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# **WOMEN, GENOCIDE, AND MEMORY**

## ***The Ethics of Feminist Ethnography in Holocaust Research***

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*This article explores the ethical dilemmas of doing a feminist ethnography of gender and Holocaust memory. In response to the conflicts the author experienced as both a participant/Jewish woman and an observer/feminist ethnographer, she engaged in a critical examination of her research methods and goals that led to an exploration into the complex moral issues that inform research on women and genocide specifically and feminist ethnographies of violence more generally. Drawing on her fieldwork at Holocaust sites in Eastern Europe, she identified three sources of methodological tension that developed during the research process: Role conflicts in the research setting, gender selectivity in studies of ethnic and racial violence, and the sexual objectification of women in academic discourse on violence and genocide. Each of these ethical tensions is examined from the standpoint of research on gender and the Holocaust.*

**Keywords:** *ethnography; gender; Holocaust; collective memory*

More than a decade ago, Judith Stacey (1988) questioned whether a feminist ethnography is possible. In her provocative discussion, Stacey challenged the widely held view that feminist approaches to ethnographic research mitigated the potentially exploitive aspects of observation and objectification that typified the traditional relationship between the researcher and the population under study. Questioning the assumptions of feminist scholars such as Anne Oakley (1981) and Shulamit Reinharz (1983), Stacey suggested that qualitative research methods do not eliminate the dangers associated with hierarchy and scientific “neutrality.” Rather, they can pose a somewhat different risk of exploitation, particularly when the researcher is faced with situations such as the death of an informant. Drawing on a fieldwork experience in which such a tragedy occurred, Stacey offered the following critique of feminist ethnography:

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My ethnographic role consigned me to experience this death both as a friend and as a researcher, and it presented me with numerous delicate, confusing dilemmas, such as whether or not and to whom to make a gift of the precious, but potentially hurtful tapes of an oral history I had once constructed with the deceased. I was confronted as well with the discomfiting awareness that as a researcher I stood to benefit from this tragedy. . . . This and other fieldwork experiences forced my recognition that conflicts of interest and emotion between the ethnographer as authentic related person (i.e., participant) and as exploiting researcher (i.e., observer) are also an inescapable feature of ethnographic method.

The dilemma that Stacey identified has perhaps even greater relevancy today as feminist research has expanded to include contemporary feminist studies of terrorism, genocide, and collective memory (Boose 2002; Lentin 1997). The self-reflexivity that Stacey brought to bear in her work more than a decade ago therefore offers a starting point from which to consider the current ethical dilemmas that feminist social scientists encounter as they negotiate the difficult moral and emotional terrain of research on gender and the Nazi Holocaust.

As a feminist sociologist, I first encountered the ethical challenges of researching cultural memory when I undertook a study of gender representation at Holocaust memorial sites in Eastern Europe. From the outset, this project proved to be especially difficult because I had entered an area of study to which I felt connected by both ethnicity and religion. During a period of six years, as I expanded the borders of ethnographic research to include an investigation of numerous and varied Holocaust memorials, I found myself immersed in a research project that not only engendered deep emotional responses but strongly resonated with Stacey's (1988) doubts about the possibility of achieving a truly feminist ethnography. In response to the conflicts I experienced as both a participant/Jewish woman and an observer/social scientist, I engaged in a critical examination of my research methods and goals. This self-reflexive inquiry led to an exploration of the complex ethical issues that inform research on women and genocide specifically and feminist ethnographies of violence more generally. In particular, I identified three sources of tension that were especially pronounced during the research process: Role conflicts in the research setting, gender selectivity in studies of ethnic and racial violence, and the sexual objectification of women in academic discourse on violence and genocide. Drawing on my fieldwork in Eastern Europe, my analysis of the data, and my reporting of the findings, this article addresses each of these ethical challenges from the standpoint of research on gender and the Holocaust.

