

Emotional Narratives at Holocaust Exhibitions in the UK: Exploring
Visitors' Engagement and Experience

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ABSTRACT

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My thesis analyses the ways in which individuals experienced and responded to Holocaust history exhibitions in the UK, immediately after their visit by interpreting their emotional and personal narratives. This research aims primarily to understand what triggers people to visit/revisit Holocaust exhibitions, the nature of the visitors' experience within Holocaust exhibitions, as well as understanding both how and why individuals engage with the difficult past in certain ways. Consequently, the thesis examines how emotional responses were contextualised within museum and whether emotional engagement has any significance in visitors' thoughts, feelings and attitude, in relation to the past and its contemporary meaning.

The fieldwork took place in two museums in the UK: The National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottingham and the Jewish museum in London. The use of interpretative qualitative approach, and open-ended interviews were conducted to enhance the exploration and understanding of how visitors responded to difficult past.

The visitors' diverse emotional responses shed light on the ways in which they related and interpreted historical narratives within museums' exhibitions. The contribution of this thesis is also enhanced by providing insights regarding the extent in which individuals used the museum exhibitions to reinforce their established ideas and values, and/or validate their identities, and how this engagement shaped their museum experience.

Furthermore, by bridging together theories and methodologies from different disciplines (museum studies, media psychology, theory of emotions and socio-cultural paradigms) the research has enriched our understanding of how the emotions work and how visitors used them within the museum space. Finally, this research questions the assumption that creating Holocaust exhibitions encourages visitors to engage effectively in ideas that affect their thoughts and actions in the future.

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I am thankful to each interviewee who kindly participated in this study and gave their time to share their stories and thoughts - without them this research could not have taken place. I am also grateful to all the staff at case study institutions for their support in this project.

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COVID-19 Impact Statement

The current COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on conducting any additional research at the case study institutions, and has caused a lot of concerns around both my studies, and finances. The COVID pandemic developed just as I was planning further interviews at one of my case studies. I was thus unable to carry out as many visitor interviews as I originally planned. At the time, I submitted my thesis the university had not put in place the opportunity to submit my impact statement, so I did not draw attention to this in my original thesis. Based on the Viva report, examiners recommend that I consider the possibility of undertaking further fieldwork, in order to conduct more in-depth interviews that are needed to support the argument about emotional complexity. However, due to local and national lockdowns, the museums remained closed for a long period of time and while they were open; it was considered sensible for both the safety of researcher and the participants not to conduct face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, due to the restrictions placed on enclosed spaces regarding social distancing, only a limited number of visitors were allowed to enter, and were not allowed to use the museum's facilities, such as the cafe where visitors can sit down to be interviewed. Additionally, due to COVID-19, family health issues, and the completion my studies; I had to return to my home country, unable to travel to the UK for a very long period. These restrictions continued for a long time and prevented me from accessing research materials and facilities, as well as, travelling to, and interacting with participants and museum staff. Nevertheless, the amendments that examiners suggested have been achieved, the full transcription of all the interview data, a more in-depth analysis using the existing data and analysing exhibition interpretive approaches using a qualitative software Nvivo, in order to provide both stronger and richer evidence to support my arguments about the visitors' museum experiences, and the impact that emotional engagement has on peoples' attitudes, feelings and thoughts. Therefore, I was unable to collect and provide additional interview data. Notably, I have found enough materials and data to support the validity of my arguments

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FIHRM - Federation of International Human Rights Museums

CMHR -Canadian Museum for Human Rights

GLO - Generic Learning Outcome

IWM - Imperial War Museum

JM - Jewish Museum, London

NHCM- National Holocaust Centre and Museum, Nottingham

RCMG - Research Centre Museum and Galleries- University of Leicester

SAHF - South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 WHY ARE EMOTIONS IMPORTANT?

It has been argued that emotions, affect, and reason are connected, and this interplay influences the way we understand and experience the world around us (Reddy 2001; Ahmed 2004; Panksepp and Biven 2012; Watson 2015). Research shows that emotions influence not only our judgments and beliefs, but also our actions (Paris and Mercer 2010). On this premise, Illouz (2007: 2) notes that “emotions are not themselves actions, but they provide an inner energy that propels us toward an act, they provide the energy for cognition and evaluation.” For instance, Sayer (2005: 955) argues that negative emotions such as shame can “motivate those offering recognition, and gives the example of anti-racists who may indeed be motivated by the shame of racism to extend recognition that facilitates redistribution”. In addition, emotions have a central role in our moral reasoning. Moral psychology can give some insight into emotions and how they can affect our moral judgment. Studies suggest that “intuitive emotional responses have as substantial impact on our moral judgment” (what is right or wrong) (Case et al. 2011:196). Exploring and analysing individuals' behaviours and emotional responses can be a useful way to understand how and why individuals construct meaning in the way they do and this is one of the justification of this research.

In the field of education, a number of scholars have delved into the effect that emotions have in the learning process, by seeing emotions as ways of knowing, being and doing (Boler 1997:204). The emotional/affective turn occurring in education has also influenced the museum field where little attention has been traditionally paid to emotion and its impact on knowledge acquisition. An increasing

number of museum scholars have turned their focus on emotions and affect in museums and how museums employ emotive and affective practices especially in relation to difficult exhibitions (Cameron 2003; Witcomb 2013a,2013b, 2014; Trofanenko 2014). But there is a need to examine the role of emotions in relation to the complexity of the engagement with the past within the museum by focusing on what emotions the museum encourages, and how visitors respond to this type of engagement.

1.2 RESEARCH STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis aims to investigate the power of emotions in the museum experience at traumatic exhibitions such as the Holocaust as well as their potential to enhance critical thinking when engaging with the past. Specifically, it explores how individuals feel and think about the stories which are represented in Holocaust exhibitions in the UK right after their visit, focusing rather on what they felt on an intimate and personal level, than what is learnt. Over the four years after starting my research, I gradually became aware of the complex ways in which we engage, express and regulate emotions as well as the variety of emotional responses that visitors might experience when they attend to museum exhibitions. In this research, therefore, I am interested in exploring the interaction between individuals' thoughts and emotions; the intertwined relationship between what we think and how we feel during the museum visit. This thesis has focused on the present as well as on the past. It seeks to reflect how museum representation of traumatic stories of the past that can be understood and experienced through emotive interpretative approaches not only to promoting an understanding about others, but also to potentially motivate socially responsibility.

History museums and specifically difficult exhibitions,¹ provide interesting case studies that contribute to researching and understanding the impact of emotions. In the case of the Holocaust exhibitions, the common experience that was often shared among visitors suggests an affinity between knowing about the past on one hand, and having an emotional involvement on the other hand. There is also the idea that links the Holocaust to notions of racial equality generally and human rights (Chapter 4). Therefore, I have taken Holocaust exhibitions in the UK to be a starting point to understand how emotions work within the museum and how visitors use emotions to engage and understand the past in their present context. The visitors' narratives allowed an understanding as to how emotional responses were contextualised within museum exhibitions, influenced by past experiences and knowledge of visitors.

In recent years, the social purpose of museums has become an increasingly studied research topic in western countries, including England (Silverman 1998, 2010; GLLAM 2000; Fleming 2001; Sandell 2002, 2007, 2017; Witcomb 2003; Macdonald 2007; Sandell and Nightingale 2012). The increasing global influence of human rights movements, the international interest in multiculturalism, and cultural diversity are just some of the factors that significantly contributed to reconsidering and changing the role and function of museum. Sandell (2007: xi) argues that museums hold social responsibility and "have the capacity to inform and enable conversations in which visitors, and more broadly society, understand difference". This thesis explores the role played by Holocaust museums, as agents of social change, by analysing visitors' responses through the lens of their emotional engagements, and asks to what extent these museums fulfil their potential for social change. Consequently, this thesis

¹ This thesis used the term difficult past/exhibitions following the definition by Bonnell and Simon (2007) about *difficult exhibitions* that refer to the displays which provide visitors with experiences that are difficult both in cognitive and emotive way and may raise unpleasant feelings and powerful memories that demand some form of response such as the Holocaust exhibitions. These heritage sites have been as studied as dissonant heritage (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996), heritage that hurts (Uzzell & Ballantyne 1998) or difficult heritage (Logan & Reeves 2009). In other words, they are not difficult exhibitions because of the subject matter or the type of objects on display but because of the effort to make a meaning.

considers the question; whether remembering and empathising with people from the past through narratives and looking painful images of atrocities and suffering within museum is not only enough to influence and shape an understanding of others, but more importantly to encourage active citizenship toward inequality and injustice. Importantly, this research only obtains a snap shot of people's attitudes and thoughts immediately after their visits, and cannot therefore, reach any conclusions about the long-term impact of museums on visitors' social attitudes.

The research objectives that I have addressed in this thesis are:

Firstly, to examine why people visit difficult heritage, in particular exhibitions related to Holocaust.

Secondly, to find out the nature of visitors' museum experiences and the different levels of their engagement with historical narratives at Holocaust exhibitions in the UK in order to understand the way visitors construct meanings.

Thirdly, to explore the potential effect emotions within Holocaust exhibitions have on visitors' engagement and understanding towards difficult past and its significance in current social life.

Finally, to understand how and why those museum narratives can become important for visitors.

The research objectives noted above have resulted into the following research questions:

- i) What motivates individuals to visit/revisit Holocaust exhibitions?
- ii) What is the nature of the experience throughout the visit in the UK Holocaust exhibitions and how do individuals respond to difficult past?

iii) How and why does emotional involvement with victims in Holocaust exhibitions affect people's feelings, thoughts and attitudes, and does it enhance their desire to engage with ideas and actions that promote social justice²?

Finally, how and why does the museum experience become meaningful to individual's personal narrative?

The emotion/affect turn in social studies has also led museum scholars to address how emotive, sensorial and affective curatorial approaches encourage emotions and thoughts by looking at the interaction between visitor and museum exhibition. For instance, Trofanenko (2014) suggests that there is an influential relationship between emotions, affect, and educational experiences about the past, within history museum exhibitions. Regardless of the visitor's emotional/affective response, she states, that emotions either positively or negatively influence what meaning and understanding is gained from an exhibition experience (2014:26). Although emotive strategies are considered positive assets for the museum experience. Their impact is still unclear, and visitors' emotive responses often remain unexplored, and deemed “secondary to the knowledge and facts gained by attending exhibits” (Trofanenko 2014:27). Only a small number of authors (Bagnall 2003; Witcomb 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Smith 2011, 2015; Watson 2013, 2016, 2018; Trofanenko 2014) have thoroughly discussed the significant role of emotions in museum learning experience. As research on the subject has been limited, this thesis can play important role in addressing the issue of the potential influence of emotions in constructing meanings in the museum that it might wish to answer. But this can be considered a point of departure for more systematic research on how the audience engages emotionally in museum and heritage.

²Social Justice is defined in this study as “the objective of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matter, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest” (Oxford Dictionary).

Furthermore, this thesis seeks to explore whether emotions impede or facilitate the visitors' engagement, and the role emotions can play in the way visitors construct meanings, considering the motivations, and perceptions of visitors. Individuals are motivated by a variety of reasons and seek different experiences sometimes simultaneously (Pekarik, Doering and Karns 1999; Poria et.al 2009,2003; Falk 2009, 2013; Falk and Dierking 2013) influenced also by the museum's design, context and ideologies, thus, making the exploration of museum visit rather complex and the visitors' interaction with museum narratives multifaceted. By assessing the data, the study provides an interpretation of people's emotional and intellectual experience, highlighting the visitors' subjective and personal understanding as well as their motivation for visiting. At the same time, the study also seeks to contribute to the discussion of the impact of the social role of museum more broadly, and then explores the extent to which emotional engagement contributes not only to informing a thinking around understanding others, but also encourages the taking of action towards social inequalities and injustices. In conclusion, this study combines interdisciplinary literature (from Museum Studies, Sociology, Psychology and Media Psychology) and approaches to examine some of the concepts about the impact of the emotions and contributes to different areas of the museum experience. Thus, it might offer further opportunities for empirical research for both museum professionals and academic scholars in the future.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCHING EMOTIONS

To be emotionally engaged with something is to make sense of it, to make it meaningful and relevant (RCMG 2014:12). Making sense of something means to 'transform the unknown into the known' (Heller 1982:65).

Waiting in the queue to enter the House of Terror in Budapest, my attention was drawn to pictures of victims that are displayed around the walls of the museum building. My visit to the museum was awash with thoughts and emotions that I was

not entirely prepared for, such as sorrow, anger and anxiety. As I was looking at the people around me taking pictures, I was wondering what I was expected to see and feel. We finally entered into the ground floor, where the atmosphere is dark; the prevailing colour in the room is a dark shade of grey. With documentaries being shown on screens located within walls and a big tank outside, the visitor is introduced to the bleak and tragic history of the Holocaust. The grey walls, the grey tank and the metal grey staircases stirred within me an unusual feeling of discomfort. Later on, moving into the basement, the first feeling that one experiences is an eerie sense of coldness. In the basement, visitors are confronted with reconstructions of prison cells where victims were brutally tortured. The exhibition's design aims to evoke feelings of fear, horror and darkness. This feeling of discomfort made me leave the museum without viewing the whole section but the thoughts, emotions, curiosity interest in further exploring and gaining insight into the topic stayed in me for years and ultimately leading to the birth of this thesis. Although, the House of Terror is a place that mainly focuses on the fascist and communist crimes in 20th century Hungary, it also serves as a commemorative space to the victims of these regimes.

My attention and interest was captured by the Holocaust and the war crimes against humanity; this thesis also focuses on the motives of people who decided to visit Holocaust exhibitions in the UK. This thesis is rooted in an understanding that lies on the belief that visits to Holocaust exhibitions are self-selecting. It seems likely that visitors choose to engage with specific objects and ideas within the museum environment based on previous values and knowledge (and desire to know and experience things more) as well as personal interests and experiences (Paris et al. 2003:418; Mason et al. 2018) which, in turn validate their own self in distinctive ways. Similarly, difficult histories might be not for everyone, as some find emotional involvement too disturbing or simply lack the necessary interest to delve into this part of history.

My next visit to a Holocaust exhibition took place years later, at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottingham. This time, the experience was

different. I was moved by the scenery and the memorial gardens, along with being stirred by the pictures and personal stories of the victims. It was at that moment I realised the power of this exhibition's approach, and engaged with the thought to what extent this experience influences the museum visit; how can the significance of the past be understood from the point of view of the present? Here, as in most exhibitions about difficult histories, immersive experiences attempt to affect senses, evoke emotions and feelings, stimulate imagination and trigger curiosity and interest in learning about the past. This is accomplished through various interpretive approaches such as the interacting with authentic historical objects, reconstructions, and personal stories (told from first-person perspective) which enables visitors to experience and engage with the past as if they were actually there (Paris and Mercer 2003; de Bruijn 2014). These practices can facilitate an insight into past, but they can equally evoke opposite or negative responses that might include denial or avoidance of emotional engagement (Sandell 2007, 2017; Bonell and Simon 2007; Smith 2011).

It was that memorable experience, my first visit to Holocaust exhibition some years ago that fuelled my interest in finding out more about how people both experience and understand difficult past, how they respond to an emotional representation of the past without themselves either having experienced or being attached to it, what all these emotions that we feel actually mean and how they work. However, what I had not yet realised was the complex structure and meanings of human behaviour, as well as the varying ways in which people use, express or regulate their emotions. This thesis initially began with my interest to further explore museums' social role in influencing the way in which society understands difference. A research interest that had been developed during my Master's degree, where I was looking at the potential impact of museums to tackle different forms of racism and prejudice through exhibitions practices and programs.

Communication is now understood in a way that gives a much greater emphasis to the visitor (Silverman 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 2007; Mason 2005; Macdonald 2006, 2010; Sandell 2007; Schorch 2015). Thus, I started looking into contemporary learning and communication theories and media, to better understand the

relationship between the museum and visitors, and in particular how individuals construct meanings within the museum. Based on the constructivist view of museum learning, visitors are at the heart of the museum experience and they are perceived as active learners who construct their own meanings based on their previous knowledge and experiences (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, Hein 2000). However, the thesis results highlighted the need to develop a more sophisticated examination into the ways visitors use and engage with museum narratives, stepping beyond the concept of active versus passive visitors' engagement (Macdonald 2002; Schorch 2015). Exhibition design, especially in difficult histories, intends to evoke feelings of respect and empathy that aim to facilitate critical thinking about history (Bagnall 2003; Simon 2006; Gregory and Witcomb 2007; Smith 2011; Bennett 2012; Witcomb 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Simon 2014; Trofanenko 2014; Munro 2014; Failler 2015; Smith and Campbell 2015; Tolia-Kelly et al. 2016). Emotional engagement has the power to potentially influence both the heart and the mind of visitor, and offer possibilities for openness and understanding (Smith 2011, 2015; Witcomb 2012, 2013b, 2014; Fleming 2014; Watson 2013, 2016; Simon 2014; Schorch et al. 2016). In the following chapter, these themes are discussed through a consideration of the museum's relationship to a socio-cultural learning experience, which refers to learning together with others (Hein and Alexander 1998:3).

Despite the vast amount of literature regarding the assumptions of museums' social impact, there is limited understanding as how visitors respond to Holocaust exhibitions in relation to the following questions; Their engagement with ideas of justice, equality and multiculturalism in the long-term?; What is the potential effect of this museum engagement on individuals' thoughts, feelings and attitudes?; How do visitors contextualize their feelings and emotions within a concept of historical distance, and particularly in the British context that this thesis examined?; What are the possible implications of this form of communication regarding the multifaceted role of Holocaust museums?; therefore, my main aim has been to give insights and provide evidence about the emotional engagement of visitors' in Holocaust exhibitions. I am also interested in exploring whether emotive interpretative strategies prompt positive responses and actions towards social equality and justice

outside museum. This thesis highlights the range of emotions that are evoked within museum exhibitions, and adds to the examination of the impact of these curatorial approaches, as well as to the understanding of how thoughts and meanings are derived from those emotional responses.

1.4 RESEARCH RATIONALE

The objective of this research is to investigate the nature of the museum experience that visitors gained as a result of their engagement within two case study institutions. It also sought to understand how and why those museum experiences became significant to the lives of these individuals. Looking deeply into the methodological approaches which could enhance my understanding of the subject matter, I realised that the visitors' narratives would provide valuable source for my interpretation. Hence, the method used was a framework of open questions, by which I was able to allow individuals to share with me their responses to the exhibitions and what thoughts and feelings they had developed after their visit.

The heart of social museums are emotions (pride, anger, joy, shame, sorrow) and social museums are about people, and people are about emotions (Fleming 2014:23).

The way that history is perceived and analysed has changed over time. Historians have often paid attention to the reasons and consequences of an event in order to explain complexities of a past event (Boddice 2018). Historians have now come to ask, not only what was it like in the past, but also what it felt like (Boddice 2018:8). Identity, socio-cultural norms, political context, relations with institutions and with the environment constitute important elements of historical analysis. However, the history of emotions is also part of this process. For many decades, emotions tended to be ignored and underestimated as they are considered personal and subjective expressions based on the assumption that these experiences can only limit the historical understanding of events (Boddice 2018). Scholars now argue that emotions are influenced by thoughts and reasons, and when thoughts and emotions interact

with each other, an action takes place (Scherer 2005; Turner 2011; Pankepp and Biven 2012:5; Watson 2013; Barrett 2018). With regards to the question, why are emotions so important in order to understand the world around us, it is summed up by Boddice:

“We think that to study emotions in their wide-ranging historical contexts helps to understand how various social and cultural practices create mentalities, experiences, interaction, and behaviour. Emotions shape, intensify, and transmit cultural meanings. Their analysis shifts the focus to individuals in their attempt to give meaning even to the most devastating historical experiences. Human identities and communities are based on emotional ties of love, attachment, trust, and desire, and suffice to say, their opposites, with the objects and patterns of such emotions varying historically and situationally. Any history of emotions therefore addresses the dynamics, functions, and consequences of this tangled web of interpersonal and communal relations. In the process, the complexity of human experience is recreated” (2008:191).

Thus, emotions have an essential role in human behaviour and expression, as well as in historical analysis. Emotions have a very unstable and changeable nature across time and place, but the meaningfulness of the experience is always linked through the memory of what the experience felt like (Falk 2009, 2013; Falk and Dierking 2013; Boddice 2018). Therefore, the interplay between thinking and feeling allows the development of meanings when engaging with the experience of the past. Both, social and cultural norms equally contribute to the construction of meanings in order to understand the world around us.

Recently, a number of social sciences ranging from psychology to affective science have shown a growing interest in the study of affect. Affect, as opposed to emotions and feelings (or to more elaborate and subjective experiences), “includes every aspect of emotion and sometimes, it refers just to a physical disturbance, or bodily activity (blushes, sobs, snarls, guffaws, levels of arousal and associated patterns of neural activity)” (Wetherell 2008:2). For many social researchers, the central element of social analysis is affect, or otherwise termed a “psychosocial texture”

(Wetherell 2008:2). In particular, the turn to affect/emotion is believed to provide an understanding as to “how and why people are moved, and what attracts them to focusing on repetitions, pains and pleasures, feelings and memories” (Wetherell 2008:2). On the other hand, Clough (2007) notes that the shift in affect/emotion could prove to be complex and confusing process. In the context of this thesis, this type of analysis can shed new light onto the impact of emotions in everyday life, by bringing social analysis into these daily encounters. The researching of museum experiences within Holocaust exhibitions should make several noteworthy contributions to the discourse around emotional practices, and their crucial link to museum and heritage. To date, there was and arguably still is a deficit of in-depth research into visitors’ emotional experiences, and the impact of this engagement on peoples’ interpretations with museum narratives, with few exceptions examining emotive/affective and cognitive curatorial practices in relation to museum visitors’ responses (Smith 2010, 2011; RCMG 2012; Schorch et.al 2014, 2016; Trofanenko 2014; Wetherell et al. 2018; Mason et.al 2018; McKernan and McLeod 2018). Cameron (2003) notes that the impact of emotional and affective engagement has originally been overlooked within the museum, except in memorial spaces such as Holocaust museums.

Nevertheless, in-depth exploration towards visitor’s emotional responses within Holocaust exhibitions is scarce. This thesis offers evidence that museums are emotional places where people engage both emotionally and intellectually. It will demonstrate particular emotional perceptions about the past and present, and what prompted such responses. Exploring and understanding the emotional nature of the visit reveals not only the different reasons that inspire and encourage visitors come to museums, but also the complex and diverse ways that individuals make sense and respond to historical narratives.³ Hence, this thesis involves the examination of these emotional responses often overlooked within institutional and academic studies, and explores the impact of the emotional engagement on visitors’ thoughts, values and

³ See chapter 6 and 7

attitudes about understanding “others” while experiencing the past in the Holocaust exhibitions in the UK.

Unexpectedly, the study at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum demonstrated some visitors' desire to visit Holocaust related exhibitions and sites multiple times. As I was curious to look closer at why people visit these museums, I started looking at the impact of emotions in search of the motives behind museum visit. The reasons why individuals decide to attend a museum exhibition, and the types of people who have visited museums and heritage sites have been exhaustively discussed and addressed in academic research (Csikszentmihalyi and Hemanson 1995; Poria et al. 2006; Falk 2009,2013). But there is a plethora of reasons, why someone chooses to visit a museum, with the most common assumption being that people visit in order to learn (Falk and Dierking 2000; Hooper-Greenhill 2004). People come to such places for a variety of reasons such as their conscious or unconscious desire to get emotionally involved with both positive and negative feelings such as sadness, grief, anger or hope. However, these negative feelings have the potential to be transformed to positive outcomes during the museum visit. The meta-emotions model indicates that the positive interpretation of empathetic sadness can be perceived as rewarding, as first proposed by Oliver (1993). Oliver's (2012) research reported that sad films do not simply evoke sadness but also meaningful thoughts and feelings of appreciation and reflection of one's life.

This theoretical discourse around emotions and affect, rarely supported by any form of empirical research, prompted me to consider how to investigate the impact of emotional engagement on visitors' engagement and understanding of the past and its contemporary significance, but my approach to the matter has slightly changed since I began my research. My research also investigates something hitherto overlooked in visitor motivations in visiting Holocaust exhibitions – why people visit at all and why some people visit repeatedly? Is their desire to get involved emotionally and to feel emotions deeply? And how do these emotions allow the experiences to become meaningful? It has been argued that people do not use the museum merely for learning; there are two groups of people who visit museum; the

“knowledge seekers” and the “identity reinforcers”, according to Poria's et al. research (2009). In present research, individuals viewed the museum visit as an opportunity not only to gain more information and reinforce previous knowledge and ideas, but also, they used the museum to validate their identity, empathise with others, and relate stories within the museum to their own experiences. Exploring the incentives for visiting difficult exhibitions contributes to our understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of museum visit, and the different levels of museum engagement, as well as to what extent visitors use museums to reinforce, validate and reflect their own identity, ideas and values; an area that has not been fully explored and understood within museum space (Smith 2011:300). Thus, having generally framed my research objective in terms of unpacking visitors’ emotional responses to Holocaust exhibitions in the UK, my analysis is based on two case study museums, the National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottingham, and the Jewish Museum in London. The Holocaust topic is particularly interesting to study, as it has a very sensitive history, where high levels of emotion are induced, and self-reflection takes place (Gadsby 2011; Simon 2014; Nawijn 2015). Messham-Muir (2004: 98) argues that many Holocaust museums aim to engage their audience in both emotional and cognitive ways, focusing on the “product[ion of] moving experiences for visitors.” This experience, he suggests, offers the opportunity for the visitor to relate to the victims through empathetic identifications. The engagement with the Holocaust history within museum exhibitions makes the reflection on the relationship between historical distance and multi-perceptivity significant; two concepts that I will discuss later in this thesis, in chapter 3.

This thesis focuses on museums and exhibitions related to the Holocaust within a European context and specifically in the UK, and the participants of the study were mainly White-English and White-English Jewish. Thus, this study only applies to how a specific national group of people think and feel about the Holocaust. In addition, as far as I am aware, the research was undertaken during a period where no events related to the Holocaust were promoted by press, media or government, apart from

the annual Holocaust Memorial Day.⁴ Arguably, political, social and cultural impact is also central in the ways emotions are shaped, expressed and managed by society and individuals. Thus, choosing a particular setting allows a reflection on the effect of specific national context on the construction of emotional response as well as historical thinking. It is assumed that the way in which particular histories are commemorated and remembered greatly impacts also how they are approached within museum. The fact that England has no geographical link to the Nazi extermination sites, nor the sites of deportation, and its citizens were neither a perpetrator nor a collaborator, has vastly impacted the evocation of certain emotions and feelings attached to this history along with the way it is taught and remembered both inside and outside museum.⁵

My research revealed that participants emotionally and intellectually engaged within Holocaust exhibitions, by bringing forth their personal experiences within the museum and interacting with the museum's narratives in a distinct way. This thesis therefore suggests that attempts to create specific overarching visitors' emotional responses will always have limited success and that people will respond in their own personal ways (as shown in the figure 1) and perhaps in unexpected ways.

Behaviour: Entering visitors' narratives {interests, needs, emotions, memories and identity}



Figure 1. Introduction to the key argument of the thesis.

⁴ The most recent event would have been in 2016; when allegations of anti-Semitism were made against the former mayor of London, and ex-Labour party member Ken Livingstone, after he made a series of comments about Hitler and Zionism (Kushner 2017:365).

⁵ See chapter 3

The conversations with visitors, strongly demonstrated that emotions were core to the museum experience within the two museums both consciously and unconsciously. Considering the way that Holocaust exhibitions utilise emotive interpretive approaches, I argue that the analysis of the emotional responses within museum exhibitions contributes to our understanding of how emotional and intellectual forms of knowledge are used by visitors. In addition, these responses offer valuable insight into how museums can use emotional approaches to create to develop critical thinking about the past as well as the present. The results of this study indicated the interplay between emotions and thoughts that have been influenced by the individuals' personal ideas, experiences and background, as well as the ways in which the past understood and used in the present.

1.5 KEY THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

When I first began to think about how I might examine the impact of emotions on museum visitors, I explored a range of theories. In particular, I developed my theoretical base from dark tourism research which aimed to address the role of emotions as a motivator in visiting heritage (Poria 2006; Nawihn et al.2015). Measuring audience emotions, after visiting exhibitions seemed a useful way of uncovering the hidden meanings behind visitors' emotion and thoughts within Holocaust exhibitions. However, as I started to develop a theoretical framework within this research, this approach proved to be unhelpful in analysing the visitors' narratives, emotions and thoughts in depth. Qualitative methods and a socio-cultural understanding offer an effective way of helping to shape the design of the research and interpret visitors feeling and thinking (Sandell 2007; Wetherell 2012; Schorch 2015:440).

The thesis gained its main theoretical perspective regarding the role of emotions in human behaviour inside and outside museum from the contributions of Reddy (2001); Rosenwein (2002); Bagnall (2003); Scherer (2005); Watson (2010, 2013, 2016, 2015,2018); Witcomb (2010, 2012,2013b,2014); Smith (2011,2015); Pankepp

and Biven (2012) and Barrett (2018). The complex issue of how and why emotion influences our thoughts, ideas and attitudes is initially outlined in this thesis using the social theory of emotions (Barrett 2018),⁶ which supports the idea that emotions are socially and culturally mediated, but also acknowledges the biological aspect of it. I will also use the theoretical framework of *emotional regimes* by Reddy (2001), and *emotional communities* by Rosenwein (2002) to explain the fluid and changeable nature of emotion over time and place as well as to understand how emotions impact people and how people express and regulate their emotions within certain time and place.

The *pedagogy of feeling* by Andrea Witcomb (2013, 2014, 2015) was also key concept as it describes how emotive and affective museum strategies engage audience with the past through empathy, emotions and senses providing an experience where visitors are encouraged to feel and think. Such approaches attempt to offer an insight into the impact of emotions on visitors' understanding and engagement with the past in the present within the museum space. Another important concept to this research is the interplay between emotions and thoughts, and as Panksepp and Biven suggest, "emotion and reasoning are not independent, instead thinking and feeling are intertwined" (2012:9) meaning that we are thinking both emotionally, and cognitively, at the same. Therefore, exploring and analysing individuals' behaviours and emotional responses can contribute to understanding how and why individuals construct meaning in the way they do. In this context, empathy is equally important element of museum experience that provides intellectual and emotional encounters with the past within museums. In this thesis, empathy is perceived as both a feeling and understanding, with and for another's situation that may encourage a critical reflection and action. In my research, empathy is used to understanding of how museum visitors engage or relate to Holocaust victims' stories within the case studies institutions. It was also deemed as a way of managing emotional reactions and that was expressed by visitors in

⁶ See chapter 3

different ways. The concept of *cold and hot empathy* helped me, in my effort to investigate the different levels of visitors' empathetic engagement and its impact on visitors' thinking and feeling about the past and present (Chapter 7).

Visitors' museum engagement was also framed through the lens of "cosmopolitan affect" (2015, 2016) by Schorch which supports the idea that cultural engagement and reflective exploration of others can be facilitated through empathy. As is illustrated in Chapter 7, this concept validated these Holocaust exhibitions as places, where people are invited to think about the events represented, translate historical into moral lessons for the future, draw on their feelings, and have the capacity to connect those feelings to ongoing contemporary issues. Furthermore, this thesis adds to the discourse about the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust by looking at how the Holocaust is contextualized and understood not only by the academics and cultural institutions but more importantly by individuals in everyday life in the UK. The present study offers valuable insights into the connection between museum and emotions through visitors' personalised narratives, arguing that understanding the role of emotions allows us to deepen our comprehension of how individuals make sense of the past and the present.

1.6 METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

The aim of this study is not to offer a generalisation, in regard to how visitors' emotional engagement looks like within difficult exhibitions. Instead it aims to explore in detail and contribute to the discourse about how different individuals (Jewish and non-Jewish visitors) use and respond to museum exhibitions through emotional curatorial practices, thus a qualitative methodology was essential. This approach requires a small sample of participants, a limited number of case studies and more importantly it does not intend to use statistical and numerical methods (Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Denscombe 2010). During the interview process, open-ended questions were used to examine the interaction between emotions and thoughts. In addition, comments that visitors had left (at the NHCM) regarding their

experience, in the museum's visitor books have been included in the data analysis. Furthermore, this research does not rely on hypothesis-based research, but rather it is exploratory in nature.

