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Sarah Hampton 16 April 2014

The Past in the Present: The Role of the Holocaust in Modern Jewish American Identity

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Abstract

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This case study looks at the ways in which Holocaust memory is incorporated into the identity of a specific Reform Jewish congregation in Atlanta, Georgia. Ritual practice and commemoration theory were used to examine the physical acts congregants performed and how this praxis affected their worldview. Through participant observation at this synagogue, 7 in-depth personal interviews with congregants, 3 interviews with Jewish educators, and a site visit to a Holocaust Museum in Atlanta, data was collected and examined for larger themes. Findings suggest that structured narrative and experiential encounters transform physical bodies into living memories. The ritualization of these practices is seen to shape the identity of participants while participants are simultaneously shaping the practices they ritually perform. Upon the conclusion of the practice, conscious memory slips into the realm of the subconscious, but can be triggered through external stimuli. In conclusion, ritualized practices surrounding Holocaust narratives are seen to shape the identities of the participants in this study.

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All glory to my God.

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Preface and Introduction

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.
-Martin Niemöller

Coming from a family of history buffs, history has always appealed to me. The World War II era in particular has been an interest of mine since middle school. During an anthropology course I took in the fall of 2012, I had the opportunity to explore some of the ritual practices surrounding Holocaust commemoration. When I spoke with my professor about the potential for an honors thesis in this topic, we both knew the direction needed to shift. Rather than focus on the Holocaust, the study needed to focus on the Jews today. Thus, this project was born, along with a newfound appreciation for Jewish culture.

In the words of Jewish author Eva Hoffman, “If we do not want to betray the past—if we want to remain ethical beings and honor our covenant with those who suffered—then moral passion needs to be supplanted by moral thought, by an incorporation of memory into our consciousness of the world” (2004, p. 278). The Holocaust was an extreme affront to Jewish culture that cannot be ignored or overlooked. This project seeks to explore the relationships among culture, religion, and identity by examining how Jewish culture experiences Holocaust memory. More specifically, it looks at the ways a specific Jewish community interacts with Holocaust narratives. It is a focused exploration of the effect that past traumatic experiences can have on collective cultural identity. Furthermore, it examines the affects that practice has upon cultural narratives and identity.

The goals of this study were to explore how historic instances of oppression can shape and mold cultural identities. I wanted to see how individuals internalized cultural narratives relating to past trauma. More specifically, through personal interviews with Jewish Americans from multiple generations and through participant observation, I wanted to see how the Holocaust is remembered in Jewish culture today. I also wanted to explore how that memory shapes the identity of a specific Jewish American congregation. The overarching questions of this project were:

- How does a culture cope with and survive traumatic oppression?
- How do events in the past determine identity in the present?
- How important is the Holocaust to modern Jewish communities?
- How has the Holocaust been engrained in collective memory?
    - How does it affect Jewish culture?
    - How is it commemorated?
    - How is Holocaust history taught in Jewish schools?
- How does the Holocaust affect how Jewish communities view themselves in relation to the world?
- Do Jews see themselves as victims or survivors?

Methodology

To begin this project, I enrolled in several anthropology courses, a Jewish studies course, and a course about ethical research provided by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I also reviewed ritual and Jewish studies literature. In November of 2013, I submitted an IRB application and received approval late that December. Permission to conduct research at The Temple was granted to me by the Senior Rabbi.

A review of existing literature surrounding ritual and identity production, particularly ritual practice theory, helped me to form the best method of research. Because this project takes an ethnographic approach, it was determined that participant observation and formal and informal interviews would be the most appropriate method of data collection. With guidance from my advisor, I used my knowledge from the literature review to create a 14 question personal interview that lasted between 20 minutes to an hour. A separate interview was created for Jewish educators comprised of 6 questions. All interviews took place over the phone, with the exception of one in-person interview. The questions on the interview were both closed and open-ended. These interviews gave participants space to expound upon their answers with as much detail as they wanted to share. With permission, these interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and transcribed. When I had finished transcribing interviews, the recordings were deleted. If a participant did not want to be recorded, I wrote notes on his or her answers. Each interview took place in a confidential environment, and all notes were stored in private, confidential settings. The interview questions were created in Microsoft Word, and were only printed once, when an interview took place in person.

The study sample consisted of 7 interviewees. Of these participants, 4 were women and 3 were men. Their ages ranged from 28-77, encompassing three generations of people. None of them were Holocaust survivors, nor were they children of Holocaust survivors. Additionally, 3 of these 7 interviewees were involved with Jewish education and were given questions from the teacher's interview. All participants were members or regular attendees of The Temple. Due to the closeness of The Temple and its status as a Reform synagogue, this was an ideal study location. Because the services were largely in English, I was able to follow the liturgy. Members of this synagogue also proved to be extremely helpful and friendly, making me feel welcome and answering all of my questions.

Upon receiving IRB approval, I began participant observation at The Temple. Every Friday and/or Saturday I attended the Shabbat Worship Services. I had also connected with the Senior Rabbi prior to receiving approval. After IRB approval was granted, he agreed to announce my research to the congregation. After this announcement was made, several people showed interest in being interviewed. I then used these initial connections to find a few more participants. The Senior Rabbi also connected me with the Rabbi of the Religious School. After emailing him, he connected me with teachers from the school. Finally, through my experience at The Temple, I was told to visit the Breman Museum, so I did a site visit there. The museum informed me that non-flash photography was permitted, so I took several pictures with a digital camera and with a phone. One of the members of The Temple was also a docent at this museum. When I reached out to this person for an interview, he also invited me to join a tour he gave to children from one of Georgia's public school districts. All interviewees were sent information sheets through e-mail, informing them of my research and what I would do with their data. Permission was received from each participant before recording the interview. One participant did not wish to be recorded, so notes were taken about this person's responses.

Data analysis was based upon qualitative methods. After each interview was recorded, I transcribed the recording into a Word Document. After transcription, I listened through the interview one more time as I read the transcription. This was to ensure that I did not miss anything and that my transcription was accurate. After this second listening, the recordings were deleted. No personally identifiable information about the participants was attached to the interviews.

Particular themes of interest were coded, and Word Documents for codes were created. Quotes that fit key themes from each interview were copied and pasted into these code-based documents. For example, quotes about "otherness" were copied and pasted from each interview into a unified document. These themes were then analyzed to generate explanations regarding identity and life experiences.

A major study limitation is that this project only explores one synagogue within a particular branch of Judaism. I was not able to look at Conservative or Orthodox branches of Judaism. This study is also limited to one location, Atlanta. There is no concrete way to say how these findings relate to other branches of Judaism, or to Jewish Americans living outside of Atlanta. This would make an interesting future research topic. However, this study does look in depth at the participants who were willing to be interviewed and who shared their memories and customs. Through their individual responses, major trends and themes within Reform Judaism were seen to be integrated with their personal identities and interactions with Holocaust memory. Through these interviews and participant observation, it was possible to see themes arise in the relationship between collective memory and individual identity.

The Temple

The Temple is a large Reform Synagogue with a rich history located in Atlanta, Georgia. It is the oldest Jewish institution in Atlanta, and was established as the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation in 1867. The synagogue originally grew out of the Hebrew Benevolent Society which had been organized in 1860 to provide relief for the Jewish poor. Thus, this Jewish institution in the southeast United States was founded upon social responsibility to its own community. During its first years of existence, The Temple fluctuated between Reform Judaism and more traditional Judaism. Eventually, a Reform Rabbi came to The Temple and united the congregation around Reform ideals. He helped to balance the relationship between the Jewish community of Atlanta and the surrounding gentile communities, and helped seal this temple’s place as a leading member of the Union for Reform Judaism.

On October 12, 1958, a group of white supremacists, known as the Confederate Underground, placed 50 sticks of dynamite by one of The Temple’s entrances out of anger for

The Temple's social activism. Because The Temple is committed to Reform ideals, they see it as their mission from God to aid in healing the world, *tikkun olam*. Thus, during the 1950s they actively supported civil rights, angering the Confederate Underground. Fortunately, no injuries resulted from the explosion and The Temple has since recovered and grown. Its dedication to the heart of the Reform Movement, to ethical monotheism, also remains a pillar of this community. Its congregation today is diverse with around 1,500 members. The Temple also hosts an early learning center and religious school, and continues to advocate for social justice and responsibility.

The time period and location of this community is striking for two important reasons. During the current time, there are very few living Holocaust survivors. Therefore, Holocaust memory is at a turning point, and there seems to be a general sense of concern surrounding the future of Holocaust memory. Secondly, because The Temple is a Jewish Institution in Atlanta, it is located in an area where tolerance has not generally been a prevailing value; past struggles for civil equality among minorities has been extremely visible and often violent. These two factors make this site an interesting place to conduct research regarding past oppression.

Study Rationale

This project is an anthropological endeavor to its core, yet also briefly incorporates religious studies due to the religious nature of the Jewish community. While designing the study, ideas drawn from ritual theory within anthropology became the tools with which I examined identity production. Because this study looks at the relationships among religion, collective cultural memory, personal identity, and historical events, ritual theory had much to offer. The data collection and analysis of interviews and observations was rooted in Catherine Bell's ritual practice theory. I was looking for the ways that participants physically interacted with cultural memories surrounding the Holocaust. Furthermore, I wanted to explore the relationship between this physical interaction and the construction of cultural identity. After an overview of literature from ritual studies, commemoration theories, and Jewish studies, a gap emerged in this area. While a large body of literature exists surrounding multiple aspects of the Holocaust, it has not been studied through the perspective of practice theory and ritual commemoration's roles in identity production. At its heart, this project is an ethnography that explores the affects of history upon specific cultural and individual memory and identity.

In the first chapter of this work, a survey of existing literature surrounding this topic is explored and examined, focusing upon American Judaism, ritual practice theory and commemoration. Chapter 2 takes an in-depth look at the stories and memories that the 7 participants chose to share with me. It explores practice theory and commemoration’s roles in the consumption of identity surrounding the Holocaust. The next chapter, chapter 3, looks at the ways in which this identity is created and transmitted to the next generation. It focuses on The Temple’s Religious School and how children are taught about the Holocaust, looking particularly at experiential activities in which the children participate. Chapter 4 turns to the Breman Museum and examines the way this physical house of memory encourages participants to interact and move through its space. Finally, chapter 5 is a discussion of these findings. It is an exploration through the lens of practice theory of the ways in which this community incorporates the Holocaust into its identity, how this incorporation is seen to interact with larger movements within Reform Judaism, and what the implications of the Holocaust’s internalization might be.

Chapter 1: Judaism and Praxis

When thinking about how the Holocaust plays a role in Jewish American identity, it is critically important first to consider theories about the formation of identity. Religious studies about Judaism and what it means to be Jewish are important for understanding the population that comprises this research. More exhaustively, however, a cultural anthropological lens is used to illuminate the foundation of this project. Part of Cultural Anthropology looks at how specific groups interact with their environment to form a collective identity. Thus, in order to fulfill the objectives of this research and look at the ways in which the Holocaust is used in Jewish American identity, literature from this field is particularly informative. Within cultural anthropology, ritual theory plays a prominent role in exploring identity creation and reproduction. Furthermore, because this research focuses on the ways in which tragedy interacts with identity, commemoration theory within ritual theory is also particularly informative.

Jewish Beliefs

Judaism is an impressively old religion full of rich traditions. Yet, it is also a religion plagued with a longstanding history of persecution. From Medieval European enforcement of Jewish ghettos to the Holocaust, anti-Semitism repeatedly appears throughout history. While the aim of this paper is not to examine the Jewish faith exhaustively, there are certain aspects of the religion, the community, its history, and its current place in America that serve to enlighten this study.

When it comes to dealing with persecution, and ultimately looking at how one instance of persecution is factored into identity production, certain traditional beliefs of the Jewish faith are important to consider. Prior to the Holocaust, oppression was often seen to be punishment from God (Wisse 2008, p. 13). When the Jews of history faced persecution, they generally blamed it on themselves and their lack of faith (Wisse 2008, p. 13). For many, the senselessness of the Holocaust was a turning point for this theological idea. Many branches of Judaism rejected the idea that the Holocaust was God's punishment and were therefore forced to rethink this belief (Rubenstein 1992). While the complex theological changes that have occurred as a result of the Holocaust are not relevant for this project, the presence of this radical shift is important to remember when considering the nature of ritual activity within Judaism surrounding the Holocaust.