### **THE GEOGRAPHY OF GENOCIDE: METHODS AND FIELDWORK IN EASTERN EUROPE**

Although Holocaust sites are located throughout Western Europe, North America, and Israel, I chose to situate my research in Eastern Europe for two reasons. First, because few studies of Eastern European memorial sites had addressed issues

of gender, my project was intended to fill this gap in Holocaust studies. A second consideration related more specifically to the sites themselves. Unlike Holocaust memorials outside of Europe, those in Eastern Europe retain what Ulrich Baer (2000, 42) referred to as “the experience of place” because they are located in the geographic landscape where the traumatic events actually occurred. Sites such as Auschwitz thus bring a realism and authenticity to the memorial space, and I sought to examine this realism in relation to the social construction of women’s memory.

My fieldwork in Eastern Europe began at Theresienstadt in the Czech Republic. A former concentration camp that was touted as a model prison by the Germans, Theresienstadt is a nineteenth-century fortress that during World War II was used as a prisoner of war camp. The camp has since been preserved as a memorial site to Czech resistance fighters as well as other groups, including Jews, who were deemed unfit or a threat to German occupation. Maintained essentially as a war memorial, the structures at Theresienstadt have not been changed or refurbished in any way. The markings and suffering of the former prisoners are still visible in the wooden bunks and broken furniture that define the memorial space. Each section of the camp—the kitchen, the latrines, and the torture rooms—contain narratives in Czech, German, and English that, with great detail, describe the German occupation of Czechoslovakia and the crimes that were committed against the Czechs. As such, Theresienstadt is a powerful first encounter with the remembrance of Nazi atrocities, reminding visitors that the Jews, while the primary target of genocide, were part of a larger effort at German domination and political repression.

A few miles from this prison camp, however, the memorial to Terezin, the Jewish ghetto at Theresienstadt, tells quite a different story. The brick buildings of Terezin, now a Holocaust museum, constitute the remaining areas of the ghetto to which Jews were sent prior to their deportation to Auschwitz. Unlike the nearby prisoner of war camp, the dominant memory at Terezin is that of Jewish incarceration and suffering. Among the most poignant installations are those that focus especially on the experience of women and children. It was here that Friedl Dicker-Brandeis organized art classes for the children of the ghetto whose fears and anxieties became the subject for drawings and paintings that now hang on the walls of the buildings and have been reprinted in a poignant text, *I Have Not Seen a Butterfly around Here* (Frankova 1993). It is also here where women, faced with increasing food shortages, created meals out of ghetto rations, the recipes for which have recently been published in *In Memory’s Kitchen* (De Silva 1996), a cookbook of Holocaust remembrance that provides another artifact of Jewish women’s lives under Nazi rule. Because women and children’s experience was at the center of Holocaust representations at Terezin, this site offered my first glimpse into the gendered nature of memorial culture, a theme that I would return to during the next five years as I expanded my research from the Czech Republic to Poland and Lithuania.

Between 1996 and 2001, I visited 30 field sites throughout Eastern Europe that have been designated as memorial spaces to commemorate violent acts against Jews both during the war and immediately after the war ended. Among these areas

are former concentration camps, massacre sites, and deportation centers from which Jews were sent to labor and death camps. Approaching these memorial spaces from the subject position of both a participant (Jewish woman) and an empathic observer (feminist ethnographer), I mourned the loss of Jewish life and culture that these sites had been established to commemorate. In my role as participant, I recited the Jewish prayer of mourning, placing stones on the graves and crematoria where Jews and other victims of the Holocaust had died. As a feminist ethnographer, I observed and recorded the remnants, especially of women's lives, that were recalled and remembered in the museums and memorial structures. Thus, at the same time that I deeply felt the pain of a more universal Jewish trauma, I specifically looked for evidence of women's Holocaust experience. To this end, I searched for women's names on memorial plaques that had been placed at massacre sites, I looked for women's clothing and artifacts in museum displays and dioramas, and I sought out images of women in photographs and in the government narratives that provided information on the history and victims of internment.

As the research progressed and the experience at the death camps grew more intense and emotional, my dual roles as participant and observer became more problematic as I grew uncomfortably aware of the moral implications of interrogating gender and genocide for the purposes of research and scholarly productivity. Because my research resides at the intersection of Jewish memory and ethnic extermination, my multiple identities were at times in contention with one another as the ethical responsibility attached to each role had distinct and different parameters. I felt a moral responsibility that required that the victims' suffering become deeply embedded in my own ethnic memory, yet my stance as observer demanded a certain distancing from the horrors of the past. In negotiating the tenuous moral terrain between empathic identification with the victims and the viewing of their dehumanization and death for the purposes of research, I grappled with the meaning of bearing witness, as this form of moral observation is deeply rooted in Holocaust remembrance. During this stage of the research project, my field notes spoke of my confusion over bearing witness to Jewish genocide while engaging in a process of data gathering through which I was creating a personal archive of genocidal history.