My fieldwork researched individuals' social cultural learning⁷ experience within Holocaust exhibitions through emotive and cognitive engagement. According to Falk and Dierking (1997: xv) "learning is a much-used and much-abused term, meaning very different things to different people". Consequently, it is essential to define what this term means within this thesis. It is also important to address the difference between knowledge and learning. Howe (1984:2) describes knowledge as something that includes "anything that a person 'knows', factual or otherwise, correct or incorrect, and beliefs and attitudes as well as straightforward information". On the contrary learning is greatly affected by the learner's previous knowledge and experience. The study has also followed Hooper-Greenhill (2004: 156-7) definition regarding the more recent perception of learning experience within museum:

"Learning is described as encompassing the acquisition of new knowledge but is now seen as much broader than that. It includes the acquisition of skills, the development of judgement, and the formation of attitudes and values. It includes the emergence of new forms of behaviour, the playing of new roles, and the consolidation of new elements of personal identity. In addition, even when concerned with knowledge, learning does not always mean the acquisition of new facts; much of what we would recognise as learning involves the use of what we already know, or half-know, in new combinations or relationships or in new situations. Seeing things in new relationships gives old facts new meanings".

⁷ Sociocultural theories postulate that learning is a social activity where people learn through interaction with others and, especially, "with more knowledgeable members of a culture" and is shaped by social and cultural context (Hein and Alexander 1998: 32). The definitions of 'learning' demonstrates some of the thesis's views, and how they have been applied to interpret museum experience.

In the thesis, it is essential to acknowledge that cognition is not separated from emotions, feelings, values, actions and locations associated with those facts (Hooper Greenhill 2004:156). Therefore, learning can be seen as a process of ‘meaning making’ where emotions and affect interact and play a key role in understanding the world around us. Furthermore, Silverman (1995: 161,162) refers to the learning process as “make meaning through a constant process of remembering⁸ and connection”. However, apart from the cognitive skills that are required during the learning experience, there are also other factors that influence directly both this process directly and its effect, such as personal and social background, motivation and the environment (Howe 1984: 3-6, Heinand Alexander 1998). Finally, the Learning Impact Research Project (MLA 2004) has set up five Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs), which evaluate learning process and identify benefits from museum experience (including also library and archive activities) (MLA 2008). The GLO regarding “changing in attitudes and values” is key to the thesis as it examines the efficacy of museum social role and value through the potential impact of emotional engagement on visitors' thinking, feelings and attitude about “others” as well as about themselves. Many theorists and researchers have attempted to understand and define the learning process within museum by highlighting the different aspects of the learning process, but the diversity in relation to the term still remains. In this thesis, learning is regarded more as an experience and active engagement that combines cognitive, emotional, bodily, sensory and affective ways of constructing meanings, and the focus of the research was on visitors’ emotional responses to difficult past. The use of emotive learning and socio-cultural learning in the thesis is recognition of the complexion and multi-dimensional character of museum experience.

The representation of the Holocaust at both sites (NHCM and JM) is reliant on text, visual material (photographic and video), survivor testimonies, and personal objects.

⁸ Howe (1984: 9-10) points out the interchangeability between remembering and learning, with learning primarily “involving acquisition, whilst remembering to be a matter of retention”.

Thus, inviting visitors to become emotionally involved with the past and connect to the individuals' stories, with the "hope" that this may bring cultural understanding and social equality. Although, both the institutions have different layouts, and differing focuses on the representation of points of view, the analysis of the visitors' comments revealed a significant similarity in the way that they engaged with the past. Importantly, both the NHCM and JM are sections of community museums, which have made it part of their core mission to support social justice and encourage active social responsibility. The analysis of visitors' narratives indicated significantly similar patterns in the way visitors responded to museum exhibitions. Between October 2017 and June 2018, I conducted 26 interviews and talked with 42 visitors; 16 at the NHCM and 26 at the JM. Participants were interviewed either individually or in couples and group of three. The interview questions were semi-structured in order to be able to keep the conversation as flexible as possible. The focus was only on adult visitors (21-70 years old) but in an effort to balance the gender and generation representation, I also tried to interview and include a variety of ages.

The challenge that I encountered during this time was to find a place that would accommodate my research in order to continue my fieldwork. The Imperial War Museum in London was considered one of the most suitable places in the UK to research visitors' experiences in the Holocaust Exhibitions. The Imperial War Museum houses, which houses one of the first and largest permanent Holocaust sections, would offer a clear insight into how British nationals understand and confront the Holocaust in the post-modern period. In addition to this, as one of the National Museums in the UK visited by a numerous of individuals around the world, it could provide me with the opportunity to capture visitors' responses at a national level as well as within a wider ethnic and socio-cultural framework provided by British citizens. However, I was not able to conduct my research there, due to a museum policy forbidding the hosting of external researchers on visitors' experiences especially within Holocaust exhibitions. The next step was to communicate with the JM where they happily accepted my research project. From, September to December 2017, the museum undertook an emotional evaluation project within the temporary exhibition (the Sukkot: Seeking Shelter), permanent

exhibitions, public and learning events in order to reflect visitors' emotional reactions and responses based on the six emotions such as happiness, sadness, fearful, angry, disgust and surprise. The director of education department kindly shared the findings of the project with me. However, the results of this evaluation assessment were based only on quantitative method in order for the museum to measure visitors' emotions and evaluate their experiences, thus it had a limited use in this study, as this thesis does not aim to have a quantitative approach, but it analyses and discusses in-depth how and why individuals experienced and responded to Holocaust exhibitions in the way they did.

The first part of this study is concerned with the mission, aims, and strategies that exhibitions use in attempting to bring traces of past events into the present, to create a historical consciousness. That was examined through mission statements and website within two case studies institutions. The second part of the study focuses on the visitors' responses, drawing on data generated through the interpretation of visitors' stories and comments. The analysis of interview data did not depend on determined theories or hypotheses. However, the use of existing theories and conceptual frameworks is needed to understand the emerging data, the connections and relationships that take place during the museum visit. It is important to mention that some fragments from the visitors' narratives were used in this analysis of data to demonstrate different aspects of the museum experience, along with revealing the visitors' motivations towards Holocaust exhibitions. The selection of participants was based on interviews of individuals who chose to visit each of these two exhibitions and was carried out as soon as their visit to the museum displays had concluded.

1.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

Many of phenomena that are influenced by political, social and cultural norms can be defined as sensitive. Topics, for example, that are "private, stressful or sacred, and discussion tends to generate an emotional response" can be characterised as

sensitive, according to Lee (1993:6). Joan Sieber and Liz Stanley (1988:49) define socially sensitive research as, “studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research”. Scholars have argued (Lee 1993, McCosker, Alan Barnard and Rod Gerber 2001, Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong 2010) about the importance of research focusing upon sensitive topics which offer an insight into phenomena that impact social life. However, there are very few academic publications focusing on the research of sensitive issues (Lee 1993, Carter and Delamont 1996, Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer 2001). Even less attention is given to documenting the process of conducting studies on sensitive and emotional topics. (Milling-Kinard 1996:69).

Social research usually concerns findings or perspectives that may impact the feelings, views, attitudes and values of all individuals involved throughout the research process (McCosker, Alan Barnard and Rod Gerber 2001). Thus, ethical concerns often are attached to a social research methodology because it involves the lives and behaviours of people. (McCosker, Alan Barnard and Rod Gerber 2001). Joan Sieber and Liz Stanley (1988:55) state that “ignoring the ethical issues in sensitive research is not a responsible approach to science, shying away from controversial topics, simply because they are controversial, is also an avoidance of responsibility”. With this in mind, it is essential for a researcher to perform a thorough examination into what factors the research is impacted by, what it impacts on, and the socio-cultural context in which the research takes place. Researchers' reflexivity and ethical awareness of the impact of sensitive topics on people's lives are great of importance and continuous part of the entire research process, “since they affect all the stages, from identifying a topic and sample, negotiating access, data collection and publication of the results” (Brewer 2012:71, 1993).

Research regarding death or violence can evoke strong emotions on those taking part in the research (such as researcher, participants and readers), as Lee (1993) explains. Thus, the subject matter of this research may be regarded as ethically sensitive with potential psychological and emotional risks to the individuals are

involved. The ethical issues of this research are related to the visitors' interviews regarding their emotional reflections. However, there were no ethical implications as the interviews did not attempt to hurt or traumatize individuals. Additionally, there were no interviews conducted with either children, or survivors of the Holocaust. Even though, the research methodology was carefully designed and is relatively straightforward. The nature of the topic itself highlighted a few challenges that needed to be approached with a sense of self-reflexivity, sensitivity, respect and awareness throughout the entire process. For example, one major issue that emerged at the beginning of the fieldwork was the sample of the participants. The topic can be highly emotional or upsetting for both Jewish and non-Jewish visitors, for people with relatives or friends who died during the Holocaust or individuals who have experienced similar situations. Therefore, this caused the research process to become complicated and challenging to deal with, as research on sensitive topics requires a careful consideration of its impact on both the researcher and participants (Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong 2010:9). The challenge of issues concerning sensitive and emotional research lies also on the difficulty to predict how the study will affect the participants and anticipate what may result out of the study. Therefore, ethical decision-making needed to be made, in order to protect both the visitors and myself. For example, as this study is highly emotional, it was deemed ethically appropriate to not approach individuals that I had identified as vulnerable or emotional.

Furthermore, when conducting interviews towards social sensitive topics, there is always a possibility that very personal and sensitive information may be generated. Draucker (1999:162) also notes that "ethical implications of using procedures such as in-depth interviews and detailed questionnaires that may unleash painful emotions and memories in participants". According to the ethical code, I protected the privacy of all participants and have not shared sensitive and personal information. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked if they wanted anything they had said to not be included within the research. Also, there were no images or words used in the interviews that may have offended or caused discomfort in the

interviewee. Finally, I have kept the participants anonymity in the written text by not using names or any identifiable feature.

Before proceeding with the fieldwork, the first step was to plan the research in accordance with the code of practice for research ethics and apply for ethical approval from the University of Leicester.⁹ The next step was to contact the museums, read their code of ethics and conducted my research in accordance with the National Holocaust Centre and Museum's and the Jewish Museum Code of Practice for Research. Before the interview, the participants were given an information sheet, explaining the purpose of the research and consent forms.¹⁰ Another part of the research process that need considerable though regarding sensitivity was the interpretation of the visitors' emotional responses. Emotions can be communicated in both verbal and non-verbal form. For example, pauses, silences, body language and eye contact were also taken into consideration in the analysis of the data. Ultimately, both the ethical and legal challenges encountered throughout the research process enabled me to not only to gain an understanding about visitors' experiences, but they also allowed me to see the challenges museums encounter when dealing with sensitive histories.

1.8 THESIS STRUCTURE

To address the complexity of emotion and human behaviour and consequently the multi-layered nature of museum experience, this thesis is structured in eight chapters. The introductory section will present the journey of this research, the aims and objectives of the thesis as well as the research questions. It will also briefly assess why research about the role of emotions in museum experience and engagement is important, why it had been a neglected area in the past, and how a

⁹ See Appendix 4

¹⁰ See Appendix 3

qualitative approach can contribute to the subject matter. Additionally, it will summarise the key theoretical contributions that frame the thesis context as well as information of the research's design, data generation, and interpretation as well as the ethics process that followed for a sensitive topic like the subject matter of this thesis. Chapter Two discusses the efficacy of the museum to act not only as a social actor, but also to provide activist work through the exhibition medium and the use of emotional interpretative strategies following the work of some key authors in the field (Dodd and Sandell 1998; Sandell 2002, 2007, 2017; Hooper-Greenhill 2007; Fleming 2010, 2014; Carter and Orange 2012 and Carter 2013).

A literature review is addressed in chapter three, outlining the main relevant theoretical contributions regarding visitor's motivations for visiting difficult exhibitions and theories about emotions; what are emotions, how and why emotions shape our thoughts, and behaviour, and how emotions are understood within difficult exhibitions. Theories of emotions allow us to not only understand the importance of emotions, but also to unfold the multiple and hidden meanings in human behaviour that are related to the museum experience. Chapter four presents a detailed description of the nature and history of the two museums as presented. It also discusses the emotional approaches and media within the two displays, and how they aim to engage their audience with the past and bring it temporally closer through reconstructions and experiences. Looking at the particular design and history of how the JM and NHCM have presented history, is an important step towards understanding how visitors responded the way they did within the exhibitions. Thus, this chapter also acts as an introduction to the setting where the interviews took place. Chapter five, presents a detailed discussion of the design and methodology of this study, and the data generation and the analysis of the findings to familiarise the reader with specific processes and decisions that were taken in order to produce the results of the thesis.

Once there has been a clarification of the key theoretical concepts, and a critical reflection to the contemporary ideas about the role of emotions within and beyond cultural institutions. I begin to interpret the visitors' narratives and present the data

gathered through interviews with the museum visitors from the two case study museums in Chapters six and seven. These chapters bring together data and discussion into the ways individuals engaged and constructed meanings with historical narratives, as well as the effect of the emotional engagement when experiencing difficult exhibitions. Particularly, in Chapter six, the analysis reveals why visitors are interested in visiting difficult heritage and specifically Holocaust related exhibitions. It considers the role of emotion plays in the decision-making process, and lastly, it discusses the meanings that are attached to such experiences that make these visits so popular. Chapter seven shows the different approaches and levels of engagement with the past as they emerged due to the research conducted in the field. I argue over the important role of emotions in museum experience, and state that visitors' interpretation was influenced by identity, emotions, and memory as well as by the socio-cultural context.

In the final Chapter, I conclude the findings of the research, and show how the data answered the main research questions regarding the potential effect of emotions during the museum experience, and engagement with the past in Holocaust exhibitions. Furthermore, I present observations based on a comparison of the visitors' engagement between the two case studies. In addition, I reflect on limitations and challenges faced during the research journey, implications of this study's findings for further research, and how they could be translated to practices in the field of heritage. Examining the visitors' engagement at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum and the Jewish Museum through the lens of emotions offers potential for future emotive/affective interpretative strategies to effectively engage their audience with the past and the present, achieving a greater understanding of museum's power within society.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: EMOTIONS AND THE SOCIAL ROLE OF MUSEUMS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out some of the key theories that have been useful in this study, particularly helping in answering the research question, to what extent Holocaust exhibitions impact visitors' thoughts, feelings and attitudes and enhance their desire to engage with ideas and actions that promote social justice. Museums define themselves as places of knowledge, encounters and dialogue; many address human rights issues and claim to contribute towards social cohesion by promoting tolerance and respect. Museums have also demonstrated, on a number of occasions, that they are capable of tackling difficult topics as the Holocaust and slavery (Duffy 2001:10). Over time, the role of the museum has evolved from a representation of memories, to encouraging "activist practices" (Carter & Orange 2012:111). At the same time, new concerns are emerging relating to museums' roles, purposes and responsibilities, such as, are museums expected to become activist? This thesis is developed within a theoretical framework that embraces the social role of museums, not only in enhancing the thinking about injustices and inequalities, but also in encouraging visitors to positively respond to these social concerns. The first section aims to discuss literature about the efficacy of the role of activism in the form of Holocaust exhibitions and how it relates to the organisation's mission. It also examines museum approaches in addressing human rights issues and what particular challenges they might face in doing so.

Next, this chapter will focus on the potential educational role of Holocaust museums and memorials in promoting "moral" lessons in order to prevent such events of happening again, as well as to motivate civil responsibility (Novick 1999, Wollaston 2013). It will also address some common concerns such as the whether the *affective*

pedagogy (Witcomb 2013: 255-71) that aims to mobilise a productive affective response to the representation of violent past, provokes concern and social responsibility. This chapter argues that if museums wish to promote tolerance and respect and to motivate change, then they have a role in promoting critical thinking through their approaches, providing visitors the means to engage and make reasoned decisions. Adopting empathetic and affective techniques may not prevent inequalities and injustice, but I argue that the creation of empathetic spaces may help people to be aware of, understand, and become sensitive towards other feelings, thoughts and experiences. Despite the contribution studies have made in understanding the impact of Holocaust museums, there are still areas that remain unclear. Is empathetic involvement with others, or the act of remembering, enough to provoke socially responsible attitudes in the present and future? To what extent do visits to Holocaust exhibitions inspire visitors to commit to ideas and actions towards social issues? These missing pieces I will discuss here which are essential to better understanding the impact of emotional engagement in Holocaust exhibitions.

Finally, I advocate that people are active, in the sense that they construct meanings, negotiate and challenge ideas with regard to both past and present. Thus, I also framed the museum engagement through the lens of the cultural *cosmopolitan affect* (Schorch 2015, 2016). This concept proposes the relationship between emotional, affective, cognitive and subjective and was applied to gain a more in-depth and comprehensive vision for examining both how and why visitors interact and respond to museum message in the way they do.

2.1 HUMAN RIGHTS TURN IN MUSEUM STUDIES

In this section, I will lay out briefly the theoretical foundation in relation to museum's role of dealing with societal and human rights issues and discuss the ways in which they have created strategies for attempting to influence visitors' emotions, thoughts and attitude on social related issues. This helps to understand the context within which the case studies have developed their own approaches to turn memory

of the past events into action and mobilise their audience to change. The socio-political events of both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries such as, World War II, the Holocaust, the Cold War, and more recent events such as social movements, the global movements of large numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants have undeniably influenced museum practices (Fleming 2010). During recent years, there has been an increasing number of museums around the world that are becoming inclusive, equitable, socially responsive, and are identifying as human rights museums, like the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, Chile, and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Canada (Carter 2013). Their aim is to combat social inequalities, and encourage social responsibility at both local and international levels, such as the Slavery Museum in Liverpool, UK, or museums related to the Holocaust or memory and human rights.

Social responsibility began to concern museum practices in the 1980s, when new approaches of curating social history focused on presenting histories of previously excluded groups within the museum space (Sandell 2002). Carter notes that these new forms of museums “make human rights concepts, stories and practices the core of their institutional mission, curatorial praxis and exhibition and programming initiatives” (2015:208). Carter and Orange (2012: 111) describe these museums as issue-based museums that do not solely focus on presentations of material culture or human experiences, but also aim to engage the public with complex social subjects on both local and international levels, attempting to encourage critical thinking and inspire change such as museums dedicated to subjects concerning genocide, immigration and human rights.

In this light, Fleming (2010) describes the institution’s changing roles in three different areas. First of all, museums have adopted a greater focus on people and their stories. Secondly, museums have embraced more emotive approaches to represent and interpret their narratives. Finally, museums have become more culturally diverse, including minorities and previously excluded societal groups. Fleming (2010), also notes that it is an opportunity for museums to work in areas of representation, education and motivate an action. In a similar vein Sandell (2007),

Janes (2009) and Carter and Orange (2012, 2013:336) argue that these new generations of museums can act as social institutions, as they are “not only as buildings that house and represent memories, but more proactively as institutions engaged in activist practices”. The Federation of International Human Rights Museums adds to that point by stressing that “a new role for museums, one that is capable of changing human beliefs and attitudes such as racism...” (FIHRM 2010 in Carter 2012:114). Their assumption is based on the ideological belief that social justice can be achieved by internationally challenging contemporary forms of racism, discrimination and human rights abuses. It also assumes that people will visit these museums who are not already convinced of these ideas. This led to considerable amount of academic and professional attention and empirical research to analyse and understand how audience responds to such engagement (Cameron 2007, Dodd et al. 2010). However, it is fair to say that there is not enough visitor research to fully understand why people visit Holocaust exhibitions and the effect of emotional engagement as practised by and experienced in Holocaust exhibitions.

Museums employ several different practices to embrace values of equality, justice and diversity. Attempting to move from simply promoting awareness, abstract ideas and theoretical concepts about the ability of museum to affect society, to adopting a vision of activism and providing a frame for future action (Sandell 2002). These museums use various techniques to engage visitors with their narratives, eliciting a wide range of emotions from sympathy or empathy in relation to victims, to horror or anger at the inhumanity of perpetrators (Carter 2013:337). For example, in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, visitors are given passports similar to those that belonged to the victims, while at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa, visitors are encouraged to choose a space for ‘White’ and ‘Non-White’ (Carter 2013:337). Thus, visitors are encouraged to empathise with others, by identifying with different racial identities, or with specific victims from the Holocaust (Carter 2013:337). This is based on the assumption that an emotional engagement with those who living in the past allows a critical understanding of the past and present and hopefully it can affect people's attitudes and beliefs. Doering (2012: 250) notes that museums have “the

capacity to touch people's lives in remarkably powerful ways' and that museum professionals need to see their jobs as more than simply displaying and interpreting".

As visitor responses are based on personal experiences and their subjectivity (Smith 2011; Mason 2018) the use of these approaches can be challenging. However, these practices raise questions as to how they can encourage individuals to be more empathetic and how exhibitions can employ emotions in order to create meaningful experiences and actively engage their audience with social issues. There is increasing support from scholars (Janes 2007, 2009; Sandell 2007, 2017; Fleming 2010, 2014; Silverman 2010) regarding the potential contribution of cultural institutions to encourage conversations and shape thinking around social life. Carter (2013:338) argues that museums have the capacity to encourage individuals to positively respond to human rights values and notes that, "in their best moments, human rights museums may serve to reconcile difficult pasts by teaching skills that enable visitors to transform memory practices into future action drawing on the tools that a larger human rights culture and framework provide". She asserts that thoughts and openness can be encouraged and hence, responsible citizenship can be achieved. After presenting the context where many museums have begun to help people change their attitudes towards engaging with social issues, it is necessary to provide a more comprehensive discussion of the theoretical literature that contributed towards understanding the complex role of Holocaust museums, and their aim to create an environment of hope and action, by engaging with the past through emotional and affective approaches.

2.2 HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS AND THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS WORK

The desire for museums to be socially responsive institutions makes it imperative for both scholars and practitioners to rethink not only the museums' purpose, their collecting, exhibiting and programming strategies, but to also bring into question, who and what the museum represents, and to whom? What new ways of thinking

can museum encourage towards human values and rights? To what extent do museums shape ideas and encourage action? (Sandell 2002; Abram 2005; Janes 2009; Silverman2010). And finally, what does this experience mean, and how does it affect different individuals who voluntarily visit museum exhibitions, in particular difficult histories? It is this latter question that this thesis has sought to answer. In order to address these questions, I shall begin by presenting the different roles of Holocaust museums and discuss “their transformative potential to create a narrative powerful enough to initiate in the visitor a change of consciousness.”

The social role of the museum can be viewed in the context of the shifting purposes and perceptions of the museum itself (Novick 1999; Wollaston 2013). Social history museums represent stories of the past that can be understood, remembered, and experienced through affective interpretative approaches, and personal emotional experiences. Some of these museums attempt to promote social cohesion by representing past abuses and atrocities. Such institutions are dedicated not only to educating and engaging in the memory work of the past, but also making such information and knowledge meaningful and relevant to present and future societies. Some of them act as social agents and focus on shaping thinking and promoting change and social responsibility, as well as mobilising people into taking action (Carter and Orange 2012). Holocaust museums are complex performance sites, playing a variety of roles; educational and commemoration activities as well as researching the history of the Holocaust coexist providing different forms of visitor engagement, depending on the context. Broadly speaking, their central aim is to communicate and educate the present and future generations about the “lessons” of the Holocaust, emphasising the importance of learning from history, however, they may differ in their way of identifying lessons for the present.

For instance, the South African Holocaust and Genocide Foundation in the Cape Town Holocaust Centre aims to promote “human rights in a way that encourages social activism, and a greater individual responsibility to building the community” (SAHF 2011 in Carter and Orange 2012:117). Other museums such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, combines

commemoration with the activities of research, representation, and interpretation, demonstrating “an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts” (Williams 2007:8). The Auschwitz museum places the emphasis more on the need to learn what happened, who did what to whom, and why. The national vision of Britain's memory of the Holocaust can be seen within the Holocaust exhibition at the IWM, where the Holocaust is linked to British national heritage and identity (Peteresen 2001). The IWM does not have a centre dedicated solely to Holocaust education, but does offer Holocaust education programmes and activities. On the other hand, the National Holocaust Museum and Centre in Nottingham aims to promote awareness around human rights, focusing on the individual responsibility. Holocaust museums aim to develop historical consciousness, whilst preserving the collective memory of a generation and facilitating conversations over social issues in the modern world by presenting suffering and atrocities of the past, based on the belief that this representation will meaningfully link these past events to the present social concerns (Simon 2014). These types of exhibitions do not simply inform visitors about the past,¹¹ but they attempt to develop different relationships between the past and the present promoting historical consciousness¹² and providing opportunities to reconsider the present (Simon 2014). According to Simon:

“The pervasiveness of public remembrance in an era as violent and destructive as our own would seem to give little cause for hope, particularly hope grounded in the anticipation that the memory of past evil will help prevent its recurrence. Clearly, an unqualified notion of remembrance does not ensure anything, least of all justice and compassion. {...} This condition of hope requires that we see

¹¹ The term, past, is used in this thesis in reference to incidents that have happened at a given moment in time and “they have not been processed as history, in order to emphasise how the notion of history precisely involves that interweaving of past present & future” (Rüsen 2004b:2).

¹² The concept of *historical consciousness* by Rüsen (2004a, 2004b) and Seixas (2004) explains the different ways in which people “make sense of the experience of time by interpretation of the past”, to create meanings and ideas to aid in understanding the past and present in everyday life and “to expect the future” (Rüsen 2004a: 66-67).

the present as incomplete and thus open to the challenge of bringing about what is not yet present” (2014:203).

He explains that “when traces of the past break into the present, remembrance becomes a form of difficult learning. {...} The past approached on such terms opens the present not merely to gaps in its knowledge, but to a radical reframing of what historical remembrance might accomplish beyond an awareness of things not previously known” (2014:204). It is believed that the present can change for the better but it requires a specific way of seeing and thinking about the past in relation to the present, and demands both responsibility and response (Simon, 2014). In other words, these exhibitions such as the case studies of this thesis address sensitive topics and attempt to prompt a particular way of thinking about the past events in terms of present social issues which is by fostering emotional attachment with particular individuals and their stories, as well as encouraging feelings of empathy and self-reflection.

These emotional practices raise concerns about the potential link between remembrance, hope and achieving social cohesion. Scholars (Wollaston 2006, Simon 2014) have questioned the approaches used within these exhibitions and their intentions querying whether this means that visiting Holocaust exhibitions and getting emotionally involved can encourage personal responsibility towards inequalities and injustices? Wollaston (2012) and Simon (2011) point out that mere awareness of what happened in the past has not prevented similar violence from taking place in recent years nor have such institutions helped to diminish injustice. Simon (2014:218) states that “curating a difficult past requires the development of a concept of a cultural pedagogy capable of bringing past and present without reducing one to the other nor dictating the terms on which this is to be accomplished”. Despite the effort, these kinds of exhibitions may result in different consequences and implications, both on the museum’s practice, as well as the visitors’ responses.

Simon (2014) also argues that this empathetic engagement also requires critical thinking such as an understanding of the historical context that historical characters lived in a certain time and place, and how people in the past saw things, thought, felt and made decisions, and why they acted in a particular way within a specific historical and social context. The importance of emotions on thinking and understanding has been underpinned by the “pedagogy of feeling” (Chapter 3), however, Trofanenko (2014: 36) explains that emotions are mediated by various factors such as ideology, prior knowledge and social experiences in order to develop an understanding. Therefore, the elicitation of certain emotions and feelings cannot be conceived as leading to universal responses in understanding

The emotional/affective change in perspectives in heritage and museum studies has highlighted the complexity of visitors’ emotional responses (Watson 2018). Emotions evoked and expressed within and outside museum, are influenced and shaped by the social and cultural context¹³ (Watson 2015; 2016) and therefore, emotional responses can range across time, society, culture and geography (Smith 2020). Smith (2006) explains, that is because a museums/heritage sites have a performative nature where individuals and communities participate, engage, and reflect cultural, social and moral values. Emotions within difficult histories are important element to look at as they can reveal connections between social and political issues in the past, the present and even for the future (Macdonald 2009). Holocaust museums differ profoundly depending on the country context. For example, studying the Holocaust in a German context may prompt questions about national identity in a society capable of producing more negative feelings such shame or horror. Moreover, Macdonald's (2009) research about the Nazi past and emotions evoked in relation to it in German current society showed the need for people to negotiate this difficult period of history or even to avoid engage or talk about this past. On the one hand, the disturbing nature and potentially unsettling effects of learning about the Holocaust in countries like Poland may raise questions relating to identity and

¹³ See chapter 3

citizenship that Holocaust education can generate (Wollaston 2006). With respect to Holocaust museum, the complexities in terms of communication, display and interpretation of difficult past needs to be addressed by academics and practitioners, who need to embrace questions such as, who their target audience is? Are they survivors or non-survivors, Jews or non- Jews? Whose story is told, the perpetrators, the victims or the bystanders? Can these perspectives be combined?

Arguably, the acceptance that emotional museum practices can alone bridge the past and the present cannot be unquestionable. Mason (2013:45) points out that that a mere interest in learning about others is not sufficient enough to enable one to experience and understand different points of view as it requires “self-identification with the other as oneself.” Smith (2020) notes that empathy is a skill but it can also be exercised, if we choose to do so. Such visions of identification and feelings of empathy can have limitations in terms of achieving a connection between the past and the present, the self and others. If one is unable and unwilling to explore the unknown or someone positions themselves in a distance in relation to others, these empathetic engagements may fail to encourage one to consider the world through the eyes of others while encouraging visitors to relate these experiences to their own lives (Simon 2014). It is argued that only emotional attachment is not enough to inform an understanding and elicit visitors’ response about current social issues, there is need to help visitors think and make sense of these present concerns through engaging with the past roots (Arnold-de Simine 2013, Simon 2014). In this light, Bonnel and Simon (2007) point out also the risk of the emotional engagement that can allow desensitization and consequently, lead individuals to distance themselves avoiding any sense of individual or collective social responsibility. But, is it enough for museums to act as reminders of the past and as witnesses to past atrocities without encouraging feelings of empathy which can lead to changes in attitude and human actions? Novick (1999) and Simon (2014) agree that neither a simple visit to an exhibition nor an exhibit itself can challenge views and change attitudes or motivate action. Notably, it is important that more attention needs to be paid to different ways that people use and respond to museum narrative such as to what extent individuals utilise museums to validate

their identities (Smith 2011:300). In this respect, visitor encounters with an exhibition relies on many various factors, thus museums cannot determine or predict visitors' reactions and responses. As this area of study has until recently, attracted little interest from museum practitioners and researchers, this discussion may raise more questions than it may answer about the complexities of understanding the museum visit, in terms of emotional engagement effect.

2.3 COSMOPOLITAN AFFECT'S POTENTIAL INFLUENCE UPON THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE OF DIFFICULT HISTORIES

It has been argued that museum displays offer opportunities to experience and view the world from a different point of view through empathic engagement and self-identification (Mason 2013). In this section, I discuss the museum experience as emotive engagement with "others", and address some of the implications and consequences of these interpretative practices for both the museum and its visitors (Macdonald 2002; Sandell 2007; Smith 2011; Schorch 2015). In this context, qualitative methods allow a more nuanced understanding of the impact of museum exhibitions as well as an exploration of visitor experiences "through an analytical lens of encounter and engagement"¹⁴ (Schorch 2016:100). Throughout this thesis, I will use these terms to address exhibitions effectiveness and visitors' experiences with "others" within the museum space. I employ some ideas of *cosmopolitanism* theory that have been greatly addressed in the humanities and social sciences literature since the 1990s, whereas there have been limited discussions and empirical investigations in the context of heritage, museum, and material culture studies (Delanty 2010), in order to discuss the social role of museum in a context of contemporary concerns. *Cosmopolitanism* offers a theoretical frame to (re)consider socio-political, ethical and practical factors that may influence the role of museums

¹⁴ Engagement in the present study is understood as being involved with somebody/something in an attempt to understand them/it (Oxford Dictionary).

as social actors in the modern era. In particular, Delanty's (2010) ideas of *critical cosmopolitanism* may help understand how heritage and museums might respond to contemporary societal change in the European context.