Another important aspect of Judaism for this project deals with how to honor those who have died. Remembrance and reciting the Mourner's Kaddish on the anniversary of the death of a loved one are important for Jewish mourning (Katz 2000). To remember those who have died, it is important in Judaism to learn about the dead and to remember them through the act of prayer (Katz 2000). These two factors are important to keep in mind while examining how the Holocaust is factored into current Jewish American identity.

The Reform Movement within Judaism is also important to consider due to The Temple's status as a leader in the Union for Reform Judaism. To understand this congregation, an overview of Reform Judaism is necessary. This branch of Judaism originated in Western Europe during the early 1800s (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011, p. 179). With roots planted in the Enlightenment and Jewish Emancipation taking place within Western Europe, this era in European history was the first time that Jews "could participate in non-Jewish culture without the stigma of apostasy" (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011, p. 177). The result of this newfound interaction between surrounding culture and Judaism was the creation of a progressive branch of Judaism: Reform. It was centered on the idea of being a light unto the nations (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011, p. 209), and its mission was based on "Jewish ethical *Weltanschauung*"

(Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011, p. 210). Ethical monotheism is at the heart of this branch of Judaism.

Reform Judaism was further shaped through its encounter with dominating American ideology and identity. As seen through historian Jonathan Sarna's work (2004), American culture is marked by pragmatism, plurality, individuality, and consumerism. An extremely important American message, however, is that individuals are free to identify themselves as long as they, in the words of George Washington, "demean themselves as good citizens, in giving [the United States] on all occasions their effectual support" (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011, p. 508). As a result of the interplay between these American ideals and Judaism, the Reform Movement in America became more radical than in its original home in Germany (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011, p. 500). In the words of Sarna, "Prophetic Judaism, as this emphasis on universalism and social justice came to be called, stimulated a wide range of political and communal activities on the part of Classical Reform rabbis" (2004, p. 195).

The denominationalism existing within Western European Judaism combined with the American ideals mentioned by Sarna above also gave American Jews the option of choosing a synagogue and rabbi (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011). Thus, American Jewish laity was important and contained influence. This greatly contrasted with pre-World War II Eastern European Judaism, where there was a single branch of Judaism and the same message was taught by rabbis across a country (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011). Eastern European laity of that time period, therefore, had much less choice and influence.

During the 1880s through the outbreak of World War I, extensive amounts of Eastern European Jews immigrated to the United States (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz 2011, p. 499). As mentioned, however, their increasing presence also meant the collision of differing forms of

Judaism. In the words of Sarna (2004), “Reform temples nevertheless perceived themselves as citadels of ‘American Judaism,’ the antithesis of the unruly Yiddish-speaking Orthodoxy that Reform Jews associated with their immigrant coreligionists from Eastern Europe” (p. 194). This collision is important to consider when examining the identity of a Reform Temple.

Another impact of the collision between American culture and Judaism is seen in the establishment of an American Jewish Civil Religion. In his book, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews*, sociologist Jonathan Woocher (1986) describes a civil religion specific to the American Jewish Community. This idea revolves around institutionalized sacred beliefs at the level of the Jewish nation within America (Woocher 1986). Two of the most important and unifying pillars of this idea are the Holocaust as victimization and Israel as redemption (Woocher 1986). The myth surrounding these pillars is a continual call for Jewish action and a continuous source of Jewish unity. This civil religion also constantly reiterates the call for social philanthropy and claims American Jewish exceptionalism and chosenness (Woocher 1986). The structure of this American Civil Judaism reinterprets rituals from traditional Judaism while also creating new rituals, such as retreats and missions to Israel (Woocher 1986). Because the study participants of this project are American Jews, this notion of an American Jewish Civil Religion and the centrality of the Holocaust and Israel to its narrative are important to remember when examining how the Holocaust shapes participants’ identities.

An example of identity formation among some of the Eastern European immigrants, on the other hand, can be seen through anthropologist Ayala Fadar’s (2009) work with Hasidic Jews. These immigrants chose to set themselves apart in ultra-orthodox enclaves to keep their traditions and ideologies alive. According to Fadar in her book *Mitzvah Girls,* “The experience of dispersal creates ties of memory and everyday practices that cross time and space. Most

Hasidic Jews have family members in enclave communities across the globe, and these ties to the Diaspora are paradoxically activated through visiting, business, marriage, and study" (p. 29). Thus, it can be seen that the activities mentioned by Fadar (2009) are activities through which this group maintains its specific Jewish identity while also identifying with those forced to spread around the world. Through the specific rules and structures of these daily activities, they arguably become set apart, ritualized events. The structure of these everyday practices governs the people living within them, but the people living within them simultaneously reproduce the structures every day. Thus they maintain and are maintained by a separate sense of Jewish identity. One of the goals of this project is to examine how the desire to maintain a separate identity has affected Jews in the United States through the lens of the Holocaust, and how practices are used to form this identity.

After the Holocaust, according to Sarna (2004), another significant wave of Eastern European Jewish immigration to the United States took place. Eastern Europeans had been affected by the Holocaust most drastically, and their migration played a critical role in increasing American attention to the Holocaust. On a wider scale, post-Holocaust immigration to the United States added a new dynamic to the emotional state of American Jews. While discussing Holocaust survivors in her article, Jacobs (2011) mentions a, "cycle of emotional repression and expression where survivors vacillate between remembering and forgetting" (p. 346). Further, she states that, "the cycle of expression became embedded in the ritual performances of the [Holocaust survivors] who, through religious practice and traditions, relived the emotions of their traumatic past" (Jacobs 2011, p. 347). Yom Kippur, a day of atonement, was especially important for ritually grieving the Holocaust, says Jacobs (2011). Israel has also created a memorial day specifically set apart to mourn the Holocaust, called Yom HaShoah, in which American Jewry also participates (Kaplan 2007).

A final aspect of Judaism that is useful when considering the Holocaust's role in modern Judaism is that of bereavement practices. According to Woodward (1997), "Jewish mourning rituals focus more on the bereaved than the body. By custom, Jews bury the dead within 24 hours if possible, without embalming, in a plain wooden coffin. Traditional Jews never put the body on view or have it cremated. 'After the Holocaust, any Jew who opts for cremation is obscene,' says Prof. Neil Gillman of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York" (p. 62). Here, the Holocaust is subtly seen to shift Jewish cultural attitudes toward burial. In focusing on the bereaved, Woodward (1997) also reveals a focus on living mourners during bereavement rather than on the departed. Furthermore, Wahlhaus (2005) explains the grieving process in more depth.

> The Jewish way comprises a phased process of grieving, differentiating the period before burial from the period after burial. Until immediately after the funeral the mourner is called an *onen*, from the Hebrew word *oni* which means 'trouble', 'misery', 'sorrow'…After the funeral, the mourner is called an *avel*, and the period of *avelut,* begins with *shiv'ah* (seven days of intense mourning following burial), followed by the *shloshim* (thirty days from burial).

This process is useful to understand when later looking at how those who died in the Holocaust are incorporated into modern grieving practices.

Ritual Theory

Ritual theory within cultural anthropology has much to say about the production and preservation of group identity. While a plethora of theories about ritual exist, there are aspects from a few generalized categories that are valuable to this study. Ultimately, however, Catherine Bell's ideas about practice theory and Filip De Boeck's idea of living memories form this project's foundation.

Functionalism is an approach to ritual that is, in the words of anthropologist Liv Nilsson Stutz (2003), "mainly concerned with how ritual functions in society, i.e. how ritual practice articulates individual experience to communal solidarity" (p. 22). Though this branch of ritual theory is not the most significant aspect of this project, it does have some important concepts to offer. Two contributors to functionalism are of particular importance. First, Emile Durkheim's view of ritual as a motor for religion is useful due to the religious population of this study. Durkheim believed that action rather than thought dominates religious life (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 23). Secondly, Durkheim's student Marcel Mauss described the importance of a ritual's structure to its social function (Bell 1997, p. 26). Structure's role in ritual identity is further explored later under practice theory, though in a different light. Mauss also viewed the body as a "collection of embodied aptitudes" rather than a means through which symbolic meanings could be read (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 25). According to this idea, techniques of the body, such as walking, are "shaped and modeled through experience in a social context" (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p.25). The importance placed upon ritualized movement and actions are also further stressed in Bell's idea of practice theory below.

A second useful branch of ritual theory stems from Functionalism. According to Bell (1997, p. 29), the Neo-Functionalist school of thought explored the ways in which ritual activities were used to regulate community or enhance the well-being of individuals. In Bell's words, it also attempts to "describe the interaction of multiple cultural systems" (p. 29). Thus, this theory is useful when examining how a specific culture, i.e. Jewish American culture, defines itself and uses ritual to enhance its well-being in the wake of tragedy. Among the most prominent contributors to this school of thought was Roy Rappaport (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 29). As explained by Nilsson Stutz (2003, p.27), Rappaport saw the relationship between groups and external forces as a necessity to understanding human culture. This idea was the first time that external factors were, "given attention in a theory focusing on explaining the dynamic functioning of human cultural systems" (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 27). This new attention to external forces is also important when considering practice theory.

Yet a third sphere of ritual theory is known as structuralism. For this classification, meaning is found in the relationship between symbols. Furthermore, cultural concepts and social experiences are seen as separated (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 29). The concepts of importance from this theory were expressed by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner. Arnold Van Gennep developed a sequential approach to ritual that understood rites as progressing from a pre-liminary stage to a liminary stage, and then from a liminary stage to a post-liminary stage (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 31). "The role of ritual is to dramatize these shifts. Thus, ritual plays a central role in the ongoing process by which society continuously redefines and recreates itself" (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p.31). Turner further defined the liminality stage to be the absence of social structure, or a state of antistructure (Turner 1995, p. 96). This notion of liminality is important when considering some of the physical rituals performed in modern American Judaism. Additionally, Turner also developed the idea of *communitas*, a "lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship" that develops during ritual activity (Turner 1995, p. 96). Both the concept of *communitas* and the emphasis placed on ritual in a society's constant attempt to identify itself are important when examining the role of the Holocaust within Jewish American culture.

The final theory worthy of mention, before turning to practice theory, is ritual as performance. The most important aspects for the sake of this project in this set of ideas involve physicality. Ritual as performance focuses on bodily experience and the reinterpretation of symbols that are actively communicated through ritual (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 34). These actions and expressions, then, shape society (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 34). According to Stanley Tambiah, a contributor to this theory, ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication where actions play a central role (Nilsson Stutz 2003, p. 34). Though this area of ritual theory relies more heavily upon pure action and literal performance than is useful for this study, it serves to reiterate the importance of action to ritual and identity production.

Finally, the most fundamental branch of ritual theory for this fieldwork is practice theory. It is the lens through which this project's research was conducted. According to this theory, ritualized activity involves a set space in a set time with set roles (Bell 1992, p. 93). The action performed in this realm, which is consecrated from that of everyday movements, creates the structure of the ritual, but the structure of the ritual is also shaping the action (Bell 1992, p. 93). It is within this circular dance that meaning is generated, giving way to the creation and reproduction of identity (Bell 1992, p. 221). Thus, this theory sees ritual as a relationship between structures of society and culture on the one hand, and the nature of human action on the other. It examines how people and human activity are constituted through social processes, while society and history, i.e. group identity, are simultaneously constituted through meaningful narrative. Individual action and cultural order, according to Bell (1992, p. 215), are shaping each other while being shaped by each other. Looking further at ritualized action, Bell (1992, p. 90) states that ritualization marks and separates certain acts from daily life, giving them a unique identity and granting transcendent effects. It is a flexible system granting reinterpretation and appropriation, but one that must be experienced.

Another author, Filip De Boeck (1993), adds to the conversation about practice theory and places significant importance upon the spatial and temporal (p. 119). De Boeck views ritual as a self-generating process through which, "semantic memory is (re)generated in and through episodic memory, that is in the actual space-time of the performance, in which meanings are generated and experienced in the flesh by the participants through their interactional making of a performance reality" (De Boeck 1993, p. 119). Like Bell, he too views ritual as inscripted and physical (De Boeck 1993, p. 120). Upon a ritual's conclusion, according to De Boeck, the inscripted knowledge "slips back into forgetfulness" and thus integrates the bodily experience of ritual into everyday practices (De Boeck 1993, p. 135). In De Boeck's view, then, bodies are living memories.

