

“Called by Name” – Family Histories. A Contribution to Research on (Post)memory

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Abstract

The present paper will attempt to outline the issues of the collective historical memory in the families of people murdered for aiding Jews during the Second World War. The reasoning is based on analyses of the results of questionnaires filled in by family members of people commemorated as part of the “Called by name” project, carried out by the Pilecki Institute. The interviews were conducted during a workshop at the first meeting of the victims’ families, held in Brok on 24 November 2019. The study was performed using the survey method and a standardized questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were digitized and imported into the MAXQDA qualitative analysis program. The answers were coded and then subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. This analysis revealed the varying approach of different generations to the issue of their family history. Despite the relatively small research sample, interest in the tragic fate of their ancestors during the war is visibly increasing among the members of the younger generations. Research has also shown that the project undertaken by the Pilecki Institute clearly inspires younger family members and the local community, and contributes to a deeper interest in their own history.

Sociological research on the attitudes of Polish society towards ethnic minorities have been conducted in Poland for a relatively long time. Unfortunately, there is a lack of pre-war works, which would enable us to outline a broader description of the treatment of Jews by Poles during the interwar period, and no such surveys have been conducted as a result. These would, however, provide historians, sociologists and anthropologists analyzing cases of Poles aiding Jews with the appropriate contextual background. As Antoni Sułek writes:

Historical sources [...] often emphasize testimonies of extreme manners and behavior (in this case, cases of anti-Semitism versus the defense of Jews) rather than the views of the “silent majority”, whose voice is now being heard in modern surveys. (Sułek, 2012, p. 855).

The present text is a contribution to research on the state of collective memory among the descendents of those who were executed for lending aid to Jews during the German occupation of Poland. The argumentation is founded on questionnaires returned by the family members of individuals commemorated by the Pilecki Institute’s “Called by name” project. The interviews were conducted in Brok, during the first meeting of the victims’ families on 24 November 2019. This research was intended to give a general overview of the level of knowledge of the events concerned and determine from which sources the interviewed persons had gathered their information (at the same time, not everything these persons knew necessarily coincided with the reality of the events)¹ and enable the establishment of methods for disseminating and maintaining family memory.

Even at this very early stage, it was discovered that the questionnaires would have to be filled in by a larger sample and be subjected to intergenerational research within a group comprising also the youngest members of the family. The above-mentioned Antoni Sułek noted:

Surveys often ask people about events that transcend their daily experiences and are unknown to them. The respondents have often never thought about such events or even if they have, they have never formed a firm opinion on the matter (Sułek, 2012, p. 854).

1 The questionnaires given to family members with regard to one commemoration event might contain, for example, divergent answers regarding the presentation of the “Righteous Among the Nations” medal, regardless of whether or not this honor was actually awarded.

This may be applied to a certain degree to the youngest generation of the murdered victims' descendents. The tragic family events left a deep scar on the consciousness of the oldest generation, this is the participants of the events themselves or their eyewitnesses, and was transferred from them to their children, and then to their grandchildren. In spite of this, the intergenerational transmission of this memory is not self-evident. Observations show differences in the reception of these stories by the younger generations. This can be explained in part by the use of theoretical concepts. Of particular interest in this regard are the research and observations of the younger generations of descendants of Holocaust survivors, conducted using psychological and psychopathological methods. As Bernadetta Janusz writes:

Clinical studies and experiences show that the mission of the first generation was the continuation of life, even though those individuals displayed emotional distance to their loved ones and were unable to satisfy their own needs or the needs of others. Very often, they did not even talk to their children about the Holocaust. Silence became for them their only means of expression, causing a severing of continuous family heritage. Among the members of the second generation, however, observations have shown that each and every engagement beyond their family circle was interpreted as the emotional rejection of their parents. The third generation has shown either specific psychopathological disorders or a rejection of the family and a search for fulfilment beyond it (Janusz, 2015).

Survey research as part of the "Called by name" project did not involve in-depth interviews, and so it is difficult to determine unequivocally whether the phenomenon described by Janusz applies in this case. Nevertheless, the answers that have been provided suggest that we are dealing here with at least some typical elements of intergenerational trauma. It may also be theorized that an essential (or perhaps the most essential) factor in both the maintenance and extinguishing of memory are the external stimuli that influence the family, including its extended members, as well as the local community. Concerning the maintenance of intergenerational memory, expressly negative factors such as the risk of accusations of egocentric motives and the lack of broader research on the issue during the Communist era have made the subject of aiding Jews taboo.

No research on the attitudes towards Jews was conducted during the Communist era for the same reason that Polish-Jewish relations were not given any attention at all (Sulek, 2012, p. 853).

On the contrary, for obvious reasons, the commemorations of individuals who were killed for having aided Jews causes an increase in interest in Polish-Jewish topics, which in turn reinforces the transmission of family memory. New themes, new tales and reinterpretations of even the most vaguely familiar stories, begin to appear.² It would seem natural, then, to ask to what extent the commemoration of the victims – significant in that they are given justice years later – represents a factor not only in the activation of family memory but the very creation of it. Any explanation of such a formulated matter would require a significantly more detailed study and goes beyond the scope of the present paper.