Furthermore, I also framed the museum engagement through the lens of the ideas in "Cosmopolitan Affect" by Schorch (2015, 2016). This concept facilitates a reflective critical exploration with others through empathetic identifications, and thus relationships between different groups are established. In particular, museum narratives, objects, and pictures humanize the encounters with others, develop dialogue and connect us with others. This tool can validate these sites as places where people are invited to think about the events represented, and link these ideas and encounters to current concerns. In doing so, visitors can translate historical events like the Holocaust into moral lessons for the future, drawing on their feelings, and the capacity to connect those feelings to ongoing contemporary issues. In part, what makes the museums powerful is when memory, personal narrative, ideas, and events are intertwined into unique and individualized experience (Simon 2014; Mason 2018 et al.). This enables people to encounter themselves and to reflect on this experience with others' lives and stories within the museum space, informed by their personal and cultural biographies. Here, I will discuss the attempt of exhibitions to address difficult pasts in an effort to engage their visitors with others. The use of the term Cosmopolitan Affect provides a way to look at the visitors' emotional responses in order to understand the ways in which meanings are constructed, and whether people are encouraged to engage and hopefully respond positively to human rights and social justice related issues. Schorch's (2016) research sheds light on the long-term impact of museums, enabling one to see the world from a different perspective, throughout a process that moves from and between the emotive to the cognitive, self and other and through empathetic, imaginative and reflexive engagement with others. According to Schorch, meaning is conceptualised and informed by memories, thoughts, beliefs and experiences and shared in many different ways. Notably, recognising that visitors bring with them their awareness, experiences, memories and beliefs is the key to understanding visitor's experience (Witcomb 2014; Schorch 2015). However, there is still some uncertainty as to how

the power of this effect can have a long-term impact on an individual's life, and whether it contributes to a positive change within the society both locally and globally.

Williams (2007) and Bennett (1995) note that the challenge for museums is to measure the success of their social outcome among visitors. It is difficult to know whether this experience can be rewarding and positive, or if it provokes opposite reactions. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000:4) states that "exhibitions are produced to communicate meaningful visual and textual statements, but there is no guarantee that the intended meaning will be achieved. Visitors may or may not perceive the intended messages, and on perceiving them, they may or may not agree with them, find them interesting". Sandell (2007, 2017) indicates that the museum narrative can produce confirmatory or negotiated responses, but also oppositional and unexpected reactions. Furthermore, by looking at visitor studies at heritage sites, Bagnall (2013) underscores that there were visitors who want to keep an emotional distance from the topic presented, or to be emotionally affected and experience it. Emotional responses are not unconscious stimulus-response that are unmediated by social and cultural differentiation (Macdonald2007). As Bagnall (2013) notes, the emotional engagement with reference to an exhibition in Germany about the immediate post-war period, is something that is likely to vary depending upon the particular topic, visitors' relationships to it, and visitors' desire to get emotionally involved in to a certain degree.

Furthermore, Mason (2013) comments that in an era of multiculturalism, globalisation, and post nationalism, the challenge for European museums is to represent, interpret and engage the contemporary complexities of identities, cultures, and histories with contemporary museum audiences. She explains that this is particularly necessary since European museum audiences may have already adopted cosmopolitan "values, experiences, and expectations precisely because the same pressures arise from current forms of globalization and post nationalism" (2013:42). Furthermore, *cultural cosmopolitanism* - one of the four categories of *cosmopolitanism* pertains to "major changes in the cultural fabric of society leading

to the erosion of the very notion of a bounded conception of the social” (Delanty 2006: 31). Thus, *cultural cosmopolitanism* suggests that peoples’ sense of identity has been affected by social events such as migration and multiculturalism. Additionally, Delanty proposes that the theory of critical cosmopolitanism may serve as a useful approach to discuss the efforts of museum to shape certain values and beliefs in relation to ideas of equality, diversity and justice. More specifically, a critical cosmopolitanism gives emphasis on: (1) *“the identification of openness to the world, (2) self-transformation in light of the encounter with the other, (3) the exploration of otherness within the self, (4) critical responses to globality, and (5) critical spaces between globality and locality”* (2010: 17). Thus, experiencing others requires one's willingness to engage in a self-reflection process that may allow one to move from and between self and other. Likewise, Held advocates cosmopolitanism as a way to see things from a perspective outside of one’s own “location” (2002: 58, 2010). According to Held, the model of cultural cosmopolitanism should be understood:

“As the capacity to mediate between national cultures, communities of fate and alternative styles of life. It encompasses the possibility of dialogue with the traditions and discourses of others with the aim of expanding the horizons of one’s own framework of meaning and prejudice.” (2002: 58)

Anderson’s term “cosmopolitan canopies” also describes the ability of people who are often confined to their ethnic group or social class to “encounter others” and thus potentially develop a “cosmopolitan appreciation of difference” (2004: 28). Therefore, the idea of *cosmopolitanism* may encourage a cultural understanding and positive response towards difference, providing opportunities for self-reflection. Cosmopolitan museology offers opportunities to move beyond ourselves and foster empathetic responses about others (Mason 2013). In this light, Barton and McCully (2012) advocate that the emphasis on emotional engagement, and especially on empathy, led young people to develop curiosity necessary for engagement with others; and Simon (2004) stresses the importance of living relationally with others from the past, and in the present, and describes “being touched by the past” as a

demand to “take stories from others seriously, accepting those stories as matters of ‘counsel’” (2004:189). During this process, the stories of others may encourage reflection of people’s own stories, experiences and interests and have an impact on their views on their shared history. Another approach to this idea is offered by Rounds (2006), who described the museum as a safe place to explore otherness, without the risk of immersing oneself. However, it is questionable whether this kind of engagement can enable visitors to feel the exact same experience as the people in the past.

At the same time, Mason (2013) highlights the complex relationship between self and other. These encounters may be utilised to confirm and validate visitors' pre-existing identities and personal narratives rather challenge or disrupt them (Mason 2018). Doering and Pekarik's (1996) research regarding the relationship between visitor expectations and visitor responses to the Smithsonian Institution, suggest that many visitors use their personal entrance narrative when they engage with the museum message. Also, it is unsure whether visitors will respond positively or negatively to the narratives presented and offered within museum and heritage (Sandell 2007, Dodd et al. 2010). Likewise, Macdoanld (2002:255) notes with regards to her study of the Science Museum that “visions and work of the curators were set in a context which gave (the exhibition) inflections they had not anticipated”. Clearly, there is need for re-consideration of problems and challenges of museum narratives representation, as well as insight into the needs and expectations of visitors in museum practices. Above all, meanings are constructed by visitors’ prior knowledge and experience while they interact with museum objects but also, they are influenced by museum up to a certain degree (Sandell 2017). Finally, Rounds (2006) notes that visitors see museums as an opportunity to temporarily experience the lives of others at a distance as a source of pleasure. However, she suggests that these experiences may challenge the visitors' identity in some cases, except when the subject matter is related to such sensitive or challenging topics as the Holocaust.

Both of the sites are community museums, which have made it part of their core work to support social justice aiming to “create a narrative powerful enough to

initiate in the visitor change in consciousness” (Hansen-Glucklich 2014: 2-3) or an affective pedagogy (Witcomb 2013:255-271) which “may mobilize affective response of past violence and provoke attention, concern and corrective action” (Simon 2011:206). This type of engagement appeared to engender feelings and thoughts of social responsibility to visitors, especially at the NHCM, but in practice this agency may prove to be highly unsuccessful (Simon 2011; Popescu 2019:329). The ability of the visitor to learn or change is reliant on many factors. However, in order to integrate a new understanding and action in one’s life, a transformation process is required where critical reflection is essential (Bergevin 2019:352). Rounds (2004), points out that change is an important aspect of identity work, as it helps to maintain our existing identity, and adjust to the new realities and needs, as expressed by Anthony Giddens:

“Self-identity cannot refer merely to its persistence over time in the way philosophers might speak of the “identity” of objects or things. The “identity” of the self, in contrast to the self as a generic phenomenon, presumes reflexive awareness. It is what the individual is conscious “of” in the term “self-conscious.” Self-identity, in other words, is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual’s action system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual” (1991: 52).

However, applying this idea to a museum visit may yield a more complex outcome. Paris and Mercer (2002:402) argue that:

“Transformative experiences brought about by museum experiences will be exceedingly rare. During a museum visit, they say, . . . learning about one’s self may be occasional, incidental, or fleeting. There may be one object out of hundreds or one conversation during the entire visit that strikes a personal chord, resonates with a deeper meaning about self, and elicits feelings that underlie reflections about who I am and how I got here and what I believe.”

In other words, this transformation can occur when visitors experienced intense feelings and emotions, and thus, might make changes more rarely. This might not be the case for museums and exhibitions that focus on significant social and historical events such as the “Holocaust, the African diaspora, Ellis Island immigration, internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and similar collections”, as Paris and Mercer (2002:402) point out. It is more likely the diverse responses evoked (pleasure, nostalgia and pride) are related to individuals' own identities (Gregory & Witcomb 2007) in these types of exhibitions. Hence, individuals are more likely to personalize their experience, when their reactions are strongly supportive or in conflict. They may interpret objects and stories in positive way, when museum generates feelings of pride and satisfaction and reinforce their ideas and identities. But they can also view museum narratives as inappropriate or they fail to see any relevance with their own lives (Rowe et al. 2002; Paris and Mercer 2003; Bagnall 2003).

The model of cosmopolitanism brings into question how museums effectively engage with an audience whose views, interests, and attitudes are different from the museum narratives. How can museums achieve their role as an agent in promoting social change and cultural understanding, when their practices seem only to influence specific group of individuals? I suggest, that looking at emotional engagement within different contexts in order to understand how museums can achieve their aims to reflect and shape thinking around social life can be of great significance. These reflections could provide the backdrop for further examination into museum engagement of more diverse audience in relationship to the museum's social impact through the lens of emotional engagement.

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed how emotional interpretative approaches are used within difficult stories, not solely to provide information about what happened in the past and why, but also to highlight the importance of the past as a mean of framing an

understanding of present issues, and attempting to build bridges across cultural differences. Emotional engagement has the potential to evoke both emotional and intellectual responses that museum researchers and practitioners are increasingly recognising as being capable of inspiring curiosity and imagination and creating a sense of empathy with others (Bonnell and Simon 2007; Watson 2013; Smith 2013; Simon 2014). In turn, promoting an understanding across differences, museum practices can be re-presented and reinterpreted in a myriad of ways. Both museum studies literature and empirical research in visitors' experiences in museums around the world have acknowledged and indicated the social effect of museums, as well as, the consequences of museum practices and narratives. Even though visitors actively construct their own meanings and interpretations, museums also have a certain degree of influence, increasing an understanding and openness toward social values, such as inequality and injustice. But, they also have the potential to move beyond this, by offering and fostering a framework for action in the present and future.

This role also has its challenges, for instance, how far can museums go in contributing to a more equitable society? In the long-term, has museum engagement made any difference to an individuals' lived experience? Do emotional practices positively affect everyone? Emotions are not only personal and subjective, as we will see in Chapter Six and Seven, but they also provide an insight into how we make sense of the world, and contribute to developing and maintaining relationships with our social and political environment (Mesquita, Leersnyder and Boiger 2016). Ultimately, this thesis suggests the need to explore and analyse emotional responses, as well as the possibilities, and limitations of emotional practices in order to further understand how museums act as social agents. To do so, the next chapter addresses literature about what the emotions are, and how the emotions are understood, expressed and used inside and outside both museum and heritage.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCING THE PAST THROUGH EMOTIONS

INTRODUCTION

A theoretical framework around emotions is fundamental for this thesis, as it allows an understanding of contemporary ideas around emotions within a particular context, and in relation to the museum experience. In particular, in this study, theories of emotions contributed to understanding and unfolding the multiple and hidden responses, while engaging with historical narratives in the museum. Rather than merely identifying and measuring emotions, this research examined how people thought and felt, and how emotions were expressed at a particular time and place, determining how meanings are ascribed within the museum exhibition. More importantly, this research was conducted in Holocaust exhibitions in the UK, where the majority of participants were English¹⁵ and came from different age groups. Emotion is regulated by society, thus, in this chapter I looked at the ways in which emotional responses to the Holocaust have been regulated over the years.

In addition to this, the research was undertaken during a period of neutrality regarding Holocaust representation in media or politics. The socio-political and governmental impact is also significant in the ways emotions are shaped, expressed and managed by society and individuals. Watson (2013:288) explains that the “past will be reworked as the needs of the present dictate, all being reinterpreted according to contemporary emotional political and cultural contexts”. Hence, factors such as time, place and social political conditions require to be taken into account in a research like this.

¹⁵ See section 4.4

One of the first objectives of this study is to find out the visitors' motivation to visit Holocaust exhibitions and what meanings are attached to such experiences. Hence, in Section A of this chapter, I will discuss what motivates individuals to visit/revisit sensitive exhibitions, by using literature from Museums Studies, Dark Tourism and Media Psychology. Exploring and understanding the motives for visitation to dark/difficult exhibitions can contribute to understanding the nature of those visits and therefore how and why visitors respond to past in the way they did.

Section B of this chapter identifies aspects of the literature that facilitate the analysis of the two case studies, and understand not only the impact of emotion, but also the different levels of emotional and intellectual engagement within museums. The literature review in this section also concerns the third research question as to explore how and why the museum experience becomes meaningful to individuals. This section focuses not only on discussions about what emotions do, but also to recognise the value of emotions within museum, particularly when we attempt to understand how individuals make meanings within museum. An important element used in order to examine how emotions are used by the visitor is the relationship between memory/remembering, empathy and imagination and identity. Memory is closely associated with feelings, emotions and imagination, and it is difficult to disassociate memory from feeling. Memory literature can help in understanding how visitors create and recall memories during and after the museum experience, and what these memories and experiences mean to them. In this study, memory/remembering was deemed as a means of engaging with the past on a personal level. Empathy is an equally important element of the museum experience that provides intellectual and emotional encounters with the past within museums. Therefore, empathy literature sheds light onto the various ways in which people understand the past, by empathising with others at different levels. Memory, imagination and emotions play a key factor in the development of empathy. In this research, empathy is used to understand how museum visitors identify or relate to the stories of Holocaust victims within the case studies, as well as it being perceived

as way of managing emotional reactions.¹⁶ Hence, exploring and analysing individuals' behaviours and emotional responses can be a useful way of understanding how and why individuals construct meaning in the way they do. Additionally, this section looked at literature regarding identity work. Identity refers to how people see themselves and are seen by others. However, this term can be problematic as we have a number of identities (political, national, social, religious, cultural, ethic etc.). Identity also is not fixed rather it is fluid, manipulated and negotiated, and played an important role in the way we perceive the world around us and understand the past. Finally, this section will also examine the historical distance theory that provides insight into the different ways visitors understand and engage past and present through emotional identifications, as they can decide how and where they will express their emotions and themselves.

SECTION A: MOTIVATIONS AND DIFFICULT EXHIBITIONS

3.1 WHAT MOTIVATES VISITATION TO SITES OF DARK HISTORY?

Motivation in visitors' studies can be perceived "as the sum of biological and socio-cultural forces which energise and generate people's behaviour" (Pearce in Lew et. al 2014:15). Motivation is one of the most essential drivers, and a complex component of visitors' experience within the museum (Poria et al. 2006; Falk 2013; Isaac et. al 2014). In order to unpack, understand, and analyse this complex and multidimensional phenomenon, I looked into literature focussed on the museum experience, and visiting motivations at difficult/dark exhibitions/sites. I summarise the main contributions of visitor's experiences and identity validation schemes and issues. Finally, I address the reasons behind these museum visits to emotionally charged exhibitions, such as ones focusing on the Holocaust, by utilising theoretical frameworks and concepts from the Media Psychology field, with the aim to increase

¹⁶ See chapter 7

understanding of the nature of these visits, and in the turn to explore the ways in which visitors engage with and respond to painful past in the present.

Richards (2002) notes that motives range from the desire for the unknown and unusual, curiosity to explore and learn something new, to searching and experiencing the “atmosphere” in history museums in contrast to art museums. Krippendorf (1987 in Sharpley 2006) states that most of the time individuals do not know what triggers their desire, and therefore don't recognize their motivations. In contrast to the “push” factors (visitors' needs), there are also “pull” motives, which can explain why one chooses to visit a site after one has experienced the push factors (sites characteristics) (Leiper 1990; Richards 2002). This suggests that examining visits' motivation is considered important to understanding individual's experiences within difficult histories (Seaton 1996; Poria et al. 2004). Nonetheless, most of the research on visitor motivation and experience in museum/heritage is not based on empirical data, but on theoretical studies. Other studies, such as Smith's research focused on visitors' emotional engagement at heritage sites and slavery museums, and the effect upon the visitors' agendas and identities after what has been learned. Seaton (2012) and Isaac and Cakmak (2013) note that too much attention is paid to the conceptualization of dark/difficult heritage instead of observing the individual's perceptions and analysing meanings of differential motives and experiences. Isaac and Cakmak (2013) contend that dark/difficult heritage sites can be best defined by the motives of visitors, whereas Stone (2006 in Isaac and Cakmak 2013) argues that what happened in the site (the content and interpretation) makes the place dark. It worth mentioning here that dark/difficult heritage is not only linked with death and suffering sites, where these experiences likely involve negative feelings (such as fear, horror, sadness and discomfort). But it also refers to visitation to sites such as memorial museums (e.g. Ground Zero, Anne Frank House, Holocaust Memorial museums) (Biran and Poria 2012). For example, Holocaust exhibitions share common characteristics with dark/difficult heritage as they similarly encourage both positive and negative emotions but also providing opportunities for remembrance and commemoration, symbolic meanings, enhancement of one's identity, culture/educational experiences and cathartic

psychological healing, or it can even be a random visit (Austin 2002; Biran 2011; Dunkley 2011; Biran and Poria 2012).

From this position, several recent empirical studies suggest that the attraction to these visits extends beyond the fascination of death or atrocity (Ashworth 2004; Sharpley 2005; Dunkley 2007; Seaton 2009; Braithwaite and Lieper 2010; Biran 2011). In a similar vein, Sharpley (2005) and Isaac and Cakmak (2013) suggest that not all the visitors are seeking a “dark” experience, such as finding pleasure in viewing others' misfortune. Conversely, Seaton and Lennon (2004) identify, fascination of death and suffering and the contemplation of death (Seaton 1996) as the two main motives in relation to difficult heritage. However, Ashworth (2004) and Timothy (2004) note that the visitor's motives range from searching for their identity and educational purposes to interest in tragedy and death, especially at the Holocaust sites. Nonetheless, it is difficult to discern from the empirical studies that individuals are interested in suffering or atrocities, or they are curious about these experiences as they are reluctant to admit socially unacceptable emotions and motives (Ashworth 2004 in Biran and Poria 2012). An empirical study conducted by Biran et al. (2011) indicates that the motives for visiting Holocaust sites and exhibitions can be categorized into four main types; 1) Visitors who are interested in seeing the site where such atrocities happened (they want to verify that they really happened); 2) Individuals who are interested in learning and understanding what happened (in particular, they are interested in being educated about the Second World War and the atrocities that happened there); 3) They desire to connect with the heritage and feel an emotional experience (they want to empathise with the victims, and to see the real site with their own eyes) and 4) A general interest in death sites. The phenomenon of visiting places associated with tragedy, death or atrocities are increasingly common within contemporary society (Biran and Poria 2012). For instance, in 2010, nearly 800,000 tourists visited the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Auschwitz Concentration Camp and Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum saw almost visitors 1,400,000 in 2011 (Isaac and Cakmak 2013). Moreover, the study of the Westerbork Concentration Camp shows that 26% of the respondents had visited Westerbork before, with an average frequency of twice, and

59.7% of respondents had visited other sites related to the Holocaust before that (Isaac and Cakmak 2013). More and more people are visiting difficult heritage places such as Holocaust sites, prisons, concentration camps, graveyards and cemeteries, slavery heritage and war sites in recent years. But why do people like to visit or revisit these sites? What meanings are attached to such experiences that make them meaningful? And what is actually taking place in these sites?

Much research has been done into museum visitors' motivations providing an understanding into what individuals seek from their museum experience. (Poria et al. 2003, 2006, 2009; Falk 2013). Perhaps the major contribution that gives insight into museum experience was Falk and Dierking's (1997) influential model on visitor's museum experience, which is relevant to this study. They argued that every museum experience could be understood by looking the following three contextual frameworks: i) the visitor's *personal context* (visitors' motivations, interests, expectations when they are visiting museum); ii) the visitor's *social context* (the impact of social group); and finally, iii) the *physical context* (the museum actual physical space, where visitors experience the museum). In addition, it is proposed that there are five common types of experience that describe what visitors seek from the museum which are: intellectual, interpersonal, social, physical, and emotional (Black 2005:286). However, visitors may anticipate and accomplish more than one type of museum experience simultaneously (Poria 2004; Poria et al. 2006). For instance, Falk and Dierking note that '*the museum experience can be as much an emotional as an intellectual experience*' (1997:92). Packer (2008) and (Gadsby 2011) highlight the "restorative" role of visiting museums and provides evidence as to how audiences often perceive museums as a way to escape from their daily routine, a relaxing and calm experience that can provide a sense of positive psychological wellbeing. In a similar vein, Gadsby (2011:4) argues that museum visitors also anticipate being engaged, immersed, informed, and relaxed, to understand the heritage as well as to spend time with family and friends.

To return to the relationship between museum visit and engagement, evidence from studies on interpretation often suggests that the main motivation for visiting

heritage sites is to gain knowledge (Ashworth 2004; Timothy and Teye 2004). Thus, the interpretation focus is given more to cognitive experience while the emotional aspects of the museum experience is usually ignored, which is one of the key elements to museum visit (Poria, Butler and Airey 2003). It is considered that experiences that are emotionally important are those that satisfy one's needs and interests, and these entering narratives trigger a museum visit (Falk 2013). Furthermore, the importance of social interaction was also apparent from the analysis of the data, as another aspect of the visitor's motivation for a museum visit. The social aspect is referenced by others, emphasising that "social groups can dictate to some extent our interaction and experience" (Ellenbogen et al. 2007:17). Media studies reveal that the exposure to traumatic or sad experiences appear to produce a social bonding affect; because of drama ability to influence at least one important neurophysiologic system, and produce endorphins which are responsible for making us feel closer to other people (Knobloch-Westernwick et al. 2012). Pekarik, Doering, and Karns (1999) also found that various dimensions of visitors' background (age, gender, familiarity) and preferences affect different aspects (intellectual, social, emotional) of museum visits.

Studies also showed that museum and heritage mean different things to different people (Poria et al. 2003; Bedigan 2016; Falk 2009,2013). The differences in attitudes, expectations and responses mean that museums need to be able to cater to a broad range of visitors (Munro 2014:54). But, visitors have different needs, expectations and preferences, and their reactions during the visit can sometimes be unexpected (Antoniou and Lepouras 2010; Frank 2013). Several studies in dark heritage tourism discuss the different experiences that visitors seek simultaneously and the multitude meanings ascribed to the sites (Timothy 1997; Poria 2009; Biran 2011; Nawijn 2015). For instance, Poria et al.'s (2004, 2006, 2009) research divided visitors into three groups: (1) those who anticipate emotional experiences, (2) those who seek a learning experience, and (3) and those who wish to experience others. In other words, the aforementioned museum experience cannot capture every possible outcome that may be sought by museum visitors, as there is a wide range of outcomes that visitors may anticipate (Smith 2015). Following this, the next section

shall discuss in further depth as to why people choose to visit places that evoke negative feelings and emotions, and how this experience can be meaningful.

3.2 COPING WITH SADNESS; A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE THROUGH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

All of us feel and experience negative and positive feelings. For some, thoughts, feelings and emotions such as guilt, sadness and anger can seem overwhelming and distressful, hence one may adopt strategies in order to regulate or suppress these emotions. One of the influential theories in social psychology is the mood-management theory's (Zillmann 2000), which suggests that individuals desire to maintain positive emotions and feelings and diminish negative moods. As a result, individuals tend to prefer activities/experiences that result in more positive outcomes and resolutions. On the other hand, a great part of media research has focused on the role of emotions and moods as “gratifying” during the media exposure. But, they also have proposed that emotional media experience can be rewarding by satisfying individuals' social and cognitive needs (Zuckerman 1979; Zillmann 1988; Oliver and Bartsch 2010; Oliver and Raney 2011). For example, experiencing negative or unpleasant emotions may stimulate other rewarding experiences. Thus, emotions seem to foster emotional media experience in two main ways: 1. Because they can affect one to feel better immediately and 2. Because emotions can stimulate other rewarding moments that contribute to well-being, self-reflection and personal growth and values (Bartsch 2012:273). This dual function of emotional rewarding media experience is explained by Bartsch (2012:274) in figure 4:

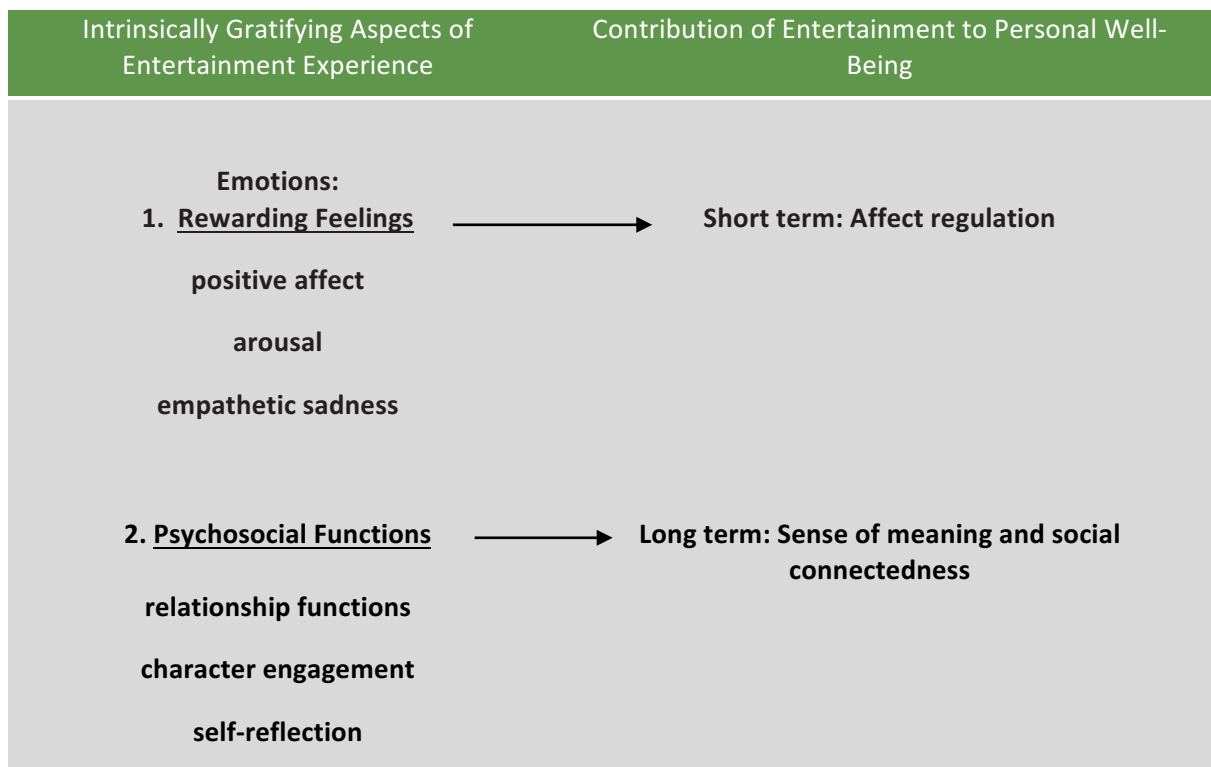


Figure 4. Two-level model of Emotional Gratification in Entertainment Experience. Adapted from Bartsch (2012:274)

Research also reveals that the feeling of sadness may stimulate catharsis and feelings of gratitude, enabling self-reflection through comparison with others in more tragic situations (Mares and Cantor 1992), and/or activate more elaborate thoughts which help one cope with their own problems and concerns (Zillmann 2000). Most of these explanations point to the idea that viewers consider these experiences rewarding not only because they can be interesting, but that they seem to be meaningful and thoughtful in the long term, as Oliver and Hartmann explain (2010). According to media psychology literature, sad storytelling can promote thought-provoking experiences while one can transfer negative emotions into positive and meaningful experiences (meta-emotion theory- Oliver 1993). But in order to understand what makes these experiences appealing for an individual, it is essential to first understand what makes the exposure to sadness a rewarding experience. Research has found a positive relationship between negative emotions and “enjoyment” while watching sad, mournful, and fearful films (Oliver 1993; Hofer and Wirth 2012). The crucial point is the transformation of a negative feeling such as the sadness into a positive affect (so called meta-appraisal). It is believed that the exposure in tragedy

foster thoughts and feelings of appreciation, as well as being in a negative affective state may alert one to take action in a problematic situation (Zillmann 2000; Knobloch-Westerwick 2012). Oliver (1993,2010) indicates that people with high empathy abilities generally feel greater empathy and consequently generate greater feelings of sadness. They are responsive to negative emotions and can interpret sad emotional responses into a positive way. In other words, empathetic and sad responses can be converted into positive outcomes. According to Zuckerman (1994), sensation seekers are able to appreciate negative feelings which have been elicited by sad experiences. However, Bartsch et al. (2008) note that sad narratives can also stimulate different emotions without a meta-emotion effect. But a meta-emotion can occur, only when the emotion is experienced as relevant or similar to the viewer (2008:15).

With respect to empathy, Green, Brock, and Kaufman (2004:315 in Hoffner 2009) contend that empathy involves “temporarily leaving one’s reality behind and... entering the milieu of the narrative” without taking a personal risk. But this enjoyment can be disrupted when empathetic engagement is extended to one who suffered or experienced negative emotional outcome (Zillmann 1996). However, personal distress (self-focused) seemed to be related to less enjoyment, especially that of suffering and tragedy related content. It may be that individuals high in personal distress do not deeply empathize with others, but their self-focus leads them to personalise the events and think more about their own lives (Hoffner 2009). In contrast to personal distress, empathy focuses on concerning and caring for others (Davis 1994 in Hoffner 2009). This type of research would begin to identify the process by which the different kinds of empathy interact with various content to influence emotional responses in relation to dramatic storytelling. Few studies have examined the link between empathy and emotional responses to tragedy, but the limited evidence supports the view that empathy is associated with more negative affect and less enjoyment.

With this in mind, it seems that the term “enjoyment” does not effectively describe the meaningful and thought-provoking experience that individuals may seek from

their exposure to tragedy, especially in the museum space. Zillmann (1998) and Oliver and Bartsch (2010) attempt to broaden the notion of enjoyment from tragedies, and they suggest that individuals at times use the entertainment as a means to get a meaningful and moving experience. They explain that the viewers' evaluation of meaningful films may be better described as appreciation than mere pleasure and enjoyment. They conceptualised appreciation based on the perception of a deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to develop thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience. In this sense, entertainment can be more associated with feelings like pleasure and excitement, whereas appreciation may elicit feelings of compassion with others, self-reflection, greater insight into life and motivate people to take an action. For that reason, I will use the word appreciation to describe the positive outcomes of the engagement with sad and dramatic narrative.