Similar to ritual as performance theory, practice theory focuses on ritual action. Unlike ritual as performance, however, where the meaning of ritual action is thought to deteriorate over time (Nilsson Stutz 2003), Bell sees meaning as inherent in action because actions have socio-historical consequences (Bell 1997). Thus, she rejects the ritual as performance's notion of distanciation. Like functionalism and neo-functionalism, practice theory views ritual as a generator of experience, embodied sense, and competence (Bell 1997). On the other hand, it rejects the perspective of ritual as fundamentally referential (Bell 1997). Lastly, structuralist notions of liminality are important to consider throughout this project, but Bell's practice theory does not focus on order within society, as structuralism does. Rather, practice theory explains structural challenge and allows individual agency a role in the dynamic of history (Bell 1997).

One of the biggest gaps in ritual theory literature seems to be a lack of clarity about what "ritual" actually means. While countless scholars have written about ritual, it seems they have only been able to describe different aspects of the idea rather than to define its nature. In Bell's description, practice and structure come together to form ritual, and ritual is structuring as well as structured by action. Thus, ritual must be viewed within the context of structure and in relation to other practices in a society. Due to the multitude of rich traditions and rituals existing within Judaism, practice theory is an extremely useful place to turn when exploring how the Holocaust fits into this religious culture's identity. In the words of Krondorfer (2008), "The anxiety over unhealed wounds, unmet justice, social amnesia, and contemporary Holocaust denial has led to a culture of reiterative performances of memory" (p. 235). Because practice theory views bodies as living memories, these "reiterative performances of memory" can be seen as the ritualistic activities of living humans. Through examination of what Jewish Americans physically do to remember the Holocaust, practice theory offers a lens through which to view how the Holocaust becomes part of and affects Jewish American identity.

Commemoration

When disaster strikes, memorialization seems to play a key role in the healing process. Because this project involves examining the effects of a disaster, the Holocaust, and how it is incorporated into group identity, commemoration theory and its importance to collective memory is a useful theoretical tool. What is envisioned for restoration and remembrance in a specific context, however, can have implications beyond original intent. Memorials often become destinations for an untold number of people. The mysterious fascination with sites of massive suffering, such as Auschwitz, particularly surrounding the Holocaust, raises the question of how Jewish culture specifically manipulates memorial space to make it personal and sacred. In his study of commemoration practices in Northern Ireland, Neil Jarman (1999) claims, "The power of the past, of a collective memory, to influence the present and the future relies heavily on the process, or practice, or commemoration, and the selectivity of memory and of forgetting" (p. 171). Thus, commemoration theory seen through practice theory enlightens an elemental part of this research.

Several ideas exist as to why dark tourism, the attraction to places of suffering, is such a fascination within modern society. Author Erik Cohen (2011), who draws from John Urry's (2002) idea of a tourist gaze and Dean MacCannell's (1976) emphasis on the tourist seeking authenticity, argues that dark tourism provides a symbolic framework that the tourist can use to understand the past. Based on his research at an Israeli Holocaust Memorial site, Cohen (2011) explains that the perception of authenticity experienced by tourists is impacted by their socialization and former knowledge of the site. He emphasizes the educational and ethical side of dark tourism, claiming that these elements are "critical in creating meaningful interpretation at dark tourism sites, especially those with controversial political implications" (Cohen 2011, p. 205). Thus, if modern American Jews visit Holocaust memorial sites, their prior education and socialization surrounding the space are vital to their experiences.

In order to explore what makes memorial space successful, Michael Rowlands (1999) looks at war memorials from the World War era and later. For Rowlands (1999), successful memorial space works "at the level of healing and reconciliation" (p. 129). "War memorials should ideally allow the fusion of the living with the dead as an act of remembrance whilst eventually providing a way out of melancholia through an act of transcendence" (Rowlands 1999, p. 131). While living bodies gaze upon and maneuver around these physical structures, they are encouraged to enter a state of liminality where life and death meet. For those personally affected, successful memorial space will allow them to remember collectively and then release the memorialized event. Thus, these memorials are transformed into ritualized sacred space. Furthermore, the narrative of a successful memorial is internalized, forming a group identity within the individual. In Jarman's (1999) words, "It is important to emphasize the social or collective nature of these memories because, as Maurice Halbwachs argued, memories of past events are primarily maintained and structured within membership of a social group rather than by individuals" (p. 171). This is important to consider when examining how Jewish culture interacts with memorial space surrounding the Holocaust, and how that interaction reinforces group identity.

An example that Rowlands discusses is the war memorial to the Anzacs in Sydney, Australia. This memorial consists of a single naked fallen soldier lying on a sword and shield in a "semi-crucified pose" (Rowlands 1999, p. 134). He is supported by three clothed women who represent the mourning mother, sister, and wife of those who were slain. In this example, the fallen warrior is used to exemplify the sacrifice of the nation while the three clothed women embody mourning as a kind of living sacrifice (Rowlands 1999). "Sacrifice of the nation embodies a classical theme of the warrior as a heroic, young and sexually potent male whose death is justified by the preservation of the regenerative powers of women" (p. 134).

In this example, a certain national narrative was sculpted into the monument to tell specific stories about Australian identity. "The symbolism of the death and suffering of the Anzac troops in Europe evokes egalitarian ideals of 'the digger', of Australian mateship" (Rowlands 1999, p. 133). Celebration of the Anzacs is, according to Rowlands, an attempt to reverse the creation of Australian identity in terms of colonialism. "Instead, to be Australian acquires an historically forged identity that has saved the 'other', and in particular saved the 'cradle of Western civilisation' through the blood and sacrifice of Australian egalitarian ideals" (Rowlands 1999, p. 133). When Australians intentionally and physically interact with this memorial space, they are shaped by the memorial's carefully structured narrative. In other words, notions of group identity and history are constructed and reconstructed when Australians ritually interact with this memorial site.

Rowland's example shows the importance of memorialization for collective memory and group identity production. The narratives of Holocaust memorials, however, are more akin to active gravesites than the Anzac memorial. Author Janet Jacobs (2004) reiterates the importance of sacred space, stating that the sacred assumes a crucial role in the face of violence and mass trauma. She gives the example of the immediate ritualistic response to September 11.

> The importance of the cross as a perceived presence of God at Ground Zero contributed to the almost immediate sanctification of the site, a turning toward the sacred that was evident not only in the worship at the cross but in the creation of the many other popular shrines and ritual spaces that spontaneously appeared in and around the wreckage (Jacobs 2004, p. 311).

Jacobs (2004) argues that this response in New York City, one of the "most sophisticated and cosmopolitan urban centers in the world," reveals the deep significance that the sacred assumes when facing wide scale trauma. (p. 311). By physically imbuing the landscape of wreckage and death with religious symbols, it was transformed into a sacred space. Jacobs then explains the importance of this transformation for sites of Holocaust memorials. In her words,

> Holocaust sites throughout eastern and western Europe offer some of the most startling examples of this trend toward sacred memorialization. Particularly in the last decade, former death camps and massacre sites have increasingly become sacred ground where the performance of rituals and death rites mark and reclaim these surviving landscapes of violence and genocide (p. 311).

A specific example Jacobs gives of these reclaimed landscapes is Majdanek in Poland. During the early 1940s, Nazi Germany constructed Majdanek for the purpose of extermination. Today, this concentration camp-turned-memorial site is one of the most poignant examples of the terrors inflicted by the Nazi regime. Throughout the years, this camp has remained essentially untouched (Jacobs, 2004). What has been added, however, is its impressive dome-shaped mausoleum. This structure contains the visible ashes of roughly 350,000 people, most of whom were Jews (Jacobs 2004, p. 313). Therefore, this memorial site is one of the few actual gravesites of Holocaust victims. What is more, "because the mausoleum is an actual gravesite, it is here that visitors, survivors, and family members come to say Kaddish (the Jewish prayer for mourning), lining the edges of the mountain-size urn with stones and pebbles in the custom of Jewish tradition" (Jacobs 2004, p. 313).

Here, Jewish mourners imbue the landscape with transcendence by ritually transforming it from a profane space into a sacred one, physically interacting with and performing rituals of mourning for the thousands who died on the site. In the words of Jarman (1999), "Formalized physical enactment and symbolic displays, which are relatively fluid in their exact meaning, therefore provide two key elements for the collective mnemonic process. One offers the suggestion of solidity, stability, structure and organization; the other allows for flexibility, variability and personal interpretations" (p.173). When Jewish visitors interact with Majdanek, individual interpretation is filtered through formal structures, informing both individual and group identity.

Interestingly, the space surrounding this camp is, according to Jacobs, "surrounded by Soviet-era apartment complexes that were developed on the land adjacent to the former death camp. Residential buildings and shops are therefore scattered along the borders of the original barbed-wire fences that today enclose the former barracks, gas chambers, and crematoria" (p. 313). The physicality of this space is a telling example of the nature of this memorial. While Majdanek remains largely unchanged and seemingly trapped in time, the surrounding town bustles with movement and change. The barbed wire barrier symbolically separates the camp from the modern world, giving Jewish visitors a space that is set apart. The importance of this physicality is what the aforementioned practice theory stresses. The closeness of the two landscapes also leads to inevitable collision between Jewish mourners and outsiders who may desire to use the space as a place of recreation (Jacobs 2004, p.314). However, this tension is not relevant to the goals of this project.

The examples above illustrate how the visual and physical nature of memorial interaction shapes the ways in which visitors experience and internalize the space. Though visitors are affected by these commemorative sites, they simultaneously shape the narrative of the sites with their actions. Through intentionally crafted narratives, memorials are successful when they allow personal memories and understanding to join with collective memory, forming and reinforcing group identity. Although the subject of this paper's research does not deal extensively with physical memorial space, these ideas and ritualized processes are still applicable. This interaction between narrative and memory in physical ways are important to remember for this project.

Summary

In the words of Jewish author Eva Hoffman (2004), "If we do not want to betray the past—if we want to remain ethical beings and honor our covenant with those who suffered—then moral passion needs to be supplanted by moral thought, by an incorporation of memory into our consciousness of the world" (p. 278). The Holocaust was a massive attack against Jews that Jewish culture makes a pointed effort to remember. In doing so, this project seeks to understand how this memory is incorporated into identity.

To understand the implications of this project's questions, a basic understanding of Judaism and existing literature about important changes the Holocaust has caused are an important first step. Examining some of the ways in which American culture, a staunchly individualized society, has influenced Judaism, a community-oriented faith, is important because this study looks specifically at an American Jewish community. More specifically, an overview of Reform Judaism and American Jewish Civil Religion are important due to The Temple's affiliation with the Union for Reform Judaism. Bereavement and burial practices are also important to consider because this research will investigate how current rituals are incorporated into and affect a specific American Jewish community's identity; some of these rituals include bereavement practices. Jewish tradition places emphasis on remembering those who have died, and the ways that the Holocaust is remembered will be a reflection upon this value. Finally, major theological paradigmatic shifts on the image of God and the incorporation of Holocaust narratives into days such as Yom Kippur are some of the ways in which existing literature sheds light upon the Holocaust's affects on Jewish cultural identity. There has also been the Israeli creation of a Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom HaShoah, which some American Jews have incorporated into their ritual calendar of practice.

Ritual and commemoration theories have much to say about the formation of group identity within the individual. They form the framework through which it is possible to understand how individual identity is affected and internalized by collective memory, and how group identity is produced and reproduced. Practice theory uses the idea of a circular dance between action informed by and informing the structure to create significance. People and human activities are constituted through social processes while group identity is constituted through meaningful narratives, and living bodies are transformed into agents of memory. Commemoration theory draws upon ritualization's ability to mark and separate space, roles, and time to create transcendent effects. Memorials supply the space for individual and collective memory, while also supplying a narrative about a group's identity. Ritualized acts performed in sacralized memorial space allow for transcendence and serve to create and maintain group identity.

There is an overabundance of research about the history and factual details of the Holocaust. There is also a body of literature on the theological changes that the Holocaust has caused. This study, however, serves to research how the Holocaust is remembered and physically incorporated into Jewish culture. It will examine how people physically interact with their environment to remember the Holocaust, called the Shoah within the Jewish community, and to pass it on to future generations. It will investigate how the past is incorporated into present collective identity and how this affects a specific modern Jewish community in the United States.

Chapter 2: Memory

This chapter takes a close look at the participants of this study, including the histories they chose to share. It seeks to explore the ways that participants interact with the Shoah, physically and intellectually. Thus, it will examine how Shoah narratives are internalized and recreated as part of the participants' identities. It will tell the stories of the study population, looking at how they learned about the Shoah, their reactions to it, and how they remember it today.