### **ROLE CONFLICTS: THE RESEARCHER AS WITNESS AND THE PROBLEM OF DOUBLE VISION**

In what may be the most provocative interpretation of post-Holocaust witnessing to date, Marianne Hirsch (2001) suggested that those who currently view images of Nazi atrocities become witnesses to the crimes. Drawing specifically on late-twentieth-century Holocaust exhibits, Hirsch called into question the moral culpability of the observer who becomes witness to these atrocities centuries later. In particular, Hirsch cited a photographic exhibit in which four women are shown in their underclothes as they are about to be executed. Hirsch suggested that while the camera is in a similar position to that of the gun, the photographer is in the same

place as the unseen executioner. Because the women in this exhibit are “doubly exposed in their nakedness and powerlessness” (p. 233), Hirsch asked,

How are postmemorial viewers to look at this picture and others like it? Where are the lines of transgenerational identification and empathy? Unbearably the viewer is positioned in the place identical with the weapon of destruction: our look, like the photographer's, is in the place of the executioner. . . . Is it possible to escape the touch of death and the implication of murder that these images perform? (Hirsch 2000, 233)

The ethical questions that Hirsch raised have particular relevance for the feminist ethnographer who engages in the viewing and recording of images of death and violence. As a secondary witness to atrocities, the ethnographer enters into an ambiguous moral relationship to her or his subjects. I have characterized this dilemma as the problem of “double vision” wherein the researcher is at once both a witness to crimes against humanity and an ethnographic observer in search of qualitative data. As a witness to crimes against humanity, the researcher enters into a deeply personal relationship with her or his subjects that, according to Dori Laub (1992), often obscures the boundaries between the researcher and the researched, a blurring of subjectivity that is intensified by bonds of gender and ethnic kinship. Historical scholars of the Holocaust have approached this troubling aspect of Holocaust studies from the standpoint of psychoanalytic thought. Dominick LaCapra, for example, suggested that “the Holocaust presents the historian with transference in the most traumatic form conceivable” (1992, 110) wherein the persecution and suffering of the subjects give rise to unconscious feelings and reactions in the scholar. Saul Friedlander described the transference phenomenon as follows:

The major difficulties of historians of the *Shoah*, when confronted with echoes of the traumatic past, is to keep some measure of balance between the emotion recurrently breaking through the “protective shield” and numbness that protects this very shield. In fact, the numbing or distancing effect of intellectual work on the *Shoah* is unavoidable and necessary; the recurrence of strong emotional impact is also often unforeseeable and necessary. (1993, 130)

The ethnographer who studies Holocaust memory is similarly immersed in the historical realism of Nazi atrocities and is thus vulnerable to the emotional strains of witnessing catastrophe within the context of scholarly research. As a Jewish woman studying the extermination of other Jewish women, I therefore found myself vacillating between the extremes of an almost paralyzing empathy and the distancing that my engagement in the research process would allow. Although I never quite experienced the numbing that Friedlander described, my defense against the horror took the form of my use of the camera as a research tool.

In entering the field of memorial culture, I chose photography as a means of data gathering at the Holocaust sites. Photography facilitated the construction of a portable database that could be transferred from the emotion-laden research setting (the Holocaust site) to the comparatively safe haven of my office in the United

States. I videotaped the interior of concentration camp buildings, and I took photographs of the walls and displays, recording images and artifacts of women that I could analyze when I returned to the United States. It was during this phase of the research project—the creation of a photographic archive—that the tensions of double vision began to materialize. In positioning the camera to record the images under investigation, my initial responses of empathy and moral outrage gave way to more pragmatic concerns over lighting, color, and contrast. At these moments in the research process, the subjects became objects to be viewed through the camera's lens, their humanity and victimization secondary to the needs of observation and data gathering.