The cognitive aspect of appreciation is characterized by deeper engagement with reasoning and contemplation. More recently, in their qualitative research, Oliver and Bartsch (2010) indicate that sad story-telling which is perceived as meaningful seems to encourage appreciation of the values and ideas related to human behaviour and experience and activate thoughts. Furthermore, both meaningfulness and appreciation seem to comprise of cognitive, emotive, and also motivational aspects (Oliver and Bartsch 2010; Bartsch 2012). Similarly, Knobloch-Westerwick et al. (2012) built on Oliver's argument (2008) that sadness exposure affects positively self-reflection and can be considered as motivational for engagement with tragedy. In particular, they found that people became interested in sad and dramatic narratives because they helped them appreciate their own lives and combat their own unresolved issues while they increase their capacity for compassion and empathy. They argue, that sad exposure induces "self-focused thoughts about one's own situation as well as socio-focused thoughts about one's relationships with others" (Knobloch-Westerwick et al. 2012:750) but they also note that this impact may not be long lasting. Being in a safe environment, such as a museum space one can compare their lives with the others' lives and experience intense emotions that they would never actually want to experience in real life.

These emotional experiences are related to the concept of intrinsic motivation which refers to the satisfaction of needs that are associated with the sense of self-worth (Csikszentmihaly 1990). Appreciation through drama may not only offer a rewarding, but a stronger and more memorable experience, according to Oliver and Bartsch (2010). Emotional involvement can foster these rewarding motivations and experiences, based on cognitive theories of emotion which maintain that being in a negative affective state enhances thoughts and motivates actions (Scherer 2001). Likewise, Fridja (1988) suggests that tragedy and sadness enable self-reflection which, in turn, might make one change his/her life. Insofar, sadness may offer opportunities to impact a self-reflection and evaluation of one's life situations. These theories may be applicable in museum context and give some possible interpretations regarding how engagement with dramatic story-telling is perceived as meaningful and rewarding experience. The museum experience here is considered to have similar characteristic with other media experiences (such as film or theatre narratives), in which visitors can see and assess what happened in the past through the eyes of others, without running the risk of experiencing the event itself. Nonetheless, it can only be assumed that the use of media which elicits negative emotions and feelings within museum may encourage certain people to act or change attitudes, adopt altruistic behaviours and promote awareness. In this study, there was limited evidence that intense emotional experience (sadness, shock, upset, horror and interest) tended to inspire and motivate people to read and learn more and/or to get involved actively with equality, mental health and well-being issues.

Emotions that are evoked during a narrative engagement are a complex mechanism, and influenced by multi-dimensional factors. This emotional involvement is based on subjective evaluation of emotions and is reliant on individuals' view, values and background which is the key to an emotional experience (Fridja 1998; Scherer et al. 2001). Thus, the need for affect also has to do with the motivation to get emotionally involved with the situation, therefore the transformation of the negative feeling to a positive outcome involves cognitive, affective, motivational and

behavioural engagement (Bartsch 2008:12 in Hofer and Wirth 2012). Dramatic storytelling within Holocaust exhibitions encouraged self-reflection and offered moving and thought-provoking experiences to visitors. The process of self-discovery and self-reflection may be the first step towards enabling people to obtain a cultural understanding within and outside museum. Visitors may have gained a rewarding experience during their visits in the exhibitions, however, it is still unclear as to what this rewarding experience actually means for them, and what are their inner motivations for revisiting difficult heritage are.

Importantly, individuals from different cultures may respond in differently to these kinds of experience. Consequently, in other cultures, ideas such as gratification may be differently perceived (Blakely 2001; Trepte 2008 in Oliver and Bartsch 2010). Nonetheless, more exploratory research is required to provide more nuanced evidence as to how emotional media exposure can be conducive to a rewarding social, meaningful and though provoking experience, and what emotions stimulate these moments. This type of analysis can allow a more comprehensive understanding of individuals' subjective reasons that seek out this kind of experience that have not been fully explored both in theory and research, and consequently it sheds light into visitors' engagement within these sites. However, the differential findings in reasons that make the experience associated with tragedy appealing to individuals reveal the complexity of this relationship. As this research focuses on exploring and understanding the museum visitors' emotions and their meanings within historical, social and cultural framework, within the next section, my aim is to understand the impact of emotions within and outside museum space in relation to the process of making meanings.

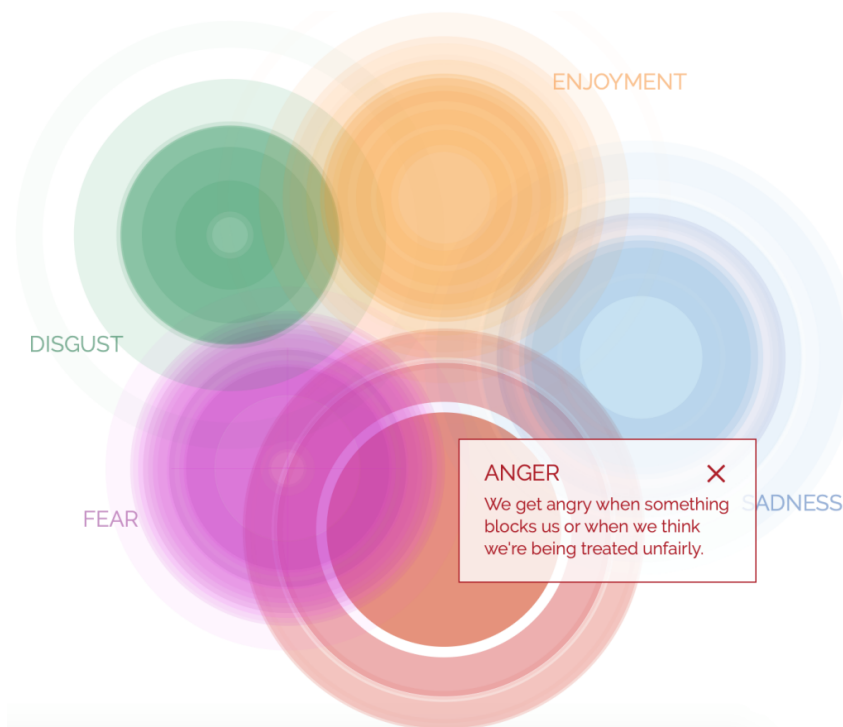
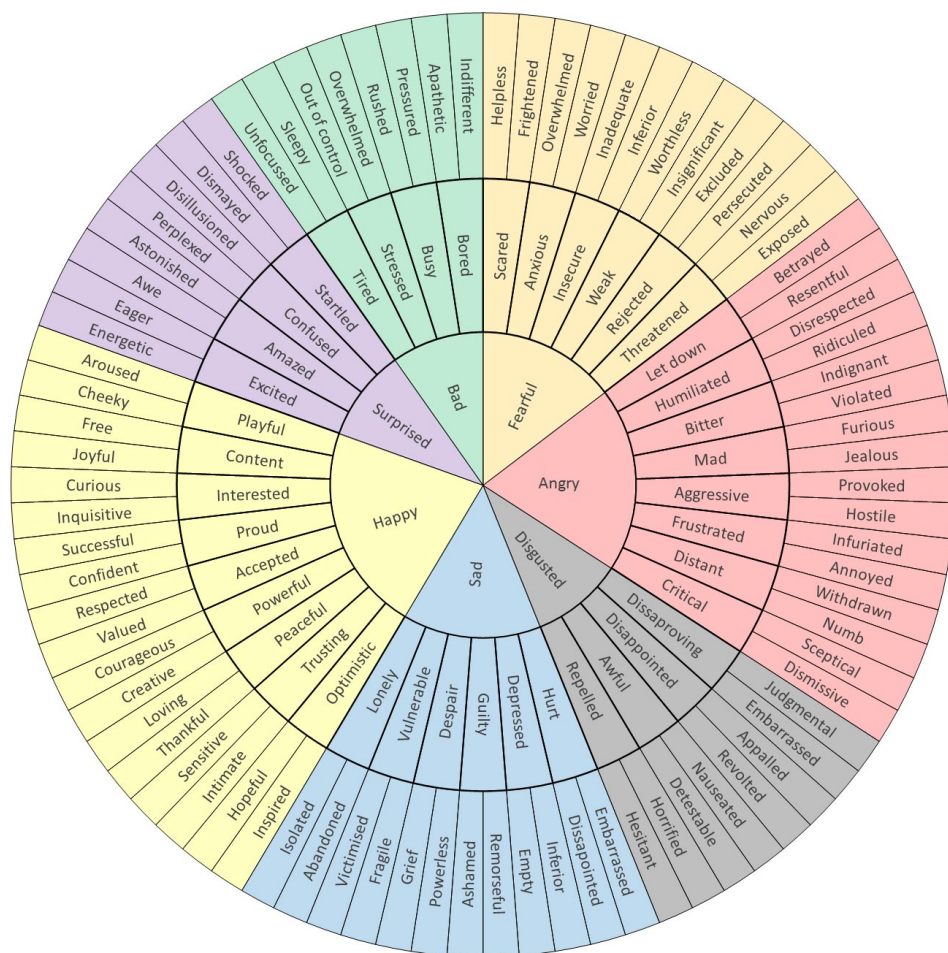
SECTION B: HERITAGE AND EMOTIONS

3.3 DEFINING EMOTIONS

Emotions are part of cognitive processes, understanding social relations, colouring in reasoned discourse and providing a sense of what hurts and what pleases, what feels good and bad, and what feels right and wrong (Boddice 2018:191).

Research on emotion can be seen in many disciplines, experts in the field of emotions study generally agree on the components and characteristics of an emotion, yet, they cannot agree on its definition. Theorists and researchers use the term *emotion* in ways that imply different processes, meanings and functions (Izard 2006). Defining emotions is complicated by the use of alternative terms, such as feeling, mood, temperament, desire and affect, which are sometimes used interchangeably across different studies. In this study, it is essential to distinguish the term *emotion/feelings* from *the affect* and other synonymous terms. According to the Oxford dictionary definition, emotions are considered as an “affective state, in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate, or the like, is experienced”. Brian Massumi (2002), argues that emotions are a result of personal experiences, and are distinct from affect because of their involuntary nature that provokes responses that cannot be predicted or controlled.

For the purposes of this research, I am using the notion of emotion or feeling to interpret an intense individual and subjective emotional experience, in relation to museum context. Here the experience of emotion/feeling is linked to meaning. It is apparent in this research that the nature of these terms is fluid, interchangeable and complex as their meanings can change depending on the context, time and environment where they are used (Thrift 2004).



Emotions can be defined as intentional actions, ambiguous, of high intensity, and of brief duration (de Rojas and Camarero 2008:528). Scherer provides another definition:

“Emotion is defined as an episode of interrelated, synchronized changes in the states of all or most of the five organismic subsystems in response to the evaluation of an external or internal stimulus event as relevant to major concerns of the organism” (Scherer 2001 in Scherer 2005:697).

So, an emotion is our brain's creation of our bodily experience, in relation to what we experience. According to Barrett (2018:31) “emotions are not reactions to the world and we are not a passive receiver of sensory input but an active constructor of our emotion.” From sensory and past experience, our brain constructs meaning and determines action (Barrett 2018). Thus, concepts are important, as our brain uses them to make meaning, and sometimes this meaning is emotional based. Our brain uses concepts to understand the world around us, what we see, smell, hear and touch. But concepts are also responsible for understanding language, feeling empathy, imaging, remembering (Barrett 2018) which are also important elements of museum experience within Holocaust exhibitions

In order to analyse visitors' emotional responses, I needed account of the descriptions of emotions that people used, and map them onto a theoretical understanding of emotions. However, this is difficult as there is no consensus about what emotions are; for example, Ortony and Turner (1990) demonstrate that interest can be considered as an actual emotion instead of desire due to its cognitive components. Furthermore, Scherer note that “emotions are considered to consist of five main components. These include a cognitive component (appraisal), a neurophysiological component (bodily symptoms), a motivational component (action tendencies), a motor expression component (facial and vocal expression) and subjective feelings (emotional experience)” (Scherer 2005:709). There is also a challenge of dealing with the concept of feelings and moods. For example, when

people say that they are sad or upset, it is not always clear if they are referring to a long-lasting mood they have experienced during the visit or if it is something else. Feelings are synonymous to emotions, but they can have a longer duration and can be repeated (Plutchik 1980). Moods, also last longer than emotions, greatly affecting our memories (de Rojas and Camarero 2008). Overall, emotions are mental experiences, often involuntary and shaped by personal, social and cultural context, whilst affect is characterized as unconsciousness and describe physical and bodily experiences (Masumi 2002; Thrift 2004).

Analysing emotions expressed by visitors either through words or bodily reactions requires us to take into account the impact of these emotions on individual memories, thought, and decision making (Bechara et al. 2000; Fredrickson 2000; Turner 2011; Falk and Dierking 2013). A considerable amount of literature recognises that emotion and reasoning are not independent, instead thinking and feeling are intertwined (Panksepp and Biven 2012:9); we think emotionally and cognitively at the same time. This means that we experience emotion through reason, without necessarily being immediately aware of the effect of our thoughts on emotions (Watson 2015:284). Our thoughts engage with emotions, and in turn, emotions can influence the way we think, behave and act (Panksepp and Biven 2012; Watson 2015:284). Nevertheless, this does not mean that all emotions are filtered through our cognitive functions (Panksepp and Biven 2012:5). Humans' emotional reactions and responses can be expressed in various ways, for example sometimes “emotions can be primitive or even unexpected”, as Watson (2015:284) importantly notes. In this view, in terms of individuals' engagement with museum narratives, it is noticeable that people can also choose to openly express their emotions and feelings, or to hide and regulate them (Mayer et al. 2008). Hence, I took into consideration both their body language and words. People know what is socially acceptable, and may believe that is not acceptable to say they feel nothing when encountering stories of human pain and suffering. Thus, it was necessary to take into account the ways in which certain conventions were observed during my analysis. This does not mean that emotions shown by words and gestures are false, but they may mask other emotions or more complex responses. It is important to recognise

that emotions are often complex and may not be entirely understood or divulged by individuals. This makes it important for researchers to undertake qualitative work as this thesis has done.

Nonetheless, even though one may wish to control one's feelings, emotions can be expressed from vocal and facial expressions (Austin 2002). I noted in my research while conducting my interviews, differences in the intensity of experiencing emotions between women and men. Robinson et. al. (2014) explain, that even though men and women experience the same emotions, they may have different ways of regulating and expressing them, particularly emotions as reference to grief, fear, anger and embarrassment (Scheff 2001). This may be due to socialization, cultural norms, and learned behaviours within different cultures (Scheff 2001; Robinson et al. 2014). In my research, I interviewed 18 men and 24 women (Appendix 5) and it was noted, albeit not the main focus of the thesis, that women expressed their emotional reactions and responses with more intensity and detail than men, who in some cases appeared to lack the ability to find the right vocabulary to express their feelings and emotions. This observation may well be of use to a future research into how certain components such as age or gender can affect the way emotions are expressed or suppressed.

There are also numerous approaches that describe the different ways in which we experience emotions. The two main approaches are the psychological/universal and cultural/ contextual ones (Tarlow 2012:171). The former approach argues that all humans have access to similar forms of emotions, such as anger, fear, disgust, happiness, surprise and sadness (Izard 2007; Bowen 2014:116), whereas, the latter explains that it is difficult to define emotions and they are culturally regulated across time and place (Reddy 2001; Rosenwein 2002). More specifically, the classical considers that events around us in the world trigger emotions inside us. Psychological approaches understand that emotions are constructed by a biological process within our brain and body, whereas, the social theory of emotions supports that emotions and perceptions are socio-culturally shaped, and as such not considered to be universal among humans (Barrett 2018). In other words, the meanings derived from

emotions are constructed in ways that are linked to our social and cultural background. So, different cultures can apply different meanings to the same concepts. This is a particularly important factor to acknowledge when it comes to identifying and analysing emotional responses and their meanings in a museum space within a particular context and time. Learning experiences involve an interaction between oneself and the outside world. In this process, the body becomes essential in order to understand the world and events around us through the interplay of emotions, senses and thoughts influenced by time and place (Dudley 2010; Falk and Dierking 2000). Unintentionally, the respondents within this study were mainly English (two participants were American), however this unintended result of the interviews creates research that is regulated mainly by English culture and sensibilities.

Differences in behaviour are based on different perceptions, prior knowledge, memories, and any personal connection to the museum or heritage (Dick 2000; Hooper-Greenhill 2007; Mason 2018) particularly in places of conflict. For example, a Cypriot or Turkish visitor may have differing attitudes and feelings towards a site in Turkish-Cypriot area, compared to somebody who comes from somewhere else in the world. With this in mind, Holocaust sites focusing on Nazi atrocities, for example, might intend to foster support for human rights and peace but can also engender a hatred for ethnic Germans in general among some visitors. However, Watson (2015:284) notes that there are times where people can develop behaviours influenced by emotional responses that “stand outside expected cultural and societal norms”. Stearns and Stearns (1985:813 after Kleinginna and Kleinginna 1981:354-359) explain further the complexity of how emotions work:

“Emotion is engendered by a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated through neural and/or hormonal systems, which gives rise to feelings (affective experiences as of pleasure or displeasure) and also general cognitive processes toward appraising the experience; emotions in this sense lead to physiological adjustments to the conditions that aroused response, and often to expressive and adaptive behaviour.”

Thus, it is accepted that cognition and memory are reliant on emotion. The belief that emotional responses impact the way we behave and make decisions is central to this research, as is the idea that we are influenced by our cultural background, social role and beliefs and prior experiences, given that some emotional experiences are learned (Panksepp and Biven 2012). Smith (2020:53) also highlights that not everyone can be affected by the same way or in the same intensity. To be affected by heritage, object, ideas or narratives are required for one to have knowledge about the subject matter, but they are also needed to make the visitor care. Jost (2006) explains that caring is mediated by cultural and social context, ideology motives and political beliefs and values.

Therefore, each of us understands the world around us in a way that is useful for us, but not true in an objective sense. For example, my perceptions are influenced by the fact that I am a woman, Greek, culturally Christian, and a PhD researcher. These ideas become central and provide useful explanation when it comes to understanding, interpreting and analysing certain responses, ideas and attitudes within the museum. While theorists stress that emotions are social, the biological aspects of emotion are also important to remember. Wetherell (2012:62) notes that affect and emotion are part of a highly complex interplay of autonomic bodily responses (such as sweating, trembling, blushing), other body actions (such as, approaching or avoiding) as well as subjective feelings and cognitive processing. Notably, biological responses are understood and shaped within a socio-cultural context (Mesquita and Albert 2007:487) and thus, it is important to acknowledge that emotions may be “understood as relational and social events that are discursively mediated, and which work to underpin and influence meaning-making” (Wetherall 2012:74). Qualitative research is also suitable here as it allows individuals to consider and process some of these body actions through discussion with researcher (Mason 2002).

3.4 THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS AND THEIR MEANINGS IN HISTORY

Based on the argument that emotions are socially and culturally constructed, academics have tried to develop particular theories and terminology to describe and analyse the history and role of emotions in different periods. In this section, I will present the theoretical framework and terminology that is used to describe emotional attitudes, followed by a discussion regarding how emotions, ideas and values around the Holocaust in Britain have changed over years, which allows us to rethink how and why individuals react and respond to the museum's emotional narratives in the way they do. According to Reddy (2001 in Plamber 2010:238), emotions "might provide a new underlying structure through which all these complex meanings we had discovered and researched became personal". Stearns introduced the term *emotionology* to describe emotional codes that define a time and place. According to Stearns and Stearns, *emotionology* can be defined as "the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression and ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct" (1985:813). Reddy (2001:81-100) uses the term "*emotives*" to describe the complexity of emotional reactions which are "managerial and exploratory". Rosenwein (2002, 2010) further introduces the idea of "*emotional communities*".

The definition suggests that any social group that shares the same interests and goals can be defined as an emotional community. Notably, not all members of a community have common emotional reactions, nor can different emotional communities share the same values and assessments (Rosenwein 2002). Emotional communities are seen the same as social communities but in that case, researchers seek to interpret "the evaluations that they make about other emotions" and the ways in which they express, encourage, and regulate emotional reactions (Rosenwein 2010:35). The concept of *emotional communities* enables us to understand how specific factors such as gender, class, age, and community influence peoples' emotional responses within museum space. Emotional communities' concept can be prominent in this study as Rosenwein (2010:11) notes this "will help

us understand how people articulated, understood, and represented how they felt. This, in fact, is about all we can know about anyone's feelings apart from our own".

Particularly useful in understanding the impact of emotions in engagement with difficult heritage is Reddy's (2001) concept of an *emotional regime*. Reddy (2001) defines an *emotional regime* as emotions/emotional styles, expressions, and practices linked to a specific time and place in the past, which impacted those who lived at that time. Cultural theorists talk about different emotional styles such as *feeling rules* (Hochschild 1983). These are emotional expressions within a community that describe power relations. *Feeling rules* refer to "norms by which people are supposed to shape their emotional expression and react to the expression of others" (Stearns 1994:2). Thus, these are important elements to understand why individuals react and respond emotionally in the way they do within museum space. For example, the museum and heritage within particular cultural and social-political settings set rules for "appropriate" emotional management. These rules interact with personal and subjective emotional experiences highlighting the linkage between emotion and cognition. These emotional expressions are not stable as they are mediated by values, goals, assessments, and vocabularies which can change over time (Rosenwein 2002).

Emotional regimes of the Holocaust can be complex as the Holocaust involves different roles, actions and feelings of different groups of individuals (perpetrators, victims, bystanders and liberators). For instance, after the war, "the perpetrators wanted the world not to know. The bystanders wanted the world not to know that they knew. The victims wanted the world to know. Survivors want the story to be told and the lessons from the Holocaust to be taught" (Weinberg and Elieli 2010:17). In an era of multiculturalism, immigration and anti-racism, lessons from the Holocaust were utilized in specific ways, becoming prominent and meaningful for contemporary society; it is considered a "lesson" to understanding human nature and behaviour in the modern world, and survivors' testimonies have played a significant role in this, especially in museum representation of the Holocaust. As the Holocaust becomes more distant and survivors are disappearing faster, the need for

remembrance and commemoration is more vital, as the values, needs and goals of society have changed. In Britain, the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp is considered to be a positive link between Britain and the Holocaust, evoking feelings of pride and heroism (Petersen 2010; Kushner 2017). Kushner (2017:366) comments that for the Britain at that time, there was a need not only to communicate its role as liberator of the camps (Belsen, Dachau and Buchenwald), “but also to ensure that the “right” message was conveyed to the public from these traumatizing disclosures.” As emotions are socially and culturally shaped, this requires considering the ways in which emotions are managed and regulated by different societies and individuals. This plays an important role on the implications of the development of interpretative strategies within the museum space, and allows us to rethink how and why visitors used museum/heritage. Furthermore, drawing on collective memory studies, Poria (2007:95) argues that “individuals are not interested in presenting or watching actions taken by “one’s tribe,” when such actions evoke feelings of shame”. Therefore, certain groups can be interested in only observing, or ignoring specific aspects of the past.

Looking back in the early years after the war, in the UK there was no desire to focus on any kind of suffering including the bombing of civilians in the Second World War (Kushner 2001). This contributed the absence of oral testimonies from the survivors’, due to the difficulty of confronting the trauma of their suffering (Kushner 2001). But most importantly, Kushner (2001) explains that it was the unease of the audience when listening to those stories, that discouraged survivors from talking about their experiences in public. Victims, and particularly Jewish ones, were also ignored by the media representation in Britain and very little information was known about their identity and background (Kushner 2010:22, 2017). The emotional regimes of the past might have led to the unwillingness to embrace victims' stories of the Holocaust in years right after the war, whereas nowadays the acceptance of the Holocaust has allowed a different way of representation and interpretation of this period of history and its lessons (Chapter 4); in addition, certain emotions and actions have been evoked within the British context where the research took place (Chapter 7).

Three decades after the war, Britain's involvement in terms of commemoration and pedagogy was still absent (Kushner 2017). It was in the period between 1970s and 1990s that Britain's role in understanding and responding practically to the Holocaust slowly showed signs of a gradual change. A series of museums and exhibitions, along with oral and video projects with interviews of survivors were developed to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, and promote the important lessons of the Holocaust (Kushner 2017:371). Oral testimonies of survivors became a core element within museum representation, indicating what Nazis did besides serving as evidence to prove that these atrocities happened (Douglas 1998:63). Testimonies have been highly powerful, personal, and emotional stories, that allow visitors to empathise with others at different levels and bring history and memory together, enabling us to see the past through the eyes of those living at the time (Simon 2014). Personal stories of victims and survivors triggered a range of emotions such as empathy, sadness, surprise, shock, hope and awe. The oral testimonies shed light on human perspectives on the war and its atrocities, revealing how individuals felt back then as well as their memories, stories and experiences. But, does the empathetic identification with the victims help visitors to understand and engage effectively with the Holocaust? Kushner (2010:91-93) discusses the role of testimonies in the Holocaust exhibition in IWM and argues that Holocaust exhibitions can be overwhelming because of the vast use of artefacts, oral testimonies, images and films, thus leaving little room for self-reflection and deeper engagement for visitor, something that was not indicated in this study.

Another example of Britain's new approach toward Holocaust memory was in 1998, when the Holocaust Educational Trust released a document entitled *Britain and the Holocaust* which emphasized that “the Holocaust is a part of British History” and pointed out that there was still no sufficient knowledge of either the exact events of the time or the country's relationship to that historical landmark (Kushner 2017:377). This accords with the NHCM's board mission statement, where they aim to make the experience of the Holocaust less distant, promote an understanding, and engage British people with the Holocaust as the relationship between Britain

and the Holocaust in the past offered little opportunities for engagement with the Holocaust history.

In recent years, Britain's relationship with the Holocaust has begun to change and this was marked by the commemoration event of the 70 years of the liberation of Auschwitz that took place in Britain in 2015. As Kushner (2017:371) explains, “it was a way of establishing a legacy of compassion, of doing right” and “ensuring that the memory and the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten lies at the heart of Britain's values as a nation”¹⁷ (Davis 2014:9 in Kushner 2017:371). It also links Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust with feelings of pride and heroism, emphasising the role of Britain in the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen camp, as well as providing homes for thousands of survivors, refugees and children during and after the war (Kushner 2017). Despite all the efforts from different media to facilitate the Holocaust consciousness among the post generations, understanding Britain's response to the Holocaust is still limited. Notably, little knowledge about the Holocaust becomes apparent from the fact that Kindertransport was celebrated in British society and politics only recently, according to Kushner (2017:377). However, Kindertransport continues to play an important role within politics in Britain nowadays by linking the British past with the present.¹⁸

The official British response to the Holocaust can be summarised and understood by the statement of MP, Ian Austin:

“Whilst Britain could have done more, no one can deny that when other European countries were rounding up their Jews and putting them on trains to concentration camps, Britain provided a safe haven for tens of thousands of refugees. In 1941, with Europe overrun and America not yet in the war, just one

¹⁷ Britain's Promise to Remember, reported by Mick Davis from the first meeting of the Holocaust Commission in January 2014 (Kushner 2017:371).

¹⁸ In 2015, Kindertransport was used to criticise recent refugee policy, however, the association of these two immigration events from the past and present was considered “in appropriate” (Kushner 2017:377)

country - Britain - soldiered on, against all odds, fighting not just for our freedom, but for the world's liberty, too{..} This period defines Britain and what it is to be British" (Davis 2014:23).

The statement highlights the desire to link Britain's role and response in relation to the Holocaust to values of democracy, fairness and tolerance. It reflects a relationship that is defined by the fact that it was used to demonstrate the moral victory of Britain as the nation that stood up to the perpetrators of this atrocity.

The emotions that visitors feel and express in the process of experiencing, affect how historical narrative within museums is understood and, in turn, how a person makes sense of their moral framework towards the present and the future based on it (Watson 2015). In this light, Holocaust coverage in the media has also influenced the way the past is remembered and interpreted both inside and outside museum in British context, which is an important dimension to understand the visitors' current emotional responses. The first images of the Holocaust seen on British shores after the end of the war came predominantly from liberated concentration camps (those images that are nowadays widely recognizable and have been used ever since to define what happened during the Holocaust). Kushner (2017) notes that these pictures, especially those showing Belsen Camp, evoked intense emotional responses that deeply affected British people. They were initially utilised to shock the public since the crimes committed and the horrors of the war elicited negative feelings for the perpetrators rather than create feelings of empathy for the victims (Kushner 2010:84). Film representations of Belsen began to shed light onto the Jewish persecution, notably with feelings of sympathy being expressed toward children, who had suffered in the concentration camps¹⁹ (Kushner 2017:368). Whilst the memory of the Holocaust is also closely linked with photographic representation

¹⁹ The Holocaust could be seen as one of a series of dreadful events in World War Two in which everyone suffered in some way. It was only later that the Holocaust became elevated above all other forms of suffering, as it became increasingly recognised as genocide.

of real people and places, it does lead to the question of how do the visitors engage with these images when they are represented within the museum.

However, the Holocaust is often associated with negative feelings such as horror, anger and sadness. In May 1995, the 50th anniversary of VE day was exuberantly celebrated in Britain; with media such as television only showing a few programmes related to the Holocaust. For example, the *Genocide* and the *Bringing the Holocaust Home* programmes presented a more critical response of Britain to Jewish persecutions, including some moral aspects of the role of Britain towards the Holocaust and influencing the historical knowledge of the post-war generations about Holocaust history and memory (Petersen 2010). Petersen (2010), explains that this was due to the belief that the representation of Holocaust related events would induce negative feelings which would disturb the celebratory nature of the VE day. Even though television channels included some Holocaust-related themes, the experiences of the Holocaust victims were not prominent in these programmes, nor was enough attention given to moral aspects of Britain's role during the Holocaust (Petersen 2010). Globally, there was and still is a profound need to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, and educate present and future generations. The awareness and interest of the Holocaust in the UK contributed not only to the Holocaust official commemoration day, and the representation of it as a permanent exhibition in the IMW, but also placed Holocaust history into the national teaching curriculum 1991 (Kushner 2017).

Our interpretation of the past is associated with the idea of who we are, or who we are not. Emotions and ideas of self and others are not only subjective and constructed, but can also be influenced. Emotions are regulated by politicians, the media, and by community activism. Public depiction of the past is designed to appeal towards a range of emotions embedded within the viewer or participants, from sympathy or empathy with the victims, to pride, while we are also required to show intellectual understanding. These common responses can define the communality and the sense of cohesiveness of a group or they can reinforce alienation. Collective memory is the events that groups of people choose to remember and represent, or

forgot. Therefore, the history of the Holocaust's remembrance in the UK is relevant to this thesis, as it helps the researcher further understanding how British people think and feel about the past (historical consciousness) when examining the emotional responses of visitors are examined.

3.5 EMOTIVE HERITAGE AND IDENTITY

Scholars have pointed out the importance of identity in relation to the level of engagement and historical understanding of the past within cultural institutions (Barton and McCully 2005; Peck 2010). In this section, I will address the role of identity work in reference to historical consciousness and how past is used in the present by individuals. The concept of identity is central to this thesis to examine and understand what visitors were doing during their museum visit based on their own actions, assumptions, ideas and reflections and what this experience meant for them. In particular, the ways that individuals used the museum to validate their sense of personal identity through personal memories and experiences, but also by their personal links associated with political and social values, became pivotal in my analysis of not only how past and present are understood but also the work that museum/heritage does.

Rounds (2004), explains that we use personal narratives to get a sense of who we are reflecting to our memories and experiences during museum visit, and points out that the value of the outcome of the museum experience is linked with discovering and maintaining our identity. Identity, has also been studied as a means of understanding the reasons and motivations of a museum visit, or the ways that visitors do or do not engage as soon as they arrive at a museum, (Leinhardt et al. 2002; Rounds 2004). Other studies describe identity as something that a visitor can "discover" in a museum (Paris and Mercer 2004). Some authors have discussed the relationship between national identity and history, noting that museums are one of the places that present ideas of the nation/nationalism (Knell 2011; Mason 2007), providing possibilities of "knowing the nation" (Mason 2007: 84, 90). Although this

thesis doesn't focus on national identity, it does recognize its importance in peoples' historical understanding. Furthermore, a number of scholars have discussed the importance of identity throughout the learning process (Vygotsky 1978; Lave and Wenger 1991), empathising that whereas visitors seek experiences that are emotionally and intellectually meaningful and valuable for their lives, they avoid others unrelated to their experiences (Falk 2009, 2013).