Ritualized Remembrance

One of the questions I asked each participant is what he or she did on Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah. Many of the participants, however, mentioned Yom HaShoah before I asked the question. Four of the seven participants informed me about a ceremony held at Greenwood Cemetery every year. An interviewee in his 70s described it this way:

> We don't call it the Holocaust; we call it the Shoah, which means the whirlwind. On Yom HaShoah, which means the day of the whirled wind, where we remember what happened, we go to Greenwood Cemetery here, there's a monument there… and we tell people about what happened.

This event at the cemetery typically involves hearing a survivor speak and then lighting six candles, in the words of a participant in his 40s, "one to represent, you know, each of the six million Jews." Another interviewee, a woman below 30, mentioned participating in the Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony where she grew up. "I would play this song from Schindler's List on my violin and do, like, a kinda spoken word poem, like, it was a whole multimedia thing that they did in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day."

What was most surprising, however, was the lack of consistency surrounding this day of remembrance. Each participant knew of the memorial day. Of the 7 interviewees, however, only two mentioned that they regularly observe this day. One of these two was a rabbi and the other was a male in his 70s. A participant in her 50s, on the other hand, explained why she did not need a special day to remember the Holocaust. She told me that the Holocaust is part of her consciousness, and that as a result, she is sometimes afraid for her child because her child is Jewish at a school with very few Jewish children. For her, the Holocaust is an example of a long pattern through Jewish history, and she does not need a specific day to remember it.

She also mentioned, however, that she visits a Holocaust memorial located in a Jewish Center when she has some extra moments. She informed me that it is a small space, but that it is experienced like a maze. According to her, the world stops when she visits. The space is eerie and silent with the feel of a gravesite, even though no one died there. Interestingly, like Jacobs (2011), she compared this space with the quietness of Ground Zero. Thus, through the way that this participant interacts with this memorial space, it is imbued and marked as sacred. In her physical presence and interaction with this sacred space, the Holocaust is reincorporated into her memory and reaffirmed in her physical being.

Another participant, a male in his 40s, echoed similar sentiments. For him, the Holocaust is the most recent major event in a past filled with "horrific events." In his words, "it's always keeping us on guard that this could happen again."

Still a third study participant, a woman younger than 30, mentioned that, "In the past six, seven years since I've been out of school, like, really I know that it's Yom HaShoah because people start posting pictures on Facebook." She went on to give examples, saying that Facebook users sometimes change their profile pictures to a "yellow star, or they post pictures of, um, the camps being freed, and they say never forget or they post a little story about one of their family members." Yom HaShoah does not fall on the same day each year, making it harder to remember the specific date. The importance of social media prevalent in this younger generation, however, is worth noting. This participant and another female interviewee, in her 40s, were the only participants who mentioned social media. The participant who was younger than 30 also mentioned that she is part of a group to raise genocide awareness beyond only the Holocaust, and that they plan to use social media, "to try to get people to pay attention." Perhaps social media will play an increasing role in the consumption and formation of identity surrounding the Holocaust for rising generations. If this is true, the lack of physical contact and interaction with online material, I predict, will prove to be an obstacle to building authentic connection. The use of social media in identity formation more generally could be a topic of interest for future studies.

A second surprise to me was the lack of importance placed upon physically commemorating the anniversary of Kristallnacht. Because I started my research in the fall, I expected to learn about the importance of Kristallnacht commemoration on November 9th, its anniversary. However, I could not begin fieldwork at that time due to the need for IRB approval. More interestingly, though, The Temple did not have a service to remember it.

After I began research, when I asked participants how often they spoke about the Holocaust, many mentioned that Kristallnacht was one of the few times it was openly discussed. However, only two interviewees, a male in his 70s and a rabbi, mentioned any form of communal commemoration on this day. The male in his 70s explained, "Every year we have a Kristallnacht remembrance… And we tell this to people because they tend to forget, and one thing I tell everybody, God realizes that we are not that smart, and that we have a hard time remembering all the things we're supposed to do." According to the rabbi, "There's certain anniversaries that often will have moments of remembrance, so it could be the anniversary of

Kristallnacht, the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, those kinds of things, where we would have certain commemorations during the year." On the other hand, the rabbi also explained that other days incorporated Holocaust remembrance. An example where he specifically mentioned Kristallnacht is Tisha Bav, a day of commemoration that remembers "all of the destruction in Jewish history… so it's the destruction of the Temple, and it's the Crusades, and the beginning of the Inquisition and all these things, but… Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass, is observed generally as part of that as well."

One commonality among six of the seven interviewees was the importance of Holocaust remembrance during other Holy Days. When I asked participants if the Holocaust was incorporated into any other important days, or if any other anniversaries incorporated Holocaust commemoration, all interviewees except a female informant in her 70s and a male in his 40s mentioned Yom Kippur and/or Passover. One participant in her 40s described Yom Kippur to me:

> [Every year] there's always a part of the service that's sort of there, you know, echoes or dedicated to [the Holocaust]. And the synagogue where I grew up, they definitely had a prayer that we would say, and they'd do these different prayers in memory of all those people who died…There's part of the Yom Kippur services called Yizkor, which is when you remember the dead. So, you remember the people in your family that have died, but then you also remember all these other people. And again, they're a part of our quote, unquote, "extended family." They're also part of other people, somebody's family. Maybe their whole family died and there's nobody left to remember them.

Another participant, a rabbi, told me that on the afternoon of Yom Kippur, there is a "part of the service that deals with martyrology, and we talk about people who've died for the sanctification of God's name, you know, who didn't have a choice." He mentioned that during this part of the service, the Holocaust would be remembered alongside other tragic events, such as the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition.

The rabbi went on to explain other Holocaust commemorations. He told me that some people remember the Holocaust during Passover because, "that's a holiday about freedom and slavery, and so some people will tie [the Holocaust] in, and some people's Seders have references to the Holocaust." One of the female participants above 40, who grew up in a neighborhood of Holocaust survivors, informed me that Passover mentions someone rising up against the Jews in every generation. Thus, in her experience, rather than only mentioning Egyptians, Hitler was discussed at the Passover Seder.

While speaking with a participant under 30, she mentioned a prayer for those lost in the Holocaust near the end of Passover, along with the prayer for Israel. When she attended a Seder that used a *Haggadah*, the Passover text, from the 1930s, she was taken aback by the absence of Holocaust literature. "It was the first Seder I had ever been to where we didn't have a prayer for those lost in the Holocaust. And I was like, 'Why aren't we doing this?' And then I looked at the [book's] date." She later described it as, "a really strange experience for me, going to that and not doing the prayer."

Perhaps one explanation for the uneven observance of Holocaust specific memorial days is because they are not as communal and familial. While explaining why the Holocaust is remembered on Yom Kippur to me, a female participant in her 40s explained, "we're all together and it's very serious." She went as far as to say, "So Yom Kippur would be more the time [to remember] that I think, yeah, than like at Kristallnacht which, again… I don't even know what time of year it occurs." Another informant his 70s described his Passover experience as a child. "So, during holidays like Passover, everybody from New York came to my house and we had a Passover Seder." The main holidays or memorial days mentioned to me that included the Holocaust were days that involve family and communal togetherness.

Holocaust remembrance, however, has a unifying effect within Judaism overall. According to an informant younger than 30,

> I think, in general, there are fewer and fewer things that unite all Jews and, like I said, I'm, it saddens me that that those are the two things that, you know, we educate about. And it seems like we only educate about Israel and the Holocaust, um, but also, like, they are the two entwined things that are kind of non-negotiable. Regardless of where you line up in the spectrum of Jewish observance and belief, like, those two things are pretty paramount.

Another participant told me that the way to bring about a revival of Judaism is to experience a wave of anti-Semitism. Then people would know they are Jewish, according to the participant. Thus, because the Holocaust targeted all Jews equally, it is an event that brings all branches of Judaism together.

Stressing the value of memory, one of the participants mentioned to me that all Jewish holidays involve some kind of remembrance.

> Every holiday, some part of every holiday, we talk about remembrance. In fact, in Judaism when a relative, a parent or a relative dies, we remember the date of their death every year, and every year we remember. And we say a mourner's prayer… And we always remember our parents, and our grandparents, because without them we wouldn't be here. We're big on remembering. We have a lot to remember.

In placing such value on the memory of departed loved ones, those who are remembering are incorporating the identity of the deceased into their own lives. By physically saying the mourner's prayer combined with the person's name, the speaker is purposefully and consciously remembering the departed. Thus, the identity of the person who died is kept alive in the speaker's consciousness through the ritual. Repeating this act on an annual basis continuously reaffirms the existence of the deceased in the life of the living. Through memory, the dead prevail in the living.

Upon starting fieldwork and attending services at The Temple, one of the first things I noticed was that the Mourner's *Kaddish*, or the prayer that was mentioned above, included the name of someone “who perished in Auschwitz.” This Kaddish is recited every week to mourn the anniversary of a death, a *yahrzeit*. When I inquired about this practice, a rabbi told me, “Once someone dies, we read their name every year on the anniversary of their death, so the names you hear on Friday night are for the full week. We also include one name from Auschwitz on behalf of all who perished in the Holocaust.” Thus, similar to the way in which loved ones are remembered, Temple attendees ritually remember the Holocaust each time they attend Shabbat Worship Services. This means that each week, the Holocaust is ritually brought to attendees’ consciousness through the physical recitation of the Kaddish.

Based on this information, it is clearer how the Holocaust is so easily incorporated into other memorials and holidays. It also reveals the Holocaust’s importance to Jewish culture. Throughout the narratives of each interview, individualized experiences and responses together formed a collective emphasis on Holocaust remembrance. Though most participants may not consciously think or talk about the Holocaust on a daily basis, the ritualized actions and attitudes toward it, particularly the unease experienced with its absence, reveal its entrenchment into Jewish cultural narrative and identity.

Agreement

There are two aspects about the Holocaust that were unanimously mentioned or described by all study participants. The first is that Holocaust survivors played a key role in the internalization of the Holocaust narrative. The second is that the Holocaust has a more profound effect on their cultural identity than on their faith.

When I asked participants how they remember first learning about the Holocaust, or if they felt that the importance of the Holocaust to Judaism is changing, a theme began to appear. In each interview, the importance of Holocaust survivors rose to the surface. The temporal distance from the Holocaust, and therefore the slow decrease in living survivors, was a concern that also appeared in every interview. In the words of a participant in her 70s, “I think [the importance of the Holocaust] is changing, but I think it’s changing because we’re losing our survivors, because they’re all senior citizens right now.” The importance of survivor narratives and their place in the transmission of the Holocaust in Jewish identity is further explored in the next chapter. However, the participants demonstrated the significance of physical interaction with survivors, with living embodied history, for the incorporation of the Holocaust into their own memories. These survivors play a key role in identity consumption.

In the words of a one participant, who was describing what it is like for survivors to share their stories, “It’s like if you have a sore, the last thing you want to do is pick it, but they volunteer to tell their story and every story is different and every story is terrible.” Here, the importance for survivors in sharing their stories is seen. Despite the difficulty of this sharing, the survivors volunteer to remember in order to transmit their memories onto the next generation. Jacobs’ (2011) earlier description of the vacillation between remembering and forgetting is seen in this process. These survivors remember, transmit that memory, and are allowed to forget with the assurance that others will remember. In other words, for survivors, transmission of knowledge is simultaneously ritualized commemoration of personal connection with the Holocaust that, upon the completion of the narrative, returns to the realm of forgetfulness.

It is also extremely noteworthy that the word “victim” only appeared once during the interview process. While I was speaking with an informant in her 40s she said,

> I imagine there’s some contemporaries of mine who are Jewish who don’t want to talk about [the Holocaust] ‘cause they see it as, maybe, if they see it as a symbol of victimization, as a symbol of, you know, reinforcing the fact that they feel different… I think it informs and it affects our Jewishness to this day, you know?... But I don’t think it should be the only thing that informs or affects us, you know, as Jews. But it definitely shouldn’t be put in a box and sort of filed away.

Rather than referring to herself as a victim, she looked outward to her larger community, indicating that she does not view herself as a victim of this narrative. Thus, for her, the Holocaust narrative has not been internalized in such a way as to produce a mindset of victimization. Rather, other factors shape the narrative of the Holocaust and thus shape her view of the Holocaust. This theme of not allowing the Holocaust to create an outlook of victimization appeared repeatedly throughout the research project.

Two of the last questions I asked each interviewee were whether or not the Holocaust was important for their faith and how they felt it affected their identity. The consistency in the tone of their responses was overwhelming. Some participants explicitly stressed the Holocaust's affect on their identity.

