REPRESENTING THE HOLOCAUST: GERMAN AND AMERICAN MUSEUMS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

In the last generation, public memorialization of past tragedies has increased like never before. The Jewish Holocaust and the extreme tragedy it brought stands in the middle as perhaps the most commemorated of these tragedies. This increasing frequency of Holocaust memorials and museums both across Europe and in the United States is part of a larger cultural phenomenon of memory, resulting in a landscape of varied and complex Holocaust commemoration.\(^1\) Some, such as Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, assert that the Holocaust is the leading event in invoking global memory and a universalist message of human rights; while others, like Jeffry Alexander, argue that “the intensifying momentum to memorialize the Holocaust indicates a deepening institutionalization of its moral lessons and the continued recalling of its dramatic experiences rather than to their routinization and forgetting.”\(^2\) How is such a terrible and inhumane act represented and why would it be beneficial to include such a narrative in public history? Are there different approaches to displaying this type of history across the world? Why has the Holocaust received so much attention in the museum sector? The same reasons it has received decades of historical study and analysis: it represents an unprecedented level of violence that begs to be researched and remembered. Museums relay this information to the public in a unique and tangible way, with the goal of instilling awareness in visitors of the dangers of the Holocaust and the incidences preceding the event so there will never again be a similar experience.

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\(^2\) Ibid., 524.
This thesis will explore the comparative historicization of Holocaust memory in Holocaust museums in the United States and Germany. Starting in the 1990s, the United States witnessed a process of public commemoration of the Holocaust through the establishment of new museums and public memorials. At roughly the same time, Germany similarly witnessed the building up of a network of new memorials and museums, particularly in Berlin and Frankfurt. These museums represented a new phase of memorialization that went beyond the maintenance of concentration camps like Dachau and Sachsenhausen. This thesis will explore how different national cultures of remembrance are reflected in these new American and German museums. How do the respective national memories of the two countries effect their museum Holocaust exhibits? Does the role that each country played in the Holocaust affect how each country presents the Holocaust? How do different perceptions of race and religion impact how these museums define anti-Semitism? How does each museum define anti-Semitism, and how do these definitions reflect on questions of continuity and change in the long history of Jew-hatred leading up to the Holocaust? Do differing narratives of suffering, endurance and agency inform differing approaches to questions of Jewish resistance in these museums? And do differing national narratives of triumph and defeat inform differing depictions of the end of the Holocaust?

This study will compare four different museums – two German, two American – that have not previously been the subject of monographic, comparative investigation: the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; the Holocaust Museum Houston; the Jewish Museum Berlin; and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt. The oldest of these, the Jewish Museum Frankfurt, was opened in 1988; the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened a few years later, in 1994. The 1980s memory wars, following America’s loss in the Vietnam War, influenced the platform surrounding the development of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Even
though it has never been a part of the mall, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is very much a part of memory wars in the 1980s, one which saw the self-effacing, anti-triumphalist, humble quality of the Vietnam memorial heavily attacked. The desire to present a “win” for America is thus reflected in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My work will develop their findings further by analyzing these museums in broader comparative context. In doing so, I intend to explore the ways in which different memorialization cultures, specifically the way in which museums memorialize the Holocaust, are shaped by national histories and patterns of collective memory.

This thesis will begin by introducing the larger question of the intersection of national histories of the Holocaust, collective memory, and museum practices. It will then detail, in three body chapters, three particular points of comparison between these museums: first, I will look at how each of the museums approach the topic of anti-Semitism historically to determine if the differences are the result of cultural, religious, or economic influences. Next, I will analyze how the museums discuss the question of Jewish resistance to Nazi persecution, and how this might reveal differing conceptions of agency among Jews who are frequently depicted as going “like lambs to the slaughter” in Holocaust memory. Thirdly, I will seek to explore how each museum examines the conclusion of the Holocaust, and whether a tone of despair at genocidal destruction, or Phoenix-like renewal culminating in the establishment of Israel, is emphasized.

It will focus specifically on the text panels within the museums, rather than the architecture or the objects included. The use of text panels yields universality to the study, since each of the four museums utilize text panels to display the main educational information to the public. Text panels and their format are a constant variable across the museums, which allows for a more balanced and accurate comparison. Additionally, text panels are the backbone of the
museums, and are used to both educate visitors and to act as a guide throughout the exhibits. As stated by Weinberg and Elieli, “Textual elements of explanatory character fulfill vital functions in the narrative museum. Only words can provide the visitor with information on the historical background of the visuals and on the context in which they are displayed. When skillfully composed, explanatory panels provide the sequential links between the thematic segment … panel titles also help visitors better understand and internalize the structure of the exhibition.”

The important role text panels play in the museums make them the ideal subject of analysis for this study.

These four museums were selected due to their content, goals, size, opening date, and geographical location. Each of the four reflects in their own way Germany’s and the United States’ commitment to multicultural and pluralist democracy by embracing ultimate “other” for the majority Christians in both countries – the Jew. Even if rates of religiosity are quite different between the two countries today, that Christianity is a central aspect of the identities of the majority populations of these two countries is nonetheless central. One of my concerns in this thesis is to explore the ways in which these countries mediate the history of the Holocaust through their respective national memories. One irony that emerges in such a study is how the United States has museums about another country’s singular crime, where as in Germany – in the country where that crime took place – we have museums committed to the history of the victims of that crime. The United States does not have a national Jewish history museum, and Germany does not have a national Holocaust museum. The two American Holocaust museums have only very little on Jewish history before the Holocaust, whereas the two Jewish History museums in Germany have significantly sized Holocaust exhibits within them. Since no Holocaust museums

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exist in Germany, comparing the exhibits in the German museums to the American Holocaust museums is the closest comparison available. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Jewish Museum Berlin are both large museums, while the Holocaust Museum Houston and Jewish Museum Frankfurt are smaller. This allows for a direct comparison of two large museums and two smaller museums, with one small museum and one large museum per country. Finally, all four museums were founded during an approximate two-decade timeline, which means that they utilize similar technology, methods and content. Following these guidelines allows for a more uniform comparative study.

The Americanization of the Holocaust will be among the concerns of this study. While the concept of Americanization can refer to various processes, such as the Americanization of popular culture or the Americanization of religion, it can also refer to the process of fitting a non-American event within an American narrative. This definition is applicable to the method that occurred in the American museums when creating exhibits on the Holocaust. As Dan Stone points out, critics have accused the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of “subtly reinforcing certain prejudices while simultaneously attempting to counter others … A Holocaust museum, some think, provides a way for Americans to feel that their country represents something other than the embodiment of absolute evil.”

The Americanization of the Holocaust was a conscious decision on the part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and is a concept that can be clearly seen in the Holocaust Museum Houston as well.

This dichotomy of taking a European event and inserting it into an American space creates complications during the design process of the American museums, and can help explain differences between the textual

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4 Dan Stone, “Memory, Memorials and Museums,” The Historiography of the Holocaust, 519.
content of the American museums and the textual content of the German museums. Discussing “Americanization” leads to an inherent comparison of how similar or different this concept is to “nationalization.” What it is to Americanize a memory versus nationalize a memory is an invaluable question, but one that empirically is beyond the scope of this thesis. A broader analysis, one that would explore Holocaust museums in third or even fourth countries, would be better able to tease out what was distinctive to any one country’s memory and what was common to all of them.

Memory studies will also be an important tool when analyzing these museums. After a nation experiences a horrific event like the Holocaust, memory of the experience is different for each person and can also change over time. As Dan Stone argues, Holocaust commemoration is varied and complex because “the Holocaust demands to be commemorated, yet our modern obsession with memory may encourage nostalgia” and result in forgetting rather than meaningful remembrance. Collective memory can affect the way a tragedy is viewed within the national framework. Collective memory is a generally simplified historical memory or shared memories of a specific group, such as how an entire country views an event. It therefore affects the way the event is remembered and the way that future generations of that nationality are educated about that tragedy and ultimately come to view it. Vamik Volkan explores the way that identity is shared and passed down in groups, often through patterns of behavior and nonverbal messages from older generations. This theory helps to understand how a sense of guilt and shame can still exist in German national memory, generations after the Holocaust occurred. Also through this

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process, Jews have inherited a legacy to “never forget,” since having a shared identity through a history of anti-Semitic treatment links even the Jews far removed from the Holocaust. Understanding the process of how certain events are remembered leads to a deeper understanding about the how event is memorialized in a tangible way. For example, this goal of never forgetting the Holocaust is seen throughout the American museums, which could be due, in part, to the large role Jews played in the creation of the museums. This concept that different groups remember events different ways is an important factor to understand when discussing the memorialization of the Holocaust.

Understanding the collective memory of both America and Germany helps to determine the motivation and reasons for how and why the museums are presented in the way they are. Maurice Halbwachs is considered the founding father of contemporary collective memory studies. He argues that memory is carried by individuals, but always has a social component, which makes it difficult to differentiate between individual memory and social memory. For the purpose of this study, social memory can also be referred to as “collective memory,” because they both are defined as memories shared by a certain group. Halbwachs is influenced by Emile Durkheim’s idea of “conscience collective,” in that collective memories are publicly available symbols and meanings about the past. These collective memories are memories that are shared among a certain group due to their shared histories, ideas, and morals. In 1992, Jan Assmann named this concept “cultural memory.” Culture became a way for groups to define a collective and national identity. This shared cultural memory contributes to the development of a national collective memory, and allows groups to differentiate themselves from other groups based on their cultural past.

10 Ibid., 46.
This development in memory studies led to a greater focus on history in relation to collective memory. Timothy Snyder breaks the idea of collective memory into two components: mass personal memory and national memory. He defines “mass personal memory” as involving the ability of many individuals to recall from their own experience an event that was of national importance. For example, people who survived the Holocaust or participated in the Holocaust experience mass personal memory. The second type of collective memory – national memory – is described by Snyder as “the organizational principle, or set of myths, by which nationally conscious individuals understand the past and its demands on the present.”

This type of collective memory will be the focus for this study, since modern-day museum commemoration of the Holocaust is aimed towards groups not directly involved. As Stone argues, “While the national context is not the only one in which Holocaust memory is carried…it is vital in understanding the development of Holocaust commemoration.”

History and group’s shared pasts also contribute to the development of a nation’s collective memory. For example, the role of Germany in the Holocaust creates a national collective memory that is different from America’s national collective memory regarding the Holocaust. While no scholar has discussed the “Germanization” of Holocaust memory, a question this thesis will attempt to address – or at least remain conscious of – is whether Germans remember the Holocaust as they do because they were its perpetrators or because of a certain set of German national memory practices? The question in other words is not just if any perpetrator people would narrate a genocide in their own museums the way Germans do; rather it is a question of the cultural lens through which the past is perceived. When talking about Germanization, it is not enough to say it is their memory because they lost. After all, the South lost the Civil War and yet southern memory of the Civil

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13 Ibid., 510.
War is defiant, marked by conceptions of martyrdom. By contrast, a sense of contrition and a sense that they deserve to have lost marks German national memory. History and its connection to memory studies is an important discipline used to help understand the development of these museums. Understanding the response of each country following the Holocaust provides an explanation for the content of each museum and how each museum is structured.

*Memory: A History* showcases some of the newer developments in memory studies, demonstrating how the use of memory has changed over time. The introduction discusses some of the bigger tragedies of history, such as the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust. As Nikulin states in reference to these events, “The very scale of the committed atrocities makes the understanding of them not only a very different task but also a painful moral obligation, which might require a very different theoretical and practical approach and an entirely novel vocabulary and a set of categories.”

Most pertinent to this study is the essay “Trauma, Memory, Holocaust” by Michael Rothenberg. He argues that focus on memory is a phenomenon that long preceded the Holocaust and shows that the link between trauma, memory and the Holocaust is the outcome of the overlapping of previous histories that came together in the early 1990s, for example the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the global success of *Schindler’s List.* This brought the attention of the Holocaust as a traumatic event to the public, and prompted the increase in research on trauma, memory, and the Holocaust. He ultimately concludes that studying this traumatic event can provide new forms of solidarity in the aftermath.

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As argued by memory theorist Kurt Danziger, “People are undeniably interested in coming to some agreement about events in the past, and they do engage in talk to establish an acceptable version of events. However, this social construction of memory is seldom motivated by a disinterested search for the truth; more usually, the issue is of justifying certain actions, beliefs, interpretations.”\textsuperscript{17} This idea is crucial for understanding the version of collective memory displayed in both the American museums and German museums, because it provides insight into why each museum includes and excludes certain topics. However, it is not the only explanation for how the Holocaust is remembered by each country. What is excluded from memory is important to consider as well.

Michael Bernard-Donalds explores this concept of forgetfulness and memory. He argues that memory texts of the Holocaust cannot be fully credible because memory and forgetfulness cannot be separated. Since they must be considered together, he claims that what is not said about the Holocaust is just as important as what is.\textsuperscript{18} This is a concept this thesis takes into account, because it helps to explain a potential reason for why certain concepts or memories are excluded from the various museums.

Although memory studies have preceded the Holocaust, the Holocaust certainly generated interest in the field. As stated in the introduction of Memory: A History, “Among various approaches to collective trauma especially prominent is the debate on the trauma of the Holocaust, which gave rise to elaborate discourses on Jewish memory, and has become the model for the study of collective trauma and produced a number of remarkable studies.”\textsuperscript{19} One of these aforementioned studies is by a German-born Jewish refugee during World War II: scholar

\textsuperscript{17} Kurt Kanziger, Marking the Mind: A History of Memory, (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 267.
\textsuperscript{18} Michael Bernard-Donalds, Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust (State University of New York Press, 2009).
Geoffrey Hartman. He argues memory that becomes meaningful should be thought of as collective, traumatic, heterogeneous, and testimonial.\textsuperscript{20} The concept of collective traumatic memory as testimony implies that its role in historical narrative is to accurately incorporate the traumatic events of the past with a moral agenda.\textsuperscript{21} This can be seen in both of the American Holocaust museums in this study, for example. Both include videos of direct testimony of Jewish survivors on their experiences during the Holocaust. These videos are intended to demonstrate the cruelty and lasting impact of the Holocaust while urging visitors to speak out against hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism, thus promoting an anti-violence, anti-hatred agenda. Museums in general are important for portraying collective memory, because they often have the responsibility of portraying traumatic events. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Holocaust museum in Houston exist specifically to represent this traumatic event, while the Jewish museums in Berlin and Frankfurt exist to showcase Jewish history and culture, with specific exhibits in the museums focusing on the Holocaust.

While \textit{Memory: A History} provides a good overview of memory studies, other books show the connection between collective memory and history. \textit{The Politics of Regret} looks at collective memory and historical responsibility. Chapter three, “Collective Memory and Cultural Constraint: Holocaust Myth and Rationality in German Politics,” specifically focuses on German collective memory and the transformation of images of the Nazi past.\textsuperscript{22} As Olick argues, political legitimacy relies on collective memory. German collective memory is complicated, and museums are a way to create a coherent and defined collective memory in order to create a history that supports the political power of the state. More specifically focused on national memory and Germany, \textit{In the House of Hangman} argues that German national identity is

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{20} Dmitri Nikulin, \textit{Memory: A History} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 23.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 23.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Olick, \textit{Politics of Regret}, 43.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
compromised by the Holocaust, since Germany played the most shameful role in the event, and looks at how widely the strain of German guilt spread throughout Germany and throughout time. Olick feels that collective memory is often viewed as a singular and static thing rather than a dynamic process that changes over time. The collective memory of Germans often involves shame (preventing acknowledgement) and guilt (requiring acknowledgement).23

Robin Ostow connects the theme of national memories to the museum world in a compilation of essays dealing with how museums incorporate national memory into their narratives. She argues, “National museums often display epic narratives and highlight moments of national grandeur.”24 While none of these museums are “national” museums in the sense that they display their nation’s history, this idea that museums highlight moments of grandeur can be applied to these Holocaust museums as well. For example, the effort to highlight moments of grandeur is clear when looking at the American Holocaust museums and their portrayal of various “heroic” acts committed by the American military, such as liberation of the concentration camps. Additionally, she views the modern, 20th century trend of monument building in Europe as part of an attempt to forge a consensus on how to view the national political past of the nation, especially in divided countries or places home to tragic events. This theory can be extended to museums as well. Museums transitioned from spaces built to demonstrate national power in the 19th and 20th centuries to places more focused on education than displaying a national agenda. However, in this study, both education and a national agenda propel the direction of each museum.

Timothy Luke elaborates further on this idea of museums and the power they have to display specific agendas to the public. He argues that museums have the power to shape collective values and social understandings because they are valuable sites where people go to learn about art, culture, history, nature, science, and technology.\textsuperscript{25} When analyzing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in DC, he concludes, “The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is a superb entertainment vehicle whose apparent success as a simulation ironically can undercut its more important institutional intentions: propagating educational lessons or sparking moments of personal remembrance.”\textsuperscript{26} His analysis is important to consider for this study; however, he fails to include extensive analysis of text panels and instead focuses on the museum experience as a whole. This marks a clear difference between his analysis and the analysis of the USHMM that takes place in this study.

*The Holocaust in American Life* by Peter Novick also discusses how the Holocaust is memorialized in the United States, but does not only look at the USHMM for evidence. He argues that Holocaust memorialization is different from past memorialization of wars because of two possible views. The first relates to trauma. Since the Holocaust was a traumatic event for Jewish Americans, it takes time to fully confront the events that occurred to the Jewish group. However, Novick disregards this view in favor of the collective memory theory. He follows Halbwachs and argues that memory is chosen by the group and there is an institutionalization of memory that occurs with this choice. The Holocaust narrative and memorialization was a way for American Jews to differentiate themselves and became part of the American Jewish identity during the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century. This new construction of American Jewish identity is around when many famous Holocaust museums were built, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial


Museum in Washington DC. Because of overrepresentation of Jews in American media, they had enough influence to start these museums.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, the public rationalized these museums because there was an important lesson to learn. This lesson is clear in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, with the message “never again” confronting visitors upon arrival and repeated throughout the museum.

The study of Holocaust museums and exhibitions has become a point of interest to both public historians as well as the general public in more recent years, with the creation of influential Holocaust museums and Jewish museums in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Therefore, in addition to memory studies, literature on the museums themselves will also be incorporated into this paper. They provide inside perspectives on the goals of each museum, and these varying goals help to explain differences between the content in each museum. Some, such as \textit{The World Must Know: This History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum} and \textit{Tell Them We Remember}, are official books from the museums. Others are examples of literature that analyze various museums, and come close to what this thesis is attempting to accomplish, but leave a gap that this thesis will fill by specifically analyzing the text in each museum to demonstrate the differences in the museums and come to a conclusion of why these differences occur.

Michael Berenbaum combines the study of both the Holocaust and the museum in his book \textit{The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum}. This book gives a historical account of the Holocaust using the stories told in the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and

\textsuperscript{27} Novick, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, 12.
concludes with the main argument of the museum: to remember, and to prevent.\textsuperscript{28} The trend of using museum information as a platform for historical analysis can be seen in other works as well. \textit{Tell Them We Remember}, by Susan D. Bachrach, was published in conjunction with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The images used in the book are from the museum, and the stories told in the book are based on the information in the museum exhibition. Both of these books seek to provide museum-approved information to the public using alternative formats and are imperative to this study because they reiterate the themes in the museums, which are the main primary sources for this analysis. Other works focus on the building process of the museum rather than explicitly focusing on the museum exhibits and relating it to the larger story of the Holocaust.

\textit{Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum} successfully provides an expansive narrative of the history of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.\textsuperscript{29} It is unique because Linenthal discusses not only the end result of the museum, but also lays out the internal process of creating the museum. He talks about issues that surfaced during the approval process, building process, and object selection process. Issues most useful for this comparative study deal with content disagreements regarding exhibits throughout the museum, such as arguments between council members over the extent that Christian anti-Semitism should be included in the exhibit introduction. Awareness of these disagreements often helps support the arguments behind why the American museums and German museums present their Holocaust information differently.