The idea of having museum and heritage sites to both represent and facilitate expressions of identity is also stressed by museum scholars (Macdonald 2013, Smith 2020). For example, Smith (2020) offers a nuanced understanding of the consequences of the links between heritage and identity. She observed that museum visitors may seek validation of their own identity or understanding another's identity and historical and contemporary social experience. Moreover, one of her core findings underpins the idea that individuals affirmed and reinforced their knowledge, values, ideas, and personal and national identity during their museum visit. Hence, identity is described as an important standpoint from which individuals and groups can offer "recognition to others or resolve to ignore and thus deny the claims of others", according to Smith (2020: 49). Thus, heritage is a process in which meanings are negotiated, remade or affirmed, and identities can be re-constructed. Smith (2020), also points out that since heritage is linked in various ways to the expression of identity, sense of place and belonging, and that identity can stimulate emotional responses, then heritage can be also emotive, as seen in chapter 6 and 7.

Furthermore, the academic debate in relation to historical consciousness and social identity theory sheds light on the impact of identity, and particularly, on whether social identity impedes or not on our historical understanding. Foster (2001), claims that the historical perspective taking approach should not involve emotional identification or imagination; and Wineburg et al. (2007) indicates how current emotional judgmental attitudes limit historical consciousness. In this light, social cognition theory assumes that cognition is motivated and constrained by identity, and mechanisms related to it (Fiske and Taylor 2008). Moreover, social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), considers us not only as individuals but also as members of a group, meaning that social comparison can be easily developed among

individuals. Such a comparison enables maintaining what is termed as “positive identity” - a feeling that “we” are at least as good (if not better) than “they” are (Tajfel and Turner 1986). However, it is also worth exploring a different approach on this. A number of researchers in history education studies (Barton and McCully 2005; Endacott 2010; Goldberg 2013), claim that socially and emotionally charged issues can foster one’s interest and promote engagement beyond our identity group. But, Goldberg’s study at a desegregated school situated in a low socioeconomic status neighbourhood of an Israeli city (with participants being descendants of Jews from Western, and Asian countries), showed that students mainly tended to empathise with specific characters who belonged to their own group, with the “unconscious assumption that shared identity means shared feelings” (2013:56).

Additionally, exploring oneself is key to provide a form of identity motivation for the museum visit, according to Falk (2009,2013). He explains that in the museum experience, “learning is (...) often strongly motivated by the needs of identity formation and reinforcement (...) The goal is not mastery in the traditional sense, but rather to provide the individual with a feeling of personal competence” (Falk2009:61). In this context, if museums are about identity validation and reinforcement, there is a need to look closely at how these experiences work within and outside the museum. According to Rounds (2006:146), “knowledge from curiosity-driven learning has the advantage that it can slip into our long-term memory without leaving much awake that might disturb our current identity, because we see it as interesting but inconsequential, we usually don’t bother to follow its trail to implications that might challenge identity”. In other words, curiosity can contribute more to our own identity exploration, rather to our willingness for deeper understanding of ourselves and in turn to others.

In relation to the potential impact of museum narratives to visitors' understanding and attitude, Rounds (2006) notes that existing interest and knowledge may trigger progression, rather than alert one to take an action. She also explains that before any change occurs, there is a need for one to imagine it. In the same vein, Halpern (2009:129) talks about the relationship between empathy and curiosity, and explains

that “empathy depends on engaged curiosity about peoples’ distinct experiences, and without genuine curiosity, it becomes easy to mistakenly equate one's own experiences with those others”. In other words, if visitors are not genuinely curious or interested in stories of others, perhaps, they would have been unlikely to take part in difficult processes to engage with the past. Due to the intention of this study being to examine the ways in which emotion facilitates how the museum is used by visitors, it is of the upmost importance to consider what skills or ways of engaging or disengaging, visitors use to construct their meanings.

3.6 MEMORY AND EMOTION

The literature has affirmed that remembering is one of the key phenomena that takes place in the museum (Crane 1997; Kavanagh 2000; Watson 2010; Arnold-de Simine 2013). In this thesis, memory is seen as a means to engage with the past in the present, rather than as a ‘learning metric’. Memories are reconstructions in the mind and are useful when they can serve present needs. Hence, in both case studies the emphasis was given to what kind of memories were prompted, and how.

Over the last decades, there has been an increasing interest in memory, both within academia and society, particularly, in western societies which seem to become increasingly interested in engaging with the past through individual and collective memory. This growing attention is linked with the fear of forgetting or “social amnesia”, as Arnold de Simine (2013:14) named it. Pierre Nora’s (1989:7) terms ‘lieux dememoire’ (places of memory), refers to today's society that has been disconnected from its past and “traditions are not ‘organically’ passed on, but have to be ‘artificially’ recreated to be remembered”, for example, through the representation of the past memory within museums or memorials. In this light, memory is distinguished from inauthentic forms of memory such as “prosthetic, second-hand, mediated or virtual memories, trivial or nostalgic memories, or simply memory scenarios whose veracity or relationship to the real is dubious” (Arnold de Simine 2013:14). On the other hand, Sigmund Freud, and Walter Benjamin were

interested in involuntary and embodied forms of memory, as they were considered to be more authentic. Involuntary memory is not experienced consciously, but often emerged unnoticeably in everyday sensations. It is opposed to voluntary memory which is based on cognitive form of memory based on knowledge and remembered facts. These memory concepts can be applied to the theories of trauma and the concept of deep memory (Faye 2001:526). Cathy Caruth's (1995:153) research supports the idea that traumatic event is 'engraved' on the mind and these traces that memory leaves can be passed on to future generations.

Neuroscientists also note that memory is a process of re-creation, which can be retrieved and reproduced. Thus, memory is a mean through which individuals and society as a whole re-construct the relationship with the past, based on the needs of the present (Munslow 2007). So, we choose to remember past events that are relevant to us, and that way they become memorable whereas other events are simply forgotten, temporally suspended in our minds or deliberately ignored. This can also indicate how visitors create and recall memories during and after the museum experience. Moreover, according to contemporary neurophysiologists, memory is not (only) a capacity to retrieve stored information, but also it relies on the imagination abilities of the imagination (Loftus 1995:47). Keightley and Pickering (2012) explain the interconnection between remembering and imagination through the idea of mnemonic imagination, and argue that remembering is a process of "reassessing past experience while imagination is what animates the material on which remembering draws" (in Smith 2015:16). Remembering and imagination, thus, are vital in understanding the significance or value of the past for the present and future (Keightley and Pickering 2012: 8), as well as having been important elements that influence the museum experience of this study.²⁰

In this light, Campbell (2006) describes imagination as a key factor which enables individuals to emotionally engage with the past in the museums' exhibitions, as well

²⁰ See chapter 6

as to control the level of the emotional experience. Emotional engagement also plays a significant role in determining how an event is experienced as meaningful, and how it is remembered (Falk 2013). From this perspective, objects, images and testimonies in museums carry cultural memories, and have the capacity to invoke emotional engagement with the past (Witcomb 2007). Bagnall (2003), maintains that visitors do not randomly choose museum media and material to engage with, but they are selected based on their experience and personal biographies. Hence, it is important to understand the way in which visitors behave, use, and relate to the memories. Kavanagh (2000) suggests that visitors engage emotionally in the museum by bringing with them personal or collective memories. Memory (personal or collective) is also constructed emotionally (Wertsch 2002), particularly when it comes to traumatic or contested versions of events that form part of a group's sense of identity (Tint 2010:246). Emotions manage and frame memories, and memories change and are understood through the process of remembering, forgetting or imagining, in which the past can become meaningful in different ways and new meanings can be created in the present (Wertsch 2002). Emotions facilitate not only remembering and forgetting, but also judgments (Morton 2002), and as they engage with cognition they allow us to negotiate, address, reevaluate or reject meanings of the past.

In the case of the Holocaust, this sensitive topic that evokes different meanings and memories, and strong emotional responses to different individuals (Jewish visitors, non-Jewish visitors, other Holocaust victims or people related to other Holocaust victims). In this type of engagement, Campbell's (2006) works recognize the importance of imagination to allow individuals to achieve this emotional engagement and control. Imagination is also central "to the creative production of meaning about the past, present and future" (Keightley and Pickering 2012: 7). However, for emotion to allow an understanding the past and its meaning in the present, it must engage emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is "the skill to first recognise an emotional response and then to utilise that response in making judgements" (Illouz 2007: 65). In order to understand and explore how individuals create meaning of the past for the present, it is important to acknowledge the

complex relationship between reason/cognition, affect/emotion and memory. From this perspective, engagement not only may vary among visitors, but is also conceived as having significant emotional and imaginative complexities.

3.7 EMPATHY IN MUSEUM STUDIES

Similarly, the concept of deep empathy that moves from simply “I feel sad” for another, is vital in this study as it can inform the level of emotional engagement. Such expressions of emotions require audiences to think beyond their own responses to the situation presented to them and to engage in a form of emotional empathy. Furthermore, empathy has been identified as an important emotion for triggering a response that engages the imagination in such a way as to evoke critical thoughts (Witcomb 2013b, 2015; Smith 2014). Hence, empathy and imagination are equally important elements of museum experience, that provide intellectual and emotional encounters with the past within museums, memorials centres and heritage institutions, however, this study will focus on the impact of empathetic engagement on museum experience with the painful past.

After reading and engaging with some of ideas and concepts that were analysed and discussed in the following sections, I became particularly interested in the area of empathy and its potential effect. Especially, with regard to how people understand the past by empathizing with others. In this section, I will discuss the power of emotions within museum/heritage and the different levels of emotional engagement that can take place by drawing over debates of empathetic identification. The concept of empathy has been of increased focus in memory studies, specifically when witnessing and trauma, (Arnold-de Simine 2013), and the possibilities of empathy in post memory (Hirsch 2001) and secondary witnessing (LaCapra 2001). It is believed that the memory, imagination and emotions are crucial to the creation of empathy (Tani et al. 2014). Curatorial strategies that trigger the visitors' imagination and encourage empathetic identifications have been rather popular, especially within difficult exhibitions that represent emotionally charged topics like wars,

slavery, immigration, ethnic conflicts and forgotten or hidden histories (Bagnall 2003; Witcomb 2012, 2013, 2014; Trofanenko 2014).

Holocaust museums are complex performance sites, with variety of roles, providing different forms of visitor engagement, depending on the context. Some of them, such as the two case studies institutions, do not simply seek to represent the past for educational purposes and to commemorate it, but also to create a space for critical reflection that might lead to action and social responsibility beyond the institution. This is based on the belief that the representation of past atrocities will link these past events to the present social life (Simon 2014), encourage visitors to respond and develop a meaningful relationship between the past and the present and the future. In order to do that, they invite visitors to become emotionally involved with the past and to stimulate within themselves empathetic moments with the people living then, allowing visitors to get a sense of being there - to feel what happened in the past. Often, these practices consciously or unconsciously, evoke emotional responses that attempt to stimulate empathy and moral engagement with historical events, and the characters portrayed within an exhibition (Smith 2015; de Bruijn 2014). At present, the research aims to contribute to this growing area, in order to enhance our understanding of how visitors engage with difficult pasts by deconstructing and problematizing the idea of empathy and using this concept in a specific way. This research focuses on empathy rather than on imagination itself, thus it is essential to clearly present what is perceived as imagination and empathy, within this thesis.

The definition and consequent the analysis of empathy, imagination, and emotions, can be a challenging process, as they involve several disciplinary fields, which deal with human behaviour, thinking and feeling as a result of which, there is often an overlapping of ideas. A wide range of the academic research from psychology, philosophy, and recently, history (Cocking and Murray 1991; Reddy 2001; Coplan and Goldie 2011; Hogan 2011; Langdon and Mackenzie 2012a), have studied the concept of empathy, imagination and emotion. In museum studies literature, Bruce Craig talked about imagination within historical sites (2007); Chappell (1989) points out

the effect of nostalgia and remembering on producing powerful emotions and memorable experiences, and Bagnall's (2003) visitor studies focused on the connection between emotions and imagination at history museums. Imagination is perceived as a process of visualization of how the past would be, or how we think it could have been. Thus, people develop an understanding about past experience based on their already established knowledge and idea, or by reconciling what they do not know. During this process, memory is central in triggering imagination. Therefore, imagination here is understood both as a "capacity for picturing things (image-making) that are somehow absent or unknown, and as a creative force of its own with power of synthesis, to bring things together in a new way" (Cocking and Murray 1991: vii–xiii). This concept appeared to be an important dimension of the museum visit, as it showed how visitors combined and translated what they see in the exhibitions with what already know or not in order to construct meanings.

With respect to empathy, it can also be understood as a form of imagination or fantasy, but it focuses on experiencing others' lives and situations through their eyes or by putting oneself in someone else's shoes. Empathy can be often confused with the ideas of sympathy, concern, or solidarity, that involves more than motivation to assist the other person (Eisenberg 2000). From a museum perspective, Jennings (2013b) defines empathy as, "the experience of feeling with and not just for another," and notes that this required, "a sense of self that can dare to be open to the experience of others." Jennings also mentions that "the idea of experiencing others' feelings without them being fully and explicitly communicated (knowing without being told)" (Jennings 2013a). In this sense, empathy requires a mix of cognitive, and affective skills that allow access to another's situation. Neumann (2015:257), recognizes that empathy consisted of three types, "an inductive affective (emotional), a cognitive evaluative (knowing) process that allows the individual to experience feelings, and understand the given situation of another" and "fundamental emotional and motivational component that facilitates sympathy and prosocial behaviour (compassionate)." In the context of museums, empathy is seen as ethically the responsible way to represent war, genocide and suffering, as well as a mean of remembering, understanding and respecting differences and motivating

altruistic behaviour. Historical empathy entails the reconstruction of people's perspectives and requires an understanding of the historical context that historical characters lived in a certain time and place by taking into consideration motives, beliefs and emotions that influenced the way they acted (Endacott and Brooks 2013). Here, empathy is used to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how museum visitors engage in the stories and experiences of Holocaust victims within the case studies. It was also deemed as a way of managing their emotions, which were expressed in different ways by the visitors.²¹

Scholars (Fitzgerald and Goldie 2011; Case, Oaten and Stevenson 2011) have also suggested a connection between empathy and moral judgment, and moral behaviour. However, there is also a lot of scepticism about the limits of empathy. The main concern lies in the difficulty in creating empathy, when the subject and object have not experienced similar situations or emotions. From this perspective, recent empathy studies distinguish between lower levels of empathy or cold empathy, as a more cognitive form of empathetic response - "an unconscious reaction which essentially mirrors another person's emotions" and higher levels of empathy or hot empathy which requires emotional and affective engagement such as "imaginative investment and perspective shifting" (Coplan and Goldie 2011: XXXIII; Hawes and Dadds 2012:47). In other words, in the first case (cold empathy) one projects his/her own emotion to another person while in the second (hot empathy) similar emotional state is reproduced or re-enacted. In both cases, we can relate to others, as "a clear self-other-differentiation prevents a fusing between the subject and the object of empathy (Coplan et al. 2011:6) while, at the same time, we share in others' experience in a way bridges the gap between our experiences (Coplan et al. 2011:16). In this context, Smith (2020: 46) notes that shallow empathy may impede an understanding about others, and "may indeed only work to make those from dominant groups 'feel better' and more secure in their own identities." Whereas, hot empathy, which is linked to imagination informs an understanding of

²¹ See Chapter 6

difference and diversity (Clohesy 2013: 56), and enables us to imagine “alternative futures and presents” where social justice is addressed (Johnson 2005: 42). The concept of cold and hot empathy played a key role in this research, in my effort to investigate the different levels of visitors’ empathetic engagement and its impact on visitors’ thinking and feeling about the past and present (Chapter 7).

Within the field of history and museum education, it has been also emphasised that emotional engagement within museums stimulated young people’s historical understanding, by linking the past to the present (Spalding 2012). However, scholars (Jenkins 2011; Seixas and Morton 2013) have criticised the ability of empathic identifications to provide in-depth historical reflection and understanding of the meaning of the past in the present, but without offering evidence. As it has been agreed by various researchers, the way that individuals engage and understand the past depends on their socio-cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds (Smith 2011; Mason 2018). From that position, Barton and McCully (2012) note, based on their empirical evidence, that students’ affective engagement with sensitive history can impede their historical understanding by finding it difficult to move away from their own positions and engage with perspectives other than their own, especially when the histories elicit negative emotions and strong moral responses (Savenije, van Boxtel and Grever 2014a). Therefore, emotional engagement can at times hinder the reasoning but “conversely too much abstract rationality can likewise undermine sound reasoning” (Ahmed 2004; Damasio 2006; Mercer 2010; Wetherell 2012; Smith 2015:8).

Furthermore, according to Hoffman (1984), a “focus on self” type of empathy that takes place when one experiences similar events and emotions with someone from the past, can lead one to sympathise more and miss the opportunity to deeply connect with others. He explains that any response that includes “focus on self” is particularly susceptible to “egoistic drift”. “Egoistic drift” is the phenomenon that can occur when “one focuses too intently on the self, and loses sight of the other’s condition” (Hoffman 1984:119). Empathy elicitation might engender further opposite results when characters experienced traumatic situations, and one chooses

to sympathise rather than to empathise. In other words, when we sympathise with others we feel *for* them, rather than *with* them, in that way we tried to regulate and protect our feelings of sorrow or compassion on another person instead of trying to understand them (Eisenberg 2000). Recently, emphasis has been given to the cognitive aspects of empathy, and on the premise that reasoning, cognition and memory are inseparable to emotion (Ahmed 2004; Damasio 2006; Mercer 2010; Wetherell 2012). This emotional involvement may encourage visitors' curiosity and interest in engaging with others and responding to the meanings of the events of the past and present (Barton and Levstik 2004). This research used the concept of historical empathy to highlight the interaction between the cognitive and emotional dimension of the museum experience, and explored its impact on the ways people contextualise the past. Therefore, it is essential for this thesis to understand and explore the ways in which both cognitive and emotional engagement with the past emerges out of the relationship between the museum and its visitors.

According to educationalists Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby (1987:62-88), historical empathy is not simply about sharing the feelings of people in the past. But most importantly acquiring knowledge, based on evidence about how people in the past saw, thought, felt and made decisions, and why they acted in a particular way within a specific historical and social context. In this thesis, empathy is perceived as both a feeling and understanding, with and for another's situation that may offer critical thinking about the past as well as a motive for action. The analysis of the museum visitors' temporary emotional engagement with others is based on a sociocultural and contextual approach, according to Falk and Dierking (2013). Studies showed that this process of engagement is shaped by the individuals' background and is informed by knowledge, beliefs, emotions, and a willingness to engage with the others" (Smith 2011; Endacott and Brooks 2013; Savenije and de Bruijn 2017:833).

Nonetheless, there are also some considerations about the role of empathy in the museum context. For example, Bonnell and Simon warn that "museums which aim to engage visitors emotionally and elicit empathy have unrealistic expectations of their visitors' attention, depth of involvement and faculties" (2007:67); Harel and

Kogut (2015) argue that people who are in a hot empathy state (those experiencing a similar emotional situation to another person or use their imagination to emotionally be engaged with others) were more capable of feeling empathy than those in a cold state (those not experiencing a similar emotional state) who dissociate themselves from other feelings; and Arnold-de-Simine (2013) stresses that empathy can provide insights into the lives of others but “one may identify with the other to the extent of losing oneself, and, as a result, fail to grasp the implication of one’s difference from others”.

Considering the interest in museums to act as agents of social change, empathy may find a practical application in engaging visitors with social justice and equality related issues. Studies have shown connections between empathy, moral behaviour, and moral development (Batson 2011). We could see another as different, and still act empathetically even had we not experienced their needs (Batson 2011). Another study revealed that empathy could enhance positive attitudes and actions towards stigmatized groups (Batson et al. 1997b). Still, empathy can have its own limitation. Sontag (2004) points out that we can never completely imagine or understand how someone else felt. Empathy has also been discussed as a source for justice, Hoffman (2000:228-9), in particular, notes that “while empathy may not make a structural contribution to justice, it may provide the motive to rectify violations of justice to others”. As this study explores the impact of emotions on visitors' engagement with sensitive pasts, and questions whether such approaches can motivate a change or action. Based on the above assumption, empathetic engagement can be an important element in a museum context, as it goes beyond simple feelings and evokes emotions which potentially encourage action in relation to the museum’s social role in prompting a social responsibility in the future. However, the impact of empathy on different individuals in museums is still unknown.

3.8 REGULATING EMOTIONS

Nowadays, the majority of Holocaust museums, such as the JM and NHCM, present narratives that aim to engage their audience with past, through survivors' personal stories, objects and experiences, and their reflection of present lives of individuals from these communities. However, different individuals visiting the same site can either express or regulate different kind of emotions. "Emotion regulation" describes a person's ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience as well as the ways in which societies determine emotional responses to national events such as remembrance of war (Orther et al.2018; Schindler and Querengasser 2018). People unconsciously use emotion regulation strategies to cope with difficult situations many times throughout each day. For example, shifting attention away from an unpleasant event to a neutral or even positive thought can provide quick relief from negative affective states. It has been previously discussed that emotions are socially and culturally constructed. It is important to consider the ways in which emotions can be consciously managed and regulated. As museums are sites of emotional expression and regulation, it is important to delve into how and why emotions are produced, and how meanings and the values associated with these emotions are expressed by visitors. Notably, people have, and seek emotional responses, but they can also choose where and how they express themselves, and how they use these emotional responses (Smith 2015). For example, individuals can make the decision to visit a museum and they can either express, avoid, or suppress their emotions toward narratives, objects, people or places (Mesquita and Albert 2007:491, Watson 2015). To great degree, these reactions are influenced by personal, social, cultural and political backgrounds, and by their ability to use emotions and to engage in emotional work (also referred to as emotional intelligence) (Mayer et al. 2008).

For the purpose of this research, attention was drawn not only to the examining of emotions themselves, but also in relation to each individual, and the overall impact of emotional engagement on the visitors' understanding and attitude. Following the shift in contemporary societies to understand the role of emotion and affect in

human behaviour and experience, scholars have begun to explore how emotions and affect are used by both museums and visitors (Gregory and Witcomb 2007; Macdonald and Basu 2007; Dudley 2010; Witcomb 2013a, 2013b). The next sections will provide an outline of influential studies and theories about how emotions are utilised within curatorial practices in difficult exhibitions, and the potential impact of emotional engagement.

3.9 EMOTIONS AND MUSEUMS: THINKING THROUGH EMOTIONS

Emotions are present in every aspect of the museum experience: in the interactions between visitors, as they move around discussing exhibitions' narratives. Visitors talk about museum displays that they are enjoying, finding interesting, or they dislike. Emotions are also developed during the visitors' engagement with museum objects, and their narratives. In addition, emotions also exist behind-the-scenes, where museum staff look after museum objects and make decisions about how to represent the past. Museum and heritage sites are used by individuals for many reasons: as places to have a day out to express and experience emotions, as spaces to search and connect with their family past and recall memories, to seek an educational experience, to remember, to affirm and reflect social, political, collective and personal values, to reinforce what they already know and feel and to learn more about themselves, other cultures and social group (Smith 2015, see also chapter 6&7).

Crang and Tolia-Kelly (2010) emphasize that what is felt at heritage sites and museums is often ignored, and the emotional experiences triggered by curatorial strategies can reveal unexpected reactions. However, there are exceptions that explore visitors' emotional experiences, their meanings and the effect on individuals (Bagnall 2003; Gregory and Witcomb 2007; Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010; Smith 2011, 2015; Witcomb 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Watson 2015; Mason 2018). Some of these works have been influential and motivational for this study. Works by Smith (2011, 2015), Witcomb (2014), Watson (2016, 2013, 2018), and Mason et al. (2018), echo

more recent studies from within museum, heritage, history, and identity fields that argue heritage is an emotional practice. Their work focuses also on the idea of visitor engagement with historical narratives, and the role of the visitor in creating meanings mediated by the relationship between emotions, memory and thinking.

Smith's (2011) study is a pioneer work for anyone interested in researching and understanding the role of emotional engagement within museum and heritage experience. Hence, her research is very relevant to this thesis, as my overall aim was to capture visitors' emotional responses and to explore to what extent they impact visitors' engagement and understanding in order to shed light into varied ways that visitors use the museum (Smith 2015). She (2015) uses the term "registers of engagement" in order to examine and interpret how different individuals react and engage differently to the same exhibition. In her research, she found out that visitors showed different scales and intensities of emotion which can have different meanings, outcomes and consequences. Smith, also notes that people utilise emotions in various ways to render "unsafe" and challenging ideas within the museum, or to manage emotions and engage with "safe" and unchallenging concepts. The "registers of engagement" idea helps to identify what visitors do during their visit, and in turn what they do in their social life. This concept is particularly useful to this study, as it offers a way of both describing and measuring not only how visitors engage with heritage, but also the impact of meaning created by the visit. It also supports the idea that emotions are used to either validate or invalidate meanings of the past which are mediated by social context, ideology, gender, ethnicity and age. These meanings of the past are "never engaged with and performed for their own sake but will be brought to bear on addressing present-day social problems and individual and group aspirations, they will have social and political consequences", Smith states. In addition, in her research, empathy was a key tool to facilitate meaning and reflection about the history of slavery, and to create a sense of connection within communities. However, my research significantly differs from Smith's research in terms of the subject matter and my analysis approach to museum and heritage. Her research was also a large-scale study of 2,733 visitors to twenty different museums in England (bicentenary of Britain's

abolition of the slave trade) and Australia (the Immigration Museum in Melbourne). First of all, my study looked at exhibitions in the UK, which means that I developed a Western, and more specifically British, perspective on museum practices. I needed to understand how emotions are used by both museums and visitors, within this specific institutional and societal context. The participants of the study were English Jewish and non-Jewish visitors. Thus, this study only applies to how specific ethnic group of people think and feel about the Holocaust.²² Smith (2020), also analysed visitors' emotional responses in relation to the museum's educational role, and what was learnt from the museum visit by the individuals. In particular, her research examines the extent to which visitors identified education or learning as important motivations for visiting, yet did not engage in learning. While this study is focusing on how and why particular meanings and emotions are activated during the museum visit. The learning process, in this research, is deemed as an experience that is influenced by individuals' socio-cultural context.

Chakrabarty (2002) has argued that the understanding of citizenship has been replaced by more emotive and affective forms of knowledge, mainly influenced by social movements in the 1960s and 1970s. The right of people to be heard became the basis of political engagement, contributing to a fundamental change in the way in which the production of knowledge was understood. Chakrabarty (2002:7–8) notes, “it was a prioritizing of experience over abstract forms of reasoning, allowing more emotional and embodied forms of knowledge to take their place alongside the traditional faith in reason”. The idea of the emotive and affective experience appears to also be significant within the museum, while exhibitions attempt to not simply represent and engage with plurality and diversity, but also build bridges between different voices and cultures. A considerable body of scholars has been increasingly concerned with re-examining the relationship between the museum and visitor by assessing interpretations strategies and visitors' responses (Sandell 2007; Scorch

²² It is worth mentioning, that the majority of participants for this study were White English, but there were also White Jewish English, and few White American Jewish and White American (Appendix 5).

2015; Mason 2018). This also reflects the civic role of the museum which aims to address current social and political concerns in ways that go beyond mere celebration, and reinforcement of existing identities. This approach can be seen in museums that represent “difficult histories” (Simon 2006; Bonnell and Simon 2007; Macdonald and Basu 2007; Macdonald 2009; Witcomb 2010, 2013a). Emotional and affective engagement are seen as a tool for promoting social consciousness within society, that encourages an understanding and respect between people regardless of class, gender, and religious and ethnic differences (Bonnell and Simon 2007; Janes 2009; Silverman 2010).

In this light, Witcomb (2014:60) underscores the importance of both emotional, and sensory forms, of engagement with history within the museum. Witcomb’s research investigates how exhibitions consciously use affective and emotive practices to elicit emotions, and encourage critical forms of historical thinking and new understanding towards the past at the Aboriginal Centre of Melbourne and at the National Trust of Australia. Her (2013, 2015) concept of a “pedagogy of feeling” highlights that museum and heritage sites have the potential to be useful places to work through emotions. The concept of “pedagogy of feeling” brings together bodily sensations and emotions that facilitate emotional responses and activate collective and individual memories. According to Witcomb, these strategies encourage visitors to look, listen, feel, think, and offer a reflective exploration of different voices and cultures. Witcomb (2013), however, has argued that the simple walking and reading of texts, or the passively listening museum narratives is insufficient in developing a critical understanding. She calls for a “pedagogy of feeling” that acknowledges the significant influence of affect/emotion in the way people engage and learn with heritage (Witcomb 2015). Trofanenko (2014: 35), also contends that emotion is “part of the multifaceted range of influences that frame how and why people choose to engage in learning”. This concept also validates the impact of empathy on the active positive engagement with the past and present. Witcomb's work was important for my own study, in that: 1) It is a study focused on exhibitions that use *pedagogy of feeling*, and bringing together emotional and affective experiences with memory, space, materials and people (although this thesis is giving emphasis, mainly on the

impact of the emotional engagement and empathy rather than on embodied experiences): 2) My research arose from the desire not only to look into the different ways that emotional experiences work within the museum, but to also take into account the visitors' perspectives: 3) I was interested in studying how individuals make meanings, and what role the material aspects of the exhibition play in this process, despite the fact that this study is not concerned with its aesthetic qualities: 4) It is research regarding the exhibition itself as a form of testimony about a difficult past, that may contribute to social cohesion in the present.

Another important piece research that has greatly contributed to the field of emotions is Watson's (2015) research, which concerns issues related to emotional expression and regulation within history museums, in relation to the idea of nationalism. She points out the need for more research into how emotions are shaped and expressed by both museums and visitors, particularly in order to understand how people learn and experience the past. She also considers the effect of the emotional engagement, by questioning some potential concerns as to whether "individuals' emotional responses to the same event may differ depending on where they are located; "will an individual's response to an event within a museum differ from their response when watching the same event on television or in a film"? (2015:285). Taking into account these considerations is of great importance in a visitors' study that aim for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the museum's social mission on peoples' lives.

On the other hand, there are also concerns about the implication of emotional engagement, particularly in traumatic and sensitive histories that cannot be ignored. Bonnell and Simon warn that museums attempting to address and present hidden histories in ways that are emotionally engaging, by eliciting empathy for others, may lead to desensitising visitors (2007). They note, "negative feelings generated by histories of trauma and loss are often associated with a sapping of energy... a negative of life rather than affirmation of it" (2007:67). As Bonnell and Simon (2007) indicate, the emotional engagement that difficult narratives offer to visitors is not

always welcomed. This can be a potential cause for concern for museums associated with difficult histories, where negative emotions are mostly elicited.

Nevertheless, Failler (2015) attempts to shed light on how hope, within museums that deal with difficult histories, may allow critical thinking, and hence inspire and motivate individuals to take social action. Likewise, Simon (2006) claims that some form of hope can be developed within this “terrible gift” of difficult knowledge. He states that “touched by the past (rather than settling it or being cured of it) is to allow them an opportunity to imagine ways of envisioning change” (Simon 2006:189). Simon’s “terrible gift” idea, was a response on how to develop exhibitions that go beyond remembering and affecting society, promoting a cultural understanding. However, Simon (2014) notes that there is no evidence that mere awareness of previous violence will link past and present in way to diminish injustice. With this in mind, it is essential to be aware of the meaningful relationship between the past, the present and the future. The challenge of these museums is beyond the cliché phrase to prevent those histories from *happening again* by simply remembering, but to use that knowledge of the past to enhance historical thinking and consciousness, and to remind people that their actions in the future are important.

Visitors, can also feel overwhelmed or confused by the environment or the material on display, so their engagement with museum narratives can be impeded (Falk and Dierking 2011:61; Gadsby 2011). Imagining and experiencing the past may similarly present opportunities and constraints to efficiently engage with the past in museums and heritage sites, according to Pieter de Bruijin (2014:30). As we engage and experience the past, history can be more tangible and our curiosity and interest can be fuelled, but it can also limit the development of a multiple perspective or make their exploration difficult, as Pieter de Bruijin notes (2014). Exploring how visitors relate, engage and construct meaning about the past allows for a greater and closer understanding of how history is perceived in the present by individuals, and perhaps in a more consolidated way.