> I don't think you really necessarily would view the Holocaust through a religious-ism… Our religion may have made us vulnerable to this type of persecution, but I think it was more than the, the religion of those people. It wasn't really their religion, it was their whole identity as a group…There were many people who were totally unreligious, you know. If they had said to them, 'become a Christian or we're sending you to the gas chamber,' they would have said, 'I'm going to become a Christian thanks'… Some people wouldn't have, but some people would have, kind of like the Spanish Inquisition or something like that. But they weren't given that choice. It was really their ethnicity and their lineage and their cultural identity and their identity as part of a group… even if they didn't themselves identify as part of that group of people around them… But I think the Jewish community tends to commemorate it through these religious toned, kind of, events, like the one at Greenwood Cemetery (female interviewee in her 40s).

When answering if the Holocaust was important for her faith, another participant, a female below 30, said, "I mean not, not really, like, for my faith, more about, for my identity and, like, my cultural, like, peoplehood." A third interviewee, a woman over 40, told me that Judaism is cultural as well as religious, but that the Holocaust affects the culture, not the religion. Still a fourth participant, a woman in her 70s, said, "Yeah, not for my personal faith, but I think it's important to remember in general for all people because… I'm scared if we forget, we're liable to go, see somebody else come like Hitler." Finally, a male in his 70s told me that he felt the Holocaust was not as important for his faith as for his identity. Thus, all of the women and one of the men in this study answered the question in the same manner.

The two remaining male participants answered the question in a comparable manner to those above, but not as explicitly. It is worth noting that both remaining interviewees are rabbis. The first told me that he felt the Holocaust was important to his faith, and that he has, "an obligation to [his] ancestors to make sure that we never forget." The second answered that "of course" it was important for his faith because the Holocaust, "is our history, this is our past." He also lamented that history has repeated itself multiple times, and that it is important to "keep [the Holocaust] central to our thoughts, but not, um, to guide our thoughts." These answers reflect an emphasis on the Holocaust's importance to the cultural aspects of Judaism, to Jewish identity, rather than to the religious aspect of Judaism.

The uniformity of this answer is illuminated by the answers to the other question introduced in this section: how participants feel the Holocaust affects their identity. Because the Holocaust is viewed as an attack against cultural identity rather than faith, it can potentially have devastating effects.

> If there's any one thing that reminds me that I'm Jewish, it's the Holocaust. They don't bring it up every day… but I remember it, and because of it, it's sort of like I'm always looking over my shoulder. I'm always making sure that I follow God's commandments, I'm always making sure that I talk about peace (male informant in his 70s).

Another participant, a female in her 20s, began by telling me she was proud of Jewish involvement in raising awareness for other genocides, such as Darfur. "I think that it speaks to, kind of the fabric of the Jewish people, that like…it's not just, like, if a Jew is persecuted anywhere, but if anybody is persecuted anywhere then we all truly aren't free." She also described feeling a sense of duty that was echoed in an interview with a rabbi. "I think it [the

Holocaust], it's, uh, pretty significant because… I feel that I have to, uh, you know, work hard as a rabbi to make sure people know what happens and to make sure people work hard to make sure it doesn't happen again."

Throughout the interview process, the profound affects that the Holocaust has upon internalized identity slowly became more prevalent. As seen above, these participants felt that the Holocaust was an affront to their cultural identity and to their existence as people. Ritualized practices of memory are important because, as Jewish history has shown, forgetting is potentially dangerous. One of my informants, a woman in her 40s, explains it well.

> I mean a big part of my identity is that I'm a Jew. Now for other people who are Jewish, they may hide that more and it may be a much less prominent part of their identity, but for me, it's definitely part of my identity. And so, remembering the Holocaust, remembering what happened, why it happened, and how it happened is something that I think, *I think*…you know, um, every Jewish person whether they're conscious of it or not walks around with the tiniest bit of, I'll almost call it fear, paranoia, concern, that they could be, they could be, um, somebody could behave toward them in a way that was prejudiced, that they would be, you know, stigmatized, that they could even be persecuted, possibly. It's always possible, just because you're a Jew. So when they talk about 'never again' and some of these phrases that they use, and 'always remember,' I think the idea behind that is that… Jewish people in Germany and Jewish people in Austria and Jewish people in Poland and Jewish people in, uh, Czechoslovakia, and these countries in that time period were very successful, they were very assimilated, they were parts of the government, they were parts of the army, they were in the army, they were, World War One, they were heroes, they were people who were in business, they were in arts, they were in academia, they had beautiful lives. They were, they were, all of their friends were Christian, they had, you know, no problems with their relatives and their friends and their neighbors, and, all of the sudden, boom! You know, bad economic times, war, trouble, all of that. First knee jerk reaction, boom, you know, let's blame the Jews. It happens over and over again, I've seen it happen, I've heard people say anti-Semitic things, and I thought, 'Oh here it comes,' you know, minute something bad happens somebody's going to make some kind of remark about the Jews and Israelis or whoever it is. And I'm like, you know, I think that's a natural sort of human response, but I think as a Jew, you always have this sense of, 'I have to be vigilant,' even if you're not consciously aware of it, because of the Holocaust.

As the struggle against social anti-Semitism continues in American society, the Holocaust is a constant threat looming beneath the surface. Through this story, the effects of the incorporated

Holocaust narrative can be seen to shape the way the individual moves through society. Here, based on past experience and the reiteration of the Holocaust narrative, the individual becomes an agent of living memory. Though the Holocaust may not be a constant conscious thought, it is incorporated to the level of subconscious through learned narratives ritually reinforced by experiential practices. The affect of this memory is to produce a sense of separation from society. As this participant describes, the existence of social anti-Semitism is a constant and present threat that reminds her to remember. To forget the Holocaust in the face of this real threat, it seems, would be to ensure that it happens again. On the other hand, as the individual faces anti-Semitism within mainstream American society, the Holocaust narrative of otherness is reiterated and confirmed. Therefore, the incorporation of the Holocaust narrative through ritualized practices of memory to the level of subconscious identity produces a sense of otherness within American society while social anti-Semitism within American society simultaneously reinforces and reiterates a message of cultural separation.

Conclusion

Based upon interactions with the participants and the memories they shared, the Holocaust has had a greater impact upon the cultural identity of this congregation than upon its religious identity. However, as seen through the lack of consistent commemoration on days like Kristallnacht and Yom HaShoah, religion is the vehicle through which this cultural narrative is commemorated. There is also a prevalent sense of anxiety about the disappearance of living survivors to ensure the continuation of this memory. Perhaps these two ideas are intertwined. Though the survivors, who are examples of embodied history, are temporal, Judaism has endured for thousands of years. Thus, because religion is timeless, if it is the vehicle of Holocaust memory, this memory has the potential to continue to be remembered after the embodied agents who lived through it are gone.

These interviewees, however, also echo ideals of Reform Judaism and American Jewish Civil Religion surrounding the Holocaust. This Jewish Civil Religion views the Holocaust as a uniting factor within the entire Jewish community. The Reform Movement then reinterprets the narrative of the Holocaust to use it as an apparatus for social activism. According to this idea, Jews who actually experienced the Holocaust are righteous and innocent sufferers. To honor them, an event of this nature cannot be allowed to happen again, whether to Jew or Gentile. Thus, social responsibility rather than victimization is an outcome produced through the transmission of the Holocaust narrative within this congregation.

Chapter 3: Transmission of Knowledge

An extremely important value in Jewish culture is education. To quote an informant, "When we're born and we read about Jewish stuff, the one thing that is always emphasized is education." Therefore, in order to examine how the Holocaust is transmitted to new generations, it was important for me to do research in a Jewish school. Rather than physically attend the school, however, I was connected with two educators from The Temple's religious school, and one Hebrew Sunday School teacher. Based on these interviews, as well as personal interviews from the previous chapter, I was able to learn about the narratives and physical activities that take place in order to produce Holocaust remembrance in children.

The Religious School

While interviewing an educator from The Temple's Religious School who teaches younger children, I asked her if there was a curriculum for Holocaust Education.

> We developed a curriculum. We generally teach them, um, certain aspects of it, like resistance and righteous gentiles. We break it down into…what led up to the Holocaust, the, um, aftermath of World War One, which left Germans, um, without an army, and basically with, having to spend so much money in repatriation. And so we, we start out with that and then we talk about the rise of Hitler and, um, how he came to be chancellor, or the Fuhrer, and, um, then basically we talk about, uh, we do a lot of talking about bullying because he was a bully.

She told me that they focus on bullying in an effort to avoid teaching about the horrors of the Holocaust and to make it relatable to the children. "We teach them about the fact that he was the ultimate bully and look what happened." She also informed me that they focus on individual lives and stories to avoid overwhelming the children with large numbers. I also asked her when the children first learn about the Holocaust. "They come in and a lot of them have it in fifth grade, and some of them who don't have it in fifth grade have it in sixth grade…They'll read a book about it…and they'll discuss it for history." Along the same lines, she also described some of the projects and discussions, based upon books, which she does with her children.

> Right now we read a, um, a graphic novel called A Family Affair. It's about, um, Holland and a family…who lived in Holland during the time of the war…They actually read this in class and then we talk about it… Next year, we're going to have an art project with an artist come in and go through the art project, but that's based on the book Number the Stars.

Literature and the absorption of its narratives are, based on this participant's information, extremely important for Holocaust education. Because the children have discussions and do art projects related to their reading, they experience the material in interactive and physical ways.

According to this teacher, the children also go on field trips to visit Holocaust museums. "We always go to the Anne Frank Museum… Most of [the children] are so familiar with Anne Frank that going to the museum makes it even more real to them." She also informed me that, sometimes, they also take children to the Breman Museum. However, the religious school does not prioritize this visit because most children who attend the religious school also attend public school, and the children's public schools take trips to this museum.

In the case of the Anne Frank Museum, this is an example of bringing literature to life. Children are given the chance to interact spatially with previously learned written narrative, incorporating it into their physical beings. Perhaps in future generations, when there are no remaining Holocaust survivors, experiences that bring the text into the physical world will become critical for Holocaust remembrance.

When I asked about the school's observance of Yom HaShoah, two noteworthy actions were mentioned. First, in the words of an interviewee, "We have a, um, we do have a survivor that comes and talks to the kids every year." The importance of survivor narratives is a constant and crucial theme in Holocaust education and remembrance. Many interviewees expressed anxiety for future generations that will not be able to interact physically with these living survivors. Second, one of the rabbis at the school mentioned a performative experience that the children do. He mentioned that for Yom HaShoah, “we have a, um, a performance of, um, our tolerance, um, performance group.” The juxtaposition of this tolerance group performing on a day set aside for Holocaust remembrance has interesting parallels. It highlights the Jewish value of social responsibility and suggests that the Holocaust plays a role in shaping this value.

A final noteworthy activity that the school does with their 6th graders is to “adopt a child who perished in the Holocaust.” In order to preserve the memories of children who died during the Holocaust, their names are adopted by the 6th graders at The Temple. These 6th graders then try to recreate the child. For example, an informant mentioned that the schoolchildren create a map of where the child was born. This informant also told me that the fallen child’s name is said during the Mourner’s Kaddish on that child’s yahrzeit. This means that each year, on the anniversary of the child’s death, his or her name is said when the Mourner’s Kaddish is read for the week. Usually the names spoken during this prayer are those of family members. Thus, the child who perished is incorporated into the family of the living child. The living child then has the responsibility to remember the one who perished. Each time the fallen child’s death is commemorated, his or her identity is reaffirmed through the living child; the fallen child lives in memory through the living child. Thus, the physicality of praying the Mourner’s Kaddish reestablishes the identity of the fallen child in the living child. This ritual exemplifies the idea of individuals as living memories. Through this interaction, holocaust narrative is internalized by the living child. This child then becomes an agent of living memory.

Experiential Learning

One of the female participants I interviewed, the youngest of my informants, had two revealing stories about the importance of physical experience for identity creation. In her words, "There're two key things that I remember from my Holocaust education, and they were both, like, around the 6th grade." The first was an experience that focused on resistance and strength during the Holocaust after her 6th grade Sunday School teacher had been teaching about the Partisan Movement.

> In the middle of the year we went out into the woods, and, like, we didn't play capture the flag, but it was like a game right, it was an experiential learning immersive experience. And, like, at the end of it, she gathered us to like, rethink something from one of the Partisans. You know, she'd give a voice to it and that's about all that I really remember of it, but the fact that I remember that from 1997 you know that's pretty sticky.

The second story she tells occurred while she was at a summer camp.