In this context, it is worth returning to the hugely interesting theoretical concepts referenced by Marta Karkowska in her research (Karkowska, 2016, pp. 102–132). The first of these is the concept of postmemory, proposed by Marianne Hirsch (Hirsch, 2011):

Postmemory reflects the complex oscillation between continuity and rupture. [...] Postmemory is a relation connecting a generation that experienced a cultural or collective trauma with a descendant generation that “remembers” those events thanks only to the stories, images and behaviors with which they grew up. This experience has been transferred to them in such an emotional way that it seems to become a foundation of their own memory. Postmemory is therefore not related to the past, which literally returns (Hirsch, 2011, p. 29).

Nevertheless, a simple analysis of the questionnaires returned by the families of victims murdered for helping Jews does not enable us to determine the relevance to this case of postmemory as presented by Hirsch. It seems, however, that this concept facilitates an explanation of certain regular results.

The second concept concerns Jan and Aleida Assmann (Assmann, 2015) and their definition of two separate types of collective memory: communicative and cultural. Communicative memory assumes an intergenerational transmission on the basis of a direct transfer of history, for example by word of mouth. Cultural memory on the other hand represents a sort of selected transference, which eventually begins to replace direct experience (Karkowska, 2016, pp. 105–106). These concepts will be considered in the final part of the paper, which presents the conclusions of our analyses.

² As it is when the generation of grandchildren learns that their grandfather did not die fighting alongside the partisans but because he helped a Jewish family, a fact that was kept hidden for various reasons.

Methodology and researched groups

Research into the families was conducted via surveys with the use of a standardized questionnaire. The answer forms included both open and closed questions. The completed forms were converted into a digital format and imported into the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. The answers were coded into the software and then subjected to a qualitative and quantitative analysis. Variables were introduced during the analysis to filter the results and to compare groups. Among the variables was a division into four different generations of respondents: 1) people born before 1945; 2) people born between 1946 and 1969; 3) people born between 1970 and 1989; 4) the youngest generation, born after 1989.

The sample size amounted to $N = 92$, of which only 4 were eyewitnesses to the events in question.³ Table 1. presents information on the researched groups according to age groups.

Table 1. Researched groups

Indirect witnesses	Eye-witnesses	Respondents born			
		after 1989	1970–1989	1946–1969	before 1945
88	4	7	25	48	12

The most highly represented group is the generation born between 1946 and 1969 (48 people), followed by respondents born between 1970 and 1989 (25). The smallest group comprises the youngest descendents of the commemorated individuals, born after 1989 (7). A total of 12 respondents were born before 1945 and represent a group of people who were directly affected by the events or by their closest relatives, even if they were not direct eye-witnesses. In the vast majority of cases, the commemorated individuals were grandparents (55) or great-grandparents (26); 9 respondents declared that the victims were their parents, and 4 that they were their siblings.⁴ Only 2 respondents noted a more generationally distant relationship with the victims. The results presented here have been divided according to the type of analysis: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative analysis enables the establishment of basic information concerning the respondents, their knowledge of the events and its sources. Qualitative analysis provides for a more profound understanding of the methods of

³ In individual cases, the results may not total N . The reason for this is that the answers may not have been given or the spaces were filled in incorrectly (for example, one respondent did not provide a year of birth).

⁴ These people may be considered direct witnesses, even if they were not eyewitnesses in the strictest sense.

information transfer regarding the family histories and the trauma connected to the tragic past. It must be very clearly stated, however, that it would be necessary to conduct in-depth interviews in order to examine this issue more thoroughly and, what is particularly interesting, to refer to the theoretical concepts outlined above.

Quantitative aspects

The quantitative aspect of the raw data gained during analysis is presented in table 2. The first column lists the families of the commemorated victims. The most broadly represented families are the Andrzejczyks, Skłodowski, Lubkiewicz, Postek and Leszczyńskis. Eye-witnesses to the events in question were found among the Skłodowski (2), Radziejowski (1) and Maliński (1) families. The murdered victims of only two families have been named "Righteous Among the Nations" for helping Jews: Lubkiewicz and Krysiewicz. This tiny proportion of honored individuals is a consequence both of the rules established by Yad Vashem (the fact of aid being given must be effective, and therefore confirmed by the rescued persons – see Schnepf-Kończak, 2011, p. 309) and by the criteria for commemoration in use by the Pilecki Institute (the commemorated persons are those who were murdered as punishment for aiding Jews).

Table 2. Commemoration – quantitative aspects

Family	No. of respondent	%	Indirect witnesses	Eye-witnesses	Born			
					after 1989	1970-1989	1946-1969	before 1945
Andrzejczyk	19	20,65	19	0	0	4	14	1
Skłodowski	15	16,30	13	2	2	4	4	3
Lubkiewicz	13	14,13	13	0	3	3	7	0
Postek	13	14,13	13	0	1	6	6	0
Leszczyński	12	13,04	12	0	0	1	8	3
Prusiński	8	8,70	8	0	0	1	5	2
Krysiewicz	3	3,26	3	0	1	1	1	0
Radziejowski	3	3,26	2	1	0	0	1	2
Budziszewski	2	2,17	2	0	0	1	1	0
Długoborski	1	1,09	1	0	0	1	0	0
Kaczmarczyk	1	1,09	1	0	0	1	0	0
Maliński	1	1,09	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sowa	1	1,09	1	0	0	0	1	0