According to Seixas (2013:13-14), taking a historical perspective requires that visitors stand back and keep a distance from the past, in order to “achieve *historical* empathy rather than identification with historical persons”. It is also important to distinguish the concept of historical empathy with the notion of sympathy. Educationalists Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby (2001:21-50) note, that historical empathy is not about “sharing the feelings of people in the past”, but about acquiring knowledge based on evidence about why people in the past felt and reacted in the way they did. This demonstrates the intertwined relationship between emotional engagement and cognitive development. Historian and educationalist Karen L. Riley (2001), argues that multiple perspectives can offer more opportunities for complex events such as the Holocaust to be better comprehended and interpreted. McCully (2010:219) further explains that when stories are told from multiple perspectives, they can have “a cathartic effect and can generate caring, while unlocking the emotional barriers that resist the scrutiny of the recent past, thus facilitating recognition, redress, and repair. Yet, at this point, it may be difficult to verify such testimony through the more distanced vista of historical investigation.” Robert Stradling (2003:23) notes that multiple perspectives require some level of empathic response, but also there is a need for visitors to understand the reasons and “underlying values of historical actors and producers of historical narratives in order to interpret evidence and accounts”.



Figure 5. Permanent exhibition “The Holocaust Gallery” at the JM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

These two case studies use different strategies to offer tangible experiences to build a connection with the past, related to the inclusion and exclusion of multiple perspectives regarding the Holocaust. These different ways of representing history provide opportunities for contextualisation and reflection of the past (de Bruijn 2014). Representing sensitive history such as the Holocaust by including or excluding different points of view in order to stimulate engagement is considered to be quite a challenging task for museum professionals. Depending on whether or not places are related to the Holocaust, and to what degree past has been interpreted, museums and heritage sites in different countries can employ different strategies to negotiate historical distance or temporal proximity, engagement or detachment. However,

individuals can respond and engage differently to the same site/exhibition, creating their own meanings, feelings and understanding, as this thesis indicates.²³

CONCLUSION

This section has offered a summary of some of the theoretical framework, and recent research across various disciplines. For instance, such as sociology, psychology, and museum studies, in regard to how emotions work, how they are utilised, expressed or managed within museum and heritage sites, and why emotions are considered so important. A growing interest in the social sciences on emotion, presents us with a range of studies and arguments about the nature, significance, and impact of emotions. Furthermore, it is suggested that curatorial practices and the interplay of emotions, imagination and the process of remembering and commemoration can provoke certain types of emotional responses. These reactions are culturally and socially mediated, but also personal and individual. History museums represent “aspects of a community’s past that the community wishes to preserve, but also, memories, values, emotions and belief and the myths that are embodied to the community” (Tint 2010; Watson 2013:243). Many museums have intentionally or unintentionally adopted emotional strategies, attempting to engage their audience with feelings and emotions from the past. But, visitors’ emotional responses to these approaches are not very often looked at in-depth. Similarly, little attention has been placed into examining these emotional aspects of the past within the historical and cultural context, recognising that the language of emotion changes over time, as do the ways in which it can be expressed (Bourke 2003:121). In the following chapters, I will use case studies to discuss, in more nuanced way, how Holocaust exhibitions use emotions, how emotions are contextualized within Holocaust exhibitions, and their immediate impact on visitors' responses.

²³ See chapter 7

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims primarily to understand both how and why visitors of Holocaust exhibitions in the UK experience, engage and respond to museum narratives in certain ways. This research is based on two case studies, the Holocaust Centre and Memorial Museum in Nottingham and the Jewish Museum in London. The study focused explicitly on the emotional experiences adults within these exhibitions. The initial focus of this thesis, was the impact of emotional engagement on visitors' meaning making of the past and present. Moreover, considering the interest in museums as “agents of social change” (Sandell 2007), the thesis concerned the effect of emotional engagement on visitors' thinking and attitudes, in relation to social concerns in the present.

The idea of emotions and feelings being conveyed within exhibitions are important elements in understanding the level of the visitors' engagement (Smith 2015; Weaver et. al 2017), and the way individuals construct meanings. By exploring visitors' experiences and motivations through an in-depth analysis of visitors' stories, I was able to discuss the power of the emotional engagement, and the ways that individuals respond and use museums exhibitions. The interview data generated by this research was approached as a form of personal narrative, from which meanings interpreted, not only by connecting them with theoretical frameworks, but also by exploring the honesty of the individual's words.

4.1 QUALITATIVE THEORY APPROACH

As this research aimed to explore not only what people think and feel about museum exhibitions, but also, how and why they thought and felt in a particular way, and how that engagement influenced their museum experience, the fieldwork method focused on the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was also employed to examine the visitors' motivations to Holocaust exhibitions. Notably, much of the research within heritage and museum studies, in relation to emotional engagement with sensitive or traumatic histories from the past, has adopted a qualitative approach (Smith 2010a; Sather-Wagstaff 2011; Witcomb 2012). The qualitative method is considered to be a flexible method, where ideas and evidence are developed together (Paul Ten Have 2004). Qualitative research values human subjectivity and seeks to understand the range of experiences and relationships as well as the contexts within which they arise (Mason 2002). In this type of research, it is insufficient to rely on “quantitative survey and statistics, and necessary instead to delve deep into the subjective qualities that govern behaviour” (Holliday 2007:7). In terms of generating data, this thesis is based on approaches that are both flexible and sensitive to the social phenomenon, in which data was produced, rather than rigidly standardized [...] or abstracted from “real-life” contexts [...], 3) and the analysis of the arguments was based on methods which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context [...] (Mason 2002:3).

Furthermore, Descombe (2010:153) claims that for social studies, material should be gathered from multiple sources in order for researchers to “review all of the data and make sense of it, organizing it into themes that cut across all of the data sources” and gain an “accurate measurement” (Creswell 2013:45). As the research seeks to explore the visitors' experiences within the museum, qualitative research seems the most suitable method (Fraenkel and Wallen 1990 in Creswell 2009:195), because it attempts to understand multiple realities (Lincoln and Guba 1985 in Creswell 2009:195). Therefore, the use of qualitative methodology is essential as it describes the detailed aspects of the social world (Mason 2002:1) through the interpretation of individuals' reactions, in the context of their lived experience

(Bryman 2001). In this light, Paul Ten Have (2004) points out that a qualitative approach facilitates the search of hidden meanings, complex descriptions as well as phenomena that are not countable, as in the case of emotional responses. Thus, taking a qualitative approach is vital especially in an area of study which is difficult to explore as emotional responses and their consequences often remain unknown.

4.2 CASE STUDY DESIGN

As for the case studies, in order to gain valuable insights into a better contextual understanding of the chosen topic, the use of relevant case studies is essential. As it can provide “detailed, intensive knowledge” (Robson 2002:89), rather than a mere description of programs, activities and exhibition strategies. Case studies can be used to describe *what* is happening in the chosen research context, but also *why* something is happening (Descombe 2010). Furthermore, a case study approach is focused on the process, such as a museum experience, or the relationship between adult visitors and the museum, and finally it takes place in a natural setting, rather than in an artificial laboratory setting. The initial research questions emerged from a broader topic, regarding different levels of visitors' engagement within the museum (such as learning based experience, leisured oriented, cognitive or emotionally driven, etc.). From this position, this study aims to present an in-depth analysis of the impact of emotional engagement, and the ways in which visitors responded to Holocaust exhibitions.

According to Yin (2003:48), the use of a multiple-case study approach builds up the credibility of a study. Furthermore, Willing (2009:78) points out that a multiple-case study approach gives the researcher opportunities to develop new theories by comparing different cases. An intensive analysis of the first case can lead the researcher to further explore a hypothesis that can be applicable to other cases of the same type (Kumar 2005). Furthermore, Robert Stake considers that, “even in the collective case studies, the sample size is usually much too small to warrant random

selection” (Stake 2008:129). So, in terms of a multiple-cases study method, he proposes:

“Researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon ‘selecting a case of some typicality but leaning towards those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn. [...] Even for collective case studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is often more important” (Stake 2008: 129-130).

In this light, it was essential to follow a two-case study approach at the National Holocaust Centre Museum (NHCM) and at the Jewish Museum (JM) to allow a comparison between the visitors’ feelings and thoughts in both case studies and strengthen the validity of the research (Yin 2003:48). Both the visitors’ stories and comments were interpreted by taking into consideration the museums background, ideology, and physical setting, as well as the wider social and cultural context beyond museum.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

This research builds on data gathered from three main sources; these are interviews with visitors, comments recorded in visitor books at the NHCM (visitor book was used only in the NHCM as the visitor book in JM wasn’t available at that time), and the museums’ own statements about its mission. According to Mason (2002), the interviewing method considers peoples' knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions, that are meaningful aspects of the social reality that the research questions are designed to explore. Furthermore, Sandell (2007) and Scorch (2015) explain that an interviewing approach which allows interviewers to probe and the interviewees to give narratives of incidents and experiences is likely to result in a more holistic picture of people’s understandings, rather than a conventional survey analysis, which would provide and elucidate the meanings that research participants attribute to their practices and actions. Thus, I

developed a semi- structured interview schedule with open- ended questions that helped both me and the interviewees reveal their stories (Mason 2002).

A semi-structured interview is defined as “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale et al. 2009:27). The interviews were conducted using a script (see *Appendix 2*) but not limiting the questions to the script, creating an interview which encourages me to become responsive to the participants’ line of thought. Hence, visitors’ stories were revealed spontaneously during the interview by the interviewee, and in some cases, they were elicited by the researcher. Moreover, researchers need to be active and reflective in the processes of data generation, by listening carefully, paying attention to visitors’ actual words, and aiming to examine and interpret, rather than being neutral during this process (Kvale 2009).

The first interview agenda was developed in September 2017.²⁴ The interview questions sought to ascertain the following themes:

- Individual background (Where have they come from? What is their occupation? Why they visit the museum?)
- Previous experiences of visiting similar museums
- Motivations and expectations
- Prior knowledge and interest
- Impact of the exhibitions’ interpretative techniques
- Emotional and empathetic engagement
- Impact of the museums’ message

The selection of participants was conducted on the basis of general and discreet observation of the museums settings. Based on my observation of the visitors, some

²⁴See appendix 1

of the individuals tended to be rather emotional, in these cases, I decided not to approach these individuals so as to not cause them any further distress. I focused on adult visitors (21-70 years old) and intentionally chose not to approach individuals who seemed older than seventy years old so not interview Holocaust survivors, nor those directly, sensitively, emotionally, and personally affected by the Holocaust in some way audience. I took care to balance my selection based on an intuitive targeting, in order to include a variety of ages and a balanced gender representation. The sample included twenty-four women and eighteen men, the majority of participants were English (forty individuals) with two being Americans who are currently living in the UK. The participants had different levels of education and ranged from secondary education to university degrees. Moreover, some of the participants were no longer in active employment. This type of data provides complementary information about visitors' profiles.

The participants were museum visitors, and were interviewed in research sites in face-to-face interviews. The researcher should also *purposefully select* not only sites but also individuals that can answer such questions (Creswell 2009:178). In total, twenty-six interviews containing forty-two adult visitors were used for the analysis that will be presented in the following chapters. The reason for this is that some visitors tended to visit museums in pairs, or in groups of three, and they were more willing to be interviewed together.²⁵ Interviews of individuals are the most widely used data collection method in qualitative research, as they provide an opportunity for the researcher to collect in-detail the participants' thoughts, attitudes and beliefs related to the phenomenon under discussion (Sandelowski 2002). Although individuals' interviews contribute in-depth data, researchers in qualitative studies (such as social, health and psychology research) also use data collected by dyadic or joint interviews where people are interviewed in pairs and participants usually know each other (Morgan et al. 2013). Couple interviews are one of the data collection

²⁵ In the JM, from the eighteen interviews there were eight in which the visitors were interviewed in pairs. At the NHCM, seven interviews were conducted with the visitors in pairs, and the eighth interview consisted of a group of three visitors (see also appendix 5).

methods that can be useful when the researchers want to gain an understanding of sensitive issues (Mudzusi 2018).

In this study, during joint interviews, participants shared meaningful and useful information which also assisted participants in narrating their experiences and to clarify their own views regarding the meaning of those experiences (Smith & Eatough 2012). Joint interviews also offered a reflective space with corroboration, extension and disagreement providing opportunities for behaviour and interaction observation (Bjornholt & Farstad 2014). However, the joint interviews have their own weaknesses. Some of the weaknesses are related to gender as well as cultural and power dynamics, which can cause the type of information to be completely biased due to domination by one of the participants, according to (Mudzusi 2018:8). Therefore, participants might describe some experiences, thoughts, and feelings, but not reveal others.

Although, one-to-one interviews have the advantage of enabling participants to speak freely about their own perspective and ideas and they can reveal or conceal information without any possibility of being corrected or contradicted by their partner, in this research, in joint interviews, partners helped to complement each other and reminded each other of some of the issues which might be affected by memory bias (Mudzusi 2018:8). Mudzusi (2018:6) and Taylor & de Vocht (2011) note that the “partner’s nonverbal reactions, when one of them is responding, act as minimal encouragers for the other partner to reveal further information”. Thus, during the interviews, I wrote down any form of nonverbal expression between the interviewees such as eye contact, smiling, and frowning, which can aid in guiding the interviewer in exploring certain areas (Taylor & de Vocht 2011). Some of these expressions, especially the eye contact made between the interviewees generated the responder add further information to the questions asked.

Whether individuals are interviewed individually or as a couple, the research interview is “a social situation, and people might wish to maintain their self-image in such an encounter” (Allan 1980). The presence of a second person during an

interview has the potential to facilitate or constrain the narrative, and can either enhance or limit the richness of the data. In this study, neither individual nor joint interviews are without their limitations. Each approach complemented the other in elucidating different aspects of people's experiences. Combining individual and joint interviews within a research study provides benefit, because it enables researchers to elicit individual as well as shared meanings (Butt & Chesla 2007).

At the beginning of the interview, I gave space to the participants allowing them to feel free to decide how and when to start, and end the story, at the beginning of the interview. Before the interview, I explained to the interviewee that I was interested in their perspectives and story about their museum experience, and therefore there are no right or wrong answers, as the aim of this fieldwork was to capture spontaneous and authentic responses of visitors. I took notes after they had finished telling me about the museum experiences that were of importance to them. Only at the end of their narrative, did I ask additional questions in order to clarify or confirm what they had told me. In few cases, when the participants had difficulties expressing themselves, their thoughts or feelings, I had to use prompt questions.

There was also an introductory "warming up", followed by different themes with questions in each of them, in the beginning of the interviews. The interview design was influenced by the models of Macdonald (2002), Paris and Mercer (2002) and Sandell (2007). It was based on the idea of moving from general questions to more specific ones, giving time and space to participants to feel comfortable and start talking about their experiences. However, the different question sections helped the interview to be more flexible. By doing this, I was able to move, or change, the flow of the interview depending on the fluency of/or points raised by the interviewees. According to Mason (2002:68–72), whose example I followed, this technique allows the interviewer to "have some control over the interview by balancing the need to ask the visitor the fundamental research questions, but also remaining flexible for spontaneous, new or unexpected issues raised by the interviewee".

During the interview process, I asked participants to describe how they felt during their visit; I gave them options to choose from, and asked them to write them down. It was mutually understood that the visitors could take their time to think, and feel comfortable as to express their real and honest feelings. However, not all participants were able to think of the possible responses to these questions, so they needed a particular type of prompting. Visitors found it easier to choose emotions from the list²⁶ or add another, but only in few cases they were able to explain why they felt the way they did. When I asked them to describe how they felt without giving them the options, they were thinking and struggling to put their emotions and feelings into words. It was possible that the visitors felt more comfortable making these comments anonymously (in written form), than making them within the interview context (in a recorded audio form).

In the first case study at the NHCM, the interviews took place in the cafe, after visitors completed their visit. In the second study, at the Jewish Museum where permanent exhibitions are hosted, the interviews were conducted on the second floor, where the Holocaust exhibition is housed. This position enabled me to observe the visitors' expressions and movements within the Holocaust exhibition, and select possible participants for the interview. The number of the participants was intrinsically linked with the qualitative approach. In a research which aims to gather numerical and statistical data, a sample of forty-two participants can be considered a small amount, however, in qualitative studies, works effectively with a small number of samples and case studies. (Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri 2001; Everett and Barrett 2011).

²⁶ The selection of emotions that were included in the interview protocol was inspired by the Universal Emotions (such as happiness, sadness, disgusted, surprised, and fear) by Dr Ekman (<http://atlasofemotions.org>). The emotion of disgust was replaced by empathy/compassion and the feeling of fear was replaced by horror for this research. The list of emotions was also related to both negative and positive feelings (interest, surprise, sadness, anger, fear and disgust) that evoked throughout the exposure to sad narratives, as it has been found out by media research (Oliver & Bartsch 2010, Oliver 1993, Bartsch 2012:293). See Appendices 1&2

The first case study was an open exploration and the second a deeper and more focused investigation based on what it has been learned in the first study. The first study at the Holocaust Centre in Nottingham highlighted topics that certain visitors talked about without being encouraged such as their desire to visit/revisit Holocaust sites. Hence, by the end of the first study, there was a sense that the interview protocol would need to be slightly amended. After some preliminary analysis of the fieldwork data, it was essential to create more detailed questions, in regard to the visitors' motivations and previous museum experiences. The examination of the visitors' motivations towards difficult exhibitions contributed to painting a more detailed picture of their museum experience and their level of the engagement within exhibitions. The questionnaire was amended to allow for a few minor changes to be made, such as the rephrasing of some of the questions (see appendix 1&2). Accordingly, the questions were adapted to be appropriate for the case study, by being open and conversational. This allowed me to formulate questions by incorporating issues into further questions depending on interviewee's comments throughout the interview (Kumar 2005:123; Willing 2009:25). To further this, different questions were asked to different interviewees when it was needed, in order for me to capture the depth and complexity of the individuals' experiences which allowed for appropriate comparisons to be made.

In terms of comments within the visitor's book at the NHCM, I was interested in contemporary comments such as those within the period of my interview work. The period of comments left by visitors were from approximately 1/8/2017 to 29/10/2017. I have kept the anonymity of these comments, similarly to interviews. The selection of these in the analysis process was based on their relevance to this research. I included comments that described comprehensive thoughts, ideas and feelings of the visitors' museum experience, such as how they felt about the exhibition and memorial garden, motivations for visiting, the purpose and importance of having a Holocaust exhibition for future generations, and the messages they took away from the museum. Vague statements towards the museum's exhibitions (i.e. it is very thought provoking or very emotional and educational place) were not included in the analysis. The purpose of including

visitors' comments within my research was to enable myself to gather further data regarding the visitors' thoughts, feelings and experiences of their visit.²⁷

Lastly, the websites of both museums (NHCM: <https://www.holocaust.org.uk/> and JM: <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/> were used to elicit information about their aims and mission statements. The reason that the websites were used was to find out further information about the museums' roles and messages, and to see if the data I was collecting from the interviews and comments within visitors' book correlated with the museums' aims. I also took into account whether the websites of both museums advertised their Holocaust exhibitions, and if they did, in what way, to consider if that had any impact of people visiting or revisiting both exhibitions. I began by looking at the front page of the two websites so I could explore in general what kind of information they are offering to their audience. The next step was to search for the mission statements and policies to provide me with information regarding the values and aims of both museums in order to explore museums' perspective. I juxtaposed the information from mission statements with the visitors' thoughts regarding the museum message and what they took away from their visit. I also looked and took notes about the information from both the exhibitions and events tabs on both websites, and whether any encouragement is given towards visiting and engagement with Holocaust exhibitions and events related to the Holocaust (such as survivors' talks).

4.4 ANALYSIS OF DATA

As in most qualitative research studies, the conversion of raw interview data into a form in which we can analyse requires a lot of effort, and multiple stages of interpreting them. This study used a qualitative coding analysis where the collected

²⁷ Whilst I initially took note of these comments to give myself further data should I not interview enough people due to Covid-19 and the issues that created in regard to conducting fieldwork, these comments then became part of the thesis' data.

data categorised into groups (i.e. visitors' emotions, thoughts and motivations) and assigned numerical codes to these groups which facilitates data conversion and measurement comparisons among visitors' reactions in the two case studies exhibitions (Saldaña 2013). The first step towards analysis occurred whilst I was carefully listening to the interview recordings while taking brief notes in a Word document regarding ideas that were relevant to my research (i.e. why they visited the museum, what they found important, different kind of emotions and different level of empathy) and then formed themes and repeated meanings. After my initial notes, I created complete transcripts of the interviews in written form, which also involved a secondary stage, in which the tone of the voice, pauses, and language were added. To do this, I went back to the notes that I kept during the interviews related to facial expressions (i.e. smiles, frowns, eye contact), tone of voice and pauses to remind myself of any important aspects from the interviews while I was re-listening to the interviews. Furthermore, both the frequency and intensity of the emotions, feelings, and thoughts that occurred were taken into account through their spoken words. Once completed, these notes aided in the forming of evidence for this thesis.

All the twenty-six interviews (5 hours of recorded interviews) and comments from the visitors' book (at the NHCM) were treated in the same way in the analysis stage, by scanning the content of each interview and comments closely, and in detail, with the help of a specialised qualitative analysis software (Nvivo). The first interviews' content came from the initial study at the NHCM, and it was examined thoroughly. The comments from the NHCM visitors' book, totalling twenty, were examined and analysed separately, and in turn compared with the interview content. A draft analysis of the interviews was written with the first set of interviews and visitors' comments, where the main topics were drawn and then applied and compared to a second sample of interviews from the JM. After completing this First Cycle Coding "a process of category building" commenced. Moving from the initial eminently descriptive and data-rooted codes, a Second Cycle Coding was initiated" (Saldaña 2013: 58). Thus, it was deemed necessary to choose particular points of focus, and accordingly recognise methodological and theoretical frameworks to help establish

the final method with which to analyse the third sample.

After the analysis of the second sample from the JM, the two samples were re-analysed and re-incorporated into this final scheme and approach. According to Saldaña “the primary goal during Second Cycle Coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes” (Saldaña 2013: 207). Notably, I organised the themes by grouping the repeated ideas (i.e. visitors’ motivations: connections with family past, interest in testimonies and must-see sites; empathetic connections for and with characters of the past; engagement with the past through the lens of the present), and developing and linking these ideas to the theory. Finally, I compared the data of the same themes and then looked at the potential links and relationships between the themes categories. Thus, “an analytical process of refining the vast array of codes, gave place to the sorting and clustering of seemingly alike things into the most seemingly appropriate groups” (Saldaña 2011: 91), looking for connections throughout the data and establishing possible similarities and patterns. In turn, meaningful categories and themes developed the interpretation of this thesis; its major themes (such as the different reasons for visiting the exhibitions and different ways that visitor responded to the Holocaust exhibitions) and key argument.

Furthermore, the analysis of the data was not always a straightforward process. Interpreting peoples’ perceptions requires a great deal of both ethical and critical skills, whilst taking difficult decisions. The process of data analysis required backwards and forwards from theory to interviews in an effort to find a deeper meaning in the research. The use of this software helped by giving me a greater control over the data. For instance, some of the conclusions I reached are due to the level of detail I gained by being able to “code” in detail certain aspects of visitors’ experiences. On the other hand, coding created problems that I would not have faced by using a more traditional method – for example, highlighting in Word. Besides the interviews, I took into consideration the content, mission, ideology and space of the case study locations as to identify the exhibition's settings and strategies. Therefore, I contextualized and linked these aspects with the visitors'

narratives throughout the analysis process in order to gain a better insight into museum role and individual's experience. The research into the sites and audience's experiences and responses were key elements for the analysis. Importantly, it was also necessary to make a photographic registration of the contents of the exhibition galleries and the objects on the display.

Finally, this study presents a few characteristics of the main traits of the visitors' profile, and their emotional reactions and motivations in the form of charts. The information presented in these charts are result of the qualitative data, but without conducting in-depth statistical analysis. The purpose of this statistical representation is to offer a visual and descriptive information of the visitors' emotional experiences and their visits' motivations and aids in mapping the complexity of the emotional reactions as to explore and better understand the visitors' feelings, thoughts and attitudes in Holocaust exhibitions.

CONCLUSION

In the previous pages, I presented the methodology and research design of the thesis, in order to explore and understand visitors' understanding and engagement with the past, and its meaning to the present. As explained, qualitative research was considered the best approach to crate in-depth and nuanced data about how and why the visitors responded in the way they did. Thus, the research methodology was based on the interpretive paradigm, allowing the research agenda to be shaped by the researcher and the researched (Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong 2010:7). Qualitative research is also suited to the study of sensitive topics as it examines peoples' experiences without assuming prior knowledge, but rather it allows developing and reflecting their own reality (Lee 1993; Dickson-Swift et al. 2010:7). The visitors' responses as generated through the interviews and the comments from visitors' book provided an insight into how emotions play a significant role in shaping visitors' understanding of the past, as well as their level of engagement. However, the analysis and interpretation of the visitors' responses also required an

examination and understanding of the museum itself, the context in which the research took place, as well as the social-cultural aspects of human behaviour and expression.

CHAPTER 5

THE CASE STUDIES

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, research into the understanding of the emotions in museum and heritage sector is not often explored in depth. The aim of this study is not to offer a generalisation, in regard to how visitors' emotional engagement looks like within Holocaust exhibitions. Instead it aims to explore in detail and contribute to the discourse about how different individuals use and respond to museum exhibitions through emotional curatorial practices. In order to achieve this, I designed this thesis using two case studies, in which I embedded myself over the course of two weeks at two museums in the UK that host Holocaust exhibitions; at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottingham and at the Jewish Museum in London. As the Holocaust becomes more distant, Holocaust exhibitions are actively seeking new ways of representing this past. In this pursuit, the role of the exhibition practices is crucial in shaping audience museum experience.

The representation of the Holocaust at both museums is mainly focused on emotional stories which include text, images, survivors' testimonies and personal objects, inviting visitors to become emotionally involved with the past, to connect with individuals' stories in order to feel and understand the past. But, how do museum narratives work, and what can we understand about the past through stories engagement in the museum space? In order to address these questions, I shall begin by introducing the two case studies of this thesis.

5.1. THE NATIONAL HOLOCAUST CENTRE AND MUSEUM

The National Holocaust Centre is both a memorial centre and a museum, located on the outskirts of a small village called Laxton, in rural Nottinghamshire. It was established by Stephen and James Smith. Born and raised in a Christian family. Stephen, had become particularly interested in Judaism. He and his brother felt that “there should be a memorial from the non-Jewish community as a symbol of understanding, solidarity... and repentance, for the role that Christianity played in the Holocaust” (Cooke 1999:24). They became concerned and engaged with Jewish history and heritage. They wanted to make the experience of the Holocaust less distant, promote an understanding and engage British people with the Holocaust, especially when the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust offered little opportunities for engagement with the Holocaust history (Cooke 1999:24),



Figure 6. Entrance view of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre. Source: Sofia Katharaki

The site was also chosen for another reason, that being the landscape, which is considered an equally of an important part of the experience during a visit to the Centre. Cooke notes that the area is “as the last open field village in England”

(1999:22). It is a very peaceful rural setting, evoking pictures and feelings of English countryside (Cooke 1999:22). The establishment of the Holocaust Centre aimed to bring together the nostalgic and tranquil experience of historic countryside with the Holocaust memory (Cooke 1999). The National Holocaust Museum is dedicated to teaching and learning lessons from the Holocaust history. Therefore, the site is important for two reasons. Firstly, because it has “its origins outside the Anglo-Jewish community who have been historically proactive in British Holocaust memorialisation” (Cooke 1999:22). Secondly, it is the complex meanings and the relationship between the landscape, history, memory and commemoration of the Holocaust in Britain that the site generates because of its location.

The site holds two permanent exhibitions about the Holocaust, a memorial and reflective space, education and teaching space, and memorial gardens. One of the exhibitions is dedicated to teaching children about the Holocaust. Their statement of purpose is to provide memorial to the victims of the Holocaust and offer an understanding of the causes and events of the Holocaust through a range of age-appropriate exhibitions and survivor testimonies, as well as to encourage personal responsibility and promote fairness and justice but also challenge learners to take positive action. The main exhibition was developed in the early 1990s, and has changed only slightly since. In 2008, the *Journey* exhibition was created specifically for primary school children. The memorial gardens surrounding the building contain various memorials, dedicated to Holocaust victims, resistance fighters and people who suffered from the Nazi occupation.

The museum has adopted strategies to evoke both emotional and affective experiences within the exhibitions, in order to allow visitors to gain a sense of the lives and experiences of those lived who in the past. The history comes alive mainly through images and video showing the everyday lives of Jewish people before and during the war. For example, at the start of the exhibition there are projection screens that display authentic video footage of daily life before the war, in countries such as Hungary and the Netherlands. This footage is accompanied “by a slow piano piece and Hungarian folk music”, eliciting emotions of sadness (de Bruijn 2014:171).

Moreover, there are sections that attempt to reconstruct the past. For example, a ghetto has been recreated, by presenting a pavement, streetlights and walls. This recreation invites visitors to have an “immediate “experience however, the museum makes clear that is a reconstruction of the ghettos at that time, through the text panel, by saying that “We could not create the sound, smell or sight of a diseased and dying population. There are no starving people here. This is not the ghetto”. The other permanent exhibition that is aimed at the teaching of Holocaust history to younger children is called *The Journey*. The exhibition follows the story of Leo Stein, a 10-year-old German Jewish boy, living in Berlin, Germany in 1938, with his parents and younger sister Hannah. By following Leo’s life from his family home through to his Journey to England on the Kindertransport, younger visitors are able to engage with ideas about the impact of Nazi propaganda, anti-Jewish measures, and anti-Semitism.



Figure 7. Internal view of the permanent exhibition at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki



Figure 8. Outdoor view of the permanent exhibition “The Journey” at the NHCM, showing a reproduction of a railway during the Kindertransport arriving in the UK. Source: Sofia Katharaki



Figure 9. Internal view of the permanent exhibition “The Journey” at the NHCM, showing a reproduction of a carriage during the Kindertransport. Source: Sofia Katharaki

Finally, the memorials and sculptures in the memorial garden provide a link between the past and present, indicating the importance of remembering. Due to its tranquil atmosphere, the walk through the memorial garden may elicit diverse emotions to the visitor. The Centre also commemorates the children murdered during the Holocaust, deaf as well as disabled people who suffered from the Nazi regime, and people who were imprisoned or killed because of their sexuality. The visit to the memorial garden encourages visitors to empathise with those who suffered from this atrocity.



Figure 10. Sculpture of Anne Frank by Doreen Karen at the Memorial Gardens at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

For instance, people can plant a rose in dedication to their loved ones, and the path of roses leads to the Centre. Visitors are invited to select a stone from a trough and place it on the children's memorial (a pile of stones), in the memory of the 1.5 million children who died). Furthermore, British sculptor Naomi Blake has constructed a memorial called 'Abandoned', which is, as it is mentioned on the label,

“dedicated to my family and friends that never returned, for their courage and dignity.” It is the first memorial that visitors meet as they are walking up to the Centre.



Figure 11. Memorial Gardens at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki



Figure 12. Children's Memorials at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

Both the atmosphere and design of the main exhibition allow the visitor to understand that they are about to delve into a dark period of history. Once inside the centre, visitors enter the exhibition via a spiral staircase, where the natural light is limited, space becomes narrow, and the artificial light illuminates the several pictures in the walls.



Figure 13. Permanent Exhibition at the NHCM; Zone 1: The Jews in Europe. Source: Sofia Katharaki

The exhibition adopts a thematic and chronological approach, which becomes apparent as one walks from one section to another, without offering any other way to move across the exhibition space. The exhibition starts with many family pictures of Jewish people in everyday life, before the war, and few portraits of Jewish artists

and scholars in a black background, emphasizing that the exhibit is all about the Jews: “this exhibit is about them. [...] It is also for them”.