> They, like, blindfolded us…We were all in, like, a very, very small space. Like, I think it was the canteen or something, but it was supposed to be, like, a box car. And, again, I don't remember that much about it, but it was like, to simulate the, how unsettling it is and how thrown up it is, like, when you have to do things that you, just do what your told, right? And you have no free will, and, um, and it was scary, you know. It was like, people we knew, but they were all yelling, you know, trying to corral us, and they were trying to simulate that experience of being deported and going to a camp… But they did it in a very safe environment.

The fact that this participant remembers these events so clearly showcases the potency of physical interaction in identity formation. In both stories, the participant engaged in actions that were clearly set apart from every day activity. The narrative of each practice, learned by the participant through her prior studies, was incorporated into her movements. Thus, the structure of each activity shaped her movements while her movements were creating the structure. This circularity affected her identity in relation to the Holocaust and how she remembers it, giving her the space to internalize it into her being.

Multimedia

When I asked study participants from the previous chapter how they remembered learning about the Holocaust, a prevalent answer was through multimedia. In particular, several participants mentioned film, television, and novels. One female interviewee older than 40 explained to me that she learned about the Holocaust through television shows and experience with survivors and family. Another participant, a 45 year old female, said, "[There's] something about films and television films, television shows that really do, or books, they really get you, sometimes more than, maybe what you learn in a text book, you know, in school or in a class, you know." This same informant went on to say, "Of course I think so many people no matter what your age is you, when you're young, you read Anne, Diary of Anne Frank." One of the teachers I interviewed also commented about multimedia. "A lot of [the children] have seen Boy in the Stripped Pajamas or read it…a lot of them have read Diary of Anne Frank, a lot of them have read Number the Stars."

The importance of multimedia in Holocaust education became increasingly prevalent as I conducted research. In the future, I would expect reliance upon multimedia to increase as the number of living survivors decreases. Various media sources and formats provide the crucial knowledge needed in order for Holocaust narratives to be incorporated into identity. Moreover, television and film media involve multiple senses and give the viewer a quasi-bodily experience with the information.

Survivors

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the importance of survivor narratives upon the production of Jewish identity surrounding the Holocaust is great. These people who lived through the Holocaust connect the past to the present and act as living, embodied history. They are the ultimate example of bringing the text to life for younger generations because they are living text. Their presence is incorporated into each Holocaust specific memorial day that was described to me, and they seem to be one of the most crucial components in the transmission of Holocaust identity. To quote an informant from the Breman Museum, “Holocaust education is mandatory in the public schools in Georgia, but the teachers feel rather than them teach, them teaching, bring ‘em here and meet a Holocaust survivor and listen to that story, and then we take them on a tour.” Survivors’ place in Holocaust memory relates back to Jacobs’ (2011) description of the survivors. She described survivors as participating in “ritual performances” that, “through religious practice and traditions, relived the emotions of their traumatic past” (p. 347). It was through these survivors that the Holocaust narrative became prevalent within American society, and my participants evidenced their continued importance today.

The participants in this study made it clear to me that these “ritual performances” are a key factor in the reproduction of Holocaust identity. Almost all of the participants expressed concern for their absence in coming generations. In the words of a female informant in her 40s, “I grew up knowing older people who had survived the Holocaust, but kids today, now who do they know? Unless it’s somebody in their family that they’ve never met, and somebody’s telling them about them, you know…As generations go on, people are farther and farther removed from it.” The effects of their eventual absence are a research topic that should be explored in future endeavors, but that currently creates a sense of anxiety based on the notion of forgetting.

Conclusion

One of the concerns that surfaced in several interviews was the young age at which Holocaust information is typically presented. A female participant over 40 told me that, after looking children who were learning about the Holocaust in the face, she thought they were too young. However, she also explained to me that many children fall away from Judaism after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the 7th grade. Therefore, 6th grade is one of the last times The Temple is sure to have their attention. Another informant from the Religious School said, “I think learning about the Holocaust as a Jew is different than learning the Holocaust as a non, a non-Jewish child, and that’s why they can teach it in school.” Still a third participant in her 40s explained that, “When you’re a Jewish kid in America, at least when I was growing up, you were told pretty much, ‘tough lessons are something that you need, and you’ll deal with it,’ and we did. So I realized, even early on, that as a Jew I’m different.”

Thus, Holocaust narratives are transmitted to children through multimedia, physical activities, experiential learning environments, and survivor narratives. This transmission is internalized by the young children and creates a cosmology of binaries that work to shape the identity of the children in relation to the Holocaust. While the transmission of this knowledge creates a sense of markedness from mainstream American society, it also reiterates narratives of righteous difference. In being forced to deal with tough lessons, an underlying message of strength is also present. The children are strong enough to handle such tough knowledge. These binaries work through the incorporation of “sticky” physical encounters with factual knowledge to engrain Holocaust remembrance within the bodies of these children. To use Filip De Boeck’s (1993) term, they become “living memories” (p. 136). It shapes their views of their places within society, and affects the ways in which they move through and interact with that society.

Chapter 4: The Breman Museum

In addition to attending synagogue once a week and conducting interviews with its members, I also explored a museum that the congregants repeatedly brought to my attention. The Breman Jewish Heritage & Holocaust Museum is one of the largest museums of this kind in the Southeast. It houses two permanent exhibits, “Creating Community: The Jews of Atlanta from 1845 to the Present” and “Absence of Humanity: The Holocaust Years,” along with a special exhibits gallery. The Breman also houses the “Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives and Genealogy Center,” “The Weinberg Center for Holocaust Education,” and a library filled with secondary sources. More specifically, I explored the Breman’s permanent Holocaust exhibit. This space was designed by Ben Hirsch, an architect who was also a Holocaust survivor. Based on Jewish values of remembrance and education, I expected this museum to be an important space for commemoration and the transmission of knowledge. This chapter looks at the importance of museum space and its relationship to identity formation.

Labyrinth to the Hall of Heroes

The nature of the Breman Museum’s space is important for shaping the interaction of the bodies that physically move through it. During my first visit, I walked through the museum’s Holocaust Exhibit on a self-guided tour. This exhibit is shaped like a labyrinth, with a collection of displays about those who refused to be “bystanders” in the center. I later learned that this room is known as the “Hall of Heroes.”

Image 1: Hall of Heroes

In order to begin the journey through this museum's space, visitors start in a room showcasing anti-Semitic artifacts. An ominous rendition of "Rachel Weeping over her Children" stands guard over this room, and therefore, the entrance to the exhibit (Image 2).

Image 2: "Rachel Weeping Over Her Children"

The next step on the tour is to enter a space filled with photographs and artifacts that showcase a glimpse of European Jewish life before Hitler came to power. The space quickly transforms, however, exhibiting the 1933 "Takeover of Power in Germany." Moving forward, I experienced the increasing chaos and oppression faced by Jews, including Kristallnacht. Finally, this straight path of displays ends with space that demonstrates Jewish ghettos (Image 3).

Image 3: Pre-Nazi Occupation to the Ghettos

Upon reaching the ghetto space, I was forced to turn to the right, entering a space showcasing the concentration camps and killings (Image 4). This was a large section, displaying many different aspects of oppression. For example, it included displays about transportation to the camps, what life in the camps was like, and the merciless shootings undertaken by the Einsatzgruppen, or mobile killing units (Image 5). One of the most striking artifacts in this area was an actual piece of the railway that led to Treblinka, a Polish death camp, bolted to the ceiling. I was later informed that this was placed on the ceiling to symbolize that people felt as though their world had turned upside down. A second striking artifact was a cast of the electrified barbed wire fence that would have surrounded a concentration camp.

Image 4: Nazi Killings

*The right side of image 4 is the space from which I walked, the leftt side is what I saw as I was forced to turn the corner

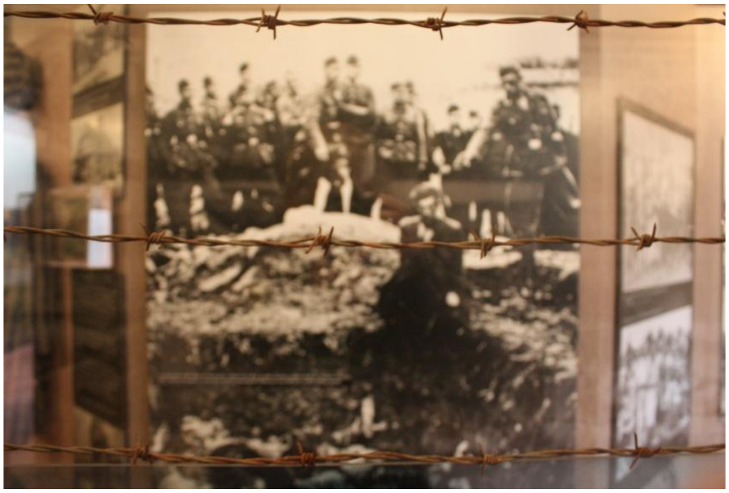

Image 5: Einsatzgruppen through Barbed Wire

As I continued moving through the space, displays about liberators, rescuers, resisters, and the creation of the Israeli State encompassed the rest of my circular journey into the center of the exhibit (Image 1).

What is most striking about this exhibit is the spatial interaction the visitor is forced to have with the displays. Upon entering the display about Pre-war European Jewish cultural life, the ground resembles cobblestone, the walls appear clean, and the windows are large and clear. Moving forward to the Nazi rise to power, the floor becomes concrete, the walls begin to dirty, and the windows become smaller and slightly more oblique. As the visitor continues, the floor transitions to red brick, the wall appears dirty and stained with occasional chips, and the windows become dark and opaque (Image 6). The last transition along this initial path through the exhibit is to the ghettos. The wall completely transforms to brick, the windows disappear, and the red brick floor becomes a dirty gray.

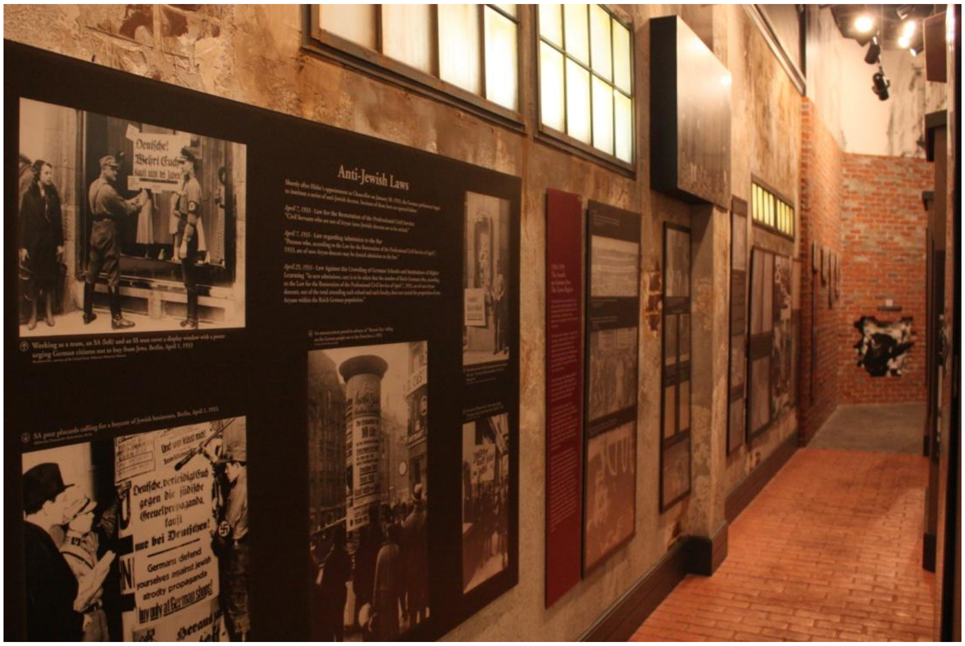

Image 6: Shifting Spatial Experience

After turning the corner, the floor and walls transition to wood (Image 7), giving the visitor a feeling of standing in a train box car. The visitor is also faced with a wall sized photo of the entrance to a concentration camp (Image 8).