One of the indicators worthy of note is the number of people who believe that their ancestors were honored with the medal of "Righteous Among the Nations." The discrepancy between the truth and the convictions of the respondents may point to a significant rupture in the transmission of memory, particularly because this title is such a prestigious and well documented honorific. The data in table 3⁵ clearly show the size of these inaccuracies. These are most prominent in the Skłodowski family, where as many as 5 of the 15 respondents confirmed that the honorific was given. It is similarly interesting to note that 4 of these belong to the second generation of descendants (born in the years 1970–1989), and the fifth to the first generation (born in 1959). It is possible to put forward a paradoxical hypothesis that this discrepancy is evidence of a stronger transmission of memory in that family, for it signifies that knowledge of their ancestors – however inaccurate it may be – nevertheless represents an essential element of the intergenerational transfer. This seems to be a good example of postmemory, which, in Hirsch's concept, "returns in the form of an investment of imagination" (Hirsch, 2011, p. 29). Being fully aware of the relatively small sample size, it is necessary to carefully assert that the formation process of cultural memory in these families takes place simultaneously with the transmission of communicative memory. As Karkowska states, the authors of these terms noted that both of the referenced forms of collective memory "bleed into one another" (Karkowska, 2016, p. 106). In the case of the Andrzejczyk family, only one of the 19 respondents stated that their ancestors had been honored as "Righteous." It may be the case the family have made efforts to formalize this, but that they have thus far proved ineffective. Of the 13 members of the Lubkiewicz family, only one is unaware that this title was awarded. It is possible therefore to claim that even the families of the commemorated victims do not have full knowledge on this matter.

Table 3. Awareness of the awarded honorific "Righteous Among the Nations"

Family	No. of people	Family	No. of people
Postek	12	Radziejowski	0
Andrzejczyk	5	Budziszewski	0
Skłodowski	2	Długoborski	0
Lubkiewicz	2	Kaczmarczyk	0
Leszczyński	1	Maliński	0
Prusiński	1	Sowa	0
Krysiewicz	1		

5 The number of people claiming that the medal was awarded is presented in table 3.

Of similar note is the fact that a vast majority of respondents (86) had not previously⁶ had any contact either with any individuals helping Jews during the Second World War or with any of those individuals' families. In spite of this, as many as 87 respondents expressed a need to maintain contact with such individuals, and only 2 people said they did not feel such a need. The questionnaires also reveal that it is the younger generations that examine their family history statistically more often (at least declaratively), as illustrated in fig. 1 ("Considerations of family history"). This likely relates to the fact that this generation feels pride in their ancestors while not being itself burdened by the trauma of the direct loss of a loved one.⁷

Fig. 1. Considerations of family history

Coding tree	Born			
	after 1989	1970–1989	1946–1969	before 1945
Does the respondent often think back to those tragic events?	5	23	44	12
Yes	5	16	33	8
No	—	7	11	4

This observation is confirmed by the answer to the question whether the memories of those tragic events are a source of difficulty in spite of the years that have passed. The trauma remains strong among half of the respondents from the older generations, while these memories do not cause negative emotional states, for example depression, despair or sorrow, in the younger generations (see fig. 2. "Trauma of memory").

Fig. 2. Trauma of memory

Coding tree	Born			
	after 1989	1970–1989	1946–1969	before 1945
Are these memories a source of difficulty for the respondent?	6	23	43	11
Yes	1	7	22	5
No	5	16	21	5

Paradoxically, the younger generations are more liable to make use of psychological support to help them come to terms with their tragic family history, while the older generations unanimously reject such a possibility (see fig. 3. "Psychological support").

⁶ Prior to commemoration by the Pilecki Institute.

⁷ See qualitative analysis.

Fig. 3. Psychological support

Coding tree	Born			
	after 1989	1970–1989	1946–1969	before 1945
Is the respondent liable to use the services of a psychologist?	6	24	43	12
Yes	2	7	7	-
Unlikely	-	-	2	-
No	4	17	34	12

Another part of the survey allows us to describe how actively the families strove to commemorate their murdered ancestors or look into their past on an individual basis. The answers to the questions as to whether a given person had searched for more detailed information of their family history are divided nearly evenly. A total of 45 people declared that they had not made any attempts, while 40 stated that they had. To this end, 18 people declared that they approached elderly members of the local community, 10 people sought information on the internet, 6 people in books, and 6 in archives – especially at the Institute of National Remembrance, state archives and Yad Vashem – as well as in the local district and parishes. The murdered victims' burial sites were also sought out. A slight majority (46) stated that they had not searched for family mementoes connected to the tragedy, while 40 said that they had. The most active group in this regard was the generation born between 1946 and 1969. The youngest generation did not make these efforts. Independently of the action taken, as many as 70 out of 86 people declared that they have passed on the news of their family's wartime experiences, while 16 people have not. It is interesting to note that it is generally the members of the younger generations who tend more towards cultivating this knowledge. We will attempt to explain the phenomenon later in the paper, however this trend can be clearly seen in fig. 4. "Passing on family history."