\textit{The Holocaust Museum in Washington} by Jeshajahu Weinberg – the first director of the USHMM – and Rina Elieli serves a similar purpose. First published in 1995, the same year as

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{28} Michael Berenbaum, \textit{The World Must Know: The History of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum} (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 226.
\bibitem{29} Linenthal, \textit{Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum}.
\end{thebibliography}
Linenthal’s work, it also focuses on the planning and construction of the museum. It then goes on to talk about the permanent exhibition, the values and principles of the museum, and the role that education, collection, and research plays in the museum. This book is beneficial for this research process, because it has the advantage of being written by an internal member of the museum. Since it is written by insiders, the perspective is based on the intended official goals and agenda of the USHMM, which is important knowledge to have when comparing the goals of the four museums.

While there is a large focus on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in DC because of its size and popularity, books on other Holocaust museums exist as well. *Ten Years: Remembrance. Education. Hope.* by Avi Kassof and Anita Dector is a book that investigates the development of the Houston Holocaust Museum and includes the Holocaust experiences of Houston residents. *Holocaust Memory Reframed* by Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich comes close to what this thesis will explore. She investigates three Holocaust-related museums: Israel’s Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Germany’s Jewish Museum in Berlin, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. She looks at the museums as a whole and includes architecture into her analysis. Hansen-Glucklich ultimately determines that the museum in Israel is centered on a Zionist, homecoming theme, while the Jewish Museum in Berlin represents a conflicted past of Jewish history. She determines that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum uses a different lens of American-centered history and incorporating objects to diminish the spatial distance from where the Holocaust physically took place. While I will be looking at similar museums, this thesis will compare the difference between German museums and American museums with a specific focus on three themes: how each museum defines anti-
Semitism, how the museums discuss Jewish resistance efforts, and how the museums conclude the exhibit on the Holocaust.

Unlike previous studies that compare museums, this study will analyze the text and captions relating to each theme discussed in the specific chapter. Text panels give concrete information that can be analyzed in a uniform way between each museum. The museums all include text panels to display the most important information in the exhibits, and thus serve as a constant variable that can be universally compared. Chapter one deals with how each museum defines and incorporates anti-Semitism in the exhibits. First, a brief introduction to the term anti-Semitism is discussed. Next, I compare the text panels at each museum that are related to anti-Semitism to determine if the American museums approach the topic differently than German museums, since, historically, Germany had more intense incidents of anti-Semitism and it could thus be a more sensitive topic. Chapter two analyzes how Jewish resistance during the Holocaust is approached in each museum. It begins with the historical context of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust and provides specific examples of the biggest instances of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. I then describe how each museum approaches the issue of Jewish resistance based off of the corresponding text panels. Chapter three examines how each museum approaches the conclusion of the Holocaust. Text panels at each museum are used as evidence for this chapter, similarly to the other chapters. Ultimately, the analysis of these texts and the comparison between different museums will help to answer the previous questions regarding the differences between German and American museums. The conclusion will summarize the findings and offer further analysis of the museums, highlighting the argument that many main differences in the museums are due to differing national memories in addition to the Americanization of the Holocaust.
CHAPTER ONE

ANTI-SEMITISM: THE PORTRAYAL OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE GERMAN AND AMERICAN MUSEUMS

Introduction

This chapter will discuss how the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), the Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH), the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB), and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt (JMF) approach the topic of anti-Semitism. I will compare the text panels at each museum that are related to anti-Semitism to determine how the American museums address the topic differently than German museums since, historically, Germany has more incidents of anti-Semitism and could thus perceive it to be a more sensitive topic. Questions that I will specifically look at include: Do the museums differentiate between anti-Semitism during the Holocaust and other incidents of anti-Semitism? Do the museums only refer to German anti-Semitism? Do the museums specifically define anti-Semitism? Does information on anti-Semitism make up a large or small part of the museum as a whole? Do different perceptions of race and religion impact how these museums define anti-Semitism?

By looking at these questions, a conclusion can be drawn for why the American museums and German museums differ in their content and focus, beyond the fact that they are two separate museum types (specifically Holocaust museums in both American cases, and broader Jewish museums in Germany). Questions of the Americanization of the Holocaust in the American
museums, combined with the differing national memory of the Holocaust for the two nations, I will contend contributes to the greatest differences in outcome.

This history of anti-Semitism that culminated in the Holocaust will be analyzed in chronological order for each museum to support this argument. While the German museums have the goal of educating visitors on Jewish life throughout the span of German history, the American museums have a goal of specifically educating visitors on the Holocaust as a moment apart from the narrative of German history. Because no Holocaust museums in the strict sense exist in Germany, this is as close as one can get to comparing how each country discusses the Holocaust in a museum setting. The results will be compared and contrasted to determine why the museums included or excluded certain information about anti-Semitism.

Origins of Anti-Semitism

Prejudice against Jews has existed for two thousand years. This status quo of prejudice continued over time and paved the way for the largest display of anti-Semitism in history. How do the museums in this study explain the origins of anti-Semitism that led to this tragedy? How far back in history does each museum discuss anti-Semitism? How is the theme of Christianity woven into this narrative? Is this theme different between the German and American museums?

The very first panel of the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB) is titled *A Journey Through Time*. The panel states that the earliest evidence of Jews in Germany was in a decree by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 321 CE: “This exhibition examines the changing relationship between Jews and non-Jews and shows the effects of prejudices and racial hatred. It not only describes the religious and secular traditions of Judaism, but also explores German history and culture, which were influenced in many ways by Jews.”

Because the JMB is a museum about Jewish history in Germany as a whole, and not specifically the Holocaust, the goal of the

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museum is to look at all aspects of Jewish life over the centuries, and not just focus on the prejudices against them. The first panel that discusses anti-Semitic acts focuses on the pogroms of 1096, resulting from the Crusades. This panel, *Hardening Prejudices*, provides a brief history of the prejudice against Jews. It does not shy away from the influence of Christianity on these incidents. The pogroms in 1096 at the start of the Crusades were fueled by a Christian agenda, which the panel makes clear. Next, it jumps to anti-Jewish legislation that resulted from a 1215 church conference in Rome. This legislation mandated a uniform for Jews including a pointed hat and yellow mark on their clothing.

The Jewish Museum Frankfurt (JMF) also briefly discusses the history of anti-Semitism. Text panels highlight the 1096 pogroms and discuss the animosity of Christians towards Jews. A timeline of anti-Semitism also provides a history of distinguishable events, such as Jewish Emancipation in the 1830s. Overall, the JMF and JMB have a similar approach of highlighting the actions of Christians when discussing the origins of anti-Semitism.

This focus on the negative role Christians played historically in establishing anti-Semitic laws and regulations could be attributed to general knowledge that the average German visitor holds when visiting the museums. An interview with a German educator who teaches at the University of Munich, as well as at the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European-Jewish Studies, expresses the fact that the history of anti-Semitism is discussed in classrooms, especially in how it relates to the Holocaust. As Lars Rensmann states, “They intend to learn about anti-Semitism, including the anti-Semitism of their grandparents, a taboo topic in the debates of former decades which focused on Hitler’s guilt or anonymous bureaucratic modern structures which were held responsible for Auschwitz.”

Germans, therefore, are more likely to be accustomed to this fact,

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and it is not too shocking to the German visitors. Museums, while imparting new knowledge on visitors, try to keep it within the frame of what the public is already accustomed to in order to keep visitors receptive to the information. Therefore, it is an easy choice to include this information in the museums, especially because their goals of both the JMB and JMF are to show the entirety of Jewish history in Germany, and not just focus on the Holocaust.

In a book published by the Jewish Museum Berlin, about the Jewish Museum Berlin, the purpose of the museum is discussed. It states, “As opposed to being a museum of local history, it became a national museum that aimed to present the history and culture of German Jewry in its entirety. Curators developed a permanent exhibition featuring thirteen historical segments that describe the history of Jews in Germany up to the present day, starting with the very first source materials from 321 CE.”

The Jewish Museum Frankfurt has a similar purpose. As referenced in the introductory pamphlet of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt: “It (the museum) endeavors to present the changing relationship of the Jews with their social environment as seen on the background of their historical evolution in Frankfurt, of the formative elements of culture and religion but also those of discrimination and hostility.”

Clearly, both of these museums look at Jewish history as a whole in order to determine the relationships between Jews and non-Jews, not just the relationship between Jews and non-Jews during the Holocaust. As stated by the JMF, looking at the history of Jews in Frankfurt offers, “many insights into the historical development of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews” and the goal of the museum is to “promote the possibility of a dialogue for its predominantly non-Jewish visitors, elucidating the relationship between Jews and their environment against the background of the historical development in Frankfurt and highlighting the key elements of culture and religion, discrimination and

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33 “Jewish Museum Frankfurt,” Introductory Pamphlet, 1.
animosity.”

Their focus on this is extraordinarily different from the approaches of the American museums. Despite their different focuses, each museum includes similarities that make them sufficient to compare. They all discuss anti-Semitism in some way and include the Holocaust and the aftermath as well.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), by contrast, glosses over the origin of anti-Semitism. The earliest reference of Jews is a text panel at the start of the museum titled Before the Holocaust. It explains that 9 million Jews lived in Europe before the Holocaust, and that Jews had lived in Europe for almost two thousand years. The text jumps to the 1880s, where it notes that anti-Semitism began taking on racial overtones, which is different than the previous religious-based anti-Semitism. A 15-minute video titled “Anti-Semitism” is available to watch in a shielded theater-room. It briefly touches on the history of anti-Semitism, and distinguishes between earlier historical anti-Semitism and the extreme new level of anti-Semitism under Hitler. While 15 minutes is a relatively long time for a museum video, the fact that it is optional and shielded, with the information excluded from the text panels, is significant and supports the idea that the museum shies away from the history of anti-Semitism and its relation to Christianity in order to avoid upsetting museum visitors.

Overall, the lack of explanation of the origin of anti-Semitism in the USHMM museum is noteworthy. It is a Holocaust-based museum, rather than a Jewish history museum, which could account for the difference. But for a museum dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism, an argument for a greater focus could still be made. Another explanation lies in the heavily Christian American demographic; according to a study surveying 35,000 Americans across all 50 states,

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more than 70% identified as Christian in 2014.\textsuperscript{35} Jewish hatred can be traced back centuries. Christians often instigated this hatred, as argued by Beller who states, “The emergence and success of antisemitism in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries cannot be understood without recognitions of the large part played by a centuries-long heritage of Christian doctrinal hostility to Jews.”\textsuperscript{36} He goes on to argue that Christian anti-Semitism was an inherent part of Christianity after Paul, around 67 AD, and continued to become more prevalent during the Crusades and the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, where Jews were accused of being Christ-killers and thought to ritually murder Christian children.\textsuperscript{37} Perhaps the USHMM shies away from displaying this information to prevent offending its mainly Christian visitor population. Lilenthal sheds some light on the motives of Project Director of the USHMM Berenbaum, during the initial building process. As stated in \textit{Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create Americas Holocaust Museum}, “He (Berenbaum) was quite comfortable with the process he called the ‘Americanization’ of the Holocaust, the process by which memory is assimilated by cultures…the study would have to be told in a way that would be meaningful to an American audience.”\textsuperscript{38} This “Americanization” of the Holocaust seems to have included a diminution of Christians’ role in anti-Semitism, as it does not fit with the American-friendly theme. The main funding for the USHMM comes from the government, since it is a nationally funded organization: In 2014, Congress granted the museum a year-long fund of $52,385,000.\textsuperscript{39} Between government funding and private donations, the USHMM clearly has the money to create and run a well-thought out museum. Why, then, do

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\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 13.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Linenthal, \textit{Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum}, 44.
\item \textsuperscript{39} “President’s Budget Request,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Fiscal Year 2015. https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20140310-fy15-pres-budget-proposal.pdf
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they not include even a brief introduction to anti-Semitism and the role Christians played in this development?

In conjunction with the fact that most visitors are Christian, perhaps the museum designers did not want to challenge Christian visitors at the very start of their visit. According to Ivan Karp, museums articulate social ideas, which he defines as “The set of beliefs, assumptions, and feelings in terms of which people judge one another and which they sometimes use to guide their actions.” Clearly, the main idea in the USHMM is about the Holocaust. Including the introductory connection between Christianity and anti-Semitism would leave more pious visitors with a bad perception of the museum as they walk through. However, including information such as this could have helped steer patrons away from ahistorical interpretations of Holocaust history. While it is encouraged by the museum for visitors to draw their own conclusions, it is hard to predict the more obscure parallels that visitors draw, for example a pro-life enthusiast proclaiming that Americans who ignore what occurs in abortion clinics are just as bad as Germans who turned a blind eye during the Holocaust, or a women who told her students that if the Jews had only chosen the correct religion, God would have been more attentive to their prayers. If this connection between Christianity and early anti-Semitism was clarified at the start of the USHMM, would these conclusions still have been drawn?

Compared to the USHMM, the Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH) provides more information on the history of Jews and anti-Semitism before the Third Reich. The first two text panels in the museum, titled *Keeping Traditions: Jewish Origins and the Diaspora* and simply *Anti-Semitism*, describe the history of Jews in Europe. *Keeping Traditions* states, “The history of the Jewish people began over 4,000 years ago. The Bible tells us of a covenant between God and

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the Jewish people starting at Abraham, who is known as the first Jew… The Romans conquered Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, in the year 70 CE, and Jews were dispersed throughout the rest of the world. Jews quickly migrated to every corner of the European continent.42 The panel describes a brief Jewish history, and then moves into the origins of anti-Semitism in the next panel.

In the panel Anti-Semitism, it states, “A racist German journalist named Wilhelm Marr coined the term ‘anti-Semitism’ in 1879. But anti-Semitism – discrimination and hatred against Jews – is many centuries older.”43 It then goes more into detail about the history of anti-Semitism, and a timeline is provided to mark significant events in Jewish history in relation to prejudice. The earliest date, 306 in Spain, marks a document proclaiming that marriage between Christians and Jews was prohibited. Other countries, such as France and Italy, are also mentioned on this time line. For example, in 535, France ruled that Jews were not allowed to hold public office. Compared to the USHMM, the HMH mentions the involvement of Christians slightly more, which could be due to the fact that the HMH is not nationally funded. Textually, the USHMM fails to mention this topic at all, while the HMH mentions it once. However, the overall lack of the Christian role in the origin of anti-Semitism could be contributed to the location of the HMH. Located in Houston, a city with a large, and dedicated, Christian population, perhaps the Jewish founders did not want to upset the Christian visitors, similarly to the USHMM. This is seen in the previously mentioned text panel Keeping Traditions. This panel is revealing, as it shows a political move on the part of the museum to detach Christians from their own historical anti-Semitism by convincing Christians that Jews should not be hated, but rather viewed as God’s “first love.” At one point, I hoped to be able to use demographic data as a

way to verify my arguments about intended audiences. However, not all of the museums provided such data, and rather than engage in partial analysis, in the name of consistency, I had to leave that part of the investigation aside.

A major difference between the museums is that the HMH is the only museum of the four analyzed to define anti-Semitism in writing. As scholarly debates demonstrate, the history of anti-Semitism is a complicated subject and hard to define. For example, a book designed to be an introduction to anti-Semitism cannot even provide a condensed and all encompassing definition. It states:

Antisemitism is a hatred of Jews that has stretched across millennia and across continents; or it is a relatively modern political movement and ideology that arose in Central Europe in the late 19th century and achieved its evil apogee in the Holocaust; or it is the irrational, psychologically pathological version of an ethnocentric and religiocentric anti-Judaism that originated in Christianity’s conflict with its Jewish roots – and achieved its evil apogee in the Holocaust; or it is a combination of all of these. It all depends on how one defines the term.44

The museums struggle with the same issue, and have even less space to define it than a book does. By giving visitors primary information but no exact definition, it allows the visitors to create their own understanding. While this may be seen as embracing pluralism in museological practice, it also leaves open the door to drastically unintended outcomes, as Novick’s anecdotal examples demonstrate. Another major difference between the American and German museums is the inclusion or exclusion of the Christian role in the creation and continuation of anti-Semitism, and one which can be supported by the argument that the difference is largely due to the Americanization of the Holocaust that occurred when creating the American museums.

Americans in general are more pious than Germans, with higher rates of church attendance and

This helps explain why the American museums are more hesitant about including the connection between Christianity and anti-Semitism. Another substantial difference is the amount of overall history included in the museums on the origins of anti-Semitism. The HMH does not limit its Jewish history specifically to Germany, but includes other areas and their treatment of Jews as well.

**Anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages**

During the Middle Ages, prejudices against Jews continued to grow throughout Europe. Incidents such as the Black Plague and accusations of Blood Libel increased the hatred of Jews among many European Christians. How does each museum address anti-Semitism during this eventful era of history?

The German museums include more extensive information on anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages than the American museums, largely because the goal of both museums is to show the entire history of Jews in Germany, and not just focus on the Holocaust. The JMB approaches anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages in various ways, such as through drawings, statues, and historical events. For example, the exhibit includes a pig drawing, known as Judensau (Jews’ sow), which is an offensive caricature of Jews during the Middle Ages. Since pigs are considered unclean in the Jewish religion to both touch and eat, placing pigs in close association with Jews was offensive and degrading to the Jewish population. The picture shows Jews wearing pointed hats, which the text panel notes was enforced by the Christian population. This is another example of a German museum displaying the role that Christianity played in the initiation and continuation of anti-Semitism in Germany. The personified religious figures, Ecclesia and Synagoga, also exemplify the JMB’s willingness to acknowledge this theme of religious

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hierarchy. The museum even includes example statues of the womanly figures, showing the subservient pose of Synagoga, who is blindfolded and holding a broken lance, while Ecclesia is donning a crown. This metaphor indicates that Christians believed their faith to be dominant, and the Jewish faith to be inferior.

Work restrictions during the Middle Ages are a focus in this museum as well. A panel dedicated to the topic, titled *Work Restrictions*, talks about how many prejudices against Jews have roots in the Middle Ages, exemplified by the work restrictions placed upon them at the time. For example, Jews were not allowed in guilds, which eliminated their opportunity to become craftsmen. This led to many Jews becoming traders, doctors, moneylenders, and other professions that did not require membership in a union.

The concept of Jews as scapegoats is also discussed in the JMB. A panel titled *The Jew as Scapegoat* talks about instances of perceived blood sacrifice by the Jews, using the example of a Christian boy named Werner in 1287, and the killings of Jews all over Europe that resulted from this claim. The Black Death in the 14th century, and the resulting violence against Jews, is discussed here as well. A panel later in the exhibit emphasizes these facts again. Titled *Horror Stories*, it states, “In the late Middle Ages, slander against the Jews was used as a pretext for plunder. It was said that Jews stabbed the host in Christian churches to ‘torture Christ’s body anew.’ Jews were said to kill Christian children so their blood could be used in rituals that would heal sickness. It was claimed that Jews had poisoned drinking wells in order to spread the plague. These accusations against the Jewish population stirred up emotion and provoked anti-Jewish attacks and killings.” 46 The JMB clearly emphasizes the wave of anti-Semitism that occurred during the Middle Ages and the various reasons that provoked this wave.

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The JMF highlights the ghettoization of Jews in Germany during the Middle Ages. Christians forced Jews to live in separate quarters of the city due to their religious beliefs. A panel titled *Frankfurt Jews and Jewess* emphasizes the discrimination of Jews through dress. In Frankfurt, for example, Jews were required to wear a yellow star on their chests from the late 15th century until the 18th century.

In the section *Animosity toward Jews*, the museum explains Christian attitudes towards Jews during the Middle Ages. It emphasizes the degrading caricatures of Jews associating with pigs, similarly to the JMB. Additionally, it reveals the opinion of Christians that Jews practiced Blood Libel, or the ritual murder and desecrating the Eucharistic Host. The JMF also discusses the transition from religious anti-Semitism in the early Middle Ages to the combination of religious anti-Semitism and economically motivated anti-Semitism. For example, Christians began accusing Jews of fraudulence and trickery, and blamed Jews for price rises.