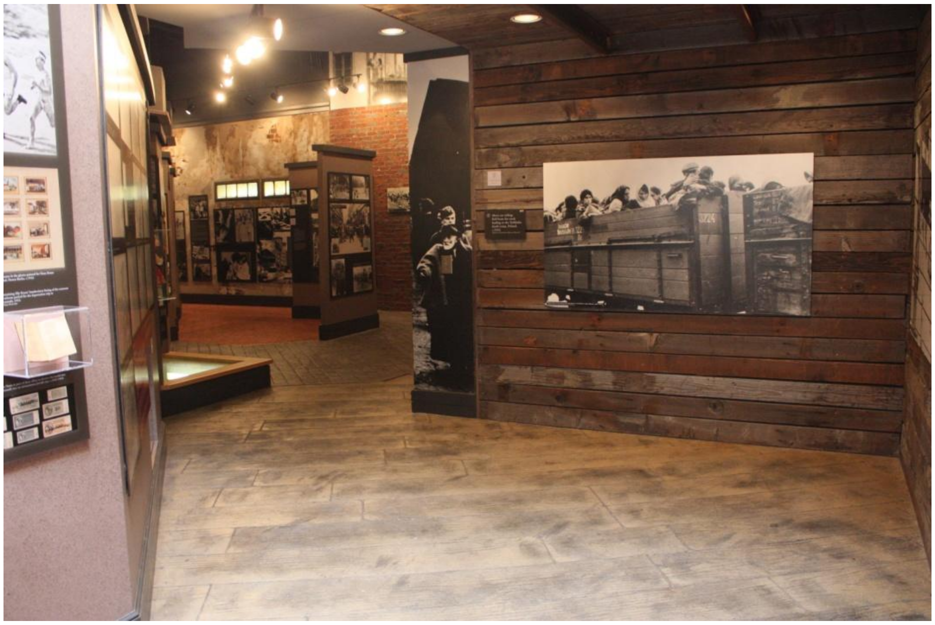

Image 7: The Box Car

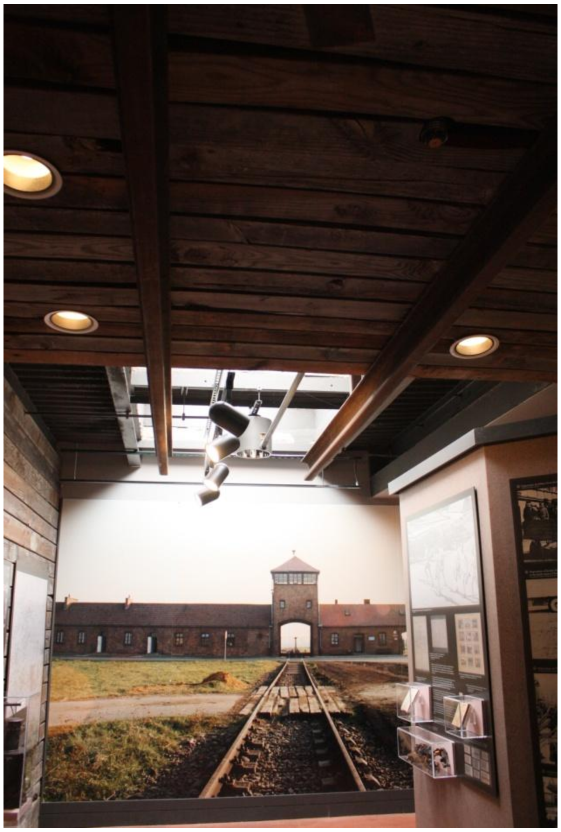

Image 8: En Route to a Concentration Camp

The last noteworthy transition is also the most perceptible. Upon entering the center of the exhibit, the heart of the labyrinth, the floor is transformed into green carpet. This transition could have several meanings and functions. I interpreted the carpet as symbolic of grass, of growth, of life. It is like a garden, a haven in the center of the maze-like structure of the surrounding exhibit. More importantly, however, is that all of the physical transitions force the visitor to interact with and move through the exhibition space in specific ways. Each transition to a different period of the Holocaust is simultaneously marked by a spatial transition. Initially, as the chaos and persecution of the Holocaust grows, the space becomes progressively bleak, dark, and dirty. By the end, however, visitors step onto the soft carpeted space at the heart of the exhibit where people who refused to accept and standby Nazi persecution are celebrated.

Through the spatial and visual changes that occur throughout the exhibition, a specific experiential narrative is constructed for the visitor to consume. This narrative plays on themes of light vs. dark, clean vs. dirty, and soft. vs. hard. As the visitor moves through the museum's space, s/he is consuming this narrative, even if the consumption is unintentional and unconscious. The transformation of hard floor to soft carpet at the center of the exhibit serves to act as a type of transcendence. Thus, the focus of the Breman Museum's Holocaust Exhibit is on resistors and rescuers. This narrative paints an image of Holocaust survivors rather than victimization. Similarly to the school's focus on resistance and righteous gentiles mentioned in chapter 3, the Holocaust is filtered through strength and social activism, encouraging visitors to avoid apathy and instead instilling values of social justice. These values of strength in the midst of darkness are poetically illustrated by the daffodils that decorate the museum's exterior. According to a museum docent, there is one daffodil to represent every child that perished in the Holocaust.

Image 9: Life

Don’t Be a Bystander

A few weeks after my initial visit to the Breman, I had the opportunity to interview one of the docents who also happened to be involved with The Temple. After the interview, he invited me to join the tour he was giving to a group of children from one of Georgia’s public school systems. The tour began with a Holocaust survivor speaking to the children, telling them his story and letting them ask questions. After hearing this narrative, the children split into three large groups and were given guided tours through the Holocaust exhibit. Each group started in a different location along the museum’s historical displays; the group led by my informant started at Kristallnacht.

While this docent led the children through the space of the museum, he used its structure to create an experiential learning environment. Three notable examples occurred in the museum space of the ghetto, the train box car, and within the large barbed wire fence. In each instance, the children had to squeeze together uncomfortably. In a small way, the children were able to imagine physically what the European Jews were forced to face. Thus, the Holocaust narratives of the museum, led by the docent, were internalized through physical experience.

One of the key points that the docent stressed throughout the tour was to avoid becoming a bystander. “That’s our main function here, don’t be a bystander. And we tell ‘em about bystanders, we tell ‘em about a small group of people who actually did something. We have a room in the tour, we call it the Hall of Heroes, people who did something.” Woven into the underlying thread of each story he told, the docent used the Holocaust to instill a culture of social responsibility in the next generation. In focusing on Holocaust narratives involving resistance and rescue, he also viewed the Holocaust through a lens of survival rather than victimization. “Here, we teach them the Holocaust. And why are we teaching them this? Because if it happened once, it could happen again! And it is happening in the Sudan and in Darfur, so we teach ‘em: don’t be a bystander.”

Conclusion

Through the structure of this museum, where visitors first hear a survivor narrative and then tour the exhibit, public school children are introduced to a Holocaust narrative in the form of embodied history which they then experience as they move through the physical exhibit. Upon entering the heart of the museum, the Hall of Heroes, they are exposed to a narrative of resistance and social activism. Transcendence thus occurs in the “garden” of this space, where benches are provided for rest. The focus is placed upon those who resisted, both Jews and Gentiles, during the period of the Holocaust, and the message to imitate this behavior is reiterated. Though this museum is a staple for Georgia Public Schools, Jewish children who simultaneously attend public school and religious school are part of the audience during public schools’ field trips as well.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This project opened with a quote from Jewish author Eva Hoffman. In this quote, "moral thought" is equated with the "incorporation of memory into our consciousness of the world" (2004, p. 278). Based upon my experiences and conversations during the research process, the idea of Holocaust memory's connection to moral thought often permeated stories and narratives. There are several factors that go into the creation of this connection, and also several implications of its connection, that began to surface in relation to practice theory. In this chapter, I will explore three of the major themes that came to light during this research. Survivors, a desire for timelessness, and the worldview of this group of people are each informed by practice theory and commemoration. These three themes also work with the religious landscape in America to highlight important information about American Jewish culture at play within this particular synagogue.

Survivors and Sacred Space

Interestingly, Hoffman is the child of Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust. Thus, her upbringing and the intimate transmission of Holocaust memory she received played a vital role in shaping her views of morality. Most importantly, however, was her close physical interaction with Holocaust survivors, her parents. As I saw during my interactions with The Temple's congregants, survivors played a major role in the incorporation of the Holocaust into these congregants' identities as American Jews.

It was not until the arrival of European Jewry during and after World War II that the Holocaust became prevalent within American Jewry (Sarna 2004). As seen in Jacobs' (2011) description from chapter 1, these survivors imbued religious rituals, such as Yom Kippur, with remembrance of the Holocaust. They created a Holocaust narrative revolving around remembrance that they incorporated into the pre-existing religious ritual structure of Judaism, and cultivated a narrative of remembrance that was reiterated through religious practice.

As seen in chapter 1, the idea of sacralizing space to provide transcendent structure was explored by Jacobs (2004). She stated that sacred space plays a crucial role in the aftermath of violence and mass trauma, using September 11th and former concentration camps as examples. Thus, the survivors who used existing religious ritual as a venue for Holocaust remembrance were also imbuing their memories with the sacred. Simultaneously, their memories were shaping the sacred space of the rituals through which they were remembering. Therefore, as they used this sacred space to memorialize Holocaust narrative, others were ritually exposed to their Holocaust narratives.

For these survivors, then, the Holocaust was regularly reaffirmed through their ritual actions. The Holocaust was a traumatic event that happened in their histories, and each time these survivors told their stories or used ritual space for commemoration, this event was reincorporated into their identities. Daily physical reminders, such as numbered tattoos on their bodies, and physical actions, such as lighting six candles on Yom HaShoah to represent each of the six million Jews who perished, reaffirmed the Holocaust's memory in the living bodies of the survivors. Religious ritualized practices, such as Jacobs' (2011) description of Yom Kippur as a venue for memory reiteration, also served to reclaim and mark the Holocaust in a sacred space. Through the use of sacred structure, according to Jacobs (2004), survivors are thus seeking ritualized transcendence.

An interesting tension between remembering and forgetting can be seen in the actions of survivors. In chapter 2, an informant described the survivors' public recall of their stories as a scab constantly picked. Thus, in this metaphor, the sharing of Holocaust narrative is a wound that is regularly reopened. After recalling the past, the wound once again begins to scab over. If this metaphor is extended further, ritualized remembrance in sacred space is the ointment for this wound. However, due to the structure of regular memorialization experienced by the survivors, Holocaust memory constantly reiterates a narrative of markedness and a fear that it could happen again. This effect was echoed by participants of this research, which will be further explored below. Thus, in an attempted effort to heal this wound and to pass the burden of memory to future generations, survivors circularly remember and reopen the wound. To ensure that the Holocaust is not forgotten, they physically recall their stories, as seen in the structure of the Breman Museum. This sharing is also a practice that attempts to allow survivors to pass the burden of remembrance to future generations and, therefore, to allow the survivors to forget. In a paradoxical circle of experienced action, the past is allowed to be forgotten through the assurance of its incorporation into identity through the physical interaction between narrator and audience.

As can be seen, the Holocaust survivors play an important role in the transmission of Holocaust remembrance. They were the catalyst to its extremely successful incorporation into the identity of some American Jews, as evidenced by the participants of this study. These survivors also remain important for the continuation of Holocaust remembrance. They are examples of Filip De Boeck's (1995) living memories who play critical roles in certain rituals, such as the one at Greenwood Cemetery on Yom HaShoah. These physical beings are living, embodied history who also instill their memories into new generations.

Timelessness

Many participants of this research, none of whom were Holocaust survivors, expressed an anxiety during this liminal time where there are very few living survivors remaining. Due to the temporality of human life, Holocaust survivors are not physically timeless. Thus, as simultaneous evidence of the Holocaust's permeation into this congregation's identity and of the importance for experiential activities in the formation of identity, many participants expressed a concern for new generations who would not be able to interact with Holocaust survivors physically. On a deeper level, one of the underlying questions seems to be whether or not Holocaust memory is timeless. Will the death of Holocaust survivors be the death of Holocaust memory? If this is true, will the cycle of oppression start anew?

While seen to be an important aspect to the Holocaust's incorporation into American Jewish identity, practice is crucial to the maintenance and reproduction of this identity. As expressed by Bell (1992), the physical practices of ritual serve to mold the agents who are simultaneously shaping the physical practices. To ensure the memory and timelessness of Holocaust narratives, The Temple's religious school, as seen in chapter 3, used various methods to provide the children with experiential encounters. These encounters include museum visits, which bring mental knowledge into the physical realm, art projects, which bring two dimensional written works into three dimensional space, and the adoption of a child who perished in the Holocaust, which equates responsibility for Holocaust memory with that of familial memory. Thus, children learn mental knowledge about this past event and then experience that knowledge through practices which bring the past into the present and incorporate it into their bodily movements. Physical interaction with learned narrative creates corporeal memory that can then be triggered by future encounters. For example, smells or sounds that were present during the experience might trigger memory of that experience as the children move through the world, simultaneously triggering Holocaust memory. This regeneration of memory in new generations provides a sense of timelessness.