The exhibition mainly focuses on the point of view of the victims. However, there is a section in the main display that tries to explain the actions and decisions of the Nazis by emphasising the context of nationalism and Social Darwinism, and the reasons why ordinary Germans supported the Nazis. By doing this, museum strategies encourage some critical thinking and allow visitors to make their own moral decision. The exhibition personalises the victims’ perspective through a vast collection of photographs, quotations and biographies of Holocaust survivors, stimulating an emotional and intellectual engagement.



Figure 14. Internal view of the permanent exhibition at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

At the end of the gallery, visitors re-enter, via a staircase, the memorial centre and garden, where the Holocaust is commemorated in the present. De Bruijn (2014:174) comments that the past and present appear separated and yet simultaneously physically linked to each other within the Centre space. Another important part of the museum visit is Holocaust survivors representing their stories and experiences.

The survivors' testimonies also encourage emotional engagement. Visitors can listen to the survivors' stories, pose questions and experience the Holocaust through their eyes. Furthermore, in the educational programs, children are encouraged to reflect on their learning experience and presenting the Holocaust as a “lesson” for the present and through the links of recent genocide such as Rwandan’s. In this way, the museum brings the past into the present by making it relevant to current times.



Figure 15. Staircase into the memorial gardens at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

In conclusion, the main exhibition of at Holocaust Centre bridges the past and present through pictures, video fragments and reconstructions. While the victims’ perspective is the main focus of the exhibition in the Holocaust Centre, a small part

of the exhibition and educational programs represent points of view of multiple historical actors through teaching materials. The museum strategies aim to evoke emotional engagement by empathising with victims and survivors, but also attempt to create a balance by representing all points of view (see section 3.6). Furthermore, as many memorials do, the Centre emphasises the significance of commemorating this history, for people today and future generations, through its peaceful and tranquil environment where the memorial centre and gardens are housed.

5.2 THE JEWISH MUSEUM

The Jewish Museum was founded in 1932 by Professor Cecil Roth, Alfred Rubens, and Wilfred Samuel. Originally located in Woburn House in Bloomsbury, it was relocated at a Victorian building in Camden Town in 1994. The Museum of Jewish Life in London was founded in 1983, and aimed to preserve Jewish heritage and represent the Jewish settlement in Britain (Pieren 2011:292). The museum expanded to present different aspects of life and history of Jewish people across London, including stories of refugees during the Nazi era (Pieren 2011). The site also developed educational programs about Holocaust and anti-racism. In 1995, these two museums were combined (Pieren 2011). Between 1995 and 2007 the Jewish Museum ran on two sites, but with a long term aim to combine the two collections, activities and displays within one single site (Pieren 2011:291). In 2010, the new museum building opened in Camden Town. Their aim and vision were based on the following statement:

“We aim to surprise, delight and engage all people, irrespective of background or faith, in the history, identity and culture of Jews in Britain: by inspiring discovery, provoking questions and encouraging understanding. In a world where cultural diversity and the contribution of minority communities are explored, valued and celebrated, for the enrichment of society as a whole”.



Figure 16. Entrance view of the Jewish Museum. Source: Sofia Katharaki

According to their mission statement, they aim to embrace and celebrate diversity, promote an understanding, and fight prejudices:

“We want the experience of visiting the Jewish museum to stand out and make the Jewish part of the Jewish Museum a positive attraction. We aim to build bridges, break down barriers and delight in our shared common humanity. We see difference as an exciting quality”.

Their exhibitions represent a wide range of issues such as identity, migration, heritage, in a variety of ways, but without delving more deeply in these subjects. Particularly, these exhibitions explore Jewish identity within a multicultural society. What is more, they celebrate the positive impact of multicultural Britain, by engaging visitors with the experiences of migration and settlement shared by many minority ethnic communities.

The visitors’ journey starts in the present, in the *Welcome Gallery* on the ground floor, where they can look at the ten portraits of different kinds people who talk

about their profession, their ancestors, Judaism, food, and other aspects of Jewish culture relevant to them. On the first floor, the exhibition called *Judaism: A living faith* showcases the Jewish ceremonial art and explores Judaism religious. On the second floor, visitors step first into the gallery *History: A British Story*, which narrates the main events in the history of British Jews since the Middle Ages in a chronological order and divided into themed displays. Despite of the narrow space, the history of the Jews who found refuge from Nazi Germany are covered in some depth, and represented through tangible experience and various interactive media. This approach encourages thinking about cultural diversity and minority—and in relationship to current cultural identities.



Figure 17. Internal view of the permanent exhibition “History: A British Story” at the JM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

Connected via a window to the display is the small “Holocaust Gallery.” This Holocaust gallery tells the story and memories of Auschwitz survivor, Leon Greenman and his family, who were captured by the Nazis while living in Rotterdam. He was born in the East End of London, and lived with his family in the Netherlands when the war began. He survived six concentration camps until his death in 2008. His experience illustrated the dreadful impact of the Nazi era, and the courage of those who survived.



Figure 20. Internal view of the permanent exhibition “The Holocaust Gallery”. Source: Sofia Katharaki



Figure 21. Permanent exhibition: "The Holocaust Gallery" at the JM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

Through this small exhibition, empathy is an important element on visitors' engagement as they are invited to empathise with Leon's personal memories, interact with his artefacts, albeit few, and develop an understanding of what happened then, and why, as well as how individuals' lives were affected (see section 3.6 & Chapter7). Leaving the gallery, visitors engage with the present days through entering to the next gallery by looking and reading portraits of modern Jewish figures. As Rickie Burman, the museum's director, wrote that "museums concerned with a religious minority need to face in two directions at once, towards the wider society and towards the community they represent, which can lead to tension" (in Pieren 2011:294).

CONCLUSION

Within museum exhibitions, the act of remembering and engaging with the past can be experienced in different forms of testimonies. In this thesis, both oral testimonies and images elicited emotional responses such as nostalgia (family images), anger, sadness and let visitors connect with the individuals' lives: those represented in the exhibitions offering opportunities for constructing meanings (Barthes 1984). In both of these exhibitions images are "history objects" that give a sense of the past and collective memory. Emotions here were evoked through the act of listening, looking at photographs, and the meaning making process. Visitors were listening to the oral testimonies, standing in front of the images, pointing to them and talking among themselves, sharing stories of family members and friends, or memories of a particular place. Photographs became meaningful through the stories around them, and through the emotional engagement they offer. Importantly, as meaning is constructed by both body and mind, there is a combination of thinking and feeling experience, "where feeling is linked with meaning - it is neither pure sensation nor ... pure cultural cognition" (Leavitt 1996:515). Oral testimonies and images are connected and integrated ways of telling stories, unlocking memories and evoking both emotions and thoughts, allowing also visitors to emphasize for and with people from the past at different levels and develop an understanding of other feelings and experiences.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON THE REASONS WHY VISITORS CHOOSE TO VISIT HOLOCAUST EXHIBITIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section aims to explore and discuss visitor's experiences in Holocaust exhibitions, by clarifying and analysing the individuals' perceptions of the sites and their motives for visiting, followed by an in-depth analysis of how and why visitors respond the way they did in both case studies, and addressing additional factors such as emotions and memory, that shaped the museum experience in Chapter 7. Therefore, a slight overlap may occur between these two chapters, due to the complexity of the museum experience, and the correlations between motivations, emotions, and identity. In this chapter, I argue that the reasons behind the visits in these exhibitions, may have a potential impact on how visitors respond and use their emotions to engage with the museums. Thus, with this comprehensive aim in mind, this chapter discusses and analyses visitors' emotional engagement based on the reasons given by the visitors for their visit in both case studies. Visitors' motivations analysis contributes not only to examining the reasons motivated to visit these sites but also to understanding the ways individuals interpret museum narratives and the level of their emotional engagement. Unsurprisingly, the findings revealed that visitors' motivation, as well as their interpretation toward museum narratives were subjective, relational and multifaceted rather than one-dimensional. In this research, while some visitors were interested in engagement that is educational, others were seeking a more emotional experience and/or they were motivated by their interest to maintain and reinforce their identity.

In this chapter, I will firstly analyse the visitors' motivations, as the reasons that people gave for visiting these exhibitions appeared to be an important element of

the museum visit, as they affected the visitors' responses and decision making. Specifically, understanding the reasons that visitors chose to visit museums is "integral to the development of pedagogies of feeling and the utilisation of museums and sites as arenas for working through difficult emotions" (Smith 2020:194). Falk also argues that "post-visit narrative is influenced by their entering narrative, and what typically sticks in a person's mind as important about their visit usually directly relates to the reasons that person stated they went to the museum in the first place" (2013:111). Therefore, exploring and interpreting the motivations (of people visiting Holocaust exhibitions), their expectations and their preferences, can contribute to understanding the nature of those visits and the individuals' level of engagement, and consequently give insight as to how these exhibitions have emotionally and intellectually affected different individuals. These themes are illustrated and elaborated upon in the following sections. I have relied upon visitors' narratives through the interviews at both sites, as well as on comments from the visitor's book (from the NHCM) to enrich these points and further embrace the complexity of visitors' emotional experience. These are only a selection of the many narratives and comments²⁸ which emerged from the research, and have been used to highlight overarching themes. It is also important to consider the individuality of each narrative and comment. Lastly, I have taken into account information about mission statements and objectives regarding the exhibitions in the two case study sites, and ways that they promote their Holocaust exhibitions online to further analyse the reasons individuals made to choose to visit these sites.

As qualitative research is a form of interpretation, this research adopted an interpretive approach towards the visitors' narratives both through interviews and visitors book, in order to analyse the findings. This method, according to Descombe (2010:119) and Mason (2012) is suited to understanding the interpretations and

²⁸ I looked at approximately twenty comments from current visitor's book at the NHCM, but only three out of the twenty fragments have been considered useful in this chapter analysis due to their relativity to the study subject matter.

meanings that people make about the world, and their lives. Interpretivism centers on the idea that “the knowledge of the reality is not being discovered, but it is constructed by those who exist within it” (Descombe 2010:119). Therefore, researchers need to be “attentive” when interpreting peoples' meanings and actions about the social world, giving “recognition to individual difference and multiple voices while also seeking to illuminate patterns amid the diversity” (MacDonald 2000:98; Descombe 2010: 119,122). Consequently, my analysis needs to go beyond a “literal reading” of what the visitors explicitly said, in order to gain a better understanding of my research questions (Mason 2002:149).

This particular type of qualitative approach focuses on getting in-depth information of the human phenomenon, through the description and interpretation of the participants' words (Heath 1997). Wertsch (2002: 119-120) suggests that the dialogue and language that people use can give us evidence of their understanding. This shift in methodology from naturalistic observation (used to study behaviour), to ‘free conversation’ (used to study a child’s conception of their world) “implies distinction between objectivity (the world) and subjectivity (its conception or representation)” (Piaget2007: xiii). However, some of visitors' stories can be seen as vague or not always clearly verbalized, and most importantly are not unquestionable evidence of social phenomena. But they can still provide insights into interpretations and meanings of social life, and in this particular research, about the ways in which individuals engage and respond to the past and present.

6.1 VISITORS' EXPECTATIONS: INSIGHTS FROM VISITORS' ANALYSIS

In this thesis, it appeared that visitors wished to learn and enrich their knowledge, see real artefacts and have an authentic experience of the past, and/or to spend family day out as well as to get involved emotionally. At this point, it is important to mention that both theoretical contributions and field research highlight the complex and multi-layered nature of visitors' experience which is stimulated by the interaction with material culture, by different forms of museum communication such

as learning experiences and/or social interactions (among the visit group as well as between the individual and its community), as well as by “introspective and restorative moments” (Pekarik, Doering and Karns 1999) such as feelings, imagining the past, self-reflection, remembering and connecting with personal heritage. With respect to museum experience, Pekarik, Doering and Karns²⁹ argue that:

“Although they differ in their details, these reflections on experiences in museums all agree that a museum visit can be very complex, involving different dimensions of a visitor’s life, including the physical, the intellectual, the social, and the emotional.” (1999: 153)

All these different experiences were used by individuals to affirm and (re)validate their diverse identity narratives that will be analysed later in this Chapter.

My research suggests that visitors had and sought emotional responses in Holocaust exhibitions and these emotions played a crucial role in visitors' engagement and interpretation process. I deduce from my analysis that the relationship between visitor and museum indicated that individuals sought connections between themselves and the museum visit which they were experiencing both in an intellectual and emotional way (Smith 2011; Mason 2018). Initial observations from the data suggested that certain emotional responses were common, regardless of visitors' backgrounds such as empathy, interest, sadness, anger, as well as hope and inspiration (Chapter 7). These emotional reactions were evoked by particular exhibits, photographs, audio recordings and/or testimonies (Chapter 7). Exhibitions personalise the victims' perspective through a vast collection of photographs, storytelling and survivors' testimonials including meetings in the NHCM with survivors which produced emotional responses as did narratives that had personal or familial associations with the displays (a familiar object or person exhibited in the

²⁹ Pekarik, Doering & Karns’ empirical and comprehensive study (eight studies at nine different Smithsonian museums) led them to develop a taxonomy in relation to museum experience, particularly those moments that visitors considered to be ‘satisfying museum experiences’ (1999: 153-154).

gallery, for instance). Visitors felt more connected with the individual characters and their stories which encouraged visitors to experience certain emotions, which in turn are linked with motivation for museum visit.

These people (survivors) give us the motivation to come again, you realise these people will not be alive for ever. I think when we listened to Martin speak, that gave us a lot of motivation to come back and listen to more didn't it?

(NHCM5b: Male, Staff in Energy Company, English)

It is clear from the current research that the visitors' emotional responses appeared to be a personal experience, confirming the existing studies in the field (Smith 2011; Schorch 2014; Mason 2018). Importantly, these personal emotional experiences along with individuals' personal and social background are considered to play a central role in the development of memories, and in the meaning making process (Hamilakis 2014:106; Falk 2009, 2013; and Alelis et al. 2013:429). Furthermore, in this study visitors who had already visited Holocaust exhibitions and sites indicated strong interest during the visit, as well as enthusiasm for future visits to similar sites. Interestingly these results are different from those in Nawjin et al.'s (2015:9) study which showed that visitors with prior experiences of difficult heritage expect to be less amazed by a future visit. Some of the main reasons that motivated people to visit Holocaust exhibitions and sites multiple times, as they emerged from the analysis, was their interest in the talks given by Holocaust survivors', their need to seek and connect with their heritage and pass feelings and knowledge related to their heritage to the next generation, and a general interest in the Holocaust (i.e. finding out more of how and why these things happened back then?).³⁰ More specifically, several visitors at both sites have visited, or were willing to visit the same exhibitions more than one time. For example, a couple of participants had visited the NHCM six times due to their special interest in survivors' testimonies. The historical narrative at the NHCM is primarily based on a wide range of visual

³⁰ More detailed analysis and discussion about visitors' motivations to Holocaust exhibitions is presented in 6.3 section.

materials, particularly of historic photographs, audio-visual recordings, and material artefacts belonging to victimized groups. It also incorporates a number of audio-visual survivor testimonies, besides the frequent live testimonies, giving a compelling insight about different aspects of the Holocaust. According to Tony Kushner, “testimony is so skilfully and smoothly presented that there is rarely any dissonance either within the different voices of the survivors or between their collective testimony and the rest of the exhibition. [...] At each stage there is testimony that is rich in power and emotion” (Kushner 2001: 91). The latter was documented in visitors’ interviews in this study (Chapter 7). For them, testimonies have triggered highly emotional reactions but also, they had motivated them to visit multiple times the centre, as it is reflected in the next example:

{Interviewer: What made you visit the museum today?}

NHCM5b: Er, specifically today was Arek, speaking. Yeah, so we follow the Facebook page and we saw that it was coming up, so, yeah, we’ve come to see that.

NHCM5a: So, we’ve came to see him, and we came to see, uhm who was it last time...

NHCM5b: Err, Martin last time. [Martin Stern was here] last time we came as well.

NHCM5a: Uhm, but have come just to see the museum as well, haven’t we? So, yeah.

{Interviewer: have you ever visited a similar museum? Either a Holocaust museum or a museum about a genocide?}

NHCM5b: There was...I-we’ve been to the National Memorial Arboretum... err, near Litchfield a couple of times, and they’ve got, uhm, a few uhm...it’s not particularly about a genocide, but there’s something in there about the, uhm,

the Burma and Sumatra Railway. Uhm, I went to the Imperial War Museum a few weeks ago, didn't I?

NHCM5a: Yes

NHCM5b: When I was in London, and they've got a...an entire floor dedicated to it now, which was a lot of the same material as here, uhm, and then there was something else we've seen as well, but I can't remember what it was...

(NHCM5: Couple, HR (a) and Staff in Energy Company (b), English)

Here it is evident that people feel comfortable with “difficult” past. They appeared to be familiar with the exhibition strategies and the ideas presented (Falk 2016). They do not appear to be shocked or horrified by what they experience and see but rather the visits, including those to the National Memorial Arboretum, are part of remembering the victims who have suffered and demonstrating their empathy with them. Their visits reinforce what they already feel and understand, rather than experiencing new feelings or ideas (Chapter 7).

Importantly, the NHCM is explicitly a Holocaust museum, with a binary mission to educate visitors about the causes and events of the Holocaust and to communicate the memory of the Holocaust in order to promote awareness around human rights issues, by focusing on the individual's responsibility, according to the museum's website. The survivors' testimonies are a highly important element of the historical representation of the Holocaust, and these events often attracts the interest and attention of the visitors in the Centre. This attitude is amplified as survivors talk about Jewish life before the war, issues of identity, or their experience of Kindertransport, giving accounts of each stage of their process, from exclusion and persecution, to extermination. Additionally, visitors also have the opportunity to ask survivors questions face to face, or online. The survivors' testimonies are advertised mainly through the Centre's website. More specifically, the testimonies and live talks with the survivors are advertised on the homepage of their website, along with their

“For Ever Project”, which is dedicated to keeping survivors’ stories alive.³¹ Moreover, there is section on their site dedicated to survivors’ biographies, where users can select a survivor by clicking on their picture and read about their lives and stories, sometimes even being able to listen to part of their testimony. This enables individuals who wish to visit the Centre to be prepared for what they may experience in their future visit, or to decide about their experience of the Centre by choosing to visit for specific survivor’s testimony. The centre has embraced emotive approaches to represent past such as testimonies, where emotional attachment with individuals’ stories is fostered and feelings of empathy are engendered. The creation of empathy may help people understand other people feelings, thoughts and experiences, even when we don’t share them as well as allow visitors to feel and understand the past- to get a sense of being there (de Bruijn 2014; Trofanenko 2014).

To continue with visitors’ reasons for visiting the Centre, people have also visited its exhibitions either because they wanted to experience the memorial gardens during a different season (i.e. spring or summer time), or because they commented that they felt overwhelmed and needed another visit to emotionally and intellectually comprehend what they had already experienced.

Uhm...I think somewhere in the middle, because I think sometimes when you read it and then you need to go away, and digest it, because you read it but you’re not taking it all in because it’s so much that, sometimes when you’re away from it and then at home, you think “oh gosh” that was really...I mean it affects you when you’re here, but, for me personally, that is just how I work, I have to go home and digest information, and, and you know, sort of think about it then, and then it’d probably affect you, just slightly more than, but that’s just me personally really. {...} but I want to come again at a different time

³¹ This project contains pre-filmed talks from survivors and the audience can have a question & answer session with one of them, even when they are no longer alive through the vast set of pre-recorded replies.

of year, so I-we can have a proper look the gardens as well, because you know, they've got some significance as well, but uhm, it's a bit cool today, so yeah (h). Yes, because I don't think you can take it all in at once, [you can't] because there's so much to read, and you can't process it all

(NHCM3: Female, School Secretary, English)

The JM, on the other hand, is a museum dedicated to the history of British Jewry with its main aim being to promote an understanding of Jewish culture, history, and identity in Britain. The Jewish Museum's Holocaust gallery is hosted in a small section and is situated within the broadened historical and cultural narratives of British Jewish life by presenting the story of a British-Jewish Holocaust survivor. The JM was designed with educational aims in mind, however, they have hosted memorial events, talks and online exhibitions devoted to the Holocaust, in order "to ensure that Holocaust is remembered for generations", as it is stated on their website.

Nevertheless, the small, but permanent Holocaust gallery does not appear on the main page of the museum's website, instead the user has to navigate to it via the permanent exhibitions section of the website. Hence, participants' narratives in the JM showed that many of them didn't expect the Holocaust section in the museum, even though some of them purposely came to the site to learn and engage with Jewish culture and history. Visitors' responses documented in this study, show that individuals with a Jewish background or special interest to the Holocaust spent quite some time in the Holocaust display. Thus, it is essential to understand how museums may affect visitors' engagement to difficult histories based on visitors' experiences and motivations. The next examples show individuals from of a Jewish background who expressed a strong interest in learning and exploring either their past, or Jewish culture and history. Further to this, these participants have visited other Holocaust sites within a short-period of time.

{Interviewer: it's your first time in this museum?}

JM11a: It's my first time.

JM11b: I've been here before but quite a long time ago, before it was, erm, made bigger I think, yeah.

{Interviewer: Have you recently visited any similar museums related to the Holocaust, or maybe a war museum?}

JM11a: I went to the war museum last year.

JM11a: Uhm...I can't remember now.

JM11a: Yes, in London yeah, yeah the war museum in London.

JM11b: I went to the war museum quite a few years ago, but last year I went to Berlin, so I saw the Holocaust museum there, and I've been to Israel...and seen quite a lot of things in Eastern Europe as well.

{Interviewer: And, in your opinion, what is the purpose of this museum?}

JM11b: For us, or generally?

{Interviewer: For you.}

JM11a: Uhm...it's important that Jews know their roots and keep their heritage alive, and that other people understand, because it is a very persecuted...race always has been, and, uhm, I think we need to keep the Holocaust memories alive and understand where history went, and unfortunately, it's been repeated many times...you know, in Serbia and all the rest, so we're still not learning, but

uhm...yeah, people need to know where they come from, in order to know where they're going I think.

JM11a: I think for me because I've spent time in Israel, and uhm, I've been brought up Jewish my children have intermarried and have...intermarried into religious relationships, and so for me, I feel I'm the last of...a kind of...you know from my parents onwards that's actually going to carry this forward so I think it's vital that I keep something...of my heritage from that, and then this all, this provides a platform, so if my grandchildren ever like you've done...and come in the future this place will be, always be here.

(JM11: Females, Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)

As it will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, it seems that people are coming to the museum with an agenda and select visiting museums based on their personal interest and background (Falk 2016; Paris & Mercer 2002). Here they visited the museum because of their need to keeping their stories alive because their children have married out and this adds a personal element to their interest in their Jewish identity and in turn to their engagement with the exhibition.

By examining the visitors' motivations that made them choose to visit exhibitions, and their expectations and perceptions about a museum/heritage sites, help better understand how and why individuals engage with past in the way they do, as suggested by Poria et al. (2006, 2009). From the next visitors' transcript, it can be seen how a visitor's motivations for entering the museum and interest interplayed shaping her current museum experience.

{Interviewer: Have you ever visited this museum before?}

JM14: Yep.

{Interviewer: Have you lately visited any similar museums, either related to the Holocaust, or a war museum?}

JM14: Yes, I went to the Berlin Holocaust museum a few months ago.

{Interviewer: And, are you particularly interested about something within the museum?}

JM14: Uhm...yes. I'm very interested in Jewish history, generally. Uhm, it's a nice museum to visit. Uhm...and the thing they were showing about Suffragettes, Jewish Suffragettes and that was really interesting to me.

{Interviewer: Do you have any personal connections or relationships to the Jewish culture?}

JM14: yes, through my err, my dad's family is Jewish.

{Interviewer: on this floor, where have you spent the most of your time?}

JM14: Uhm...I was on a tour of, err, particularly about, err, the focus was courage, so uhm people who came as refugees or the Suffragettes, uhm...yeah, mostly what was on the tour.

(JM14: History Student, English with Jewish background)

These responses demonstrate a correlation between emotion and identity-related motivations as it is proposed by Falk (2009, 2013). Visitors' engagement with the past was emotional and subjective, drawing from their desire to learn more about their culture, connect with their past and keep their heritage alive (Chapter 7). They also viewed the past as an important lesson for future generations as visitors expressed in the next example:

{Interviewer: Have you ever visited a similar museum? Maybe one related to the Holocaust, or another genocide?}

NHCM7a: Yeah, nine weeks ago I went to, uhm, Krakow, and I visited Auschwitz.

NHCM7b: No, I didn't go with her to Auschwitz, I...uh, went, in June to Theresienstadt in, just outside of Prague, and...we've both been to Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem, and we've been to the Imperial War Museum, to the, uh, Holocaust exhibition there.

{Interviewer: in your opinion what is the purpose of this museum?}

NHCM7b: Oh it's educational, to, it's really...I mean it was set up, uhm, not by a Jewish organisation, it w-was set up with government help, so, it's to educate people, uh, and...we were talking earlier some of us about we don't understand about the deniers, you know, and you, [how can...] how can you escape, what is there pictorially in history, so, uh...

NHCM7a: Say it never happened.

NHCM7a: It's for future generations, future generations must be educated, there are a lot of children, and their parents...a lot of children and their parents that have never met Jewish people...that have no idea what we're like. There's a lot of stories, a lot of myths, uhm, it was once thought we had horns, years ago, ad uhm, it's got to be education for the next generation, so it should never happen again.

*(NHCM7: Female and Male, Retired (a) and
Business owner (b), Jewish English)*

In the same vein, Poria et al. (2006b) highlight the link between interest in knowledge, and the motivation to pass on the past represented within museum to younger generations, as well as the willingness to feel emotionally involved. Moreover, there were visitors with no connection or relationship to Jewish culture who have frequently been visiting Holocaust sites around the world reflecting a general interest in the Holocaust.

{Interviewer: Lately, have you visited any similar museums or exhibitions, either related to the Holocaust, or a war museum?}

Wife: Yes, yes.

Husband: Quite a number, umm.

Husband: Uhm.....uhm.....Prague, we possibly went to-

Husband: -A museum, and where was the other place we went to, with all that...

Wife: Budapest?

Husband: Budapest.

Wife: And Auschwitz.

Husband: Yeah, we visited Auschwitz as well, yeah.

{Interviewer: in your opinion, what is the purpose of this museum?}

Wife: Education.

Husband: I think it's important we don't forget what happened, yeah. To hopefully stop it happening again

{Interviewer: are you particularly interested in something in this floor, the history of the Jews, or the Holocaust maybe?}

Wife: I was interested in the story of Leon³², through there, and I was also interested in the talk, when she talked about the kindertransport and the suitcase.

(JM16: Female and Male, Teacher (a) and Handyman (b), English)

³² Leon was a British Holocaust survivor and the main character of the Holocaust gallery at the JM.

JM17: I am interested in Jewish history, and I've been to similar museums in Berlin, and Jerusalem, and Prague.

{Interviewer: In your opinion, what is the purpose of this museum?}

JM17: Uhm...to keep Jewish history alive.

(JM17: Female, Caretaker, German)

{Interviewer: Have you ever visited a similar museum?}

NHCM1a: Err...we went to the...the one in Prague...Terezín.

NHCM1b: we went to Terezín.

NHCM1a: And the...memorial to the...murdered Jews in Berlin. Uhm...the Holocaust exhibition in the Imperial War Museum. Uhm loads of others.

*(NHCM1: Female and Male, Paralegal (a) and
Recruitment Staff (b), English)*

Other visitor from this study explained that coming to the NHCM would be useful for her upcoming visit to Auschwitz:

{Interviewer: what made you visit the museum today?}

NHCM2a: we just like his-our history, see what, see what, you know what happened in the past, and how...yeah...how you can learn things from what happened....

NHCM2b: We know it's here, we've been talking about coming for a long time...and today is the day we thought we'd, we'd come.

NHCM2c: I go to Auschwitz in December, so I thought it'd be quite good to...have a look round.

(NHCM2: Two Females and a Male, Van Driver (a), Bus Driver (b) and IT System Auditor (c), English)

There were also visitors who had visited the same Holocaust sites multiple times because they are driven by their children general interest in history.

{Interviewer: Have you visited any similar museums related to the Holocaust, or even a war museums recently?}

JM4: Well we live right next door to the Imperial War Museum, so we kind of flit in and out of there, we don't sort of...it's...it's the kind of subject which you don't want to do too much of it at one go. But, he's of the age now, where, he's sort of interested in history and culture, and all the sort of thing, so...he's starting to understand it. I've been to places like the Anne Frank museum many years ago, uhm...but that's about it.

{Interviewer: In your opinion, what is the purpose of this museum?}

JM4: Er...to inform people of Jewish culture, yeah. I mean I know I've realised looking round here that...even though I know that there has been quite a big Jewish presence in London for years, I don't really know...much about them their culture and customs.

(JM4: Male, English)

In another group of studies, Chen (1998) distinguishes between visitors to heritage sites according to two main motives: interest in knowledge and personal benefit (e.g relaxation, sightseeing, recreation), while other studies (McCain and Ray 2003; Lisle 2004; Muzaini et al. 2007: 29) point out that interest in searching for family history or personal connection to the site (e.g. families of victims) differentiates regular visitor and individuals with a special interest. However, here interviews indicated individuals who have not been to similar sites before, but considered them as

important and must-see places, expressed feelings of shame of not visiting previously.

{Interviewer: What made you visit the museum today?}

JM9: Well I'm ashamed to say, given all the wonderful, uhm exhibitions here, that I came for Asterix (h), because of...err growing up with him, so that's why I came for the exhibition.

{Interviewer: Have you ever visited the museum before?}

JM9: I have to say to my shame that I didn't know it existed until I saw the...the advertisement.

{Interviewer: Have you recently visited any similar museums related to the Holocaust, or maybe a war museum?}

JM9: No, no I haven't, so this is the first time.

(JM9: Male, Retired Teacher, English)

It appeared that the temporary Asterix exhibition housed in the JM brought people into contact with the main displays, including the Holocaust gallery, providing an interesting contrast to people who come specifically for the Holocaust. Those individuals either had a personal connection to Jewish culture, or they expressed a particular interest in WWII and Holocaust history. This implies that people may go, or prefer, visiting places that they are familiar with, even if the exhibitions are representing difficult pasts, such as the Holocaust. But with the aim of many Holocaust museums focused on promoting social justice, the question inevitably arises: how do these museums make a difference, when their visitors are already familiar with them and their engagement with the museum does not prompt any openness to new ideas. The role of selectiveness was also showcased in the participants' choices to visit Holocaust exhibitions/sites, which varied because they were driven by individual interest, preferences, and decision making. Equally, the

participants confirmed the usefulness of visiting these sites as they suggested that museum visits enable them to understand better the past and learn more about other cultures and customs. However, the reasons why people are interested in visiting Holocaust museums and sites have various possible explanations which are going to be analysed more thoroughly in the next section.

In this study, people appeared to visit the two-case study institutions triggered by mixed motivations. Some visitors were interested in order to search for and connect with their past and share it with their family members, expecting also an emotional experience. Other visitors had different expectations, confirming Bruner's (1991) observation that not all visitors' experiences are necessarily associated with identity issues. Some expected the visit to be an educational experience, while others regard it as an enjoyable and interesting day out, as well as emotional and thought provoking. Thus, it can be assumed that the same individual may be interested in several simultaneous experiences from the same site and visit (see figure 34).