Fig. 4. Passing on family history

Coding tree	Born			
	after 1989	1970–1989	1946–1969	before 1945
Has the respondent told others about their family history?	6	25	44	11
Yes	6	23	35	6
No	-	2	9	5

Most of the respondents (76) have never testified about the events related to the sheltering of Jews, compared to 7 who either confirmed that they did it personally or named someone who did, for example parents

(see fig. 5. "Number of testimonies submitted"). The majority of these 7 respondents were born before 1945 (5) and in the 1950s (in 1950 and 1953) (2). The testimonies were submitted to "the prosecutor's office in Białystok by my mother and her surviving siblings";⁸ "to the public prosecutor's office in the 1970s";⁹ to the "Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes [in Poland] – it regarded the medal of the Righteous, which was not awarded due to a lack of witnesses";¹⁰ to the "Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes, submitted by my mother and older siblings";¹¹ to the "Institute of National Remembrance in 1982, by my wife";¹² or as part of the "Warsaw 1987" project.¹³ One person did not indicate precisely where the evidence was submitted.¹⁴ Only a handful of respondents (6)¹⁵ strove for a more detailed investigation into the crimes (born in 1946–1989, see fig. 6, "Attempts to investigate the crimes"). Some people from this generation also applied for compensation for the harm caused, but these were only 4 of the respondents.¹⁶

Fig. 5. Number of testimonies submitted

Coding tree	Born			
	after 1989	1970–1989	1946–1969	before 1945
Has the respondent testified in this matter?	6	23	42	12
Yes	–	–	2	5
No	6	23	40	7

Fig. 6. Attempts to investigate the crimes

Coding tree	Born			
	after 1989	1970–1989	1946–1969	before 1945
Has the respondent tried to have the crime investigated?	6	22	31	12
Yes	–	3	3	–
No	6	19	28	12

8 F-1950 (female, born in 1950). In order to maintain the respondents' anonymity, only the gender (M/F) and the year of birth is given.

9 F-1970.

10 M-1938.

11 F-1939.

12 M-1929.

13 F-1931.

14 M-1950.

15 F-1950; M-1958; F-1965; F-1972; M-1986; M-1989.

16 F-1958; F-1965; M-1968; M-1984.

The majority of respondents noted that their stories did not interest any organization except for the Pilecki Institute. This was confirmed by 40 people, while 22 were of the opposite opinion. According to more than half the group (57), their stories were not paid the slightest attention by the Jewish community; 14 people noted that the Jewish community showed some interest. Asked about other honors (beyond the Pilecki Institute's project and the honorific "Righteous Among the Nations"), most of the respondents (67) answered that they had never come across any such initiatives. Only 5 people confirmed that the relatives had been commemorated in some other way: 2 members of the Andrzejczyk family described the inclusion of a name on a plaque in the Chapel of Memory in the Church of Saint Mary the Star of the New Evangelization and Saint John Paul II in Toruń, and 3 members of the Postek family recalled that a medal had been awarded in 2009 by then President Lech Kaczyński (however none of them could give the full name of the award: the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta). It must be noted that the majority of respondents (70) did not take any steps to have their family members commemorated, while only 10 people made the attempt (these were 2 people born before 1945, 6 between 1946 and 1969, and 2 between 1970 and 1989).¹⁷ The example of one male respondent born in 1986 is particularly significant in this matter; except for him, almost all respondents who sought honors are members of the older generations.

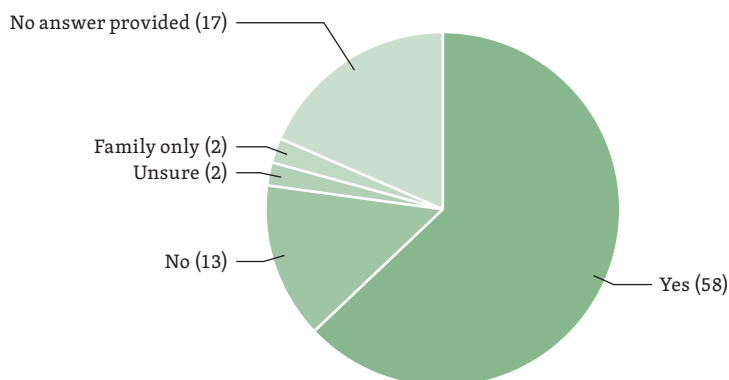
The final answers subjected to quantitative analysis regarded social reactions to the initiative of the Pilecki Institute. Most of the respondents are convinced that the local community is interested in the history of their family. On the other hand, 13 people stated that the neighbors were unfavorable, 2 chose the answer "unsure," and another 2 noted that interest in the matter is limited to the immediate family. Quite a large percentage (18.5%, i.e. 17 respondents) did not answer this question at all, which likely means that it is difficult for them to observe how the local community considers the matter (see fig. 7. "Interest in the local community").

Furthermore, a majority of respondents (51) claim that the commemorations by the Pilecki Institute of people involved in the rescue of Jews have invigorated the local community. 13 people are of the opposite opinion. Similarly, as many as 60 consider the form of the commemoration by the Institute is sufficient, while 17 people noted that it is insufficient in their opinion.

17

M-1938; M-1941; F-1953; M-1954; F-1958; M-1958; M-1959; F-1965; F-1972; M-1986.

Fig. 7. Interest in the local community



Qualitative analysis

Family stories became the main way to transmit knowledge about helping Jews and its tragic consequences. More often than not, such information was obtained from parents and grandparents. Regarding the consequences for the family, the provided answers often include the topics of the loss of relatives murdered by the Germans; the forfeiture of property, including the house; as well as the need to hide and separate the family. Representatives of the younger generations emphasize that they have been deprived of the opportunity to meet their grandparents or great-grandparents. Several people point out that the repressions did not affect them directly, but only touched their ancestors, and eyewitnesses of the events speak about being brought up by their extended family, about the loss of grandparents and parents, and about prison sentences.