These potentially dehumanizing aspects of the ethnographic project were particularly pronounced at Auschwitz where the museum photographs are, in many cases, those that originally had been taken by the Nazis to document medical experiments and other forms of torture and deprivation. In retaking these photographs decades later for the purposes of research on collective memory, I question whether I had unwittingly replicated the acts of the perpetrators who had also photographed these women to create an archive of genocidal history. In witnessing the atrocities through the lens of the social scientist's camera, had I, as Hirsch (2000) suggested, become implicated in the original crime, subordinating the memory and pain of the victim to the goals of scientific inquiry? Although I reassured myself that unlike the Nazi perpetrators, my research objectives would restore integrity and respect to the memory of the photographed subjects, I remain haunted by the possibility that I am nevertheless tainted by my role as observer and my use of photography as a data-gathering tool.

In retrospect, I recognize that my ability to create an intellectual space in the midst of traumatizing imagery and artifacts was, to a large extent, dependent on the shifts in perspective that my use of photography demanded. The camera thus became a vehicle for my separation from the subjects, a distancing that while facilitating the management of emotions in the field also challenged the values of empathy and closeness in which much of feminist ethnography is grounded (DeVault 1999; Reinharz 1992). Although feminist methodological approaches have for the most part tended to emphasize closeness rather than distance in the field, a number of feminist scholars (Behar 1995; Davidman 2002) have recently begun to address the difficulties that closeness with the subjects may impose on the research process. The sociologist Lynn Davidman (2001), for example, thoughtfully discussed a struggle to separate her life experiences and assumptions from those of her subjects during a study of newly Orthodox women:

Since a central goal of this project was to convey, as best as I could, the women's attraction to Orthodox Judaism from the perspective of their life experiences and social locations and not from mine, I knew I needed some help in sorting out my personal reactions. Otherwise, these feelings would prevent me from seeing and hearing realities that differed from my own and my research project would be a failure. I worked for over a year with a therapist to separate out my memories and feelings of

being forced by my father to attend services and observe Jewish law and practices, from the realities of the women who made a conscious choice to be in the synagogue every Shabbat morning. (Davidman 2002, 24-25)

For Davidman, the success of the project relied on her ability to separate her intrusive memories and emotions from the research perspectives that she brought to the fieldwork setting. In my own research, the issues surrounding closeness and separation from the subjects emerged in a somewhat different context. I feared that in creating and sustaining emotional distance from the women, I would be at risk of exploiting their pain and degradation. As these fears emerged and reemerged at each site that I visited, I used my field notes both as a therapeutic aid and a confessional where I acknowledged my doubts about the ethics of the study. The self-reflection and introspection that the field notes allowed provided a method with which I constantly assessed the goals and objectives of the work against the exploitation of an atrocity's history to which I felt so closely allied. As I painstakingly recorded the personal conflicts that accompanied my shifts in vision between subjective witnessing and objectifying data collection, other moral issues also began to surface, most notably those having to do with the ethics of victim selectivity in Holocaust research.

#### **ENGENDERING THE HOLOCAUST: THE MORAL COMPLEXITIES OF VICTIM SELECTIVITY IN STUDIES OF GENOCIDE**

Holocaust scholars disagree over whether women and men should be considered two distinct populations in the study of ethnic destruction. Writers such as Ruth Bondy (1998) and Lawrence Langer (1998), for example, challenge the notion that women should be studied separately in historical and social analyses of mass extermination. Although Bondy offered insight into women's experience at Theresienstadt in a volume specifically on women and the Holocaust, she qualified her discussion with the following introductory remarks:

Zykon B [lethal gas] did not differentiate between men and women; the same death swept them all away. Because the same fate awaited all Jews, I approached the writing of this chapter with grave reservations: why should I focus on women? Any division of the Holocaust and its sufferers according to gender seemed offensive to me. This issue of gender seemed to belong to another generation, another era. (Bondy 1998, 310)

In his study of women and suffering, Langer challenged the moral stance of what he perceives as the privileging of one group over another in Holocaust studies:

The pain of loss and the relief of survival remain entwined in the memory of those lucky enough to have outlived the atrocities. All efforts to find a rule of hierarchy in

that darkness, whether based on gender or will, spirit or hope, reflect only our own need to plant a life sustaining seed in the barren soil that conceals the remnants of two-thirds of European Jewry. The sooner we abandon this design, the quicker we will learn to face such chaos with unshielded eyes. (Langer 1998, 362)

In contrast to these points of view, feminist scholars such as Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman (1998), Carol Rittner (1993), and Joan Ringelheim (1998) maintain that the study of women in the Holocaust is not only valid but necessary to redress the absence of women's lives and experiences in the documentation of Holocaust history and the preservation of Holocaust memory. Rittner and Roth stated,

Relatively little attention has been paid to women's experiences before, during or after the Holocaust. Much of the best witness literature by women, the autobiographical accounts of those who survived the Holocaust is out of print or not easily accessible. Much of the most widely read scholarship—historical, sociopolitical, philosophical, and religious—treats the Holocaust as if sexual and gender differences did not make a difference. . . . Thus the particularities of women's experiences and reflections have been submerged and ignored. (Roth 1993, xi)

Ringelheim (1998) argued for the inclusion of women-centered perspectives that focus on "gender-specific" traumas such as sexual assault and reproductive abuse. As such, she asserted that

Jewish men and women experienced unrelieved suffering during the Holocaust, but Jewish women carried the burden of sexual victimization, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, killing of newborn babies in the camps to save mothers, care of children, and many decisions about separation from children. For Jewish women the Holocaust produced a set of experiences, responses, and memories that do not always parallel those of Jewish men. (p. 350)

Having been involved in feminist sociological research for close to 20 years, I welcomed this gendered approach to the study of genocide and was inspired to engage in my own studies of gender and the Holocaust. For this research project in particular, I therefore brought what I construed as a feminist gaze to the study of women's representation, a visual lens through which the memory of women's lives, experiences, and suffering could be explored within the context of public memorials and museums. I was interested in the question of inclusion, that is, the extent to which women were represented in these memorial venues. I was especially drawn to the study of visual content, the way in which women's stories of genocide were told through the imagery and artifacts that have become part of the public memory of Holocaust trauma.

As I became increasingly engaged in the ethnography, however, I became more troubled by the moral tensions that the fieldwork raised. I began to have a greater appreciation for those who objected to a gendered analysis of the Holocaust,

particularly in Eastern Europe where sites such as Auschwitz and Majdenak offer an almost incomprehensible memory of ethnic subjugation and cultural annihilation. These “living” gravesites contain the artifacts, photographs, and human remains of millions of women, children, and men whose memory provides the focal point for the exhibition halls and memorial spaces. Approaching these sites from the perspective of gender representation requires the observer to focus her or his attention primarily on woman-centered imagery and atrocities, a subjective point of view in which the women become larger, more obvious in their degradation, suffering, and humiliation, while the children and men recede into the ethnographic background. My observation and analysis of the visual representations of the tattooed female body is illustrative of this troubling phenomenon.

In a collage-like exhibit at Auschwitz, tattooed limbs of the prisoners are preserved in photographic imagery in which only an arm or leg is visible, highlighting the numbers imprinted on the exposed body part. Among these images, only one limb belonging to a woman is discernable. In this photograph, the female prisoner’s knee is slightly bent, her body in profile, revealing the numbers 23528 that had been burned into her upper thigh. The upper limits of the photograph are bounded by a skirt that appears to have been raised intentionally for the camera. Had this image stood alone, separate from the other, more masculine arms and legs, it might be mistaken for a 1940s pornographic postcard.

As a visual memory of Auschwitz, however, this image of ethnic branding conveys a kind of sadomasochistic eroticism that is absent from the tattooed depictions of the male prisoners.

It is thus the singular image of the woman’s thigh that I chose for my photographic archive, an image that in its gendered representation offers evidence of the objectification of the Jewish female body in Holocaust memory. In reviewing this and other photographs of Auschwitz, I could not ignore the obvious reality that in the pursuit of feminist research goals, I had relegated Jewish men to a place of insignificance. For the purposes of my research, the memory of the men as victims of death and ethnic branding was important only insofar as their bodies offered a background against which to compare the women. Through a process of ethnographic selectivity, I therefore chose which memory to privilege and which to trivialize, a choice that in the face of genocidal histories, raises serious ethical concerns.