While the American museums focus on the Holocaust, the “long prelude” to it in the history of anti-Semitism would arguably still be important to include. There are certainly many scholars who contend that previous acts of anti-Semitism are a necessary part of pondering the roots of the modern anti-Semitism of the Holocaust. According to Kenneth L. Marcus:

> A complete definition of anti-Semitism must account for its ideological, attitudinal, and practical qualities; its continuities, discontinuities, and repetitive structure within Western cultures; its connections to analogous phenomena; its chimerical quality; and its role in the construction of individual and collective Jewish identity. That is to say, it must account for the participation of anti-Semitic discourses and practices in the construction of the “the Jews,” individually and collectively. This process is equally critical to the understanding of anti-Semitism and to the development of means of countering what might be called anti-Semitism’s chimerical core.

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48 “Jewish Museum.” 29.
Marcus’s argument that in order to understand anti-Semitism fully, one has to understand how past incidents of anti-Semitism apply. Since the USHMM is considered a narrative museum, anti-Semitism during the Middle Ages would arguably be an important section to include in this narrative. And indeed, the USHMM covers this “prehistory” of anti-Semitism in the optional movie. This indicates that either the museum founders did not think the information was important enough to deserve its own text panel, or that they made a choice not to offend certain museum visitors. Museum council member Martin Smith recalled being told that, “the museum had to be careful not to make people feel too guilty” in regard to the relationship between Christianity and anti-Semitism.\(^49\) According to council member John Pawlikowski, precautions, such as avoiding stating this relationship upfront in text panels and only demonstrating these examples in the optional 12-minute film, were taken to avoid angering “Christians coming in, who have not had any preparation…because you wind up…losing your audience.”\(^50\)

The HMH includes a few sentences about anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages, all within the first few text panels in the museum. In the panel Anti-Semitism, it states, “Depending on the times and circumstances, they prospered and found social acceptance, or they experienced persecution and isolation.”\(^51\) Then the panel delves into the various ways Jews were discriminated against, like being referred to as “Christ-killers,” and highlighting their expulsion from England, France, and Spain in 1290, 1306, and 1492, respectively. It also points out that even though Christianity developed out of Judaism, anti-Semitism among Christians was rampant.\(^52\) This was the only museum that referenced this fateful connection between Jews and

\(^{49}\) Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 227.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 225.
\(^{51}\) Anti-Semitism. Text Panel. Holocaust Museum Houston, 2016
Christians. Overall, the information on anti-Semitism during the Middle Ages is lacking in the American museums.

**Anti-Semitism and the Enlightenment**

Taking place in the 18th century, the Enlightenment promoted freedom, human rights, and equality before the law and religious tolerance. Up until this point, the anti-Semitism against Jews had been based purely on religious intolerance. During and after the Enlightenment, however, this anti-Semitism transitions into a racial hatred of Jews.

The JMB chose to discuss Jews during the Enlightenment by focusing on one Jewish Enlightenment scholar: Moses Mendelssohn. Moses Mendelssohn was a Jewish Enlightenment thinker who played an influential role in promoting the Enlightenment ideas of equality and religious tolerance. According to the text panel, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment*, he, “shaped the culture of his age more than any Jew before him – and lived strictly by the laws of the Jewish religion. Later generations regarded Mendelssohn as the first German Jew, but when he died in 1786, Jews were still subject to degrading social laws.” Overall, the section focuses on the progress made by Mendelssohn, rather than any discrimination he experienced during this time. The mention of “degrading social laws” that Jews experienced throughout the Enlightenment period is referenced only in passing at the start of the Enlightenment exhibit. Perhaps the German museum wanted to focus on a story with a positive outcome for Jews, even if the outcome occurred amidst other anti-Semitic influences. The final panel points out the unusual nature of his success. Titled *A German Socrates*, it states, “In his work as a German philosopher, he wrote in German and was read by Christians. For a Jew at the time this was highly unusual. The recognition he received was, by extension, enjoyed by his fellow Jews – for

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many of them he opened a path to modern society.\textsuperscript{54} Ending on a positive note, the Enlightenment portion only briefly acknowledges the unusual success of a Jewish scholar, considering the prejudices surrounding Jews at this time.

The JMF also discusses Moses Mendelssohn when covering the Enlightenment in Germany. As he was the most successful German Jewish Enlightenment thinker at this time, including him is an obvious choice. However, the JMF also addresses other aspects of Jews and the Enlightenment as well. For example, the museum has an \textit{Enlightenment and Education} section where the influence of education on diminishing prejudices against Jews is discussed. A mock school-room is set up, and the panels explain that Christian “reform schools” and liberal Jewish schools founded during this time had goals of dismantling prejudices and encouraging tolerance and understanding for other religions.\textsuperscript{55} In general, the JMF addresses education during the Enlightenment more than the JMB. In addition to the reform and liberal schools, the museum touches on the “Das Philanthropin,” an Israelite founded school in Frankfurt that offered both Jewish and non-Jewish children an education. The museum notes, however, that this push for tolerance did not make a significant difference in the daily treatment of Jews. The Judengasse fire of July 1796 is used to prove this fact. As stated in the museum, a debate ensued over whether to integrate Jews into the community or build another ghetto. Clearly, there was no consensus on how the Jews should be treated in the German community.\textsuperscript{56}

Discussing the Enlightenment period through the story of a single person is an interesting similarity between the two German museums. Why would they choose to look at this era through only one main lens? This could be because the museums wanted to focus on something positive that happened for a Jew during the Enlightenment era to vary the theme of Jewish struggle that is

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{A German Socrates}. Text Panel. Jewish Museum Berlin. 2015.
\textsuperscript{55} “Jewish Museum Frankfurt am Main.” Prestel Museum Guide. (Prestel, 2002) 62.
\textsuperscript{56} “Jewish Museum.” 65.
interwoven throughout the museum. A Jewish Museum Berlin guidebook emphasizes his accomplishments as well, which supports this idea that the museum focused on Mendelssohn to show positive Jewish achievements.\textsuperscript{57} Since the JMB is demonstrating Jewish history within German society, it makes sense that they would show Jewish contributions. Mendelssohn’s accomplishments are a perfect way to highlight these contributions, and in a way alleviate some of the Christian German guilt for fostering anti-Semitism throughout their history. Additionally, without the story of Mendelssohn, the Enlightenment exhibit panels would be similar to the surrounding panels on Jewish history, talking about the daily lives of the Jews and their relationship with the Christian community. Approaching the Enlightenment from the perspective of one Jew adds a personalized dimension to an exhibition.

The Enlightenment specifically is not written on any text panel in the USHMM. In the video on anti-Semitism, the time-period of the Enlightenment is discussed very briefly, and it is an insignificant part of the museum as a whole. Since it is a Holocaust museum, the focus is on the era directly leading up to the Holocaust, rather than on anti-Semitism in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.

Similarly to the USHMM, the Enlightenment is not discussed at length in the text panels at the HMH, but is referenced in a single sentence in the text panel \textit{Anti-Semitism}. It states, “In eighteenth-century western Europe, the liberalizing trend of the Enlightenment changed the status of the Jews. Its ideas about human equality, religious toleration, and civil rights enabled Jews to become almost equal citizens of the law. Eastern Europe, however, lagged far behind the West in accepting such views.” Only in the HMH is the question of Eastern Europe addressed, however briefly.

\textsuperscript{57} Clemens Beeck, \textit{Daniel Libeskind and the Jewish Museum Berlin} (Jaron Verlag, 2011), 68.
Modern Anti-Semitism

When prejudice against Jews first began, it was not based off of a racial component, but a religious one. However, by the 1800s, a shift in anti-Semitism began to take place. Not only did many Christians hate Jews because of their different religion, they also started to despise them for racial reasons. A culmination of events during the 19th century prompted this change, including the rise of Social Darwinism, the publishing of the book The Protocols of the Elders of Zion – which insinuates that the Jews conspire to destroy the non-Jewish world, and they are thus the cause of everything bad that happens in the world - the Industrial Revolution, and the gradual lifting of restrictions against the Jews, which led to Jewish economic success. This fostered resentment among the less successful non-Jewish population, and resulted in a shift from the previous form of religious anti-Semitism – where Jews were hated because they were not Christians – and racial anti-Semitism – where Jews were hatred purely because of their ethnicity. This switch is significant because it was the basis for the anti-Semitism of the Holocaust.

Influenced by racial anti-Semitic politicians such as Georg von Schönerer and Karl Lueger, Hitler developed his extreme racial anti-Semitic views that resulted in the elimination of 6 million Jews. Without this transition from religious to racial anti-Semitism, Hitler’s views would not have been as normalized and the Holocaust may never have occurred. How do the museums address this shift from religious anti-Semitism to racial anti-Semitism?

In the panel German and Jewish at the Same Time 1800-1914, the desire of Jews to be both German and Jewish is established, and the resulting wave of anti-Semitism during the start of the German Empire is made clear. The new wave of anti-Semitism resulted in a new form. As stated in the text panel Modern Anti-Semitism:

In the last third of the 19th century, there arose a new form of apathy towards Jews. Parties and associations, pamphlets and flyers, sermons and readings spread hatred and prejudice against Jews. Whether bemoaning the collapse of a speculation bubble, economic liberalism or the corruption of morals: the anti-Jewish propaganda made Jews responsible for all the ills of society – and demanded the repeal of emancipation.

This new movement – anti-Semitism – was rooted not in religious, but in racial distinctions. Anti-Semites claimed that the Jews were a “parasitic, inferior race,” which differed from the “Germans” by virtue of innate and unalterable characteristics.\(^{59}\)

This section of the museum is detailed. The room discussing modern anti-Semitism is filled with examples of this anti-Semitism in quotes around the wall. For example, “The power of money lies in the hands of the Jews’ Catholic newspaper 1848,” “Violent riots attacking Jews in 80 locations 1848,” and “Plundering of Jewish homes in Wurzburg following a rise in beer prices 1873.” The room also has an interactive activity asking questions such as, “Should Jews be granted the same rights as citizens?” and “Can a Jew be a German?” and “Are the Jews ready for emancipation?”

The JMF does not emphasize this switch to a new form of anti-Semitism as clearly as the JMB. A timeline in the museum titled Anti-Semitism looks at the progression of anti-Semitism from the time of Jewish Emancipation in the 1840s to the rise of National Socialism in the 1930s. The timeline mentions that anti-Semitism turned from religious discrimination to racial hatred, exemplified by the fact that even Jews who converted to Christianity were still inferior.\(^{60}\)

Both German museums distinguish between these two types of anti-Semitism, which is important when discussing the Holocaust later on in the museums. By clearly indicating the difference between religious and racial anti-Semitism, visitors can see the transition that ultimately led to either acceptance or apathy among the German population towards Hitler’s

\(^{60}\) “Jewish Museum Frankfurt am Main.” Prestel Museum Guide. (Prestel, 2002) 76.
racially grounded anti-Semitic policies. It is a significant turning point in anti-Semitic history, and should be properly discussed in any context surrounding Jewish history and anti-Semitism.

While the USHMM never specifically mentions the phrase “Modern Anti-Semitism,” the switch to this type of anti-Semitism is acknowledged in one of the first text panels in the museum. The panel titled Before the Holocaust, which serves as the main background panel to the Holocaust, states:

Jews had lived in Europe for almost two thousand years. Depending on where they lived and when, they experienced persecution and isolation, or prosperity and social acceptance… By the 1880s, Jewish life was in ferment throughout Europe. Though Western Jews had gained equal rights under the law, religious anti-Semitism reappeared, with political and racial overtones.61

This shows that the new anti-Semitism was more racially based, but fails to note that it had been religiously based in the past. Unless the visitor previously knows this information, the subtly of the text in this panel would probably not be noticed. This act could be intentional on the part of the museum, since the focus is the Holocaust, and racial anti-Semitism rather than religious anti-Semitism motivated the Holocaust. Perhaps the USHMM deemed this information on religious anti-Semitism either too obvious or not crucial enough to explicitly include in the text panel.

Similarly to the USHMM, the phrase “Modern anti-Semitism” is not specifically stated in the text of the HMH. However, the concept is made clear. In the anti-Semitism timeline, one event referenced is the writing by German philosopher Karl Eugen Duhring in 1881. The quotation used, “The Jews are to be defined solely on the basis of race, and not on the basis of religion,” identifies this change between the old and new version of prejudice against Jews.62 A caricature of Jews depicted as thieves and drunkards further emphasizes the new wave of anti-Semitism that revolved around race.

The American museums fail to discuss the switch to modern anti-Semitism as thoroughly as the German museums. This could be because the German museums have more space allotted to the history of Jews in Germany preceding the Holocaust, and chose to expand on this topic because of its significance. By only dedicating a small portion of the museums to this topic could indicate that the American museums do not think this is as important for understanding the Holocaust, as long as visitors know the type of anti-Semitism during the Holocaust. However, the historical transition between types of anti-Semitism is important to acknowledge because it provides the visitor with a deeper understanding of anti-Semitism and a greater understanding of the Holocaust. Showing various examples of anti-Semitism throughout history demonstrates that, “however deeply ingrained the prejudice against Jews might have been in the European, and especially Central European, mentality, this did not mean that this mindset could not change, or at least lead to other outcomes other than ‘full-blown’ antisemitism.”

Displaying the transition in Germany from religious anti-Semitism to racial anti-Semitism shows the unique path that eventually resulted in the rise to Nazi power and the subsequent loss of millions of Jewish lives.

**Anti-Semitism and World War I**

During World War I, Jewish anti-Semitism briefly decreased as Jews fought valiantly for Germany. However, after Germany’s loss, Jews again became the scapegoats for the nation. As summarized by Stephen Beller, “1914 saw the beginning of what has been called the ‘general crisis and Thirty Years War of the 20th century,’ which culminated in the genocidal crimes and ultimate defeat of Hitler’s Third Reich.” He goes on to explain, “The waning days of the Central Powers, as they faced economic crisis, social catastrophe, military defeat, and political destruction, saw a return to antisemitic policies and attitudes that pointed both backwards to pre-

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64 Ibid., 78.
emancipation ‘Jew laws’ and forwards to the Nazis.”⁶⁵ After the war, anti-Semitism was prevalent in Germany, and the economic disaster of inflation and the “degenerate” modern culture that developed in response to the modern times were blamed on the Jews. According to Adolf Hitler, Jews were responsible for Germany’s loss by poisoning the nation, the same way that cancer poisoned his mother in 1907. In November 1923, Hitler organized a revolt in Munich to end this “Jewish” oppression of the Germans.⁶⁶

The JMB addresses anti-Semitism during World War I the most thoroughly of all the museums analyzed. The panel, *Equality in Danger 1914 – 1933* describes how Jews fought for Germany during the war with the hopes of becoming equal citizens. Immediately following the war, these rights were gained. The constitution of the Weimar Republic banned religious discrimination in legal service, and eliminated the legal restrictions on Jews. However, the Jews were again used as scapegoats during the Weimar Republic. Germans blamed the Jews not only for losing the war, but also for the worldwide economic crisis.

In the JMF, Jews during WWI are discussed in a positive light because of their focus on tolerance of Jews. The text explains that Jews eagerly volunteered to serve for Germany, with the hopes of being integrated into German society following a victory. The museum mentions that their religious customs during the war were respected, and Rabbis held patriotic speeches both at home and on the battlefield. However, this pause in Jewish harassment did not last long, and soon the Weimar Republic proclaimed that Jews were avoiding their duties, despite the fact that this was a false claim.

Anti-Semitism during WWI is not discussed in the text within the USHMM. Again, this is probably because the main focus of the museum is on the Holocaust and the events that

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⁶⁶ Ibid., 82.
immediately preceded the tragedy. However, World War I and the outcome played a large role in increasing anti-Semitism in Germany. Economic catastrophes following World War I, with the economic recession in Germany starting in 1927, the Wall Street Crash in 1929, and the Central European financial collapse of 1931, led to the rise of Hitler and the National Socialist Party. Beller states, “The major cause of Nazi success was the abject failure of the established political parties in Germany to find a solution to Germany’s economic woes.” After the Nazis gained complete power with the Enabling Act on March 23, 1933, their focus on anti-Semitism became clear. Thus, in order for the Holocaust to be properly understood, more background information should be included in the USHMM.

This can be applied to the HMH as well. No mention is made of Jews during WWI. The text panels jump right into the WWII era, with the first panel after Anti-Semitism skipping all the way to the National Socialist era, titled Germany under Hitler: A Police State. This exclusion of information follows the trend of the HMH to exclude specific instances and details of Jewish discrimination and violence in the text panels. The only, limited, specific examples are seen in the timeline. Since both the USHMM and the HMH focus on the era of World War II, it makes sense that they would not heavily incorporate anti-Semitism during World War I into the main exhibition. However, it is odd that no information at all is included, since treatment of Jews during and after World War I and the general destruction in Europe set the stage for the extreme anti-Semitism during the Third Reich. The designation of Jews as scapegoats following World War I combined with the failure to restore economic normalcy to Europe, including Germany, all contributed to Hitler’s rise of power and acceptance of his extreme anti-Semitic views.

68 Ibid., 86.
Anti-Semitism during the Third Reich

Anti-Semitism during the Third Reich represents the culmination of centuries of Jewish prejudices. As described by a Jewish victim of Nazi anti-Semitism, Chaim Kaplan writes, “It is a hatred of emotion, whose source is some psychopathic disease. In its outward manifestation it appears as physiological hatred, which sees the object of hatred as tainted in body, as leapers who have no place in society.”69 This extreme anti-Semitism went far beyond religious or political ideological hatred, and was based on a physiological and racial nature. The focus of the USHMM and the HMH are specifically on this era of anti-Semitism, and thus naturally dedicate a large percentage of the museum to this topic. Despite this difference, the information included in each museum about this topic can still be compared by analyzing the text panels that fall under the category of “anti-Semitism during the Holocaust.” All four of the museums include content that covers anti-Semitism during the Holocaust, and examining the text panels is a useful way to determine which museums approach the topic more directly, and why this difference might occur.

Once Hitler took power, the lives of Jews became increasingly worse. In the JMB, this transition is discussed in multiple text panels. For example, the panel *The End of All Hope* describes the breakdown of the Weimer Republic and the April 1, 1933 boycott. This is a significant event in German history because it was the first time a nationwide and state-sponsored attack against Jews had been carried out by the Nazi party. However, the panel does not acknowledge this important fact. It simply states, “On April 1 the Nazis called for a boycott of Jewish-owned shops, medical practices and solicitors offices.”70

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The next panel, The *Beginning of the End*, fails to go into much more detail. Its main focus is the law passed on April 7, 1933, that consigned Jews to “permanent retirement.” This “Law to Reestablish Civil Services” prohibited Jews from working in the civil service sector, and forced all Jews currently working in this area to quit.

The final panel on this subject, *National Socialism 1933-1945*, indicates the changes that took place with the rise of Hitler. It states that Jews were deemed “racially inferior” and new restrictions and laws were applied to the Jewish population. Subsequent panels then discuss the persecution and deportation of the Jews.

One interesting aspect of this museum is the comparatively little time it spends discussing the anti-Semitic measures that took place during the rise of National Socialism, and how this led to the systematic elimination of Jews. The American museums focus more on this topic in general. While this could be due to the differing focus of the German versus American museums, it could also be due to other reasons as well. For example, shame and guilt could play a role in this glossing-over by the German museums. The collective national memory of Germans regarding the Holocaust includes a shameful aspect, which is why the German museums might not focus as much on the terrible events and laws that led up to the Holocaust. A collective sense of shame for the apathy among the Germans at this time for not recognizing and acting out against these anti-Semitic measures could be something that the German museums do not want to highlight. As Jeffery K. Olick mentions in *The Politics of Regret*, “The avoidance of mentioning anti-Semitism as racism, although it contains some instrumental elements, is an excellent example of a taboo in different contexts, but the avoidance is remarkably consistent. In the early years, anti-Semitism in the present was quite simply denied.”\(^7\)

\(^7\) Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, 47.
If the public does not want to be reminded of something tragic like this, the museum might avoid expanding on these details to prevent upsetting the German public.

