



# **Surviving the Holocaust: A Life Course Perspective (Contemporary Sociological Perspectives)**

*Ronald Berger*

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# Surviving the Holocaust: A Life Course Perspective (Contemporary Sociological Perspectives)

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Surviving the Holocaust is a compelling sociological account of two brothers who survived the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Poland. One brother, the author's father, endured several concentration camps, including the infamous camp at Auschwitz, as well as a horrific winter death march; while the other brother, the author's uncle, survived outside the camps by passing as a Catholic among anti-Semitic Poles, including a group of anti-Nazi Polish Partisans, eventually becoming an officer in the Soviet army.

As an exemplary "theorized life history," *Surviving the Holocaust* applies concepts from life course theory to interpret the trajectories of the brothers' lives, enhancing this approach with insights from agency-structure and collective memory theory. Challenging the conventional wisdom that survival was simply a matter of luck, it highlights the prewar experiences, agentive decision-making and risk-taking, and collective networks that helped the brothers elude the death grip of the Nazi regime. *Surviving the Holocaust* also shows how one family's memory of the Holocaust is commingled with the memories of larger collectivities, including nations-states and their institutions, and how the memories of individual survivors are infused with collective symbolic meaning.

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