Concerning the question about the motives behind their relatives helping Jews despite the threat of death, the eyewitnesses provided interesting answers¹⁸: “My parents had ten children. My mother felt very sorry for the persecuted Jews. Poles and Jews had a common enemy (Germany). Everyone has the right to live”;¹⁹ “it’s hard to say; maybe they were recommended by a gentleman who previously visited us in the countryside”;²⁰ “the parents did not talk to the children and Mr. [...] does not know”;²¹ “dad said these were people who needed help.”²²

18 All examples given here are cited verbatim.

19 M-1938.

20 F-1931.

21 F-1937.

22 F-1939.

Representatives of later generations mainly point to family characteristics and upbringing (“willingness to help others,” “professed values,” “religious faith,” “Christian values,” “they were good people”). They also emphasize that their ancestors did not make such decisions out of a desire to get rich. It is worth noting several of the most striking statements:

My family has always valued what is most important in life; this is how they were brought up and this is what they passed on to their children. Therefore, their children were aware that 7 Jews were being sheltered on the Postek farm. They had to keep it a secret, because other people’s lives were most important to them. They knew that if they did not do this, those people would die.²³

My grandfather was quite a wealthy farmer. He had good contacts with people of Jewish origin who lived in Czyżew (he traded goods with them). They were his good friends, so he had no objection to helping them. He hid 18 people!²⁴

My grandparents and aunt and uncle [...] had been renting apartments to Poles and Jews for generations. My dad had played with the Jewish children. His friend and guardian was Łejka, the daughter of the Jewish tenants. Her parents weren’t wealthy. Łejka’s father was an organ-grinder. For some time, the Czerny brothers, who were musicians and accompanied in the cinema during the screenings, also rented an apartment. Other tenants living with [...] were merchants. Ryczke had a soda water factory.²⁵

Helping others in need, regardless of nationality. A Christian’s duty.²⁶

As far as I know, it started with hiding Jewish acquaintances. Then they brought their friends and relatives.²⁷

They knew these Jewish people and they just offered selfless help.²⁸

23 F-1978.
24 F-1948.
25 F-1972.
26 F-1947.
27 M-1948.
28 M-1961.

A deeply ingrained sense of duty to help one's neighbor. Belief in higher values that cannot be broken by the order of the occupant. Civic attitude of civic bonds among nationalities living in the territory of the Republic of Poland.²⁹

Never for money, never for profit, because the wife's family was quite rich. Rather, it was done from the heart.³⁰

When asked what had driven Poles who did not help the Jews, some witnesses of the events replied that it was fear. Others also emphasized the terror introduced by the Germans. One common sentiment from this group states:

Fear for one's own life, property and relatives, fear of the atrocities and terror carried out by the German occupier of Polish territories, and incitement by the occupant of personal aversion among the inhabitants of a given territory.³¹

In four other statements, apart from the argument of fear, there is also the theme of aversion to Jews or foreigners:

[...] I don't know, maybe fear, anxiety, aversion to Jewish nationality.³²

Racist views and the desire to get rich from the property of the victims of the Holocaust!³³

[...] fear, fear for one's own life and the life of the family, sometimes (I assume rarely) aversion to other nationalities, religions, etc.³⁴

Fear. Concern for one's own family. Dislike of Jews.³⁵

[...] Fear of losing life, property, a good name; often selfishness. Less so racial motives, though in some communities jealousy that the Jews were better off.³⁶

29 M-1971.
30 M-1938.
31 M-1971.
32 M-1979.
33 M-1982.
34 F-1956.
35 M-1950.
36 M-1978.

When asked if the respondents were aware of any other cases of helping Jews in their local area, one of the eyewitnesses to the events quoted a story about rescued Jews:

From hear-say. My distant family hid two Jewish families; they survived, they moved to the USA. Those who had survived, visited them in the USA. In Długosiodło.³⁷

The second mentioned the Postek and Lubkiewicz families.³⁸ It is impossible, however, to determine whether this knowledge about them was obtained from elsewhere, or as a result of the commemoration project. Most of the remaining, indirect witnesses (over 70 people) claimed that they had not heard of similar fates of other people from the area. Only 11 of them mentioned some families who helped Jews, of which several confirmed that they had learned this thanks to the "Called by name" project.

The respondents, who strongly supported maintaining contact with other families of the commemorated victims, emphasized the importance of passing on history, shaping identity in younger generations, and providing mutual support especially because they share similar experiences and a desire to find historical truth. In their opinion, however, the most important aspect is to maintain the memory of the tragedy and events that occurred during the war.

As previously mentioned, family stories were the main means of transmitting this knowledge about the difficult wartime fates to the younger generations. In the questionnaire, most of the respondents stated that helping Jews during the war was a topic of conversation in their homes. The answer "definitely not" was selected by 2 people, while 10 people said "rather not" and 10 said "no." (see fig. 8. "Was helping Jews a topic for discussion?").

These conversations usually took the form of stories about the war told by grandparents. Some respondents indicated that it was a way to deal with trauma. People who answered that the subject was not discussed in the family, generally justified it by citing trauma and overly strong emotions.³⁹ Several of the respondents mentioned envy and the prevailing belief that the family had gotten rich by hiding Jews.