The JMF focuses more heavily on the rise of National Socialism, and even has a room dedicated to the topic. The museum notes that the anti-Semitic feeling increased between the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler, and many laws were passed to exclude Jews in various ways from German society. Additionally, the museum acknowledges that Jews had to change their middle name to either “Sarah” or “Israel,” and had to wear the yellow star to distinguish themselves from non-Jewish Germans.72

Individual panels are dedicated to significant events during this time, with titles such as, *The April Boycott, Exclusion from Public Life, The Nuremberg-Laws, Arianisation, Identification and Expulsion, The November Pogroms, The End of The Communities, Deportation, and Extermination*. These text panels are each about one or two paragraphs long, and show the progression of the anti-Semitic violence under Hitler, culminating in the extermination of millions of Jews.

Since the USHMM is specifically focused on the Holocaust, most of the text panels in the museum that are related to anti-Semitism are in the time frame of the rise of the National Socialist Party in Germany. Most significant events leading up to the Holocaust receive their own individual text panel with multiple paragraphs. For example, the April 1 Boycott, which was brushed over in the German museums, has a whole panel called *Boycott*, where it explains the significance of this event. The Nuremberg Laws and the question of “Who is a Jew” are also individual topics discussed. The panel *Who is a Jew*, gives great detail on the complexity of this subject. It states:

With the passage of the Nuremberg Laws, the German nation was divided into Aryans and Jews. Yet the term “Jew” remained undefined. Since the laws included measures for criminal persecution, the need for a clear definition was urgent. By November 14, 1935, the term “Jew” embraced two categories:

A “full Jew” was defined as any person with three or four Jewish grandparents, and certain persons with two Jewish grandparents.

A “part Jew” was considered not a Jew but a person of “mixed Jewish blood.” The “part Jew” category of Mischling – literally, “mixed-breed” – was defined further.

A “first degree” Mischling, or half-Jew, was any person with two Jewish grandparents, who did not practice Judaism and was not married to a Jew.

A “second degree” Mischling, or quarter Jew, had only one Jewish grandparent.

German society was now divided according to Nazi racial theories. There were Aryans and there were non-Aryans: Jews and Mischlinge.  

This detail on what constitutes a Jew is not seen in any of the other museums analyzed, either German or American. Another thorough panel, From Citizens to Outcasts, chronicles in detail the exclusion of Jews from German society between 1933 and 1939. This panel explicitly states the progression of anti-Semitism during the rise of National Socialism. Another panel, The Night of Broken Glass, covers Kristallnacht in detail.

The HMH does not go into quite as much detail, but includes panels of specific anti-Semitic events such as the April 1 boycott, the Nuremberg Laws, and Kristallnacht. The HMH picked the main defining events to discuss in the text, since the museum is not as large as the USHMM and thus does not have as much space to discuss other acts of anti-Semitism in detail, such as the “scientific” rules for who qualifies as Aryan and who is a Jew.

Clearly, the American museums focus more heavily on anti-Semitism during the Third Reich than anti-Semitism in any other point in history. They are Holocaust museums, dedicated to telling the story of the Holocaust and warning against an event like this from ever taking place again. It is therefore necessary to include extensive information on anti-Semitism and the anti-

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Semitic laws and actions that took place surrounding the Holocaust. In the German museums, anti-Semitism during the Holocaust is present, but no more so than anti-Semitism in other eras of history. This is probably due to the fact that the German museums do not want to focus a majority of their museums on the Holocaust, but rather Jewish history as a whole. Possibly this is to show that Jewish history is so much more than just the Holocaust, and the German museum founders want to stress this in their museums. Another possible reason is that they do not want to bring up the feelings of shame and guilt that can come up when discussing the Holocaust.

**Conclusion**

The main differences between the American and German museums, such as the lack of information on anti-Semitism before World War II and the lack of reference to Christianity’s role in anti-Semitism pre-World War II and during World War II in the American museums, and the German museums’ comparatively less focus on anti-Semitism during the Third Reich than the information available in the American museums, can be attributed to the Americanization of the Holocaust in the American museums and the shameful national memory felt by Germans influencing the content of the German museums. Both the American and German museums have to balance facts on anti-Semitism with how receptive the visitors will be to this information. In the American museums, for example, committee members were concerned that including information on the negative role of Christianity in the creation and perpetuation of anti-Semitism would lead to angry and unresponsive visitors. The German museums have a similar problem with displaying information on anti-Semitism during the Third Reich, as many Germans still feel connected to the Holocaust in some way, either because of personal connections or because of a nationality connection of being German.
Overall, the German museums tend to follow a similar format for discussing anti-Semitism. Both the JMB and the JMF discuss the origins of anti-Semitism, and do not hesitate to include the role that Christians played in developing this prejudice. In comparison, the USHMM and HMH did not include a lot of background information on the history of anti-Semitism. This could be due to the more narrow goals of the USHMM and the HMH. When the USHMM was being built, complaints from the Jewish community expressed thoughts that the rich history of Judaism would be ignored or overshadowed as more attention was paid to the Holocaust. Additionally, the focus on memorializing the Holocaust in the United States would cause funds to be diverted to memorial projects that should be more appropriately used to aid Jews still suffering from anti-Semitism in foreign lands, or in the area of education to strengthen Jewish identity. However, others, like the American Jew Yaffa Eliach, who survived the Holocaust and created the tower of photographs in the USHMM, believed Jews had discovered the “vast educational and financial potential of the Holocaust.”\(^7^4\) Lobbyists for excluding the history were victorious, but overall both American museums could have talked more about anti-Semitism increasing in the 30 years or so leading up to the Holocaust.\(^7^5\)

The German museums tend to play down the violence against Jews during some eras and focus more on the positive outcomes for specific Jewish persons to distract visitors from feeling guilt and shame. Overall, the JMF tends to focus more on the accomplishments of Jews in Germany. For example, they discuss Moses Mendelssohn during the Enlightenment, and also have a video installation about the contributions made by Jews in Germany to the fields of politics, science, business, and the arts. In the section on WWI, the museum notes that Jews

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valiantly fought for Germany, and that their religious customs were honored during this time, especially on the battlefield.76

Why does the museum focus more on the accomplishments of Jews rather than how the German society held them back? The German museums want to draw attention to the highlights of Jewish history as a way of honoring the Jews, rather than focus entirely on the depressing parts of Jewish history, such as the Holocaust. The museum potentially wants to “make-up” for the centuries of Jewish discrimination by providing a space for the successes of Jews throughout history. Additionally, the museum wants to distract from the wrongdoings of German society throughout history by focusing visitors on Jewish life without bringing German guilt into the equation. A final analysis is based on the notion that acquiring visitors is what drives museums. If the subject matter is too offensive to the target audience, in this case German citizens, then the museum will not grow as an organization. While mostly the government and private donations fund the museums, appealing to visitors is important for the museums. Without visitor approval, positive press will not circulate, and the museums will not survive. The potential offensive nature of a museum narrative focusing on the prejudice against Jews throughout time is both depressing and could be seen as offensive towards Germans, if they still share a feeling of shame or guilt for their ancestors’ actions.

The German museums also tend to repeat certain information about Jews multiple times throughout the museum. For example, the panel Work Restrictions and Typical Professions both provide similar information on Jewish occupations being limited by prejudiced laws. This could be to either enforce the importance of these restrictions or because the museums want to focus more on the non-violent results of anti-Semitism.

The USHMM and HMH follow a similar pattern when discussing anti-Semitism, focusing briefly on the history of it and then diving into the atrocities committed against Jews during the Third Reich. While I expected the HMH to be similar to the USHMM, but on a smaller scale, one thing I noticed was that the phrasing in some places was extremely similar. For example, in the panel *Before the Holocaust* in the USHMM, it states, “Depending on where they lived and when, they experienced persecution and isolation, or prosperity and social acceptance.” In the HMH, the panel *Anti-Semitism* states, “Depending on the times and circumstances, they prospered and found social acceptance, or they experienced persecution and isolation.” The structure and phrasing of these sentences are strikingly similar. This demonstrates the similarities of the American museums in both the information displayed as well as the format in which it is displayed.

Finally, the only museum to offer a specific definition of anti-Semitism is the Holocaust Museum Houston. The other museums provide examples of anti-Semitism, but do not explicitly define the term. This could be because the term “anti-Semitism” can refer to many different ideas, ranging from religious prejudice against Jews, to racial prejudice against Jews, to outright violence against Jews. By not including an exact definition, it allows visitors to draw their own conclusions about the meaning of anti-Semitism. In this way, museum visitors can form their own definition, which is important knowledge they will take away from the museum.

Overall, the German museums had a similar approach when discussing anti-Semitism. They both noted the origins of anti-Semitism and discussed the progression of this hatred throughout history. The American museums, on the other hand, dove right into anti-Semitism during the Holocaust, with very little background information. This is in part due to the differing

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focus between the German and American museums, but is attributed to what the nation’s population wants in the museums. Humans are fascinated with tragedy, and memorializing tragedy has become popular in recent decades. Americans have little problem focusing a whole museum on the tragedy of the Holocaust, possibly because America came out victorious. This heroic national narrative associated with the Holocaust makes it less painful to commemorate than for the German nation. Their national narrative is based on shame and guilt regarding the Holocaust, and so by making museums that discuss this topic focused on Jewish history as a whole, it softens the guilt for the average visitor. While their goal is not to make the visitor feel less guilty about the Jewish Holocaust, the museums strive to make sure visitors are receptive to the information. Drawing attention away from indications of blame in the narratives strengthens the reception of the museums. Ultimately, this national narrative clearly plays a role in how each museum portrays anti-Semitism.
CHAPTER TWO

JEWISH RESISTANCE: THE REPRESENTATION OF JEWISH RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST IN THE GERMAN AND AMERICAN MUSEUMS

Introduction

Jewish resistance efforts against the Nazis during the Third Reich is an important topic in the Holocaust narrative because of its symbolism of strength, persistence, and extreme dedication to survival in a time of horror and death. Amidst the depressing and disheartening museum text panels explaining the progressively increasing inhumane treatment of Jews during the Third Reich, a few panels describing resistance efforts offer a slight sliver of solace to the visitors in an otherwise brutal museum experience.

The topic of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust is a broad subject, spanning the period of the Third Reich and manifesting in organized, independent, underground, and traditional forms, such as violent revolts and uprisings against the Nazis. Efforts of resistance began at the start of Nazi anti-Semitism in the early 1930s. When the Nazi party took power in January of 1933, they ordered anti-Jewish boycotts, book burnings, and enacted anti-Jewish legislation, such as the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. Efforts to combat the Nazi party agenda first began with the organization of Jewish groups to unite Jewish Germans and speak for Jewish interests within the Nazi state, such as the Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden, translated in English as the National Representation of German Jews, which was founded September 17,
1933. Jewish resistance efforts intensified during Nazi reign and culminated in violent protests and attacks against the Nazis in ghettos and concentration camps in the 1940s. In Nazi-occupied territory, Jews contributed to the resistance efforts by providing supplies to Jewish prisoners in the ghettos. Within Nazi Germany, other resistance efforts took place. Escape from Nazi rule or hiding within the Third Reich demonstrates a generally independent and silent form of Jewish resistance, although sometimes attempts at mutual support were made – often in Berlin, where Jews in public could blend in because of the higher population than small towns. For example, one German Jewish resistance group organized in 1942, The Chug Chaluzi, helped Jewish children escape. In another form of resistance, organized uprisings in ghettos show a more violent and unified effort to fight Nazi power. While the organized attempts had no long-term success, they offered hope to the Jewish prisoners and provided them with a purpose, which is something that was missing from their lives in the ghettos. Others fled from the ghettos and escaped through the woods, joining the Soviets. In the camps, Jews attempted to resist as well, but with the little strength they had it was a futile effort. Three organized attacks occurred at the camps in August 1943, October 1943, and October 1944. These efforts to attack SS guards at the camps resulted only in the deaths of the resisters. Although a few lucky Jews resisters survived the war, most were killed in the rebellions or in the resulting manhunts. Despite their failure to make any real difference for Jews during this time, these resistance efforts still represent a more hopeful aspect of the Holocaust, demonstrating the incredible strength of the Jews in face of severe persecution.

How do museums weave this multifaceted narrative into their exhibits while keeping with the theme of Jewish devastation during the time of the Holocaust? Do they disperse the information throughout the museum or concentrate it within a specific section? Do the museums define what “Jewish resistance” encompasses? Do the museums have separate sections dedicated to Jewish resistance or are resistance efforts incorporated throughout the museum? Are specific groups or people discussed as part of resistance efforts, or is the subject of resistance a more general focus within the museum? What are the major similarities and differences between how the museums approach the topic? How large of a role does Jewish resistance play in each museum?

Answering these questions helps provide evidence to the argument that the biggest differences between the American museums and the German museums can be explained by the Americanization of the Holocaust and the influence of national memory on the museum narratives. Instead of taking the information of Jewish resistance in the museums at face value, analyzing what aspects of the topic are included and excluded from the museums leads to a deeper upstanding of why the American museums and German museums possess differences. Demonstrating this through using the lens of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust shows that the Americanization of the Holocaust and German national memory influences multiple aspects of the museums, including less prominent story lines such as Jewish resistance, in comparison to major parts of the Holocaust, such as anti-Semitism or life in the camps. Using Jewish resistance during the Holocaust as a comparative theme strengthens the argument that the German museums and American museums are different due to the two aforementioned reasons because it includes examples of supporting evidence, such as the exclusion of violent rebellions in the
camps and ghettos in the German museums compared to the American museums’ large focus on these rebellions.

In order to answer these questions, the text panels relevant to the topic of Jewish resistance will be analyzed to determine the differences between the German and American museums. Ultimately, the major differences between the German and American museums are the differing focuses on organized versus independent resistance and the location in which the resistance efforts discussed took place. These differences can be explained by the Americanization of the Holocaust in the American museums and the differing national memories between the American and German nations.

**Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust**

Prominent Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg argues that the Jewish reaction to their persecution played a large role in the destruction of the European Jews. After centuries of persecution during which Jews survived by “placating and appeasing their enemies,” Hilberg narrowly understands Jewish resistance as acts of armed, violent rebellion against their oppressors, thus not including acts such as surviving underground or participating in daily acts that went against Nazi instructions, like smuggling food or medicine into the ghettos, as resistance. As Hilberg asserts, this two-thousand-year-old approach could not be unlearned, and the Jews were helpless during the Holocaust, going like “lambs to the slaughter.” A resistance fighter from Vilna, Abba Kovner, originally used this phrase as a call to resistance. He proclaimed on January 1, 1942, “We will not be led like sheep to slaughter. True we are weak and helpless, but the only response is revolt. Brethren, it is better to die fighting like free men

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than to live at the mercy of the murders. Arise, arise with last breath. Take courage!”85 This mentality was spread throughout the ghettos and inspired other leaders, such as Polish-Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum in the Warsaw Ghetto. Expressing his frustration at the lack of Jewish resistance, he approached the Jewish Social Relief Organization and asked, “How much longer will we go ‘as sheep to the slaughter’? Why do we keep quiet? Why is there no call to escape to the forests. No call to resist?”86 The perceived lack of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust stems from various reasons, such as fear of death by outwardly resisting the Nazis, fear of harming other members of the Jewish community by the subsequent consequences of defying Nazi rule, such as when family and friends of resisters were attacked by pure association, and belief that diligently working and following Nazi directions would keep them safe from death.87 As Ringelblum explains this thought process of the Jews that did not outwardly fight the Nazis, “They [the Jews] did this in order that the others might live, for every Jew knew that lifting a hand against a German meant endangering Jews in another city or possibly another country…to be passive, not to raise a hand against the Germans, was the quiet heroism for the plain, average Jew.”88 These less seen, more independent acts were acts of resistance as well, which more modern historians argue.

In more recent decades, prominent historians in the field, such as Yehuda Bauer, Michael R. Marcus, and Patrick Henry, contest this view that Jews went to their death “like lambs to the slaughter.” Yehuda Bauer extends the definition of Jewish resistance to include non-violent and violent actions, and can be, “any group action consciously taken in opposition to known or

87 Ibid., 369-370.
88 James M. Glass, Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust: Moral uses of Violence and Will, 32
surmised laws, actions, or intentions directed against the Jews by the Germans and their supporters.”89 He includes armed and unarmed (spiritual, educational, religious, smuggling of food and medicines) as active resistance, because he believes the word “resistance” in itself implies some sort of activity.90 Marcus expands further on this, and believes that the intentions of the resisters and how they saw their actions affect whether or not an action was an act of Jewish resistance.91 Henry asserts that resistance includes not only violent resistance but non-violent as well, because resistance against the Nazis took many different forms.92

The more obvious types of resistance, such as violent uprisings that took place in the ghettos and camps – for example the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 or the Treblinka revolt of 1943 – were armed, violent, and organized by underground resistance groups. Over the course of the war, armed revolts broke out in over twenty ghettos.93 Other types of resistance occurred both inside and outside the ghettos and camps. Berlin and Frankfurt, for example, had the highest numbers of German Jewish resisters during the war, and underground resistance efforts created and distributed newspapers and pamphlets to dispute the Nazi propaganda.94 Despite the isolated position of German Jews in the Third Reich, it is estimated that between two and three thousand Jews, out of the two hundred thousand Jews living in Germany during the outbreak of war in September 1939, were involved in the anti-Nazi underground movement.95 Groups, such as the Herbert Baum Group, started anti-Nazi activities when Hitler first came to power in January 1933. In May of 1942, the Baum group attempted to set fire to a Nazi propaganda exhibit in

89 Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, 137.
91 Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, 137.
93 Wistrich, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, 81.
94 Dieter Kuntz, “Resistance in Nazi Germany and Austria,” *Jewish Resistance against the Nazis*, 350.
95 Wistrich, *Hitler and the Holocaust*, 84.
Berlin. Although they failed and were executed, it demonstrates an effort by German Jews to resist the Nazi rule.

Other forms of more independent, non-violent resistance occurred as well. For example, some Jews committed suicide rather than die at the hands of the Nazis. Others resisted in subtle ways, such as pasting “poison” stickers next to Hitler’s Mein Kampf in card catalogs at libraries. Doctors at a Jewish hospital in Berlin saved hundreds of lives by issuing medical deferments to patients and even performing unnecessary surgeries to postpone deportations of patients to the extermination camps. Daily acts of independent resistance occurred in the ghettos and camps as well, by smuggling in extra food, taking illegal pictures, participating in spiritual resistance to maintain their humanity, creating illegal archives to document the experience, and holding onto Jewish traditions and prayers in secret. Even though activities including religious study and education were forbidden, most ghettos had synagogues and religious study groups that operated secretly, allowing Jews to keep their mental stability alive. These silent acts of resistance further demonstrate that the Jews did not go “like lambs to the slaughter.” As Bauer explains, “The absence of armed revolt during the early war years does not mean that the Jews everywhere unquestioningly accepted the fate decreed for them by the Nazis. It means that until the truth about the death camps leaked out in 1942, resistance was nonviolent, designed to conserve lives and make them as meaningful as possible.” Ultimately,

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97 Kuntz, “Resistance in Nazi Germany and Austria,” Jewish Resistance against the Nazis, 354.
98 Kuntz, “Resistance in Nazi Germany and Austria,” Jewish Resistance against the Nazis, 361.
these attempts of organized and independent, violent and non-violent, acts are defined as Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. To what extent do these museums discuss this complex topic?

In each of the four museums, the topic of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust is approached in different ways. In the four museums, different instances of Jewish resistance are also covered. Organized resistance, independent resistance, and various specific instances of resistance are highlighted in the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB), Jewish Museum Frankfurt (JMF), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), and the Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH).