Similarly, in the rooms that house the installations of artifacts and Jewish memorabilia—hair, clothing, and religious objects—I became increasingly aware of the absence of the memory of women as religious Jews. In comparison with the men, there is little evidence of their religious lives in the remnants that had been carefully preserved and displayed at the camps. With the exception of Sabbath candle sticks, the religious artifacts in the museums relate specifically to male culture—prayer shawls, skull caps, and phylacteries—that signify the religious observance of Jewish men in prewar Eastern Europe. These observations led me to conclude that while the remembrance of religious genocide is presented primarily through the

frame of male ritual and practice, the memory of ethnic genocide is most often recalled through images of the subjugated female body, photographs of naked and starved women whose memory has come to represent the worst of Nazi atrocities. Thus, in observing and recording the remnants of victims' belongings at memorial sites such as the death camp at Majdanek, my attention was especially drawn to the thousands of women's shoes that have been preserved in massive iron cages that, since the 1940s, have been used to house the clothing and confiscated possessions of the murdered victims.

While Auschwitz is perhaps the best known and most frequently visited concentration camp museum and memorial, Majdanek is the more historically authentic of the two World War II sites. Situated in the southeastern part of the country, Majdanek is surrounded by high-rise apartment buildings that overlook the grounds and buildings of the former death camp. The approach to Majdanek is marked by a huge stone sculpture that according to James Young (1993), is intended to convey a sense of danger that infuses past events as well as present memories. Once inside the camp, however, it is the memory of genocide that becomes pervasive and overwhelming. Opposite the entrance to the camp ground, at the end of a long road, a dome-shaped mausoleum houses the ashes of the 350,000 mostly Jewish victims who died at Majdanek. This powerful gravesite provides a backdrop to the rows of wooden barracks, abandoned guardhouses, and barbed-wire fences that today compose the infrastructure of the museum. In entering Majdanek, perhaps more so than at any other Holocaust site, the visitor is returned to an almost unaltered landscape of horror and death, a geography of remembrance that seems untouched by the passage of history and the intervention of time.

Especially in entering the shoe exhibit, the observer is transported to another time and place where the reality of genocide immediately assaults the senses, as smells of dust and aging leather converge to create a memory of ethnic crimes. Searching among the victims' relics at Majdanek, I immediately looked for female artifacts, recording the way in which the women's shoes stood out, the expensive evening wear and the worn-out sandals making a stark contrast to the less colorful and less evocative men's foot coverings. As I carefully and painstakingly documented the remnants of the women's shoes, I once again became engaged in a process of selection. Through the lens of my camera, the men's work shoes became the backdrop against which the silk high heels and peasant women's boots were framed. Even the numerous and tragic children's shoes were relegated to a place of secondary importance in the photographic compositions that I recorded for analysis. Both at the Holocaust site and then later at home, with the photographs strewn across my desk, I experienced a "crisis" of observation in which I questioned not only my betrayal of Jewish men and children but my responsibility for a research project that by its very nature could contribute to the dissemination of images of women's subjugation and degradation that were already so pervasive in Holocaust memorial culture.

### MODES OF REPRESENTATION: ACADEMIC VOYEURISM AND THE REPORTING OF DATA

The photographs that I took of the shoe installation at Majdanek, along with those of the tattooed and starved bodies at Auschwitz, contributed to a database of atrocity images with which I began the arduous and painful process of data analysis. As I catalogued the hundreds of images that I had collected during my years of fieldwork—coding each photograph according to content, place, and historical context—patterns of representation began to emerge. From the outset, I observed that women appeared to be overrepresented in atrocity images and artifacts at sites such as Auschwitz and Majdanek. Although men are strongly represented in the museum exhibitions and installations, it is primarily women's bodies that form the focal point for the commemoration of atrocities, such as human experimentation, that highlight the violation and desecration of the Jewish body. Having arrived at this disturbing conclusion, I was then faced with the dilemma of how best to report and present these results without using graphic illustrations that, while convincing, would reify and reinscribe these images into public consciousness. Because recent as well as past research on Holocaust representation has contributed to the persistence of a Jewish memory that is characterized by images of passivity, weakness, and victimization, I was especially wary of reinforcing this form of remembrance as such studies invite a kind of observational voyeurism, especially when gender is the focus of the analysis.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) discussed this problem of scientific reporting in her work on Black women and the racialized body. Hill Collins discussed the dangers of using female imagery in academic presentations that are geared toward exposing scientific racism. Speaking specifically of studies of Sarah Bartmann, the so-called Hottent Venus who was exhibited in Paris during the nineteenth century, Hill Collins cited the academic setting as the place in contemporary culture where Bartmann has once again become the object of a racialized and gendered gaze:

A prominent white male scholar who has done much to challenge scientific racism apparently felt few qualms at using a slide of Sarah Bartmann as part of his Powerpoint presentation. Leaving her image on screen for several minutes with a panel of speakers that included Black women seated on stage in front of the slide, this scholar told jokes about the seeming sexual interests of White voyeurs of the nineteenth century. (p. 142)

Hill Collins further described another presentation in which Bartmann's image was used by Black male scholars to illustrate the changing physiology of the Black body. As in the example cited above, Bartmann became the focus of a slide show that according to Hill Collins, "allowed a lengthy voyeuristic peek" at the "raced" body (1990, 142).

In drawing attention especially to the victimized bodies of Jewish women, studies of gender representation of the Holocaust risk promoting a similar form of academic voyeurism that, however unintentional, contributes to a literature on genocide in which the violated Jewish woman is reinscribed in post-Holocaust memory. In surveying studies on gender representation of the Holocaust, the important work of Barbie Zelizer (2001) provides a lens through which to interrogate this dilemma of academic reporting. In her compelling and groundbreaking analysis of woman and Holocaust imagery, Zelizer analyzed the news media's depiction of women immediately following the liberation of the concentration camps. Her survey of atrocity photographs indicates that women were displayed as survivors, perpetrators, witnesses, and victims. Furthermore, Zelizer found that images of women in particular were used to convey the depth of the atrocities and to universalize genocide:

Perhaps because women were presumed to be more vulnerable than men, the brutality both against women and by women was seen as doubly atrocious, challenging gender-based expectations of humanity. Not surprising then, female gender was strategically emphasized in the photographic record of the camps that emerged. (Zelizer 2001, 255)

While Zelizer (2001) concluded that women's victimization became the symbolic representation of Nazi brutality and destruction, her analysis also shows that certain images of women, those that had an especially erotic component, were frequently excluded from the mass dissemination of photographs of women. In particular, she discussed a photograph that shows the corpse of a nude woman whose body was found near her two dead children when the allied troops entered the death camp at Bergen Belsen. Zelizer pointed out that while the imagery of the two dead children was widely circulated, the partially clothed body of their mother was routinely cropped from the newspaper pictures, leading Zelizer to conclude that the mother's image, both beautiful and sexual, violated the more domesticated representations of victimization that were favored by the press:

In these images, bodies of women were strewn alongside those of children, in scenes depicting a kind of warped domesticity. One such image was taken at Belsen, and it appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* and the British journal *Picture Post*. Readers were told that it portrayed a brother and sister who had starved to death. But a corresponding shot, which extended from the children's bodies, revealed that of their naked mother lying on the ground nearby. . . . Why was one photo widely reproduced and the other accompanying it was not? It may have been that the woman of the latter shot—the mother of the dead children—was considered too beautiful and perhaps erotic to be shown. (Zelizer 2001, 257-58)

To illustrate her point, Zelizer included the photograph of the dead woman in her textual analysis. While her argument is strengthened by the inclusion of this provocative image, the dissemination of the graphic illustration nonetheless raises a

number of ethical concerns. Because Zelizer presented this section of the photograph alone, decontextualized from the corresponding images of her dead children or the topology of the death camp in which her body lies, its inclusion in the essay unintentionally offers an eroticized vision of the Jewish female victim that makes possible the kind of academic voyeurism to which Hill Collins (1990) referred.