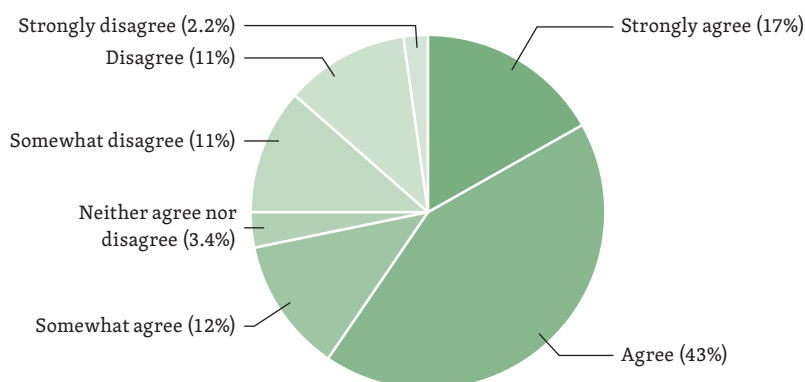
People who answered yes to the question about searching for additional information about the wartime fate of their ancestors stated their family, the Internet and books as the main sources of knowledge. One of the respondents made a query in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance. On the other hand, those who did not seek such knowledge

37 M-1941.

38 M-1938.

39 F-1973. "My dad was 10 years old when his father was killed in front of the children."

Fig. 8. Was helping Jews a topic for discussion?



argued that the reason was a lack of sources or knowledge of where to find them. Several people said that they became interested only thanks to the Pilecki Institute.⁴⁰

As already mentioned, the majority of respondents declared that they pass on their family history. According to the majority (57), its perception is positive. Only 2 people considered that their stories had been met with negative reactions. The respondents who did not tell these stories to anyone explain that it was previously a taboo subject⁴¹ or that they only learned about it recently.⁴² Several people confirmed that the stories did not go beyond the family circle. It appears that in at least one case, the family concealed the true cause of their grandfather's death (for hiding Jews), and stated that the death was the result of partisan activity in the official version of the narrative.

Recalling these difficult events in family history evokes many emotions in the respondents. The "word cloud" presented here (see fig. 9, "Feelings associated with memories") shows the most common ones. Two types dominate: the first is feelings of grief and sadness after the loss, and the second – pride and respect. The former occurs primarily in the

40 F-1978: "I listened to my grandfather's story as if it was nothing more than that – a story. It was only when the Pilecki Institute began to show interest in my great grandfather that I realized what a brave and good person he was."

41 M-1954: "It was a taboo subject in the 1950s"; M-1943: "We didn't talk to anyone outside our immediately family"; M-1946: "no one from outside the family ever discussed it back then."

42 F-1960: "Because I didn't know anything about it before. I learned the truth about my grandfather in 2019 and now it is a common subject in our family"; F-1958: "I learned the story about how my grandfather sheltered Jews in 2019; until then, I had only heard a version that he had been with the partisans."

Fig. 9. Feelings associated with memories



generations born until 1969, and the latter among the younger generation born after 1970.

The vast majority of respondents replied to the questions regarding compensation claims⁴³ that they were not aware that it was possible at all. Those who applied for it mention the Israeli embassy in several cases, from which they were “sent away empty-handed.” One of the interviewees (an eyewitness) also states: “nothing will make up for what I experienced.”

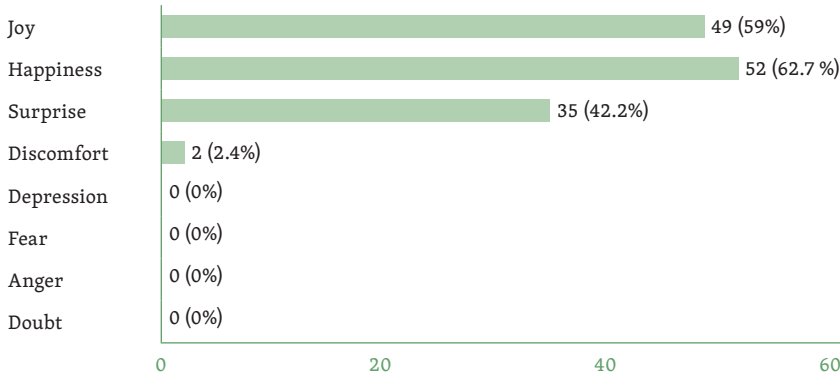
As for the respondents’ opinion on the investigation of their case, 24.3% declare that it has been thoroughly analyzed, 36.5% know only that it has been investigated but do not know the details, 9.5% say that the work was started but not completed, and 5% replied that the matter had not been raised at all.⁴⁴ Among the institutions that showed interest, the most frequently indicated are the Institute of National Remembrance (18 people), the Jewish Historical Institute [Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH] (5) and the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy [Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację, ZBOWiD] (4). According to the majority of respondents, the attitude of employees of these institutions was kind (62.2%) or indifferent (16.2%).

Another issue is the reaction of family members to the commemoration ceremonies conducted by the Pilecki Institute. The most frequently indicated feelings are: joy, happiness and surprise. Interestingly, 2 people said they were embarrassed by the whole situation (see fig. 10, “Reactions to commemoration”). The responses from the surrounding community turned out to be more varied, although here too, the dominant reactions were kind (76.2%), neutral (11.9%) or indifferent (8.3%). Only 4 people noted

43 The questions were phrased: “Have you ever applied for compensation for the damage done?” and “When and where was the application submitted?”