The two major differences between the German museums and the American museums in regard to Jewish resistance during the Holocaust is their focus on types of resistance and location of where the resistance efforts take place. The German museums display more panels of individual efforts of resistance, all of which took place outside of ghettos and concentration camps. While they include a few instances of organized resistance, the information is slim, with few details, and the examples are entirely about groups outside of the ghettos and camps. The American museums, on the other hand, focus much more on acts of organized resistance that took place within the ghettos and concentration camps. Most acts of resistance included in the American museums, whether individual or organized, occurred at one of these locations.

The USHMM and HMH are not constricted to exclusively discussing the lives of German Jews, which could thus account for the differences in focus of the locations of the revolts between the American and German museums. Since many ghettos and camps existed outside of the German nation, the lives of German Jews in these camps technically are not part of the “Jewish life in Germany” theme. However, the camps and ghettos were in German occupied
territory at the time, and since German Jews existed in the camps and ghettos, the German museums would be justified to cover the topic of Jewish resistance within the ghettos and camps.

One reason why they avoid this is because many German Jews fled or hid during the Holocaust, and many of the revolts in the ghettos and camps were orchestrated and executed by Jews of other ethnicities, such as Polish Jews. For example, the Jewish Fighting Organization, founded by Polish Jews, was instrumental in organizing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.\textsuperscript{102} However, that is not to say that Jews were not involved in the uprisings. German Jews existed in the ghettos and camps, and participated in rebellions along with Jews of other ethnicities. For example, during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, a German Jew named Hoch fought and perished when his stakeout spot caught fire.\textsuperscript{103} Another potential reason is because the museums do not want to draw attention to the cruel role the Germans played in shutting down these resistance efforts, since most visitors identify nationally as German. In primary accounts of the revolts, the Germans are referred to as murderers, such as an account by resistance fighter Leon Najberg of the Warsaw Ghetto when he states, “The defenders are passing over from one street to another through garrets and recapturing places which are threatened by German bandits. The murderers have introduced flamethrowers into action. Houses in the ghetto are set on fire.”\textsuperscript{104} Primary sources such as this would have to be used to discuss these rebellions, highlighting the cruelty of the Germans and inflicting a sense of shame among the German visitors. However, despite this, and despite the fact that the German museums mainly focus on the lives of Jews in Germany, excluding the mention of any Jewish revolts in the ghettos and camps, especially ones that included German Jews, leaves a large hole in the Holocaust exhibit.

\textsuperscript{102} Gilbert, \textit{The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War}, 486.
\textsuperscript{103} Gilbert, \textit{The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War}, 561.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 367.
German Museums and their Presentation of Jewish Resistance

The Jewish Museum Berlin is successful in including various forms of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. Letters, stories of specific families and people who went into hiding, paintings that show defiance through art, and information on specific resistance groups are a few examples of how the JMB incorporates independent Jewish resistance into their museum. Only one panel, titled Resistance and Attempts to Survive, discusses the resistance efforts in general. An excerpt from this panel states, “Individuals made a variety of protests, from civil disobedience to organized actions. The Nazis forced all Jews to wear a yellow star but some Jews refused. Others carried out acts of sabotage during forced labor, or wrote leaflets. The attempt to flee or go into hiding was another act of self-assertion, as was the more drastic decision to commit suicide.” 105 This panel sums up the main options for individual resistance during the Holocaust.

Other specific instances of independent resistance are also included. For example, suicide was a form of individual resistance during that time. Many Jews felt they would rather take their own life than suffer the severe anti-Semitism and subsequent mass murder of Jews during the Third Reich. As the text panel The Last Letter demonstrates, suicide was an option for Jews rather than being taken by the German government. Martha Liebermann, a Jewish woman in financial trouble in the early 1940s, overdosed on Veronal rather than succumb to the eminent fate of torture by the Nazis. 106 In contrast to suicide, the JMB includes instances of outright protest against the anti-Semitic laws. For example, a panel titled Protest! explains how in 1935, a man named Matirn Friedlander had a flag made of the Jewish colors of blue and white with a

Star of David in the middle, and hung it out of his window to protest the Nuremburg Laws, which were passed in September of that year.\textsuperscript{107}

Emigration is another aspect of independent resistance that the JMB includes. The panel \textit{Thoughts of Escape}, shows the feelings of a Jewish artist during this time. He states, “I wish myself some hundred thousand miles away from this city, from this country. Where to could one escape?”\textsuperscript{108} It then goes on to explain that Ludwig Meidner tried unsuccessfully to emigrate to Palestine in 1933, and was finally successful emigrating to England in 1939. These examples of individual resistance all clearly take place outside of the Jewish ghettos and concentration camps, despite the wide array of independent acts of resistance outside the ghettos and concentration camps. This is true for the Jewish Museum Frankfurt as well.

While the JMF discusses emigration of Jews and the preparation they took to emigrate by taking language classes, training, and seeking advice for social and financial support, it barley touches on the resistance in the ghettos and camps. The JMF clearly states that the Jews were unprepared for this extreme treatment against them, and most did not actively resist.\textsuperscript{109} Like the JMB, the JMF allocates more space to the education of independent resistance rather than organized acts, and the resistance efforts that are the focus are the acts that occurred outside of the concentration camps and ghettos.

Perhaps this is because the JMB and JMF do not want to focus on any sort of large-scale failure of the Jews during this time. Maybe the museum designers did not want to draw attention to yet another display of power by the Germans against the Jews. By talking about the organized resistance in the ghettos and camps, the outcome would have to be included as well. This outcome, which generally involved harming or killing Jewish resisters, highlights the cruel

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Thoughts of Escape}. Text Panel. Jewish Museum Berlin. 2015.
\textsuperscript{109} “Jewish Museum Frankfurt am Main.” Prestel Museum Guide. (Prestel, 2002) 83.
nature and sheer power of the Germans, while also illustrating the weakness and unsuccessfulness of the Jewish resisters.

Additionally, since the museum is focused on Jewish history, the museum founders did not want to risk people interpreting the failed attempts at organized resistance as something that could be blamed on the Jews themselves. While the idea of a visitor blaming Jews while attending a Holocaust exhibit sounds outlandish, as Peter Novick points out, it happened at the USHMM, and could easily happen at the German museums as well. He states, “Indeed, visitors draw their own conclusions, extract their own lessons…A teacher from an apostolic church school told the students she was shepherding through the museum that if the Jews of Europe had recognized Jesus as the Messiah, ‘the Lord could have heard their prayers a lot more.’”  

The museum creators of the JMB could have been trying to prevent an outcome like this.

The development of the JMB itself was a controversial process, and was concluded under the instruction of W. Michael Blumenthal, a German Jew whose family suffered in the Holocaust. It was ultimately determined to be its own entity and not an extension of the Berlin Museum. Therefore, the focus was on German Jewish history specifically. The historical theme of Jews as scapegoats goes hand-in-hand with the centuries of anti-Semitic views held by Germans and other Europeans. Due to this long history, maybe the museum designers did not want to include anything that could promote or spark any sort of blame towards the Jews. While this attitude would be unaccepted and uncommon, perhaps it is a fear that the German museum designers held when creating museums about Jewish history in Germany. Although instances of anti-Semitism have been lower since World War II, they have not been non-existent, and the

\begin{footnotes}
  \item Novick, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, 260.
\end{footnotes}
German nation is most likely more sensitive to and paranoid about this fear than the American nation due to the role that the German nation played in the Holocaust. In 2001, the same year the JMB opened, the Federal Office for Protecting the Constitution recorded more than 1,400 anti-Semitic crimes that year in Germany.\textsuperscript{112} Avoiding triggers for anti-Semitic thoughts could have been a subconscious, or even conscious, effort of the museum designers. Pointing out the “failure” of the Jews to resist could be considered one of these triggers, as it is an easy target to criticize the Jews’ weaknesses if a person held that racist and unaccepted mindset.

National memory again plays a role in the exclusion of Jewish resistance efforts in the ghettos and camps. The brutal shutdown of resistance efforts is the “icing on the cake,” so to speak, of terrible treatment of Jews in the camps. Not only are German guards torturing the Jews through denial of food and forced labor, they are also violently shutting down any attempt of Jewish independence. It is more likely for Germans to feel a sense of national collective guilt for the Holocaust over Americans, and pointing out the fact that the Jews were unsuccessful in their resistance efforts because of the Germans could create a feeling of shame among visitors that the museum founders hoped to avoid. Although guilt has subsided with the new generations, this memory genre of guilt still exists, and existed during the creation of the German museums. As defined by Jeffry K. Olick, “A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning. Genre is representative of creative memory in the process of literary development.”\textsuperscript{113} According to Olick, the genre of “German guilt” has been incorporated into national memory and has led to attempts to reconcile this guilt through various efforts including apologies and memorializations. While this is a general assumption, and Germans have developed ways in the last few decades to incorporate the Holocaust into national memory without strictly feeling

\textsuperscript{113} Olick, The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility, 60.
shame and guilt, it is still present in the national narrative.\textsuperscript{114} While this feeling of shame is prevalent throughout the museum, in the eyes of the JMB founders the resistance efforts and their failures could add an extra, and possibly unnecessary, sense of shame that can easily be avoided by not including the information.

Despite mainly focusing on independent acts of resistance, the German museums include scattered examples of organized resistance. However, the examples of organized resistance are discussed only briefly, and the main focus is on groups that formed at the start of the Third Reich, rather than groups that formed in the ghettos and concentration camps.

The JMB has a panel dedicated to Jewish efforts to organize and help one another when National Socialism and its anti-Semitic policies were on the rise. Titled \textit{Jewish-Self Assertion}, it states, “Under the pressure of the time, the Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden was founded on 17 September 1933 under the leadership of Leo Baeck. Some 560,000 strong, it was the first organization to unite Jewish Germans… Its aim was to speak for Jewish interests and dealings with the Nazi state and to build an extensive self-help network. The institution provided Jewish education, helped those who wanted to migrate and gave support to the members who stayed in the country.”\textsuperscript{115} In this panel, another Jewish group named Kulturbund Deutscher Juden – or Cultural Alliance of German Jews – is briefly mentioned. Their goal was similar to the goal of the Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden, and was also founded in reaction to the exclusion of Jews from the cultural sphere in the early 1930s. Another small panel, titled \textit{Youth Aliyah}, informs visitors of the Youth Aliyah movement in the early 1930s that allowed teens ages 15 through 17 to immigrate to Palestine without their parents. This demonstrates awareness among

\textsuperscript{114} Olick, \textit{In the House of Hangman}, 22.
the Jewish population that immigration would be better than staying in Germany under the Nazi party.116

Providing multiple examples of Jewish organization in the early stages of the Holocaust is not something that is seen in the American museums. Organization among the Jewish community is not discussed until the sections on organized resistance in the ghettos. Why does the JMB include information on organized efforts by Jews at the start of the section on the Holocaust?

Starting the depressing section on the Holocaust with something that demonstrates unity and comradery among the Jews makes the visitor experience a slightly more positive emotion than the feeling of unavoidable sadness that comes crashing down with the rest of the exhibit. According to Edward and Mary Alexander, knowing the visitors is important to creating a successful exhibit.117 Understanding what the visitors want, and creating exhibits that mimic their desires, leads to higher successes of the museum. The JMB designers knew their audience when designing the museum, which is evidenced by the fact that they include “feel-good” sections throughout the depressing section on the Third Reich. Seeing a sense of community among the Jewish population makes the visitor feel empathy for the Jews, and this feeling stays with the visitor as they travel through the Holocaust exhibit. Additionally, showing that the Jews organized against the Nazi party from the beginning of the Third Reich demonstrates to the museum visitor the intuition and intelligence of the Jews during this time. Putting this information at the start of the Holocaust exhibition helps to dispel myths that the Jews were oblivious to the increasing anti-Semitism or that they were too uneducated or unorganized to

117 Edward and Mary Alexander, Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums, (AltaMira Press, 2008), 247.
create institutions to help the Jewish community combat the restrictions placed on them by the German government.

Later on in the exhibit, other types of organized resistance are expressed as well. However, in the JMB, these are not the traditional resistance efforts associated with Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, such as violent uprisings. Additionally, these tidbits of information on resistance groups are scattered throughout the Holocaust exhibit and are written on small text panels with titles unrelated to resistance, making them easy to miss when walking through the exhibit. One such panel is titled *Urgent – Jewish Matter*. It recounts a story of a woman in Berlin who told the Berlin Gestapo of a Jewish woman who was living illegally in the building. When the Gestapo investigated, they found a resistance group. As stated in the panel, “The denunciation led to the discovery of an entire resistance group. Franz Kaufmann, a ‘non-Aryan’ Christian, had been providing accommodations, food cards and forged IDs to Jews living in hiding. Kaufmann was arrested together with approximately fifty helpers and Jews. They were sentenced to prison or deported to concentration camps.”¹¹⁸ The phrasing of this panel is not only vague, but also confusing. What does the museum mean by “non-Aryan” Christian? Was he a former Jew who converted to Christianity? Was he a foreigner who previously immigrated to Germany? Overall, the display of resistance in the JMB is fairly weak.

One small panel, however, is titled *The Resistance Group around Herbert Baum*. This seven-sentence panel is the most detailed about any specific resistance effort. It simply states:

In Berlin, a small circle of friends gathered around the Jewish Communist Herbert Baum. Before 1933 they had been members of the Communist youth organization KJVD.

From autumn 1941 the group prepared its members for living in hiding, but it also used public action to show that resistance existed.

On 18 May 1942 they attempted to set fire to the anti-Soviet propaganda exhibition “The Soviet Paradise.” They were betrayed, arrested and executed. As

a regulatory measure, the Gestapo arrested 500 Jews. Half were shot, the others were deported.\footnote{The Resistance Group around Herbert Baum. Text Panel. Jewish Museum Berlin. 2015.}

While the panel explains the highlights of the group, it is short and general. Like the other panels about resistance, this example takes place outside of the ghettos and concentration camps, which goes back to the idea that the German museum creators possibly did not want to draw more attention to the heightened acts of violence that occurred during resistance efforts, since the violence of Jews in the ghettos and camps were already so extreme to begin with.

Similarly to the JMB, the JMF focuses more on resistance efforts outside of the ghettos and camps. They touch on more individual resistance in Frankfurt instead of organized resistance efforts. Emigration is a large focus here. For example, the museum discusses Martin Buber, a Jewish professor at the University of Frankfurt, and his emigration to Palestine in 1938. As far as organized resistance efforts, the JMF discusses a training workshop, The Anlernwekstatt, which trained young people in skilled jobs such as carpentry. This helped them gain the skill-sets needed to emigrate to Palestine or the United States during the Holocaust.\footnote{Jewish Museum Frankfurt am Main,” Prestel Museum Guide. (Prestel, 2002) 83. The museum makes clear that after 1933, the Jewish community banded together because they had to become self-reliant. This is a similar theme to the JMB. The German museums both focus on the aspect of community that emerged during the beginning of the Third Reich. The American museums do not discuss this at all.

American Museums and their Presentation of Jewish Resistance

The American museums, however, do discuss Jewish resistance efforts in camps and ghettos in their museums. Both independent attempts at resistance and organized resistance in the ghettos themselves are a significant focus in the USHMM and HMH, however overall they more prominently display the organized resistance efforts. Members of the USHMM planning team
felt that these resisters should be role models for other victimized population groups, which led to the prominence of resistance efforts in the museum.\footnote{Jeshajahu Weinberg and Rina Elieli, \textit{The Holocaust Museum in Washington}, 55.} Turning these resisters into role models is a clear example of the Americanization that took place when creating spaces dedicated to the Holocaust in America.

In the USHMM, organized forms of underground resistance are discussed at length. For example, in the exhibit on life in the Jewish ghettos, a panel on the Kovno ghetto explains how the Jewish population was educated and worked together to help others escape. According to the text panel \textit{The Kovno Ghetto}:

> The Kovno ghetto leadership was elected by the Jews themselves. It aided all fractions within the ghetto, including an underground resistance movement. The Jewish ghetto police in Kovno gave military training to young men and women, and the council helped them escape to the forest, where they joined anti-Nazi partisans. Jews defied the Germans in other ghettos as well. The persistence of educational, religious, cultural, and political activity within the ghettos in itself constituted defiance. Inside the Warsaw ghetto, underground groups collected information and published clandestine newspapers. In several ghettos, private homes served as houses of prayer after synagogues were closed down, and underground classes were held after Jewish schools were outlawed. In Lodz, Jewish medical students continued their training, and in Theresienstadt, Rabbi Leo Baeck gave weekly lectures on theology.\footnote{\textit{The Kovno Ghetto: Defiance}. Text Panel. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2016.}

The USHMM gives numerous examples in this panel alone of ways that Jews tried to resist the Nazi government and defy the ghetto system. Heroic fighting and resistance played a large part in the founding of America, and therefore Americans can identify with the resisters more than German visitors would. The Americanization that occurs when inserting this non-American event into an American space could account for this focus on parts of the Holocaust that involve strength and unified fighting, such as organized Jewish resistance efforts, or, as will be analyzed later, liberation efforts.
In addition to forms of underground and silent resistance, the USHMM also displays efforts of organized, violent resistance. The exhibit on ghettos includes an entire section on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. The main panel, titled The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Passover 1943, goes into detail about the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) and the Jewish Military Union that were formed by youths in the ghetto. On April 19, 1943, over 700 Jewish fighters rose up against the German military to prevent deportation. Although it was ultimately crushed, the battle held extreme significance, which the panel makes clear. It quotes a letter from Mordecai Anielewicz, a resistance fighter, which states, “The dream of my life has become true. Jewish self-defense in the Warsaw ghetto has become a fact. Jewish armed resistance and revenge had become a reality. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic struggle of the Jewish fighters.” Including this letter instills a sense of hope in the visitors, rather than the common theme of despair throughout the ghetto exhibit.

Within the exhibits on organized resistance, the American museums include more details about the resistance efforts, evidenced by the fact that they also focus on the individuals who participated in resistance movements, unlike the German museums. While the main focus on resistance efforts is the organized attempt as a whole, the USHMM has an entire wall dedicated to resistance fighters. Each important fighter has a picture as well as a description of their role in the resistance. In the HMH, individual names and their roles are mentioned throughout the text panels describing resistance efforts. The difference in focus on individuals between the German and American museums is explained by the idea that the American museums also serve as memorials. If it could be said that museums speak to the intellect, perhaps it is the case that memorials speak to emotion. If that is so, at every point, the very architecture at every point in

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the USHMM is evoking emotion, whether it’s the use of red brick on the outside of the building, or bolted steal in the elevators that take you to the top floor, the museum seeks to constantly impart “memory” even while the displays that I actually examine in this thesis, speak to the intellect. This feeling and emotion is evoked by honoring individuals by telling their story, which the USHMM does to an extent. The American museums also have spaces of reflection, further solidifying the memorial aspect. The USHMM even mirrors a church feel in the memorial section by designing the space to include a large church-like rotunda to encourage reflection.

Other differences are due to the diversity in museum focus as a whole. Since the German museums are focused mostly on Jewish history in its entirety, information on specific Jewish resisters during the Holocaust is not crucial to the museums’ goals. However, including this information provides a more personal touch that allows visitors to connect with the stories of specific people involved in the resistance. Creating a visitor and victim experience was an important concern of the USHMM. In a book created by the USHMM, the development process of the museum is discussed. It states, “Throughout the planning process, staff had to wrestle with the question of how to project the human face of the victim…certain design strategies were adopted to serve this purpose of helping visitors balance in their minds the overwhelming impression of the numbers and the identification with the individual victim.”

124 Including photos of individuals involved was a design process that was implemented. If the German museums felt that this information was important to remember for Jewish history, they would have included it in the museum in a memorable way. Since they did not, it can be concluded that the German museum designers do not see Jewish resistance and the individuals involved in resistance during the Holocaust as important information to include in the museum.

