterranean in salvaging Greek and other European Jews (from the British to the exiled Greek government in Cairo to the Jewish National Fund) a digital reconstruction of hiding and escape networks would also de-provincialize the story of Greek Jewry, expand the geographical range of Holocaust Studies beyond their Eastern European core, allow the field to move beyond the still dominant ethnocentric approaches, and ultimately, rewrite the Greek and more broadly the European cases as truly transnational histories.[63]

Moral Cognition and Collective Action," in *Social Forces* 73 (1994): 463-496; Leo Goldberger, *The Rescue of the Danish Jews: Moral Courage under Stress*, (New York: New York University Press, 1987).

[62] Karina Lampsa and Yaakov Schiby, *Ē diasōsē: Ē siōpē tou kosmou, ē antistasē sta gketto kai ta stratopeda, oi Ellēnes Ebraioi sta chronia tēs Katochēs*, [The Survival: The People's Silence, Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps, the Greek Jews in the Years of Occupation], (Athens: Kapon Publishers, 2012).

[63] For the promising gains of a truly transnational history of the Holocaust see the ongoing work of Atina Grossman. Atina Grossman, "Remapping Relief and Rescue: Flight, Displacement, and International Aid for Jewish Refugees during World War II," in *New German Critique* 39/3 (2012): 61-79.

Conclusion: Networking the Holocaust Audiovisual Archive

When properly theorized, the use of digital network visualizations can therefore productively problematize the logic and structure of the audiovisual archive, expand the conceptual spectrum of Holocaust Studies, question the use of such non-historicized categories as "solidarity" and "humanity," and renew the ties between social and Holocaust history by placing emphasis on the constitution and function of the "social" in the camps. Social network analysis and digital network visualizations introduce a new way of thinking about the Holocaust subject by reconceiving the individual survivor as a "networked self." So far, the individual interview has come to determine not only the serial logic of Holocaust audiovisual archives, but given their proliferation and accessibility, the Holocaust's very politics of representation. The "testimony format" recasts the survivor as witness, gives voice to the voiceless, and evidences the importance of the myriad individual accounts over the singular, totalizing narrative of the perpetrator's archive or the historian's monologic text. The linear organization of most Holocaust audiovisual archives implicitly informs a distinct logic of individual-centered representation of the survivor and by default, of survival as well.

Yet, a methodological focus on social relations and the use of digital technologies as a means to visually represent them can redress this imbalance. Attention to the forms and structures of relatedness can lead to a better understanding of how prisoners attempted to reconstruct a social universe in the camps and navigate within it under extremely adverse circumstances. Social network visualizations provide us with an adequately flexible tool to analyze the multiple relations between prisoners themselves, move beyond the perpetrator's gaze, and tackle the impasses of top-bottom approaches to Nazi genocidal ideology and its implementation in the camps. They offer a glimpse to some of the organizing principles shaping incarceration and prisoners' society. Hence, they allow us to more fully understand how identities were not only forcefully imposed by the perpetrators but also liminally crafted by the prisoners themselves, as fragmentary senses of the self, produced through the discourses and practices of relatedness. Complementing the technology of audiovisual testimonies with that of social networks helps us not just restore the "humanity" of the survivor-witness but also contextualize it and thus historicize it. Data connectors may be

dots and lines in a blank screen, but they eventually make us understand what it meant to be human in Auschwitz.

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