In spite of these efforts, however, uncertainty permeated interviewee narratives surrounding the loss of survivors. Perhaps this is another reason the Holocaust is incorporated into religious praxis. Due to participant agreement that the Holocaust is important for cultural identity, its remembrance through religious commemoration is somewhat striking. As mentioned above, Jacobs (2011) stresses the importance of the sacred for the commemoration of traumatic and chaotic events. Religious ritual provides structure and a semblance of transcendence. Some of the ways congregants of The Temple mentioned the incorporation of Holocaust memory into religious ritual, as seen in chapter 2, is through prayers of mourning on Yom Kippur and Passover, and the incorporation of the name of someone who perished during the Holocaust into the weekly reading of the Mourner's Kaddish. As mentioned by a rabbi, the Holocaust is also incorporated into other holidays, such as Tisha Bav. The incorporation of the Holocaust into these practices ritually reiterates the Holocaust's narrative to congregants, though, as Bell suggests, the specific meaning may not be universally interpreted. Some of these meanings and the effects of this incorporation will be further discussed later.

Perhaps another reason for the insertion of Holocaust remembrance into pre-existing religious ritual structure, however, is that it provides another source of timelessness. Judaism has endured for thousands of years, with days such as Yom Kippur and Passover thoroughly engrained within the religious framework. If the Holocaust is ritually commemorated as part of these Holy Days, it has the potential to become a timeless aspect of Jewish identity. This assurance of timelessness, perhaps, also provides structure to allow for forgetting. With structure to provide assurance for the burden of continued Holocaust remembrance, forgetting becomes possible. However, through the internalization of Holocaust narratives and the physical interaction surrounding their internalization described during interviews with study participants, it is carried in the bodily memory of Temple attendees. Therefore, it is not forgotten, rather it is pushed to the level of the subconscious until ritually remembered or triggered by the external world. As several participants mentioned, they felt the Holocaust was always in the back of their minds, though they did not often consciously think or speak of it. When some participants described encountering instances of social anti-Semitism, on the other hand, they mentioned that Holocaust narratives were thrust to the front of their minds. Thus, the Holocaust narrative became incorporated into the identity of these members of The Temple as they physically commemorated the Holocaust and was then triggered through their interaction with the outside world. The circular interaction between commemoration and external forces such as anti-Semitism solidify the need for remembrance. Thus, a need is created for a sense of timelessness that is, perhaps, satisfied through religious incorporation.

Worldview

An important point of uniformity seen in chapter 2 is the profound effect the Holocaust was felt by participants to have had on cultural identity as opposed to faith. The wide-scale targeting and persecution that took place during the Holocaust was the first time Jews were oppressed based upon bloodlines rather than upon religious practices. Though many European Jews were fully assimilated into European society, they were still targeted simply because they had Jewish parents and/or grandparents. Thus, this was the first time Jews had been widely defined and persecuted based upon their ethnic identity. Their lives were threatened simply because they existed instead of any religious beliefs they may have held.

This cultural targeting of the Jews and the thought that it could happen again was a source of anxiety seen throughout this research, hence the importance of timelessness seen above. Because of this, many participants described a sense of separation from other Americans, even if the separation was not visible, simply because they were Jewish. Through cultural experiences, the Holocaust both affects and is affected by this sense of otherness.

As seen in chapter 3, one participant described two experiential encounters that were “sticky” experiences. One of the activities she described occurred during a Jewish Summer Camp, where the children were made to feel that they were in a box car. This simulated environment was emotionally powerful, emulating the confusion and chaos experienced by people during the Holocaust. The act of herding the camp children into a small space and disorienting them created bodily and emotional memory, forming a personal connection with Holocaust narratives within the children. This experiential activity thus becomes a part of the subconscious memory of the children, part of their muscle memory that can be triggered by external stimuli. Even though the experience slipped into the realm of forgetfulness, of the subconscious, as they left the camp and went on with their lives, the memory of the event shaped the way their bodies interacted with the world. As expressed by several participants, this bodily memory shapes a sense of markedness and an anxiety about identity in the world. Experiences with social anti-Semitism work to reaffirm that narrative and reinforce Holocaust memory within the bodies and emotions of the individual.

Though the Holocaust was unanimously seen as an affront to Jewish cultural identity, it has been incorporated into the existing framework of ritual structure in Judaism. This existing framework has, in turn, shaped the way that the Holocaust is incorporated into collective identity. Characteristics of Reform Judaism and the intertwinement of American Civil Religion with Judaism to create an American Jewish Civil Religion, described in chapter 1, have worked to shape the ways in which Holocaust narratives are received within the community. This filtration of the Holocaust through religious narrative is then a mechanism through which to construct group narrative and collective identity that circularly shapes individual interaction and identity.

The sacred space of religious ritual, when interpreted through a religious lens, provides ordered meaning to the chaotic events that took place during the Holocaust. American Jewish Civil Religion views the Holocaust as a pillar of suffering while the creation of Israel is seen as redemption (Woocher 1986). Reform Judaism, as described in chapter 1, incorporated certain aspects of this Civil Religion. At the heart of the Reform Movement is the idea of ethical monotheism. Because this research took place in a Reform temple, ethical monotheism was saturated throughout interviews with participants. The Jewish Civil Religious idea of the Holocaust as a pillar of suffering and a critical aspect of Jewish identity, however, was also seen within this community. A binary emerged between the Holocaust as a pillar of righteous and innocent suffering versus the modern call to avoid passivity and ensure that the helpless, whether Jewish or not, are helped. Holocaust memory played a key role in this push for social activism. Thus, morality is linked with memory of the Holocaust.

Evidence of these attitudes can be seen through several examples. As seen in chapter 2, multiple participants mentioned the incorporation of Holocaust memory into Yom Kippur. One informant specifically mentioned that it is commemorated during the ritualized time set aside for memory of martyrs. By associating those who perished in the Holocaust with martyrs who died for “the sanctification of God’s name,” meaning is imbued in the Holocaust narrative. Deaths during the Holocaust are given meaning and those who lived through it are painted as righteous sufferers. This narrative, then creates an identity founded upon righteousness and suffering.

It also uses religion to interpret a cultural attack. In the words of a participant, “Our mission is feed the hungry, clothe the naked, walk humbly before your God, and that’s our job. I just wish everybody thought that way." This particular participant evidenced the ethical monotheism found within Reform Judaism. His answers throughout the interview suggested that he viewed faith as a means to the prevention of another Holocaust. However, there was not enough data collected about the impact of the Holocaust upon Judaism to provide any generalizations. This is also the topic of much debate and discourse. Still, in all the activity surrounding the question of the Holocaust's relationship to Judaism, the Holocaust's importance and incorporation into the cultural sphere of Jewishness is evident. The discourse also reveals that this incorporation into collective memory does have a deep impact upon Judaism as a faith. While the Holocaust is seen to affect faith, faith is seen to affect Holocaust memory.

The above participant's quote also showcases the reiteration of social responsibility found within The Temple in relation to the Holocaust. This viewpoint is made visible through the physical structure of the Breman Museum. Described in chapter 4, the museum creates structured physical encounters with the Holocaust narrative. Though visitors will not interpret the message of this structure in a uniform manner, the main theme of social activism is evidenced by the seeming oasis in the center of the maze-like exhibit. As visitors reach this green carpeted space with places to sit and rest, they are surrounded by images and narratives of Jews and Righteous Gentiles who refused to be idle during the Holocaust. This ideal of social responsibility is parallel to Reform Judaism's reiteration of ethical monotheism. When some Jewish children attend this museum with their public schools, then, they experience the museum's message in a different manner than their non-Jewish peers. All the visitors negotiate the way the narrative is negotiated through their physical movements in the spatial structure and through their prior exposure to material housed within the framework of the museum.

An aspect of American Jewish Civil Religion’s shaping of Holocaust memory that involves Israel was its unifying effect within Judaism. The importance of Israel was also seen in the Breman Museum in its status as the last stop before the oasis space in the exhibit’s center. According to some participants, as seen in chapter 2, the Holocaust and Israel are both seen as “non-negotiable” factors of identity. Both of these pillars are physical events and places that exist within the world. Thus, within American Judaism, where denominationalism and fragmentation create disharmony among America’s universal Jewish population, some participants expressed the Holocaust and Israel as unifying to Judaism. They are two aspects which are concrete facts based in the external physical world rather than learned factual and theological knowledge. The existence of Israel is also seen here as an antithesis to the Holocaust. While the Holocaust is destructive and dangerous, Israel is constructive and safe. This binary illustrates the two pillars of American Jewish Civil Religion, and this belief about Israel was mentioned by some participants of this study. One female interviewee mentioned that because Israel exists, she feels safe. Thus, in the future, perhaps further research could be done on Israel’s place within American Jewish identity and its place within Holocaust memory.

While Holocaust memory has been inserted into the religious praxis of Judaism, the religious beliefs of Judaism have simultaneously shaped the collective memory of the event. Through ritualized practices and experiential encounters, Holocaust commemoration produces a worldview of the Jews as righteous and innocent sufferers who are socially responsible for the larger community. Though commemoration through the lens of cultural identity, seen above, has the potential to produce an identity centered in victimization and constant fear, the religious aspects at play within The Temple work to reshape the narrative and produce a worldview that seeks to incorporate the past into a framework of social activism.

Concluding Thoughts

Through the various rituals and practices discussed in this project, the incorporation of the Holocaust into Jewish identity is illuminated when viewed through the lens of practice theory and commemoration. The chaos and destruction of the Holocaust is given a structured narrative that is then experienced through activity. The physicality creates muscle memory and incorporates the experience into the body of the participant, transforming him or her into a living memory. Knowledge is combined with movement, factual memory with muscle memory, and ritualized commemorative practices ensure that it is not forgotten. Ritualized repetition is important for the inscription and re-inscription of the Holocaust onto participants in consecrated space during set time. As one participant mentioned in chapter 2, "Every year we have a Kristallnacht remembrance… And we tell this to people because they tend to forget, and one thing I tell everybody, God realizes that we are not that smart, and that we have a hard time remembering all the things we're supposed to do." Because people tend to forget, it must be repeated in order to allow people to forget. The repetition of ritualized practices, such as lighting the six candles at Greenwood Cemetery on Yom HaShoah, transforms the participants into agents of living Holocaust memory.

Through this structure, the Holocaust becomes embedded within the subconscious. Ritualized practices reiterate narratives of righteous innocence, otherness and potential danger, and social activism. This focus on social activism prevents this congregation from viewing themselves as eternal victims from the standpoint of the Holocaust. Rather, they use it to reiterate a worldview of social responsibility for Jews and Gentiles alike. In a time where living survivors will soon no longer be present, it will be critical for experiential encounters and rituals to recreate a personal connection in those who have no personal connection.

Here the Holocaust is seen as an internalized piece of Jewish identity, shaping the way this Jewish congregation physically interacts with the world while also being shaped and shaping the religious structure of the Temple. Based on interviews and participant observation, the Holocaust has been incorporated into many facets of this Jewish community's identity. This incorporation paints the Holocaust as an event with far reaching implications, beyond a traumatic experience that happened in the past. It is used in this congregation to paint the Jews as innocent and righteous sufferers who are marked from mainstream society simply because they are Jewish. However, it also is used to reiterate messages of social justice and the importance of helping those who are helpless. The Holocaust is thus given meaning while simultaneously used as a tool to provide meaning within this congregation. It shapes the ways that some American Jews negotiate the physical world while the physical world simultaneously reinforces its narrative. Without reiterative ritualized practices based in learned narrative, this facet of identity would not exist.

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Appendix

Congregation Interview Questions

How old are you?
Was your family personally affected by the Holocaust?
When do you first remember learning about the Holocaust?
From whom did you learn?
Do you remember your reaction? What was it?
Do you incorporate the Holocaust into other events, such as remembering or mourning on high holidays?
How often do you talk about the Holocaust?
What are some of the things you and your family did to remember the Holocaust when you were younger? What do you do now?
What do you do on Holocaust Remembrance Day?
Are there other times set apart to remember it, such as anniversaries of things like Kristallnacht? If so, what do you do on these days?
How do you feel it affects your identity as a Jewish individual?
Do you feel that remembering the Holocaust is important for your faith?
Do you feel its importance to Judaism is changing in any way? How so?

Educator Interview Questions

What year do you teach?
How do you teach this subject? Is it part of the curriculum?
When do children first learn about the Holocaust?
How is it taught? How often is it taught?
Are there any activities that go along with the lesson?
Are there any trips that students take to learn about it? (museums, for example)