The focus on individual resisters within the revolts is also explained by Americans’ love of a good “heroic” story, since the American nation is often seen as a hero at various points throughout history. Evidence that Americans are fond of a heroic narrative can be seen in the popularity of famous novels throughout time, such as *The Scarlet Letter* – where the female character is often considered the first heroine in American literature – and *To Kill a Mockingbird* – where the hero is based on justice and equality.¹²⁵ Lan Dong addresses the heroic narrative in America and determines that there is a “prominence of hero narratives in American culture.”¹²⁶ With World War II, the American nation is seen as the heroic victor, liberating the Jews from the oppressive German government. The national narrative regarding the Holocaust is thus different in the United States than in Germany, which contributes to the differences between the German and American Jewish and Holocaust Museums. The drive to memorialize the Holocaust during the 1990s came from this narrative and by the advocation of Jews, who wanted to transition from the silent heroes to displaying their survival story more publically.¹²⁷ Including information on the strength exemplified by Jewish resistance efforts during the Holocaust exemplifies this strength that Jewish survivors hoped to portray in these types of museums. The creators of the museum wanted the resistance fighters to act as role models for other victimized population groups, urging them to fight against their oppressors.¹²⁸ By including examples of specific resisters, visitors experience a more personal relationship with the resisters, leading to a deeper connection with this ultimate message. Additionally, maybe this information on resistance is included because, stereotypically, many Americans love a good fighting story, and presenting the information in such a way makes it more accessible to the average American visitor. Because the

¹²⁶ Lan Dong, *Teaching Comics and Graphic Narratives*, 90.
existence of the American nation resulted from a war to fight an oppressive motherland, maybe Americans infer parallels between this resistance fighting and the resistance fighting during the Revolutionary War. Perhaps the museum designers aimed to create this somewhat personal connection between visitors and the museum by including information about specific resistance fighters.

Another reason for including specific resistance fighters is to honor them. Memorialization of people and events has become increasingly common in the United States in recent decades, and national museums and institutions have grown enormously in the last twenty-five years. Additionally, American museums have transitioned from places promoting economic, scientific, and cultural values needed in modern industrial democracies of the 19th century, to places that are “secular cathedrals” promoting a nation’s shared history. This secular nature during the 20th and 21st century has opened doors for museums to become places where politicized events can be memorialized, for example the Holocaust. In Europe, museums were built in the 19th and 20th century to demonstrate their wealth and power. Memorialization began in more recent decades in Europe as well, with monument building and memorial museums representing an effort to show unification in still divided nations. Cultural influences help explain the increase in memorializing events in Europe, but it pales in comparison to the American tradition of memorialization. Americans have a long history of honoring the dead, especially if they died performing a heroic action, such as fighting in a war to protect the American nation. Including examples of specific resistance fighters in the American museums demonstrates the Americanization of the Holocaust in the American museums.

129 Karp, Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture, 574.
131 Ostow, (Re)Visualizing National History: Museums and National Identity in Europe in the New Millennium, 5.
Near the end of the USHMM, more resistance efforts are discussed. In a section called *Resistance* directly preceding the liberation exhibit, other examples of ghetto revolts and death camp revolts are displayed on text panels. The main panel, titled *Resistance*, gives a general overview of the types of revolts that occurred in the camps and the ghettos. It states, “Despite enormous obstacles, many Jews throughout Europe attempted armed resistance against Nazi Germany. Jewish partisans fought Germans in the forests ghettos of eastern Europe. In France, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, and Greece, and Jews joined resistance movements. Even in the death camps, Jewish prisoners carried out acts of resistance.”

The subsequent two panels, titled *Ghetto Revolts* and *Death Camp Revolts*, discuss the numerous resistance efforts in the ghettos and the camps throughout the Holocaust. *Ghetto Revolts* lists the ghettos where revolts occurred, such as Starodubsk, Tatarsk, Kletsk, Mir, Lachva, Kremenets, and Lutsk. The panel *Death Camp Revolts* is the only panel in the museum specifically focused on rebellions in the death camps in the whole museum. Examples of revolts at Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz-Birkenau are discussed in detail. The revolt at Treblinka is described in the panel, which states, “On August 2, equipped with shovels, picks, and a few weapons taken from the SS armory, they set fire to part of the camp and broke through the barbed-wire fence. About 200 prisoners managed to escape; only half survived the search that followed.” While the guards crushed all of the revolts, including this information in the museum demonstrates the strength and ingenuity of the Jews, and the placement of these panels within the museum is significant. By placing this information right before the liberation of the camps, it instills in visitors the idea that the Jewish community fought up until the very end. It highlights the strength and perseverance of the Jews, even in times of extreme despair.

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The HMH also discusses organized resistance in their museum. Titled *Resistance and Rescue*, this section includes details on resistance efforts by the Jews during the Holocaust, as well as rescue efforts attempted by outside partisans. Another panel in this section, titled *Resistance*, provides more information on these efforts. However, like the first panel, the text is general and non-specific. For example, it states, “Even amid the crushing circumstances of the Holocaust, individual Jews and groups of Jews resisted the Nazis and their collaborators. Flight, hiding, rescue efforts, determination to maintain religious observances, daily struggles to stay alive – all were forms of resistance. In addition, armed Jewish men, women, and young people resisted the Nazis, in partisan units, in underground groups across Europe, in ghettos, and even in the concentration and extermination camps.”

This museum is the only one to define what resistance includes, while the other museums provide examples and let the visitors figure it out on their own. However, like the USHMM, this section on resistance includes smaller text panels of the specific people involved, along with their pictures. Expanding on the resistance information by including text on the resisters demonstrates the importance of Jewish resistance within the museum, similarly to the USHMM.

**Placement within the Museums**

Placement of resistance themed text panels throughout the museum is significant because it provides evidence for this study that supports the idea that the American museums and German museums have differences that can be accounted for by the process of Americanization and the shameful national memory that Germans associate with the Holocaust. The American museums have designated sections for Jewish resistance efforts, which make the resistance efforts obvious

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to the visitor. Without these sections, like in the German museums, visitors have to search closely for resistance efforts and it is easy to miss certain efforts of resistance.

The American museums keep resistance efforts contained in specific and easily observable exhibits. The headings of the text panels, such as *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, *Resistance, Ghetto Revolts, Death Camp Revolts*, and *Resistance and Rescue*, clearly indicate that the following text will contain information on Jewish resistance efforts. While the USHMM has two areas of resistance in the museum due to its chronological nature, most of the information on resistance is confined to the section describing the different ghettos. Specific examples of independent, subtle resistance are dispersed among the ghetto text panels. For example, in the panel, *Photographic Jewish Life in the Lodz Ghetto*, it is explained how a Jewish photographer, Mendel Grosman, living in the Lodz ghetto took unauthorized pictures of life in the ghetto, including the Chelmno killing center. Before being deported in 1944, he hid the negatives of the photographs, which were discovered after the war. By trying to expose the horrors that occurred in the ghettos controlled by Nazis, Grosman participated in his own unique form of independent resistance.  

Additionally, both sections on resistance in the USHMM are clearly marked. Reading text panel titles is a way for visitors to clearly understand the highlights of the exhibit, and the direction that the museum is heading. The founding director of the USHMM, Jeshajahu Weinberg, argues, “The sequence of panel titles represents the infrastructure of the narrative display, just as the sequence of chapter titles usually represents the infrastructure of a book. Thus panel titles also help visitors better understand and internalize the structure of the exhibition.”  

The clear headings in the USHMM and HMH in relation to Jewish resistance efforts demonstrate

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that the museum designers felt that resistance was an important topic to include. The Americanization of the Holocaust can be seen in this example, because the American museum committees made the resistance efforts a detailed and obvious section of the museum. America’s dedication to freedom and fighting against oppression make including these organized resistance efforts an easy decision on the part of the committees, and visitors do not easily miss these large panels with clear headings. Most members of the USHMM planning team believed that “the episodes of rescue and resistance were of great enough importance to warrant separate thematic treatment. They argued that rescuers should be regarded as role models for people who find themselves in the position of bystanders, whereas resisters should be regarded as role models for victimized population groups.”

The German museums, on the other hand, have no clear titles indicating that the text will include information on Jewish resistance efforts, and the text panels that do include examples of Jewish resistance are mixed in with other panels on Jewish life during the Holocaust. The only way to find all the information on Jewish resistance is to read every single text panel in the Holocaust exhibit. The lack of focus on Jewish resistance in the German museums supports the theory that German guilt plays a role in the exclusion of resistance efforts.

The dispersed and scattered pattern of the resistance efforts could also be due to the random nature of the resistance efforts that are mentioned. Since the acts of resistance included are not tied to each other in any way other than they demonstrate acts of Jewish resistance somehow, the designers of the museum may have thought the flow of the Holocaust exhibit would be better if the resistance examples were placed with corresponding chronological themes, rather than awkwardly lumped together in one section.

For example, two of the specific resistance stories of two Jewish German painters are told in the Holocaust exhibit at the JMB. Neither panel is near each other, or near the main resistance panel. This could be because the first painter’s story revolves around Jews and their thought of escape, using himself and his family as an example. The other panel that discusses a German Jewish painter highlights his art, and the significance his art had since it represented the rejection of all limitations and boundaries.\textsuperscript{139} It therefore makes more sense thematically to include the first painter with other stories of escape and hiding, while it makes sense to include the second painter with examples of other forms of resistance, such as artwork and letters.

How the museums showcase Jewish resistance efforts within their exhibit, such as by using clear or unclear text panel headings or their placement of resistance panels within the Holocaust exhibits, demonstrate the importance of the topic to each museum. The clear headings, significant information, and clearly designated resistance sections show that the American museums felt that the topic of resistance is important, while the unclear headings and scattering information on Jewish resistance in the German museums shows they did not wish to highlight these efforts.

**Conclusion**

Many differences surfaced when comparing how the American museums and the German museums approach the topic of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, which can mainly be traced back to the Americanization of the Holocaust in the American museums and the differing, more shameful national memory in Germany regarding the Holocaust and the manifestations of this shame within the museums. As a whole, the American museums are more thorough and all encompassing with their approach, including both individual and organized acts of resistance during the Holocaust. They include more panels dedicated specifically to the topic of Jewish

\textsuperscript{139} Degenerate Art. Text Panel. Jewish Museum Berlin. 2015.
resistance to the Nazis and include more diverse examples, from individual resisters to organized resistance groups to full-blown Jewish revolts in the ghettos and concentration camps.\textsuperscript{140} Unlike the German museums, they include details on uprisings in ghettos and concentration camps, as well as individual stories of the participants. The HMH even provides a general definition of resistance during the Holocaust. This is attributed to the differing education curriculums between the two countries, and the assumption by the German museums that their German visitors would be aware of these resistance efforts during the Holocaust from their time in school. According to various German educators, students in Germany spend a significant portion of history class learning about the Holocaust, which includes “going to museums, even possibly visiting concentration camp sites, and other forms of Holocaust education.”\textsuperscript{141} Another German educator discusses the education of German students on the Holocaust, and claims, “They [German students] come with a great deal of knowledge [of the Holocaust.] Almost every school in Germany where I have worked has a project related to the Holocaust. The topic of the Holocaust appears in every area of study.”\textsuperscript{142} Since the Holocaust is a part of German history, students learn about it extensively and repeatedly. Thus, it is likely that Jewish resistance efforts would appear at some point, or multiple points, during their education. The American museums also focus more on the individuals involved in the resistance efforts, which could be attributed to the fact that Americans are drawn to heroic storylines, and that the memorialization of heroes is more integrated into American society. This “hero” storyline and the desire in the American museums to portray the resisters as heroes and role models demonstrate how the Holocaust was “Americanized” within the American museums.

\textsuperscript{140} Berenbaum, \textit{The World Must Know: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum}, 71-80.
The German museums focus their organized resistance information on efforts early in the Third Reich, and ignore the attempts at revolts in the ghettos and concentration camps. This difference is explained by possible efforts by the museum to avoid mentioning the failures of the resistance efforts due to the harsh counter-attacks by the Nazi guards in order to avoid German visitors feeling shame and guilt. Additionally, it is explained by a conscious effort to avoid anything that could trigger anti-Semitic attitudes among the visitor population. If a person held this attitude, they could potentially blame the Jews for getting themselves into that situation, rather than seeing them as the strong victims.

In general, the German museums included less information on resistance than the American museums. The USHMM is the most broad in terms of types of resistance included, examples of resistance, and placement of resistance throughout the museum. It has two resistance sections in the museum, both covering different types of resistance, from individual efforts, to revolts in the ghettos, to uprisings in the concentration camps. The HMH also has a designated section on these different types of resistance. The German museums, meanwhile, focus more on independent acts of resistance, such as hiding or fleeing the country. To demonstrate this in the JMB, they include specific stories of Jews on small panels throughout the Holocaust exhibit. It is incorporated throughout the Holocaust section at the JMF as well.

Overall, while some differences between the German museums and American museums can be attributed to educational differences and varying museum goals, the main explanations for these differences lie in the Americanization of the Holocaust and the differing, shameful national memory in Germany regarding the Holocaust. Efforts to Americanize the Holocaust are seen throughout the American museum exhibits regarding Jewish resistance, with the large focus on resistance efforts in general and the display of resisters as role models, while the lack of focus on
Jewish resistance in the German museums can be attributed to the desire to create a less shame and guilt-inducing visitor experience.
CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUDING MESSAGES OF THE HOLOCAUST EXHIBITS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCLUDING MESSAGES IN THE GERMAN AND AMERICAN MUSEUMS

Introduction

The conclusion of the Holocaust takes many different forms within national and independent memory, both of which influence the narrative within the museums. With the liberation of German concentration camps by American forces, the end of the Third Reich plays a different role in each county’s history. Because of the heroic role of American liberators, Americans view the end of the Holocaust in a very different way than most Germans. Americans associate the liberation and aftermath with victory and a sense of humanitarianism. Germans, on the other hand, associate this with defeat and the collapse of an entire government. These collective memories are then integrated into each of the museums differently, and result in different messages, or lack thereof, in each museum. How is this then projected in the Holocaust museums and exhibitions in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Holocaust Museum Houston, the Jewish Museum Berlin, and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt?

Liberation, the aftermath, and the final messages of each museum are an important part of each museum, because of the significance these events hold within the Holocaust narrative. By comparing and contrasting the text panels discussing these topics, similarities and differences between the two museums will be determined. How do the museums conclude the exhibits on the Holocaust? What approaches do the museums take to present the conclusion of the Holocaust?
Do they take a straightforward, factual approach, or use emotion to convey the results of the Holocaust? How large of a portion of the museum is dedicated to this subject? What message is left with the visitor at the conclusion of the exhibit? Does this message follow the goal of the museum?

Analyzing the conclusion of the museums based off of these questions helps create evidence for the argument that the main differences between the German and American museums are attributed to differing national memories and the process of Americanization in the American museums. The focus of the American museums on liberation and including a “take-action” message at the end of the museums demonstrates ways that the Holocaust narrative is “Americanized,” since it portrays the American liberators as heroes and the concluding messages are framed within the American values of action, liberty, and justice. The American museums’ information differs from the German museums’ lack of extensive and detailed information on liberation, since it is associated with defeat for the Germans, and their less concrete messages about the lessons of the Holocaust support the idea that the museum designers did not want to leave German visitors with a concluding sense of guilt upon their exit.

Liberation

During the summer of 1944, the Western Allies and the Red Army reached the concentration camps. Liberation was an emotional affair for the Jews who still possessed any strength, and American involvement in the war, which is sometimes criticized for not helping soon enough, is presented positively in the American museums’ exhibit of liberation and the aftermath. This exemplifies the idea that liberation within the American museums was “Americanized,” pointing out the positive parts of America’s involvement in liberation. This view exists, and is supported by accounts of Jews who were liberated, such as Samuel Pisar who
states, “Realization flooded me; I was looking at the insignia of the United States Army. My skull seemed to burst…I fell at the black man’s feet…and yelled at the top of my lungs: ‘God bless America!’ With an unmistakable gesture, the American motioned me to get up and lifted me in through the hatch. In a few minutes, all of us were free.”\textsuperscript{143} Accounts such as this support the hero-narrative of American liberators that is present in the American museums. This process of liberation secured victory for the allies and defeat for the Germans, leading to differing presentations of the event in the museums that are ultimately caused by the Americanization of the American Holocaust museums and the differing national narratives. What are the differences?

In the Jewish Museum Berlin, liberation is discussed very briefly. One text panel, titled \textit{Liberation}, covers the process of liberation of the camps. This short, six-sentence panel mentions the basic information that liberation began in the summer of 1944, and that the armies were not prepared for what they saw. Additionally, it includes a quotation by a camp survivor of Bergen-Belsen to reiterate this fact. He states, “One day, when all we were waiting for was the salvation of death, a small group of English soldiers stepped into our barracks. And it’s true, for a moment they remained standing on the doorsill, aghast at the appalling spectacle before them.”\textsuperscript{144} The text panel ends on this quotation, which is significant because it requires the visitor to visualize this event, rather than simply reading about the facts. By inserting a memory from a survivor into the panel, visitors at the JMB get a first-hand account of reactions during the liberation process.

Overall, however, it is strange that liberation does not take up a more significant portion of the exhibit. Liberation of the camps was an extremely important turning point in the war, and provided hope and freedom to the Jewish sufferers that were trapped in the camps. Compared to

\textsuperscript{143} Gilbert, \textit{The Holocaust: A History of Jews of Europe during the Second World War}, 802.
\textsuperscript{144} Liberation. Text Panel. Jewish Museum Berlin. 2015.
other aspects of the Holocaust, this is arguably the event associated with the most positive emotion, on the part of the Jews. From a German perspective, liberation is seen in a different way.

For the Nazi Party, liberation meant defeat. It represented the loss of years of work, organization, and political changes. It marked the end of an era that Hitler and his followers tried tirelessly to build. Liberation of these camps symbolized an end to all of that. It also began a period of confusion for German identity, in the sense of “who was to blame?” Olick presents this confusion well, stating, “These two questions – defeat versus liberation, rupture versus continuity – posed basic dilemmas for all Germans contemplating the future of their collective national existence, to say nothing of their personal and material circumstances. At the root of these dilemmas was the issue of whether, and in what ways, all Germans were responsible for National Socialism and everything it had wrought: Were ordinary Germans perpetrators, bystanders, or victims? To what extent was National Socialism a product of German culture and to what extent was it a deviation, accident, or even foreign plague?” Questions involving responsibility were common after the war, and were met with complicated answers. Maybe the German museums wanted to avoid having to acknowledge the answers to these questions that plagued the nation after the war’s end.

Additionally, perhaps the JMB does not want to highlight this event of defeat in its museum. Instilling a sense of failure in its German visitors on top of a feeling of shame that is ingrained in the national memory might be too depressing on a personal level for the average German visitor. As argued by Elizabeth Crooke, “It is the complexity of memory that makes the representation of highly emotive and complicated experiences of contested histories so difficult. Adding to this complexity is the variable nature of our memory; memory is not fixed, it is

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context and audience dependent and can be triggered by any number of actions and objects.”

Since memory is influenced by a person’s surroundings, it would make sense to omit extensive information on liberation if the museum designers did in fact want to prevent visitors from experiencing more shameful memory.

Similarly to the JMB, the JMF does not focus on the liberation aspect of the Holocaust. The museum jumps from a section on deportations of Jews, to a brief mention of liberation, to a section titled “Life After 1945,” which discusses the aftermath of liberation. Again, this could be because the German museum does not want to bring attention to the failure of the German nation to win the war. Liberation of the camps was a defining moment in the war, and represented the weakness of the German government at this time, which led to their ultimate defeat. They would rather focus on the aftermath of the war and how the Jews dealt with the Holocaust than on the defeat of the German nation. Additionally, the museum is focusing on Jewish life in Frankfurt, and not the outcome of World War II specifically. When explaining their motivation in creating the museum, the JMF pamphlet states, “Tracing the history of the Jews in Frankfurt, in many respects exemplifies the development of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Germany.”

No mention of how the museum incorporates Jewish life after the Holocaust is mentioned in the pamphlet, indicating that it is not a large focus of the museum. However, it is still important to include this information because it is a significant point in Jewish history as well, since it represents freedom and a fresh start after years of suffering from the acts of severe anti-Semitism. Liberation clearly fits into the narrative of Jewish history, and would be appropriate to include in the JMF and would be acceptable to elaborate on the topic. Thus, it is likely that the German museums did not include this information because – although Germans

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146 Ostow, (Re)Visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the New Millennium, 93.
147 Pamphlet, Jewish Museum Frankfurt, 1.
today do not believe they should have won – it still demonstrates the defeat of the German nation and the failure of a new political system.