44 Other individual answers were also given in addition to those listed here.

Fig. 10. Reactions to commemoration



unfriendliness or even antagonism. One claimed that the family was accused of profiting from hiding Jews.

The Pilecki Institute also asked about further proceedings regarding commemoration, and particularly about what suggestions the respondents had for the next steps to honor their relatives. People who submitted their proposals indicated various educational activities, including popularizing their history on the Internet, publishing books and films. The need for activity in local communities was especially emphasized. One of the respondents wrote that it would be important for the state to provide statutory support (for example in the form of retirement benefits) and systemic assistance in submitting applications for the “Righteous Among the Nations” award.⁴⁵

Conclusions

Only the most basic and general conclusions are gathered here. Obtaining more accurate results would require more questionnaires to be filled by the elderly generations and, in justified cases, supplemented with data using the in-depth interview method.

Research has shown that the older generations of the families of those who were murdered and commemorated are still traumatized by these

45 M-1950. “Consider statutory financial support for children (or grandchildren in the event of the death of the former) in the form of a pension supplement. It would be the best help for us surviving elderly people. I am asking you to take seriously what I have written above. It would be the most substantive aid from the Polish state. I would be satisfied if the Pilecki Institute and the Institute of National Remembrance would help us submit the application for the title of Righteous Among the Nations. It is very important to us!”

events. The younger generations, who were not directly traumatized, see the history of their ancestors as a source of pride. The project undertaken by the Pilecki Institute clearly inspires younger family members and the local community, and contributes to a deeper interest in their own history. This is important in building an identity based on a close family history, as well as the fate of neighbors and friends. Returning to the issue of two types of memory mentioned at the beginning of the article, it can be concluded that commemoration is one of the elements in the natural process of shaping cultural memory.

The research discussed here clearly shows that further attempts should be made to integrate the circles surrounding the commemorated victims, something which the respondents themselves have also emphasized; such action contributes to the growth of their social activity, and helps them not only to work through the family trauma and break taboos, but to remove the stigma of families marginalized in the local collective memory.

Moreover, the analyses indicate a rather limited initiative of family members of the commemorated persons in their efforts to broaden their knowledge about the tragedies of war and to undertake independent attempts to commemorate, to seek compensation, or to reach out to research institutes established for that purpose. The question of the cause of this passivity seems therefore to be of paramount importance. It is possible that this is the result of dissociative disorders described by Bernadetta Janusz:

In a psychological and psychopathological sense, trauma is often related to dissociative disorders, which are manifested by a disconnection from a dramatic event. This may be, for example, describing an extreme experience of violence in colorless, almost official language. Dissociation is often related to the disturbance of memories of a traumatic event, or even its complete removal from memory. It is a kind of self-preservation, a means to cope with fear and terror (Janusz, 2015).

"Oppressive silence," or intergenerational silence about the causes of the trauma that Bernadetta Janusz describes, may be one of the reasons why the older generation was not willing to investigate the details of the events, and why the younger generation was deprived of such an opportunity.

Considerations over the collected survey material revealed in several aspects a different approach of subsequent generations to the issue of the history of their own families. Despite the relatively small research sample, there is a clear trend in increasing interest in this subject among the representatives of the youngest generations. However, this interest is probably not self-inspired and may result from the "Called by name" commemorations. Moreover, it is clearly visible that the generations closer to the events

(born in 1946–1969) were the most active group in, for example, their efforts to investigate the crimes. Despite the declarations of the youngest respondents about their commitment, they do not undertake such activities.

The relatively high percentage of people taken aback by the commemoration shows that it is necessary to continue the “Called by name” project. A large part of the respondents, regardless of their knowledge on the subject, have a tendency to treat information passed down through the family as one of many “family stories.” Another important factor was doubt in the sense and effectiveness of attempts to commemorate, which results from many years of evading this chapter in the history of their families and the poor results of previous efforts. There is also a clear thread of the lack of systemic support in acquiring knowledge and in trying to obtain compensation or even just honoring, for example, with the “Righteous Among the Nations” medal.

An important conclusion from the analysis is the need to make local communities aware of their history (perhaps by introducing its elements to schools). It should be noted that the responses clearly raised the problem of tabooing the activities of families helping Jews, which may also result from the belief that this could be perceived as non-altruistic and resulting from purely financial reasons. The responses also quite clearly reveal a sense of injustice, resulting not so much from the lack of material compensation for the wrong done, but above all from the lack of interest and gratitude of the Jewish community. It remains a separate question to what extent the reason for this disinterest is that the issue generally regards unsuccessful attempts to save Jews, and therefore, there are often neither survivors nor their descendants to make efforts for commemorating the rescuers. It should be emphasized that the same mechanisms of creating cultural memory on the one hand, and post-memory on the other, concern both the families of murdered Poles and possible survivors.

(transl. by Ian Stephenson)

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Annex 1. Questionnaire

Called by name – family histories

WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE



PERSONAL DATA

Name and surname _____

Place and year of birth _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

The data collected during the workshop are confidential. They will be used exclusively in research performed by the Pilecki Institute and will not be shared outside the institute or otherwise published.
 I understand and agree.