Given the imagery of sexualized victimization that composes my own gendered archive of Holocaust remembrance, I am torn between presenting the photographic evidence and withholding these images from public view. While Zelizer (2001) appropriately questioned the suppression of one particular image of the maternal body in postwar Holocaust photographs, I would expand the discussion to include an analysis of how the use of such images raises other issues, most notably the sexual exploitation of women's suffering in public remembrance of ethnic trauma and catastrophe. Particularly after doing the fieldwork in Eastern Europe, I have become increasingly concerned about the voyeuristic consequences of bringing these images into the public arena of academic discourse. Because I am speaking for and representing dead women to whom I feel connected by both gender and ethnicity, I am especially cognizant of the ways in which my research shapes the memory of the subjects, women who have been remembered and memorialized essentially as embodied victims of ethnic genocide, nameless, without humanity, religiosity, or individuality. I am acutely aware of my responsibility to sustain a dignified memory of the Jewish women who died at the camps, particularly because I am interrogating the ways in which the subjugation of their bodies has become a form of public record and the vehicle through which the history of Nazi atrocities are remembered and represented at Holocaust sites throughout Eastern Europe. Thus, here and elsewhere in the reporting of my research (Jacobs 2001), I have chosen narrative and description, rather than the images themselves, to convey the brutalized memory of the victims.

## CONCLUSION

Since the inception of the research project, I have time and again returned to Stacey's (1988) question, asking myself whether a feminist ethnography of Holocaust representation is actually possible. In answer to her own quandary, Stacey suggested that while the methods of ethnography preclude the possibility of a totally feminist research process, a "partial" feminist ethnography, in which the moral consequences of representing the other is addressed, is both a worthwhile and necessary scholarly endeavor. In the case of Holocaust memorial culture, I cautiously agree with Stacey's conclusions. The atrocities of the Holocaust must somehow be remembered and conveyed into post-Holocaust memory. It is thus the responsibility of the feminist scholar to interrogate not only the gendered realities of ethnic annihilation but the problems inherent in representing the victimization of women through the lens of sociocultural objectification.

Through an interrogation into my own research process, I have sought to examine the varied and significant ethical issues that have yet to be resolved in such feminist endeavors. I recognize that not all ethical dilemmas are in fact resolvable, and I have learned to tolerate a certain amount of moral ambiguity. Throughout the research process, I made a number of choices that allowed me to complete the fieldwork, even as I wrestled with the dilemmas and issues that I have described here. Most significantly, I chose to complete the research project as originally conceived, maintaining my focus on women while continuing to use photography as a data-gathering tool. I made these decisions in the field primarily because of the startling content of the imagery. Weighing the potential importance of the findings against the ethical considerations of the data-gathering process, I became reconciled to the moral discomfort of double vision. As evidenced by the writing of this article, however, the discomfort persisted well into the analytic phase of the research project and significantly informed my decision to use narrative rather than visuals in the reporting of data. My use of narrative has bearing on the future direction of the study in which I will undertake a more detailed examination of the photographic images. Because the next stage of content analysis will focus primarily on women and atrocity representation, I will be faced with the challenge of selecting words and descriptors that convey the horror of the violence in the absence of a visual presentation that lends credibility and realism to my findings.

Taken together, my emotional experiences and moral difficulties with the Holocaust study have led me to reevaluate my goals and values as a feminist sociologist and the guilt that I bear for the exploitation of Jewish tragedy and the memory of women's suffering. Although I am tempted by the argument that in the pursuit of an unattainable "ethical purity," feminist researchers have made unrealistic demands on themselves and others (DeVault 1999, 38), I remain unsure about my own culpability both in the field and in the world of academic discourse. What I do remain sure of, however, is the value of a self-reflexive methodological approach that insists on the need for moral self-examination within feminist research. While I am well aware that reflexivity in and of itself is unable to solve the myriad and diverse problems of ethnographic observation and reporting, I strongly believe that the intellectual honesty that such reflexivity brings to the field of social science can contribute greatly to a more thoughtful and sensitive analysis of gendered memory. In light of the recent ethnic and racial violence in Bosnia and Rwanda, the self-reflexive approach to feminist ethnography would seem to be particularly important for future studies of genocidal traumas where women have been victimized both for their gender and for their ethnicity.

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