In the American museums, liberation is portrayed more extensively than in the German museums. In the USHMM, for example, text panels, photographs, video footage, and artifacts such as prisoner uniforms all tell the story of liberation. The large text panel titled Liberation: Encounter, describes the process of liberation in more detail than either of the German museums. This four-paragraph panel discusses the liberation process by the Allies and the Soviets, and also mentions the thousands of starved, diseased, and injured prisoners that inhabited the camps upon the arrival of the Allies and the Soviets. The first paragraph of the panel states, “During Germany’s military collapse, the converging armies of the Allies and the Soviets liberated the concentration camps that lay in their path. The liberations were not a primary objective: they were a by-product of the goal, which was to defeat Germany and its allies.”¹⁴⁸ This emphasizes the fact that the liberation of the camps, while not the main concern of the armies, was linked to the defeat of the German nation.

As an American museum, portraying this German defeat is not a problem. It is unlikely that any visitors going through the USHMM would experience any feeling of personal or national failure when reading about the liberation of the camps. In fact, most visitors would probably experience an emotion similar to pride, since the Americans played the role of the heroic liberators rather than the evil captors in the concentration camp narrative. Novick argues this point, stating, “At the end of the war almost all Americans, certainly the overwhelming majority of American Jews, were proud of the role of the U.S. armed forces in defeating Hitler; justifiably or not, proud of whatever their own contribution to victory had been. What we now call ‘the Holocaust’…had come to an end, thanks to the efforts and scarifies of the United States

and its allies.”\textsuperscript{149} This feeling of pride makes displaying liberation unquestionable in the museum.

This pride is justified by the opinions of survivors and American Jews. For example, an American Jewish journalist, Fred Friendly, was present during the liberation of Mauthausen, and his thoughts about America’s important role in liberation perpetuates the theme that Americans should be proud when they think of liberation. He wrote, “If there had been no America, we, all of us, might well have carried granite at Mauthausen.”\textsuperscript{150} By insinuating that without Americans, the Nazis might have subjected all the Jews to this horrific treatment, Friendly is validating the prideful memory that many Americans associate with liberation. Additionally, as Olick argues, “For many Americans, the fight against Germany was a moral crusade. As Roosevelt had put it in his January 6, 1942, Message to Congress, ‘There has never been – there can never be – successful compromise between good and evil. Only total victory can reward the champions of tolerance, and decency, and faith.’”\textsuperscript{151} Roosevelt is clearly referring to Germany as “evil” and America as “good” and “champions of tolerance, and decency, and faith.” This outlook that was so prevalent after the war and is still present in American memory today, further explaining the need for both American museums to include the narrative of liberation extensively.

The idea that Americans love a good heroic storyline, evidenced by the extreme popularity of and fascination with superheroes and real-life rescue stories in today’s society, supports the reasoning for including more information about liberation in the USHMM than in the German museums. This storyline of liberation in itself is uplifting and powerful, but combined with the fact that the American military was involved in the rescue and played the role of the “good guys” makes it an easy choice for the museum designers to include a large panel

\textsuperscript{149} Novick, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, 59.
\textsuperscript{150} Novick, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, 66.
\textsuperscript{151} Olick, \textit{In the House of Hangman}, 41.
about the moments of liberation. The memory wars that occurred in the 1980s, resulting from the question of how to commemorate America’s loss during the Vietnam War, led to America wanting to celebrate the clear victory of World War II. This is apparent within the liberation exhibits in the American museums. Next to the text panel of liberation at the USHMM, a large picture shows the moment when a United States troop liberates the Mauthausen concentration camp. The extreme joy, excitement, and gratitude of the Jewish prisoners is obvious. The caption states, “Almost 20,000 prisoners were in the Mauthausen concentration camp when tanks of the U.S. 11th Armored Division arrived on May, 7, 1945.” This short sentence of information is all that is needed to understand the photograph. By including this next to the text panel on liberation, visitors can see the emotion during the liberation process, and can see the American military as heroes in action. The theme of liberation also marks the turning-point within the museum to discuss the more uplifting topics that occurred as a result of liberation.

In the Holocaust Museum Houston, liberation and the aftermath take up a significant portion of the exhibit. Pictures, quotations from rescuers and survivors, and text panels make up this section of the exhibit. In the section “Jewish Life After the War,” a text panel titled Liberation discusses the process in four paragraphs. Similarly to the USHMM, the HMH provides the basic details of the liberation and notes the role that the Soviets and the Allies played in the liberation of the camps. However, unlike the USHMM, the HMH specifically refers to American troops at certain points. For example, one part of the panel states, “On April 4, 1945, Ohdruf became the first camp liberated by Americans. American troops arrived at Buchenwald on April 11, 1945.” The HMH brings the American nation’s role in the liberation process to the visitor’s attention. They clearly do not want visitors to miss the fact that American

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152 Liberation Photo Caption. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
troops played a significant and heroic role in the historic event of liberation. While this heroic narrative is portrayed, the horrors discovered during liberation are not hidden at the HMH. Pictures of dead bodies with captions such as “American liberators look at the burned corpses of starved Jewish slave laborers at one of the Kaufering camps…Just before liberation, SS men killed them and burned the camp.” Even with the depressing nature of the picture, the caption still reinforces the idea that the Americans were the rescuers and the Germans were the evil villains. This is consistent with the portrayal in the USHMM.

Overall, one of the major differences between the German and American museums and their portrayal of liberation is the amount of space allotted to this theme in each museum. The American museums had a larger proportion of liberation themed text panels, photographs, videos, and artifacts than the German museums. The German museums only briefly discussed the facts about liberation, while the American museums delved into more detail on the process. This is most likely because of the extremely different roles the Americans and Germans played in the liberation process, and how these differing roles contribute to the national memory of each country. The Liberation statue by Poland-born Jewish sculptor Nathan Rapoport exemplifies the way that American’s view their country’s role in the liberation process. Located in New Jersey, the monument shows an American soldier carrying a Holocaust victim, which perpetuates the idea of Americans as liberators and America as a place of refuge. This monument shows the American soldier to be strong and hero-like, reflecting the image that exists in the national American memory. While Americans associate liberation positively within their national memory, liberation brought defeat to the Germans. As Novick points out, “Dachau was liberated on April 29; the previous day Mussolini had been executed; the following day, Hitler committed

155 Linenthal, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum, 67.
suicide. Mauthausen was liberated on May 6; the next day Germany surrendered unconditionally. “Since Germans have a more conflicted association with liberation since it indicates defeat and failure, they shy away from discussing it as much in their museums. The American museums, on the other hand, embrace the Americanization of the Holocaust and use American’s obsession with justice and rescue to emphasize liberation during the Holocaust.

**Aftermath of the Holocaust**

In the wake of the Holocaust, chaos existed across Europe, especially in Germany. How does each museum present the ramifications of the Holocaust and the punishments for those involved in the horrendous era of history? How does each museum approach the aftermath of the Holocaust as a whole?

In the JMB, the aftermath of the Holocaust is revealed in the exhibit titled “Present: 1945 to today.” This section discusses Jewish life in and outside of Germany after the war. Often, the text panels focus on stories of specific individuals rather than Jews as a whole. This could be because each story is unique, however the museum often generalizes the stories of individuals to other Jews as well. For example, the panel *A British Present*, states “Like many Jews in exile, Martin and Ella Deutschkron did not return to Germany after the war – they made a new life for themselves in England. Martin Deutschkron had escaped to England in 1939. Ella and their daughter Inge survived in hiding in Berlin and were not able to leave Germany until 1946.” Despite focusing on a specific family, this panel still shows the general consequence that many Jews did not return to Germany following the war. A majority of text panels in this section follow this type of pattern. One entirely general panel, however, is the main panel of the exhibit, *Present: 1945 to today*. It begins, “After the war, Jewish life in Germany was long

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overshadowed by the Holocaust. Very few of the survivors believed they had a future in the country of their perpetrators. Jewish communities were re-established, but their members lived with packed suitcases, hoping to emigrate to Israel or the United States. Strict immigration regulations forced many to stay."\textsuperscript{158} This panel brings attention to the fact that not all Jews were able to leave Germany after the war, even if they wanted to immigrate to another nation. In a way, it puts the United States in a more negative role by insinuating that the American nation had strict immigration laws that prevented Jews from living a more desired life in the United States.

Interestingly, this panel includes the only reference to Israel, when it states, "Jewish communities were re-established, but their members lived with packed suitcases, hoping to emigrate to Israel or the United States."\textsuperscript{159} This exclusion of details revolving around the creation of the state of Israel could be due to the poor relationship between Israel and Germany immediately following the war, and continuing for years after. While the United States recognized the state of Israel on the same day of its creation on May 14, 1948, Germany did not follow the same procedure. The Reparations Agreement, which required Germany to pay the Israeli state for resettling Jews after the war and to pay reparations to individual Jews, was enacted in 1953. However, Germany did not have diplomatic relations with Israel until over a decade later. When the JMB opened in 2001, and even still today, the relationship between Germany and Israel was not entirely positive. This animosity of each state towards the other could explain the exclusion of the topic in the JMB.

After the life of Jews post-1945 is discussed, the JMB turns to the criminal trials that took place after the war. The main panel, titled \textit{Auschwitz, Majdanek On Trial}, is extremely large – taking up an entire wall – and is hard to miss. It discusses the difficult nature of gathering

evidence to sentence the criminals, and focuses on the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial of 1963-1965 and the Dusseldorf Majdanek Trial of 1975-1981. In the panel, it states, “The public debate about the murder of European Jews began in the courtroom. In 1958, German authorities started systematically investigating Nazi criminals. However, these investigations only seldom resulted in indictments. There was a lack of concrete evidence that could be used to prove suspects were personally involved with murder. As a result, most of the charges were dropped. On the other hand, the court proceedings also served as a means of researching and documenting events that had taken place in the camps.”160 The museum puts a positive spin on these trials, since other countries criticized them at the time for not being harsh enough in handing out punishments, by using the justification that they helped document the camps.161 The extensive nature of the trials included in the museum portrays the idea that the Germans involved in the Holocaust paid for their crimes, which would help alleviate some of the guilt felt by the German visitors in the museum. The large main panel ensures that visitors do not miss this section of the museum. However, the museum fails to mention the other post-war trials that took place, such as the famous Nuremberg trials. This could be because those trials make Germany and their actions look especially horrific, and the museum founders do not want to further the feeling of national guilt.

Or, perhaps the German museums excluded this information because the scope of these trials was large, and process of defining a “crime against humanity” was challenging. When discussing this process, Kaplan writes, “Crimes against humanity were characterized ‘by the assassination, extermination, the reduction to slavery, the deportation and all other inhuman acts committed against a whole civil population, before or during a war, as well as by persecution for

political motives, or racial or religious.’ This may have been adequate for the concrete purposes of law and judgment, but it still does not satisfy the large implications of a ‘crime against humanity.’ Perhaps no legal process or terminology could.”¹⁶² The moral implications of this definition are huge, and the German museums could have avoided this topic because they were already filled with other content, leaving no space.

The exhibit on life after the Holocaust concludes with personal stories and photographs. Titled *It Was as Simple as That: Growing up Jewish in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland after 1945*, it displays a few sentences taken from interviews about life in these places after the war. For example, one panel states, “My first week in high school. Swimming lessons in the Stadtbad Mitte swimming pool. Georg came over to me in the changing room, asking shyly, ‘Are you really Jewish?’ It was obvious that Georg had never met a Jew before. He gazed at me like I was some extinct animal – like I was a dinosaur in the Senckenberg Museum of Natural History.”¹⁶³ Showing life from the perspective of Jews lets visitors experience the results of the war in a more personal way. It also draws focus away from the Holocaust itself, which could be why the JMB chose to end the aftermath exhibit in this way.

Like the JMB, the JMF also has an exhibit titled “Life after 1945” that discusses the life of survivors after the Holocaust. The JMF points out that many Jewish survivors fled Germany to the United States, Palestine, and other Western countries. Like the JMB, the JMF only briefly mentions Israel as well. The museum does mention, however, the creation of the Frankfurt Jewish Community in 1949, and that it still exists today.¹⁶⁴ While the museum focuses on Frankfurt, which shows the connection between this community and the museum, it seems like

the museum is trying to draw focus away from the chaos that existed after the war by focusing on the positive rebuilding of the Jewish community, however small it was. This could again be to diffuse the sense of German guilt that German visitors might feel while in the museum. As stated by Harold Kaplan, a scholar on conscience and memory, “There is an embarrassment in the Holocaust, an embarrassment on behalf of man so great that an endless future might be spent in redeeming human self-respect.”

This feeling of embarrassment carries into modern day, and the strong feelings of shame that are associated with being from a nation that started the events leading to this embarrassment of mankind supports the reason for why the JMF focuses on the more successful rebuilding that occurred after the war.

The German museums and lack of information on life after liberation could be due to the sense of guilt felt by the German nation regarding the Holocaust in general, and the identity problem that occurred after the war involving the question of responsibility. Olick points out that this guilt after the war stems from the solidarity that people have with their countries. He claims, “This solidarity has both its benefits and its costs: it provides us with language, culture, material resources, and a sense of identity; by the same token, we cannot simply detach ourselves from these when we do not agree with what is happening in their name.”

This complicated connection to one’s country, regardless of if that person disagrees with their country’s actions, is further explained by philosopher Karl Jaspers. He states, “The German…feels concerned by everything growing from German roots…We have to bear the guilt of our fathers…The individual cannot wholly detach himself from these conditions, for – consciously and unconsciously – he lives as a link in their chain and cannot escape from their influence even if he

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165 Kaplan, *Conscience and Memory: Meditations in a Museum of the Holocaust*, 150.
166 Olick, *In the House of Hangman*, 314.
was in opposition.”¹⁶⁷ The museums’ decisions to avoid highlighting the chaotic and sad lives of Jews and Germans after the war could go back to this concept of guilt, and the desire to prevent the German visitors from feeling this guilt again during their departure from the museums.

At the USHMM, the aftermath exhibit begins with the events immediately after liberation. The text panel Liberation: Aftermath describes the challenges following liberation, including how to care for the thousands of former prisoners suffering from starvation and disease. The panel does not sugarcoat the depressing outcome of liberation, stating, “Fifty percent of the prisoners alive in Auschwitz at liberation died within a few days. In Bergen-Belsen, hundreds of prisoners died every day for three weeks. During the first month after liberation, 13,000 of the camp’s approximately 50,000 surviving prisoners died.”¹⁶⁸ The USHMM recognizes that after liberation, the situation did not immediately improve for the survivors. Keeping with this depressing theme, a panel titled Children explains that more than one million children and infants died in the Holocaust and that very few children survived the concentration camps. From here, the museum discusses the killers, the Nuremberg Trials, the Eichmann Trials, and other post-war trials. Unlike the German museums, the USHMM mentions the Nuremberg Trials, and even dedicates a text panel and video to the subject. The panel The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial explains that the International Military Tribunal, a court representing the Allies, tried 21 leaders of the Nazi Party, German government, and German military between November 20, 1945 and October 1, 1946. As stated, “The tribunal’s verdicts sentences 11 of the defendants to death…Seven of these sentences involved responsibility for genocide against the Jews. Three of the defendants…were sentenced to life imprisonment. Four received limited prison sentences and 3 were acquitted.” Unlike the German museums, the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 314.
USHMM shows trials where Germans were sentenced to heavy sentences, such as death or life in prison, rather than trials where the defendants were mostly acquitted because of “lack of evidence.”\footnote{169}

This difference could potentially lie with the opposite reactions that the trials have in both countries. Americans feel no shame when seeing that Germans were sentenced to death or life in prison because of the role they played during World War Two. In the case of the Nuremberg Trial and other post-war trials, American military courts played the powerful role of judge and persecuted many morally unsound individuals that were responsible for the war crimes committed during the Holocaust.\footnote{170} Similar to the role Americans played in the liberation of the concentration camps, their role in these trials can also be considered heroic, which could be why they are more of a focus in the USHMM rather than in the JMB and JMF.

Unlike the German museums, the American museums take a more general approach when discussing the aftermath of the Holocaust. They talk about the facts that happened after the Holocaust in a chronological matter. The USHMM and HMH both compensate for this lack of personal connection by concluding the museums with videos of interviews with Holocaust survivors telling their personal stories of liberation and the aftermath. This creates an emotional ending for the visitor, and allows them to connect with the victims on a deeper level, making the museum visit a more personal experience.

Leading into the creation of Israel, the USHMM has a panel called Displaced Persons, which gives the facts about the millions of people who were uprooted during the war, including 200,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors. It discusses the camps that were constructed by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to help the displaced peoples,
especially since few countries would accept Jewish refugees. As stated in this panel, “The DP camps, in spite of their sometimes harsh conditions, gave Holocaust survivors an opportunity to recuperate from the traumas they had experienced. The UNRRA, Jewish Brigade veterans, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and other Jewish relief agencies aided greatly in the rehabilitation and process.”¹¹¹ Unlike the German museums, the USHMM shows the real problems that affected the Jewish survivors in the time period shortly after the war. This helps explain the creation of Israel and the United States’ support for it when it was officially declared.

An entire large text panel, A New State, is dedicated to the creation of Israel in the USHMM. It lays out the general history of how it started, noting that many Jews wanted to return to their homeland of Palestine following the war, and that the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into two separate states: a Jewish state and an Arab state. A quote from Israel’s Declaration of Independence is included on the panel, and it states, “The Nazi Holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, provide anew the urgency of the reestablishment of the Jewish State, which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish people to equality in the family of nations.”¹¹² Next to this statement, an exact replica of this declaration provides a visual of this historic moment. Why does the USHMM include information on the creation of Israel while the JMB and JMF do not?

It goes back to the poor relationship between Germany and Israel after the war. The German nation was not on good terms with Israel following the war, while Truman recognized the existence of the nation on the day it was announced. This led to better American-Israeli relations than German-Israeli nations. Since, as it is pointed out in the text panel A New World,

many Jews tried to immigrate to the United States, creating the Israeli state offered the survivors another place to go besides the United States. In the narrative of the USHMM, the creation of Israel is presented as a positive outcome of the war, which is how many Americans perceive it today. Today, the majority of Americans view Israel as an ally, and an overwhelming majority view Israel as friendly. This positive perception by Americans is what could have prompted the museum designers to include this information in the museum.

The HMH follows an extraordinarily similar pattern as the USHMM when discussing the aftermath of the war. The main text panel of the exhibit, Jewish Life after the War, summarizes the topics that appear later in the exhibit, including liberation, displaced persons, the trials, and the struggle of Jewish victims to build new lives. Also like the USHMM, the HMH has text panels specifically explaining the war crime trials, displaced persons, the state of Israel, and survivors in the United States.

The panel War Crimes Trials summarizes the Nuremberg Trial and the sentences of the defendants. The text panel Displaced Persons provides extremely similar information that is expressed in the panel at the USHMM. For example, it states, “Relief agencies such as UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT) worked to improve living conditions and provide education and occupational training for the Jewish survivors. As the months passed, Jewish life began to renew itself, even in the ruins. Survivors married and new families formed. Nevertheless, DP camps were never very happy places.”

The HMH emphasizes the necessity of the DP camps while noting that they were not the best places, similarly to the USHMM.