 (date, signature)

I. RODZINA

1. Relationship with the commemorated person. He/she was:

- My parent (mother/father)
- My sibling (sister/brother)
- My grandparent (grandmother/grandfather)
- My great grandparent (great grandmother/great grandfather)
- My aunt/uncle from my mother's side
- My aunt/uncle from my father's side
- My grandmother's sister/brother
- My grandfather's sister/brother
- Other: _____

2. Were you and eye-witness to the events in question?

- Yes
- No

3. If yes, how old were you at the time?

4. **If no, who informed you about the hiding of Jews and the death of a loved ones, and when?**

Who: _____

When: _____

5. **What consequences did your family face in relation to the sheltering of Jews and the loss of a loved ones? (Choose all that apply):**

- We lost our home
- We lost our possessions
- I was raised by distant family
- I was raised by someone not connected with my family
- I was placed in an orphanage
- My family was split up
- I found my family years later
- I had to start working sooner than expected
- I was repressed by the occupant – how?

- My education was interrupted
- A member(s) of my family were forced into hiding
- We left our local area, we were resettled
- other: _____

6. **In your opinion, why did the members of your family help Jews? What could have been their motivation?**

7. **In your opinion, what motivated other Poles not to help Jews?**

8. Are you aware of any other cases of Poles helping Jews in your local community?

Yes

Which? _____

No

9. Have you ever had any contact with any other families with similar experiences to your own?

Yes

Who? _____

No

10. Do you believe it is necessary to maintain contact with other families with similar experiences?

Yes

Why? _____

No

Why not? _____

II. MEMORY IN THE FAMILY AND MEANS TO PRESERVE IT
11. Was helping Jews a topic for discussion in your family?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. If these stories were told in your family, why do you think such information was passed on?

13. If those past events were not discussed in your family, why not?

14. Have you ever searched for information about what happened to your family?

-
- Yes

Where?

-
- No

Why not?

15. Have you ever looked for family mementos, letters, photographs etc. connected to those events?

-
- Yes

-
- No

16. Have you ever told anyone your family history connected with the sheltering of Jews?

Yes

How was the story received?

- Very negatively
- Negatively
- Somewhat negatively
- With indifference
- Somewhat positively
- Positively
- Very positively

No

Why not? _____

17. Do you often recall those events/stories in your mind?

Yes

No

18. If yes, what do you feel when you tell others this story?

(Choose all that apply):

- Sadness
- Regret
- Despair
- Pride
- Pain
- Depression
- Respect
- Sympathy
- Helplessness
- Humiliation
- Rage, anger
- Fear
- Incomprehension
- Isolation
- Admiration
- Longing
- Relief
- other: _____

19. Do you still find those events difficult to talk about in spite of the time that has passed?

- Yes
 No

20. Would you consider the help of a psychologist in difficult moments?

- Yes
 No

III. INVESTIGATION & COMMEMORATION

21. Have you ever testified with regard to the events surrounding the hiding of Jews – either before a court, a prosecutor, or the Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes?

- Yes

When and where? _____

- No

22. Have you ever tried to have those events investigated?

- Yes

When? _____
Where was the case reported? _____

- No

Why not? _____

23. Have you ever applied for compensation for the damage done?

- Yes

When and where was the application submitted? _____

- No

Why not? _____

24. In your opinion, the case

- Underwent a detailed investigation – I have the relevant documents
- Was investigated, but I do not know the details of the results
- Was opened, but never concluded
- Not investigated
- other: _____

25. Have any other institutions/organizations shown any interest in your family's case?

- Yes
 - Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy
[Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację]
 - Jewish Historical Institute [Żydowski Instytut Historyczny]
 - Institute of National Remembrance [Instytut Pamięci Narodowej]
 - POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews
[Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich POLIN]
 - other: _____
- No

26. If yes, what was the attitude of these institutions?

- Kind
- Neutral
- Indifferent
- Impolite
- Antagonistic
- other: _____

27. Has anyone from the Jewish community (e.g. the family or friends of the people who were sheltered) ever shown interest in your family's case?

- Yes
Who and when? _____

- No

28. Has anyone in your family ever been awarded the medal *Righteous Among the Nations*?

- Yes
When? _____

- No
Why not? _____

29. Has anyone in your family ever previously been honored in another way for helping Jews?

Yes

How? _____

No

30. Has your family's story ever been told in:

Press articles

Books

Television programs

Films

Radio broadcasts

On the internet

other: _____

If yes, when?

31. Have you ever taken any steps to have the loved ones who were murdered for helping Jews commemorated in any way?

Yes

How? _____

No

Why not? _____

IV. CALLED BY NAME

32. What was your reaction to the news that your loved ones were to be commemorated as part of the *Called by name* project?

- Joy
- Satisfaction
- Surprise
- Discomfort
- Depression
- Fear
- Anger
- Doubt about whether I wanted to recall those events

33. What was the reaction of your local community (e.g. neighbors, friends) to the news that the members of your family were to be commemorated?

- Kind
- Neutral
- Indifferent
- Impolite
- Antagonistic
- other: _____

35. In your opinion, did the local community begin to show interest in your family's story following the commemoration?

- Yes, even if they had known it for a long time
- Yes, they began to ask questions
- They are indifferent
- No, they are not interested
- The commemoration has caused envy

36. In your opinion, has the *Called by name* project enlivened the local community?

- Yes
- In what way? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- No

37. In your opinion, is the present form of commemoration sufficient?

Yes

No, I also suggest: _____
