

Children of Holocaust survivors more anxious about Iranian nuclear threat than their peers

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As preparations are made to observe Holocaust Remembrance Day (Thursday, April 16), a new Bar-Ilan University study reveals that the adult children of Holocaust survivors are more preoccupied with the threat of a nuclear Iran than their peers whose parents are not Holocaust survivors.

The study, entitled "Transmitting the Sum of All Fears: Iranian Nuclear Threat Salience Among Offspring of Holocaust Survivors" was published in a recent issue of *Psychological Trauma*, an American Psychological Association journal dedicated to the study of trauma and its aftermath.

Study author Dr. Amit Shrira, of the Interdisciplinary Department of Social Sciences, set out to test the hostile-world scenario among second generation Holocaust survivors. Hostile-world scenario is a term coined by Israeli researcher Prof. Dov Shmotkin to describe one's image of actual or potential threats to one's life, or more broadly, to one's physical and mental integrity.

Shrira first studied a total of 106 people. Sixty three of the participants were born after World War II ended in 1945 and whose parents lived under a Nazi or pro-Nazi regime. Participants in the comparison group of 43 were also born after 1945, but their parents, of European origin, either immigrated to Israel before the war or fled to countries which

were not under Nazi occupation.

Three main findings resulted from the study:

- Second generation Holocaust survivors exhibit greater preoccupation with the Iranian nuclear threat than the comparison group.
- Second generation Holocaust survivors are more sensitive to nuclear threat, and the more they are interested in the subject, the more general anxiety they report.
- Second generation Holocaust survivors show not only more preoccupation and sensitivity to the Iranian threat, but also a more ominous outlook on the world in general - a world of threat and significant danger that can fall upon them, providing proof of hostile-world scenario in this group.

To ensure that the results were accurate, Shrira performed a replication, an identical study on a second sample of 450 (comprised of 300 second generation Holocaust survivors and 150 comparison participants). The same results were found, giving additional validity to the findings.

"In second generation survivors we most often see that they are a group with resilience and mental resources, and they generally exhibit good functioning on a daily basis. But they do have vulnerabilities which can be manifested during times of stress," says Dr. Shrira.

Provided by Bar-Ilan University

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