The creation of Israel is also mentioned in the exhibit. Titled *Palestine/The State of Israel*, this text panel gives more extensive background than the USHMM or the German museums regarding information on how Israel came to be an independent state. It discusses the flood of Jews into Palestine after the war, Britain’s quota only allowing 1,500 Jews to immigrate each month to Palestine, and the international pressure that ultimately led to the creation of a Jewish homeland, Israel. Following this, the panel *Survivors in the United States* discusses the difficult time the 72,000 Jewish survivors that reached the United States had adapting to a new society. It emphasizes the perseverance of the Jews in yet another time of hardship, and states, “Holocaust survivors have not had an easy time in the United States. They arrived here penniless, jobless, unable to speak English, and burdened with difficult memories…Nevertheless, Holocaust survivors are deeply devoted to their adopted country, and most of them have been able to rebuild their lives successfully here. Their presence in America is a gift that should make us remember how precious – and precarious – the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness really are.” The HMH includes this information in order to show the strength of the Jews, even after everything they had been through, while at the same time emphasizing the message that life is a gift and should not be taken for granted.

Overall, the German museums follow a similar pattern to each other when discussing the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the American museums follow a similar pattern to each other when discussing the aftermath of the Holocaust. The German museums focus more on individual stories that fit into the theme of life after the Holocaust, while the American museums focus

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more on the general facts. This is explained by the differing memories between the German and American nation regarding the end of World War II. The end of the war signified failure for the German nation, which is a shameful part of national memory, while for Americans the end of the war signified success. Thus, the American nation would not hesitate to display the general facts of the aftermath of the Holocaust, since they helped Europe rise from the ashes and helped Jewish survivors rebuild their lives.

Blame on the average German was present during the entire reparations process, and contributed to this shame they felt regarding the Holocaust. Olick states, “Roosevelt, like so many other American leaders and ordinary people, regarded German society in its entirety, rather than just the temporary German leadership, as the source of trouble. Therefore, no easy distinction, so common in the history of modern warfare and essential to the identity of many Germans after the war, between regime and people was appropriate.”\(^{179}\) Blaming the entire nation is a viewpoint again expressed after the war, when Vice President Henry Wallace claimed, “The only hope for Europe remains a change of mentality on the part of the German. He must be taught to give up the century-old conception that his is a master race.”\(^{180}\) A sense of shame and guilt quickly developed among the German population as a result of this blame on the nation as a whole. From a German perspective, the Holocaust was so shameful that they refused to confront this fact until decades after. According to Peter Novick, Germans did not truly begin to confront the Holocaust until NBC’s miniseries *Holocaust* was aired in Germany in 1979. He states, “The airing of the series, in January 1979, became a turning point in Germany’s long-delayed confrontation with the Holocaust, which, albeit now without bumps in the road, has continued ever since. It enabled Germans to connect with the Jewish victims, and with the crime, as never

\(^{179}\) Olick, *In the House of Hangman*, 41.  
\(^{180}\) Ibid., 41.
This was shortly before the creation of both German Jewish museums, which helps explain why the Holocaust sections regarding the aftermath are lacking in content and detail – Germans were only then confronting the results of the Holocaust.

**Concluding Messages of the Museums**

After walking through an entire museum or exhibit on the Holocaust, the final message that the museum offers and the way in which they do that is significant. The concluding message summarizes the importance of the museum reiterates the goal of the museum, which is imperative that visitors internalize upon their exit. Does each museum have a concluding message? What is that message? How does that message differ between the American and German museums?

The concluding message of the JMB is construed more through symbolic means than by a textual message. At the end of the museum, visitors pass through an underground level with three axes, the Axis of Continuity, the Axis of Exile, and the Axis of the Holocaust. Each axis represents a different reality for the Jews in Germany. For example, the Axis of Continuity represents the connection of Jewish history in past Berlin to Jewish life in modern-day Berlin. The Axis of the Holocaust, which becomes physically more restricting and dark as the visitor walks down the path, represents the Jews that perished in this event. This axis includes personal artifacts of Jews affected by the Holocaust, making the experience more personal for the visitor. The Axis of Exile, leading to the daunting Garden of Exile, represents all the Jews who emigrated during and after the Holocaust. Overall, the concluding message of the JMB is unique to each visitor, as each visitor will have a different experience while walking through the

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three axes. It is not a concrete statement, but rather an emotion that is left with the visitor upon their departure.

Like the JMB, the JMF does not have a concrete concluding message. The museum’s main exhibition ends with the information about Jewish life after 1945, but provides no ending message or concluding space for visitors to process what they have seen. Instead, visitors then enter into the area of temporary exhibits. The fact that there is no sort of message following the Holocaust exhibit is strange. Perhaps the museum designers did not want people to dwell on the Holocaust, and preferred visitors to become distracted by the temporary exhibits that come after the Holocaust section.

Another argument is that the German museums have so much information that there is no concise way to conclude the museum. Bernhard Purin argues that German Jewish museums are faced with so many expectations that they are bound to fail. He summarizes their duties and concludes, “Jewish museums in Germany…are expected to do the following: teach young people and adults Jewish history, be it local or broader; explain three thousand years of Jewish culture and religion in a concise manner; and document and remember the Holocaust. And they are expected to do so not only as educational institutions, but also as sites of remembrance both for the victims and for the descendents of the perpetrators. These museums are intended to express the will of German society to fight racism, and to serve as political instruments of responsibility.”\(^{183}\) With the responsibility to do all of these things, creating a cohesive concluding message that sums up everything covered in the Holocaust exhibit, and the museum as a whole, is a challenging task.

Unlike the German museums, both American museums include more concrete concluding messages following the Holocaust exhibitions. The USHMM concludes its

\(^{183}\) Ostow, *(Re)Vizualizing National History*, 146.
permanent exhibit with a quotation by Martin Niemoller, a Lutheran minister who was an early Nazi supporter, but was later imprisoned for opposing Hitler. It states:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.184

This quotation emphasizes a running theme in the USHMM of taking action, even as an individual, and not becoming a bystander to a horrible event such as the Holocaust. As stated by Weinberg and Elieli, “It was hard to find a better way to expose the guilt of the bystanders.”185 Clearly, the intention was to show the perils of being a bystander, and the ultimate guilt that comes from watching, but not taking action.

After this quotation, visitors can move to the Hall of Remembrance, where they can silently reflect on what they learned in the museum. Before entering, they see another powerful quotation by Elie Wiesel, which states, “For the dead and the living we must bear witness.”186 Finally, upon exiting the museum, visitors see a quotation on the façade of the museum structure, which states, “The next time you witness hatred, the next time you see injustice, the next time you hear about genocide, think about what you saw,” and another quotation stating, “Never again: what you do matters.”187 All of these concluding quotations emphasize the importance of individual action, and urge people to speak out against hatred and violence to prevent a situation like the Holocaust from ever occurring again.

The HMH also leaves people with a concrete message, dedicating an entire text panel to this topic titled *Has the World Learned from the Holocaust?* Like the USHMM, the HMH reminds people that we are all responsible for never letting the Holocaust happen again, and warns people that the world has not learned enough from the Holocaust. In the text panel, a quotation from Elie Wiesel is also included, which states, “If we stop remembering, we stop being.”

This stresses the importance of remembering the Holocaust in order to prevent it from happening in the future by alerting people to the signs and dangers of racial hatred, ethnic cleansing, and anti-Semitism. The panel concludes:

> The Holocaust was not inevitable. Human decisions created it; people like us allowed it to happen. The Holocaust reminds us vividly that each one of us is personally responsible for being on guard, at all times, against such evil. The memory of the Holocaust needs to serve as a reminder, in every aspect of our daily lives, that never again must people be allowed to do evil to one another. Never again must racial hatred be allowed to happen; never again must racism and religious intolerance fill our earth. Each one of us needs to resolve to never to allow the tragedies of the Holocaust to occur again. This responsibility belongs with each of us – today.

Like the USHMM, the HMH urges people to take action against hatred and responsibility for preventing another situation like the Holocaust from ever occurring. Quoting Edmund Burke, Avi Decter writes, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing.” He then goes on to explain, “This is the central lesson of the Holocaust. This is the mission of the museum.” This concrete message in the museum is clear, and leaves visitors without any confusion for what they should be taking away from the museum: that action against evil is the key to prevention.

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190 Avi Decter and Anita Kassof *Holocaust Museum Houston: Ten Years: Remembrance. Education. Hope.* (Houston: Holocaust Museum Houston), 37.

191 Avi Decter and Anita Kassof *Holocaust Museum Houston: Ten Years: Remembrance. Education. Hope.*, 37.
Unlike the vague concluding nature of the German museums – which can be partially, but not wholly, attributed to the fact that they are not specifically Holocaust museums – the American museums tell people what they should be doing in response to their visit, which is to take action against hatred and take preventative measures to solidify that no event like the Holocaust will happen again. The German museums offer more vague conclusions, which allows visitors to draw their own conclusions of the exhibit based off of their emotions that are provoked from the symbolic spaces. Why would the German museums not want to include a specific message? Maybe because the Holocaust exhibits and museum as a whole are so expansive, and including a message that incorporates everything is a difficult challenge. However, despite this, it would be beneficial to have a clear message following the Holocaust exhibit to take every precaution to prevent something like that from happening again.

**Conclusion**

When comparing the German and American museums, clear differences exist between how each museum concludes their Holocaust exhibit. These differences can be explained by the concepts of differing national memories between the two countries and the process of the Americanization of the Holocaust within the American museums. The American museums’ focus on liberation and trials after the war demonstrate how the American museums fit the Holocaust narrative into an “Americanized” storyline. The lack of focus of this in the German museums supports the argument that a feeling of national shame regarding these events prevented their expansive inclusion within the museums, despite their importance in the Holocaust narrative.

The concluding messages of the museums support this argument as well. The German museums leave visitors to determine their own message based off of the exhibit, while the
American museums push clear agendas for what visitors should take away from the museums. The JMB uses symbolic architecture to evoke a final concluding emotion from the visitors, while the USHMM and HMH clearly lay out the message that each individual is responsible for taking action and preventing a future Holocaust.

This difference between a concrete message and a not-so-concrete message is explained by the different role that each nation played in the narrative of the Holocaust. The shameful role of Germany could prevent the museum designers from drawing attention to this at the end of the museum by having a text panel reiterate the horrors of the Holocaust and how Germans need to be responsible for that never happening again. If a sign similar to the American museums existed in the German museums, an extreme sense of guilt would most likely be present as people leave the museum, since their ancestors did nothing to stop the Nazis, and some of their ancestors probably were Nazis. For Americans, when they read those panels they are reminded that their ancestors helped to stop the first Holocaust, rather than standing by and doing nothing, so the concluding message would not be received as harshly as it would in the German museums.

Additionally, the different endings of the four museums are due, in part, to their differing focuses. The USHMM, for example, is a history museum, but is more than just a history museum. It is a narrative museum and a memorial, and is arranged in a way that tells a story to the visitors.\textsuperscript{192} It is also focused on an educational mission. According to a book written by the museum, “The most crucial aspect of the Museum’s educational role is demonstrating the applicability of the moral lessons learned from the Holocaust to current and future events. This is indeed what the museum is about: creating an encounter between the visitor and this moral imperative.”\textsuperscript{193} Because of this goal, it makes sense to include a clear message at the end of the

\textsuperscript{192} Jeshajahu Weinberg and Rina Elieli, \textit{The Holocaust Museum in Washington},17.
\textsuperscript{193} Jeshajahu Weinberg and Rina Elieli, \textit{The Holocaust Museum in Washington},19.
museum, urging visitors to remember what they learned in the museum to prevent a future Holocaust.

On the other hand, the German museums were founded to focus on Jewish history, not just the Holocaust. Therefore, the messages at the end of the museums, or even at the end of the Holocaust exhibits, would not be as clearly stated, since that is not the focus. For example, when building the JMB, W. Michael Blumenthal and his staff wanted the JMB to be both a place of remembrance and a place to teach Jewish history. Because of this focus, a concluding message on the Holocaust is not necessary to accomplish the museums goals. However, it would be beneficial to include it to make certain that visitors understand that each individual has a responsibility for preventing hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism.

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CONCLUSION

On the construction of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, director Michael Berenbaum stated, “What we are about is the Americanization of the Holocaust.”

“Americanization” has been applied to various concepts, such as the Americanization of food, of religion, or of other societies’ cultures. In this sense, the “Americanization” of the Holocaust refers to the delicate procedure of taking a European event and inserting it into an American narrative. Critics of this Americanization, such as journalist Jonathan Rosen, find it difficult to believe that the undercurrent of differing religious and cultural backgrounds creates an environment where an accurate representation of the Holocaust can be displayed. Indeed, planners in the creation process of the USHMM, such as Elie Wiesel and Michael Berenbaum, struggled with the proper way to institutionalize the Holocaust into American memory.

This Americanization of the USHMM adjusts the Holocaust narrative into a form that resonates with its American visitors. Ultimately, the museum is placed within the American framework of the right to life and liberty, and the individual responsibility of each and every person to stand up against hatred. The Americanization of the Holocaust is also seen in the Holocaust Museum Houston. Arguably, this Americanization of the Holocaust is what explains the most significant differences between the American Holocaust museums and the German

197 Linenthal, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum, 15.
Jewish museums. The lack of explanation of the Christian role in anti-Semitism, the exclusion of substantial historical information of anti-Semitism preceding the Third Reich, the extensive focus on Jewish rebellions, the highlights on liberation, and the ultimate concluding message of individual responsibility and prevention, can all be understood as examples of Americanization in these two museums. Especially when compared to German museums which emphasize German guilt and a continuity of anti-Semitism.

Whether or not to include Christian anti-Semitism was a contested debate between council members of the USHMM. Some believed the story of Christian complicity should be told in the USHMM, while others thought it would upset visitors to the point of defensiveness about the entire museum. Council member John Pawlikowski argued in favor of including the crucial discussion of Christian anti-Semitism. However, he thought it was necessary to include it in a way that would not anger “Christians coming in, who have not had any preparation…because you wind up…loosing your audience.” He continued to argue this fact throughout the building process, stating later, “You don’t want to immediately…turn people against the museum and have groups declare it as anti-Semitism or anti-Christian, but I think we’ll have to deal with that.” While Pawlikowski was successful in arguing this inclusion, the history of anti-Semitism and the role Christians play in its origin and its continuation throughout history is available only in a separate film, not stated upfront in a text panel. Pawlikowski and other council members were not satisfied with this outcome. One member, Martin Smith, argued that it was a moral failure, and happened because “the museum had to be careful not to make people feel too guilty.” The majority of Americans are of Christian faith, which means that

199 Ibid., 226.
many visitors in the museum are Christian. Showing the negatives of Christianity upon people’s entrance to the exhibit is a good way of turning them off to the entire museum, which is one potential reason why it is not included. Combined with the fact that many Americans view organized religion, especially Christianity, as a positive and moral force, highlighting the fact that individual Christians and Christianity as an organization supported National Socialism would not be good for visitor reception. By contrast, the German audiences for whom the two German museums were built are raised in an environment which takes German guilt as a given, and which are marked by far lower rates of Christian religiosity than pertains in America. For Americans, emphasizing Christianity’s role in National Socialism dehumanizes the religion and alienates the visitor. The exclusion of information on anti-Semitism preceding the Third Reich in American museums compared to German museums must take these factors into account.

Americanization of the Holocaust is revealed in discussions of Jewish rebellions and resistance efforts as well. The help of Christians is briefly discussed as well; but when exploring the reasons this theme is different in the American museums compared to the German museums, we must consider the classic American narrative of individual heroism. The foundation of America was based on resistance against “foreign tyranny”: the resistance of Jews against their oppressive German captors parallels this story nicely. Despite the ultimate failure of the Jewish resisters, American visitors can relate to the plight of the Jews, as their American ancestors fought for their freedom as well. The hopefulness felt for the Jewish resisters creates a break from the otherwise entirely depressing narrative in the museums, and keeps visitors “hopeful.”

Liberation of the concentration camps is a much larger focus in the American museums than in the German museums. This too reflects an American narrative of heroism, representing our soldiers as the heroic liberators – most of whom were at least nominally Christian. Promoting
Christian Americans as the saviors to the Jewish camp inmates reinforces a sense of collective national identity. This theme was somewhat contested during construction, however. Council member Martin Smith objected to the Christian American hero theme throughout the museum, since he believed it represented false information. He believed that it was “much more likely that you would be saved by a communist or a socialist than a Christian.”

However, because the American museums wanted to incorporate the Holocaust within the American framework, the theme persisted. This Christian American hero theme is a clear example of Americanization of the Holocaust within the American museums.

Finally, the concluding messages of the American museums constitute a culminating national ethic: that visitors should learn the signs leading up to future crimes against humanity, and should take individual responsibility so it never happens again. The HMH has a similar concluding message as well, urging visitors to speak out against racial hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism. Taking the Holocaust and incorporating American values within the narrative is clearly on display in both museums.

Is this Americanization necessary? Forcing a European narrative into an American museum visited by mainly Americans would fail on many levels. By Americanizing the Holocaust, paying audiences are retained – as are the tax dollars provided by Congress. American collective memory regarding the Holocaust is different than German collective memory on the same subject. This “Germanization” creates a different lens from the American museums through which the Holocaust is viewed in Germany. It is natural to approach the topic in different ways within a public display. It is clear, however, that this Americanization comes at the expense of the historical record. By opting out of including information such as the Christian

involvement in early anti-Semitism, visitors are prevented from fully understanding the circumstances that led up to the Holocaust. Examples of these wrong impressions are seen in criticisms of the museum, such as the woman blaming the Jews for their fate, since they “picked the wrong religion.”\textsuperscript{202} This American bias that results from the Americanization process prevents the museums from focusing on some of the crucial elements leading up to the Holocaust. In order for visitors to fully recognize the stages leading up to the Holocaust, so that they can fulfill the museum’s goal of educating visitors on how to prevent it from ever happening again, all the information should ideally be presented in an unbiased way.

What accounts for the other differences such as the larger proportion of information on the history of anti-Semitism in the German museums, the general lack of a resistance and liberation narrative in the German museums, and the lack of a specific concluding message to visitors of the Holocaust exhibits in the German museums? Museum goals and the presence of a lingering sense of German collective guilt contribute most greatly to these differences – in other words the so-called “Germanization” of the Holocaust. As argued by Karp, “When people enter museums they do not leave their cultures and identities in the coatroom. Nor do they respond passively to museum displays. They interpret museum exhibitions through their prior experiences and through the culturally learned beliefs, values, and perceptual skills that they gain through membership in multiple communities.”\textsuperscript{203} The identities of the visitors drive these museums, and support the theory that a lingering sense of guilt among visitors shaped the German museums.

For the Jewish Museum Berlin and Jewish Museum Frankfurt, the goal is not to educate the public on the Holocaust, which is the goal of both American museums, but rather to educate

\textsuperscript{202} Novick, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, 260.
\textsuperscript{203} Karp, \textit{Museums and Communities}, 3.
people on Jewish history as a whole. While that includes educating the public on the Jewish experiences during the Holocaust, it also includes the responsibility of teaching visitors about Jewish history from its beginnings in Germany. Naturally, the German museums will therefore include more information on anti-Semitism leading up to the Holocaust, since it is a part of the Jewish historical narrative. But this choice is also about a different understanding of the Holocaust that pertains in Germany than in America – not just as a sui generis horror visited upon humanity, but as the sad culmination of centuries of German anti-Semitic precedent. This feeling of guilt as the children of a nation that slaughtered millions of innocent victims helps explain the almost total lack of a camp liberation narrative – even though today’s Germans are taught of the necessity of the Allies’ victory over their own nation. Within national German memory, liberation is therefore associated with loss and defeat. While today it is understood that this defeat was necessary, it can still be viewed as a shameful event since it represents a loss of German power and the end of an era. Since liberation represents success for the American nation, the American museums are careful to showcase the process of liberation. However, the negative association of this event in German memory prevents the inclusion of a substantial focus on this theme within the museums.

Finally, the difference in concluding messages between the German and American museums can also be traced back to the idea of German guilt. While the American museums provide concrete text clearly stating that the Holocaust was a horrible event, the German museums do not include anything of a similar nature. Instead, their endings are more rooted in loosely symbolic architecture that presumes the visitor understands the larger lessons. By not including a concrete message on the horrors of the Holocaust, German visitors do not leave the museums being instructed as to the guilt that they feel – it is understood.
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