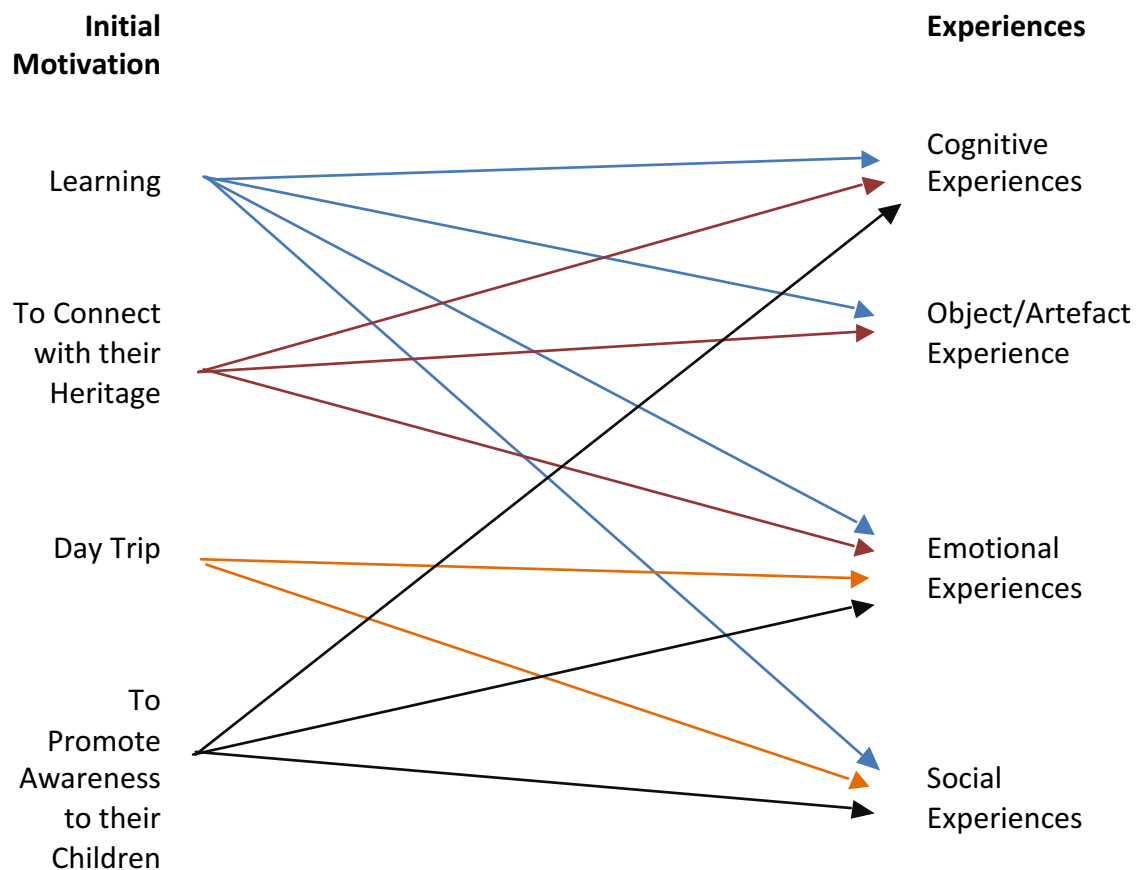


Figure 22. Key Argument of the Thesis.

Personalised experiences can be achieved, by exploring museum's emotional approaches and narratives in relation to visitors' biographies. But what actually influences visitors' decision to visit multiple times a museum exhibition over others is going to be discussed more analytically in the following section.

6.2 WHY DO INDIVIDUALS CHOOSE TO VISIT HOLOCAUST EXHIBITIONS: INSIGHTS FROM VISITORS' ANALYSIS

The stronger the motivation, the higher the level of satisfaction and engagement become, according to Csikszentmihalyi and Hemanson (1990, 1995). However,

motivations towards difficult exhibitions are diverse, and some of them are not fully explored. In this research, visitors perceived case studies institutions as an opportunity to fulfil:

- 1)** The need to satisfy curiosity and interest regarding Holocaust history and Jewish culture and religion.
- 2)** To participate in a meaningful social experience accompanied by family or friends.
- 3)** To seek part of their own identity and their desire to get emotionally involved.
- 4)** To promote awareness of what happened in the past to next generation

By looking at visitors' motivations, I wanted to explore if there is any linkage between visitors' motivations and their level of their engagement within museum exhibitions. The reasons that made people visit both museums were general motivations such as a day out, and specific motives related to a particular site, like specific interest in WWII world and Holocaust history, and/or because of other exhibitions taking place in the museums at that time, as it is seen in figure 35.

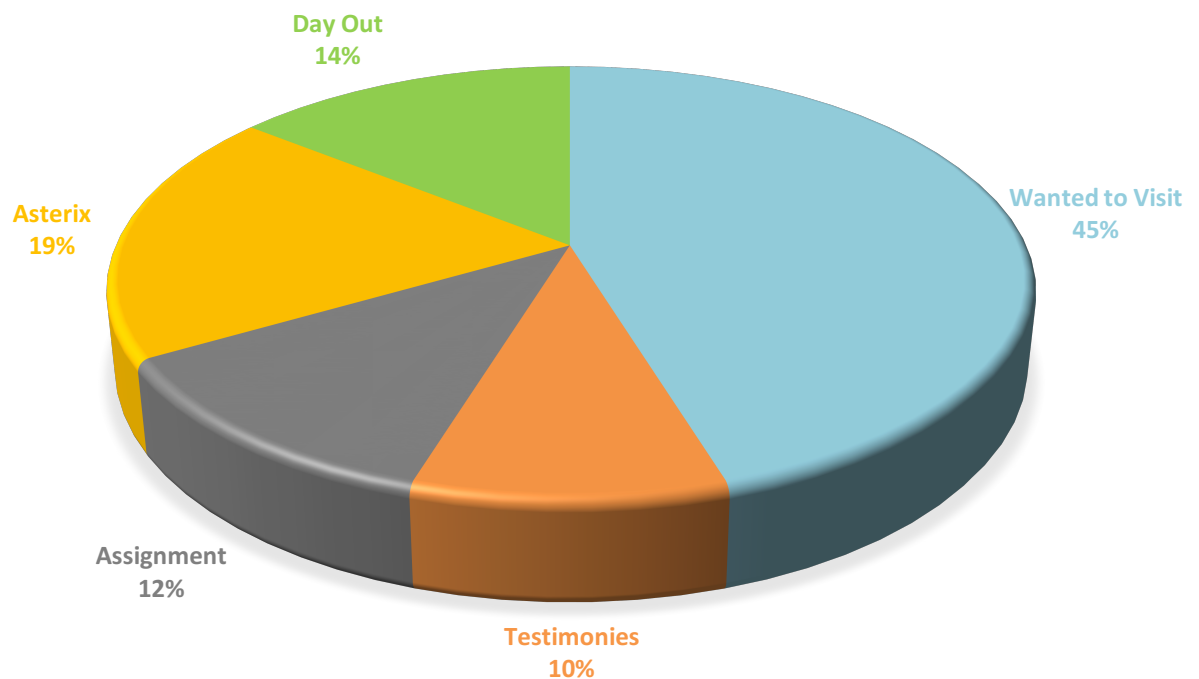


Figure 23. Visitors' motivation at the both museums.

Wanted to Visit This Museum: The visit was programmed as part of a tour specifically to see the museum, they had previous knowledge and interest in the museum, in the Holocaust History and in the WWII History as well as they wanted to connect with their own heritage.

Assignment: The visit was made as part of their work.

Day Out: Visitors were near the museum for other reasons. But some of them had preliminary knowledge and interest in the museum so they decided to visit it and others were looking for a place to spend their free time with their children.

Asterix (Temporary Exhibition at the Jewish Museum): Their primary desire was to visit this temporary exhibition but they also visited the Holocaust Gallery.

Testimonies: They visited the museum mainly to listen to survivors' talks at the NHCM.

Broadening historical knowledge wasn't the only key motivator: compassion/empathy, curiosity, searching for their own past was among the reasons that triggered the museum visit. The multifunctional nature of these sites provides a variety of meanings. Hence, this diversity makes identifying specific motivations and experiences a difficult process (Biran 2011). As in many cases, a museum visit

consists of more than a single motivation. The reasons which inspire and engage people to visit sites with difficult histories are still rather complex as different individuals are looking for different experiences motivated by variety of reasons. This factor makes the motivation analysis more complicated, as it is difficult to apply generic motivation to this kind of study, and particularly when individuals are not aware of what exactly they were visiting as was the case with some visitors in both institutions.

In this study, individuals anticipated seeing, feeling and learning what happened in the past as a way of preventing such events from happening again. The next participants were parents who visited the museum as they believed that it is a “must-see” site and a good place for their children to learn and engage with the past.

{Interviewer: What made you visit the museum today?}

JM1b: It's something I hadn't done

JM1a: Uhm, I haven't done it either.

JM1b: And, er, yeah, nor has my friend Jane, so we just decided to come, because it was close to where...we are.

JM1a: And just, we were interested in the histories we would find here.

JM1b: But also, to bring the children here.

JM1b: It's good for them to learn.

{Interviewer: Have you recently visited any museums related to Holocaust exhibitions, or a war museum?}

JM1a: Not lately

JM1b: No

JM1a: I went to the one, in the, uh, Imperial War Museum, yeah...and Caleb went to that, but we didn't realise he wasn't allowed in, but uhm...he was, he came...we came in the exit, quite by mistake (h).

*(JM1: Females, Cash Officer (a) and Civil Servant (b),
English with Jewish Background)*

Furthermore, visitors' comments on the visitor book at the NHCM showed similar ideas and feelings, viewing the museum visit at the centre as:

A must visit centre, informative and very peaceful. The centre is a must do for schoolchildren wanting to know more about what has happened to the Jews but also a must for people wanting to understand and perhaps help prevent further persecution of not only Jews but anyone who is singled out because of religion/disability/colour.

(NHCM15: Female, English)

"Must visit if you are against barbarism" One thing I can say everybody must visit this place irrespective of ethnicity. Though this museum talks a lot about Jewish Holocaust, but there is a hidden message and an alert to all civilised people to stand up against barbarism.

(NHCM17: English)

Tarlow (2005 in Isaac and Cakmak 2013) suggests that visitors visit difficult heritage sites/exhibitions, especially those are connected to the Holocaust, because "it is the thing to do". However, this "must see" experience is interpreted by some scholars (Lennon and Foley 2000) as a more passive process of observing others' pain and suffering. In this research, for visitors with personal links to the Holocaust, the visit was more than "the thing to do" experience. They were motivated by their desire to come close and further explore their history and culture, which allowed them to get

emotionally involved with their past, and gain an understanding of their own identity:

JM11a: Uhm, my father's Jewish, and uhm, so I wanted to find out a bit more about my heritage, and show my daughter her background.

JM11b: Erm, I've known uhm...my friend Stephanie for a couple of years, and her background is a very interesting background because of the mix of religions. So, and my background is fully Jewish, so I-we have been talking about coming here for quite a long time, and so today was the day we decided to actually come here, but it's also very emotional for me...because of the Jewish background and keeping roots.

(JM11: Females, Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)

Visitors recalled and evaluated their own situation, and related to others' experiences and emotions. By thinking of their life or past situations, they seemed to engage with the museum narratives by empathizing with others, stimulating memories, thoughts and emotions that have to do with themselves (Chapter 7).

JM11a: Well for me I knew...uhm obviously word of mouth my father's told me my history 'cos all that generation have died now, my father was very old when he had me, so err, he told me that my grandfather was a Jewish tailor, and when I saw this here, that there were tailors, I was thinking "oh it's true" although I know it's true, it's quite emotional to know it really is true, and uhm, things my father told me you know, I had a Jewish upbringing but without the religion, and uhm, so it's...I want to find out more about where I come from, I know it was from Poland...and with the situation now w-with immigrants and you know, I say to people "look, I'm from...Eastern Europe (laugh)" you know what I mean, it's like I can't say, "you can't have immigrants here" it's ridiculous 'cos I'm from...immigrants...uhm...background, and er, fleeing persecution in the same way that a lot of people are. So, for me, uh yeah, it's eye opening really, to find out and hear the stories of the people, yeah.

JM11b: I think yes, much the same way, it's to hear the stories and to...uhm...that has an emotional impact because it's about, it's not about some distant person, it's about you yourself, and you can relate, to the pictures, and the...and the things going on. You can relate to persecution, you can relate to this feeling of...erm...of, of the Jewish population not carrying on, so...

(JM11: Females, Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)

Finally, the research unexpectedly indicated the visitors' desire to visit Holocaust related exhibitions and sites more than once, and the importance of these visits to them, to the extent that which it appeared they found the experience rewarding in some way. Heritage research points out that individuals visited difficult histories due to their need to feel the sense of shock or to challenge the security at their own experience (Packer 2008; Hughes 2008; Sharpley 2012; Gasby 2015). But the actual reasons behind people's choice to visit sites that evoke highly intense feelings and emotions are yet unclear, and not sufficiently explored to support that this is a prevalent attitude. Visitors' narratives in this study cannot confirm this assumption. In the next section, I am going to continue analysing individuals' motivations in relation to both case studies, by looking at this time the visitors' entry narratives.

6.3 HOW DID IDENTITY-MOTIVATIONS AFFECT MUSEUM EXPERIENCE?

Doering and Pekarik (1996:20-25) support that “visitors are likely to enter a museum with an *entry narrative* and these entry narratives are likely to be self-reinforcing, directing learning, behaviour and perceptions of satisfaction”. Similarly, Falk suggests that entry narratives can reveal the individual's motivations for visiting the museum and in turn, “they could best be understood to satisfy one or more personal identity related needs” (2013:113). Thus, identity is perceived as a central aspect of museum engagement (Falk 2009, 2103) but the question lies in how do identity-motivations shape our experience within the museum? To answer this question, I drew upon Falk's argument that “we do not have a single identity, but a complex identity system, which can be expressed collectively or individually, at different times and in

different circumstances, and hold different roles, positions and responsibilities” (Falk 2013:113). Identity is, thus, a reflection and reaction to both the social and physical world but it is also subconsciously influenced by the family, cultural and personal factors. In this study, the findings confirmed the impact of the visitors' identity related motivations to the way they engaged with the past. At the JM, the period in which the interviews were conducted coincided with the school half term and consequently, some of the participants were parents who visited the museum with their children. They considered the visit was a good opportunity for their children to get a good understanding of the history and culture.

JM4: Yeah...I mean you still get the sort of horrible sense of what's gone on and you know it's the thing about it's important to keep it...alive, so people know about it...uhm, but I know with, with m-my son there this is er something they'll be studying in more detail at school and they have stuff coming up soon. So, I think he needs to sort of get a good understanding of what's been going on. I think, I think for kids as well until they learn a bit about, you know, history and the kind of circumstances at the time it's hard for them to kind of put it into some kind of context. Well, for all of us really. But, you know when you have got a bit of the history as a backdrop you can get a better understanding of what happened.

(JM4: Male, English)

This respondent was motivated to come to the museum by his son's desire and interest in history, as he was driven by the need to be “a good parent”. He decided to spend time in the museum with his son, and his engagement with the exhibition was influenced by his son who was keen to learn about the Holocaust history. Hence, our decisions are affected not only by identities such as gender, nationality, religious and racial/ethnic identities, but also from “little identities that respond to the needs and realities of specific moments and situation” (Falk 2013:113). At the JM, visitors with personal connections and backgrounds to Jewish culture anticipated to search and feel connected with their own heritage and past. Some visitors entered the JM without having any expectations about the emotional effect of the museum visit, but were willing to get emotionally involved. Therefore, they perhaps experienced more

intense feelings, developing an understanding which was drawn by their individual biographies. For instance:

{Interviewer: if possible, can you recall what you were expecting to find in the museum today?}

JM11a: I had no expectations, no.

JM11b: Uhm...I knew what was here...uhm, but I'm always fascinated by the people's stories going 'round, and stories, and the names, I've just found the name of an actor who is my best friend's family name, so I've just texted her...and said I've seen this name, and funnily enough her gran-her nieces and nephews, have become actors.

JM11b: And so I saw the name there, and I thought, oh, I'll just have to text her and say I've seen your father's name, as he was an actor 18...02, so it's such a historical place, not just for Jews, I think for everything and also the history of England, as well, it's a very important place.

(JM11: Females, Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)



Figure 24. "History: A British Story" exhibition at the JM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

These visitors' narratives corroborate the correlation between why they visited the museum, what they remembered, and how they experienced the museum visit and prove that motivation is real and can impact one's actual behaviour, attitude and understanding. Their experience wasn't purely educative; they anticipated getting emotionally involved with their roots and family past, and that appeared to be a central factor during their visit. They also viewed the museum as a place that preserves history, and teaches lessons for the future.

JM11b: But also, I think, don't you think that when you've seen the Holocaust and you've seen the horror of it and then you come here...this is kind of a place of hope as well, because...everything's here, and this can hopefully stay for the, for a long time in the future. So, you've got this little pocket of place, whatever happens to the Jews in England or anywhere, in Israel, whatever wars there are, you've got this little, you've got this little place, you've got places now in each of these countries where the Holocaust took place, very visual places, Berlin probably is the most, to me the most striking. Uhm...and you've got these reminders a-and so whatever's happened in the past.

JM11a: That's what a museum's function is to preserve history, and to you know, so like I say, if you don't know where you've come from, not just as an individual but as a people, we're human beings on this planet, then we don't know where we're going, and we have to learn from history. But, you know, unfortunately it's been so many horrors since the Holocaust...maybe you know, we just have to change countries' economies. The economy is why people go into war, because of an imbalance of money, erm, in terms of Hitler, he, I don't know quite what happened to him, but he just Chancellor initially of Germany, and I think he just got power-hungry. But, he tried to make it a financial issue and this is what turned the corner against the Jews, so yeah, we have to learn from history and we have to try and preserve...this is a museum basically a history condensed, and hopefully if people engage with it they can learn, even on a personal level.

JM11b: But a lot of people that come, like Jewish people, that come here would see their families on those walls...or see someone, knew a family or-

This thesis revealed that visitors experienced multiple emotions simultaneously such as interest, curiosity, anger, hope and sadness but also visitors felt upset or sorry (Chapter 7). According to the “feeling-is-for-doing” (Nawjin's et al. 2015) approach, emotional response is a motivator for behaviour. Particularly, Nawjin's et al.'s (2015:11-12) study shows that both expected negative, and positive emotions were associated with the behavioural intention to visit Holocaust memorial site. For instance, not only were shock and sadness important, but also interest, anger, fascination, disgust, pride, gratitude and compassion had positive outcome and played a role in decision-making. The same was evident in this study. The positive and negative emotions were the drivers for decision making, both in terms of how visitors experienced the museums (Chapter 7), and in other cases, their intentions to visit/revisit similar sites, as illustrated in the conversation of these two visitors:

JM11a: We're gonna go to the, hopefully to the section, do a little bit if I get time, but I would love to do a bit more research on my father 'cos erm trace him back to where he came from, my grandfather from Poland, so I'd like to find that out, I don't know if I've got time, how long it takes, but to know I have a personal connection in here means a lot to me. I'm sure it does to you.

(JM11: Females, Businesswoman (a), Jewish English)

This research was also able to draw several conclusions concerning the content of interpretation. Participants, who perceived the site as being part of their own heritage, appeared to seek information focused on their own past. This allowed them to feel connected to their personal history, and generated an emotional visiting experience. For those seeking to enrich their knowledge about others, the museum visit was described as an interesting, educative and thought-provoking experience (Chapter 7). In Nawjin's (2015) and Poria's (2009) research, those who were close to the Holocaust expected these feelings to be more intense compared to those with no connections. Firstly, their findings revealed clear differences among

those visitors who perceive the exhibition as being part of their own heritage, and those with no affinity to the heritage, in relation to their motivation to visit and their engagement. For example, those with connections to the site (Western Wall, in Jerusalem), showed a greater interest in learning, feeling emotional involvement, being connected to their heritage, and passing the past on to their children. On the contrary, it was apparent from my findings that it was not necessarily individuals with a personal connection to the heritage site that looked for an emotional experience within the sites, but also visitors who perceived the experience in these kind of sites as ones of leisure. In particular, at the NHCM, a family visited the museum as a leisure experience for their child and they described their experience as highly intense one. Although, they experienced a negative state of emotions like sadness, they expressed their desire to revisit the museum again (Chapter 7). Nevertheless, there is not enough evidence to propose that there is a link between the emotional engagements that occurred during their visit, with the need to revisit the centre. It seems that there is something rewarding within these experiences that triggers the need for emotional involvement within museum. According to Shedroff (2008:22 in Sharpley and Stone 2012) experience is a meaningful action, and “must include a personal sense of reality which is connected to one’s identity values and emotions will become a meaningful and valuable trip”. Thus, experience is subjective and unique providing personal meanings and significance to different situations.

CONCLUSION

By drawing on visitor comments (both through interviews and the visitor book), this chapter showed the reasons why people chose to visit these Holocaust exhibitions played a significant role in shaping the visitors’ interpretation of the Holocaust, as well as their level of emotional engagement. The visitors' identity motivations revealed that emotions and feelings are part of the museum experience, and interwoven with cognition, fostering thoughts and memories. Here, visitors made sense of the exhibitions through linking museum representation and interpretation

to their own entrance narratives. Notably, different individuals were interested in several simultaneous experiences, such as gaining knowledge, exploring their past and heritage, sharing their experience and connection with the past with their families, validating their identity and reinforcing their views as well as to getting emotionally involved. Furthermore, the reason that motivated them to go to these sites, in many cases more than singular; individuals visited the case studies institutions for a day out with their friends and families, to learn, to connect with their past, to listen live testimonies from Holocaust survivors or because they considered these exhibitions as “must-see” places. What I discovered confirms the findings from these earlier studies, and advances our understanding around the complexity and multi-layered nature of the museum experience and human behaviour.

As always, the way we observe something depends on our background and perspectives; it is this thesis’ understanding that individuals engaged and understood the past through their own unique and subjective way, that relied upon emotional commitment. Certain experiences and motivations that may have been silent, remained on an embodied level or lacked verbal expression. It is still uncertain whether the inner motivations and desires triggered individuals to visit these kinds of sites multiple times, but it is clear that both the positive and negative emotions that are evoked by these exhibitions are central to shaping museum experience. Finally, we may visit a site more than once, but we perceive museum visit differently each time, assuming that personal, social and context factors can change constantly (Falk 2000). This research study of visitors’ experience of the Holocaust exhibitions showed that the reasons behind museum visits, as well as other visitors’ behaviours, indeed influence visitors’ emotional and cognitive responses in many significant ways. In the next chapter I present and analyse in further detail the visitors’ emotional and intellectual responses, in order to understand the impact of emotional engagement in relation to not only how the past and present are understood, but how the past is used in the present.

CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS: MAKING SENSE OF THE PAST THROUGH EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In this section, I analyse visitors' responses to the JM and the NHCM. This chapter focuses on the individuals' emotional and intellectual engagement in both exhibitions, and shows the diverse ways in which people use, experience and engage with museum narratives. Moreover, in relation to the interest of museums acting as agents of social change, this thesis discusses the impact that emotional engagement might have on visitors' thinking, feelings and attitude. Based on visitors' studies (Austin 2002; Biran and Poria 2012, 2011; Isaac and Cakmak 2014), difficult histories appear to stimulate strong emotional engagement. Accordingly, the idea of emotions and feelings being conveyed within these sites are important elements in understanding the individuals' engagement (Weaver et. al 2017). Thus, this study seeks to bring the voices of visitors into the foreground. This section contributes to the argument of not only how emotional engagement influences the way that visitors respond to the past and present, but also how the past is used in the present and to advance our understanding regarding the impact of museum. Data here have been used to demonstrate the complex and diverse ways that individuals make meanings and respond to the museum's stories and the way they integrate this within their own biographies. The interview testimonies generated by this research were approached as personal stories, from which meaning derives by both theoretical frameworks and visitors' responses aiming to bring the voices of visitor into the foreground. Additionally, visitors' experiences based on interview data as

well as peoples' comments from the visitor's book (at the NCHM),³³ helped to form a rich, qualitative method from which to analyse and synthesise the findings

The way of representing a difficult past inevitably raises questions such as, how do visitors respond and contextualize their emotions in relation to the existing historical distance? And do these approaches contribute to inspire the individuals' desire and ability to take action? The data reveals the impact of Holocaust exhibitions, and the ways, such visits can affect the feelings and thoughts of the visitors. In this chapter, I argue that emotive strategies can be positive assets for the museum experience, but their impact is still complex and unclear. This research study of visitors' experience of the Holocaust Exhibition shows that emotional curatorial practices as well as visitors' behaviours, attitudes and ideas indeed influence visitors' emotional and cognitive responses in many significant ways. What emerged from the findings are emotional stories that revealed the complex, personal, social and psychological processes that taking place during the museum experience. Specifically, as it has already been discussed in Chapter 6, the visitors' engagement with historical narratives are shaped by personal memory; their identity; interests; motivations; curiosity about what living in the past would have been like; how they established hot or cold empathy with people from the past; and how they interacted with the material world. The most common type of impact or change reported by visitors where emotions and feelings of sadness, hope, appreciation, empathy, affirmation and new knowledge and understanding. The message conveyed by visitors' emotional responses in this Chapter is that engaging with the Holocaust involved remembering what happened and also ensuring that similar events do not happen again.

³³Here, I looked at approximately 20 comments from current visitor's book at the NHCM, but only 11 out of the 20 fragments have been considered useful in this chapter analysis due to their relationship to the study subject matter.

In this chapter, I will present fragments from the visitors' interviews and comments from visitors' book (at the NHCM) in order to provide a richer sense of the interpretive act of the visitors within museum. The methodology of this thesis is focused on gaining insights into visitors' narratives to obtain a more nuanced understanding as to how and why visitors responded to the museums' invitation to become emotionally engaged. Thus, I took detailed fieldwork notes in order to record the experiences unfolding within and around me. On topics such as the visitors' tone, gestures, and rhythm. Participants were asked to respond to questions about how they felt during the visit and why; what part of the exhibitions were most significant for them; along with the reasons that made them to visit these exhibitions. The analysis of this study involved coding responses (from both interviews and visitor's book comments) into sub-themes, followed by identification and categorization of sub-themes into broader thematic categories using the qualitative software NVivo. Overall, the analysis of the findings indicated that there were five main elements that shaped and informed the way that visitors engaged and responded to the past, and its meaning to the present within Holocaust exhibitions, which are the following memory, empathy, material, cultural and narratives, as well as by linking the past with current social events. This built upon other visitors' research, that explored the diverse ways that visitors construct meanings toward past in different context such as "interpreting, emoting, remembering and embodying" (Wise 2011:91) and "remembering; imagining and empathizing; explaining and interpreting; believing and belonging; and perceiving the material" (Marroni 2015:126).

7.1 MEMORY AND REMEMBERING

Visitor narratives indicated the diverse ways they engaged and made sense of the past, and revealed different kinds of emotions and levels of emotional involvement that can take place within a museum visit. Identity played an integral role in the museum engagement, and the Holocaust became meaningful to individuals through their emotional and personal experiences, whilst they were discovering salient

aspects of their own lives within museum exhibitions. Museum visits in both museums evoked both positive and negative emotions that were important in the way visitors constructed and activated meanings. There were five main elements that influenced the participants' engagement with the historical narratives in the present. Firstly, they engaged with museum narratives through specific memories that were related to their own biographies, experiences and previous museum visits. Memory is closely linked to feelings, imagination, sensations and emotions (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 4) and for many visitors in both of the case studies, what they experienced at the museums brought back memories of what they had seen at other museums related either to the Holocaust and WWII, or more broadly, of visits to other heritage sites. This suggests that museum experience allows them to recall memories on every new museum visit of previous visits. For instance, a visitor at the NHCM explains how a very old memory of previous visit motivated her to visit the centre again.

Uhm...I came here when I was with school about, over ten years ago, and I've always had an interest in the Holocaust and, uhm...twentieth-century history, So, I've always mentioned it and remembered it so we just decided to come back, and have a visit.

(NHCM1a: Female, Paralegal, English)

After I asked another visitor at the JM if there was anything in the exhibition that gave her an emotional reaction and how it made her feel, she vividly described her experience when she first visited the museum twenty years ago and met the Leon, the main character of the Holocaust exhibition, who gave a talk to her school group. Her recent experience in the museum triggered memories of how she felt back then, as well as details of Leon appearance and clothes. Those old, but powerful emotional memories, made her spend more time in the Holocaust section and emotionally engage with the past.

I...came as a student to the museum when I was...probably nearly 20 years ago and we saw him speak before he died, yeah, I remember him, uhm he was very

small (laugh), and we were all taller than him, and we were about eleven or twelve (laughing whilst saying this) and uhm, yeah I remembered we, we was, I was probably, it was when the museum was in Finchley...and we came from my school on the trip and he uhm, and we all cried and it was very sad. So, I was thinking about it, and I remember when he died it was in the newspaper, and I felt quite uhm (voice trembled) ...moved. I mean we had no connection beyond that, but I think, uhm and my friend worked here and she...went through the archives, she was a curator and assistant here for a while, and she said you could feel his, that he never really, well obvious never recovered, but his kind of manic...I don't know, keep obsessive, keep hoarding of things, and uhm so I always felt quite moved, even though I never met him because I feel like it was a... it's very vivid because the talk he gave I remember him giving that talk to us, and it's the same, or very similar experience as he talks about, and I remember like, his talks about the clothes that they were wearing, and things like that.

(JM14: Female, Civil Servant, English with Jewish background)

Other visitors' comments indicated that the museum experience not only brought back memories from other media such films, or previous visits to Auschwitz, but also fostered their existing knowledge and feelings.

I visited Auschwitz some years ago and now visiting Laxton. It just reinforces everything I learnt on that visit, the centre is a must do for schoolchildren wanting to know more about what has happened to the Jews but also a must for people wanting to understand and perhaps help prevent further persecution of not only Jews but anyone who is singled out because of religion/disability/colour.

(NHCM15: Female, English)

I saw it a long time ago, and whenever I, 'cos I play the piano, I bought the piece and I couldn't play the piece without crying...and I've not seen it since, but now Olivia's here I want her to see the film, 'cos I couldn't bring myself to it again, yeah it's... I just remember the girl in red, it's all in black and white. I remember where they hose them, where he wanted to give water to the Jews when they were in the...and he ma-pretended that he was hosing them off to be cruel, but

really it was for water...and I think Goebbels or whoever it was, was laughing but he didn't realise he was tricking him into thinking that they were...h-he was gonna harm them with this water but they were desperate for drink. I remember that, I remember a horrible one where a baby was thrown into the air, he used-was it Goebbels again? He was the worst, uhm, he would throw babies in the air and just shot them like pigeons and that was in the film, yeah I remember that bit (h). It is horrific, I'm just warning you Olivia.

(JM11a: Female, Businesswoman, Jewish English)

There are two more important reasons that can be considered as to why museums and heritage sites visits tend to fuel the memory of other visited museums or historic sites: Firstly, the museums present the same type of contents, or present it similarly (a type of display that has a particular structure, such as showcases and text panels, for example) which makes it easier for visitors to make these links between different museum visits; Secondly, museum visits are a unique and sometimes rare experience for people, therefore, to a certain extent it becomes a special occasion that is more easily remembered; for example, learning something new, experience different feelings or seeing things through a different lens that is deemed significant. This follows on from some of the ideas expressed by Sandell (2007), according to whom, museums have an "extra-ordinary" character that enables them to influence peoples' perceptions.

Another important aspect of engaging with the past during a museum visit, is memories related to the individuals' own past, as perceived in the visitors' responses. The museum visits triggered emotional rapprochement with the past through personal and family memories, especially for the visitors of a Jewish background. In the first place, some visitors perceived history to be something more than simply acquiring knowledge or information. From the Jewish visitors' interviews at the JM, engaging and interpreting history was about connecting with their ancestors and their roots. The JM is not a museum solely focused on Holocaust, rather it is devoted to the Jewish history and culture (Chapter 4), thus many of the participants who visited the museum appeared to be Jewish or they had a Jewish

connection or background. Consequently, the museum visit at the JM appeared to have a more intense impact upon Jewish visitors by bringing family memories into present, but this response does not align with the museum's initial intentions for the exhibition based on their mission statement of Board of trustees, as it is stated in their website. These responses convey the importance of curatorial choices and the need to consider, based on visitors' experience, how these practices can affect visitors' engagement with the Holocaust. For many, but not all visitors specifically in the Jewish Museum, identity related visits were central of the museum experience. In these cases, the visitors' engagement was deep and intense, as they felt connected to the museum stories and therefore with the past. For example, participants describe:

JM11a: Uhm, my father's Jewish, and uhm, so I wanted to find out a bit more about my heritage, and show my daughter her background. I know my history. My father told me my history. My granddad was a Jewish tailor. When I saw it here (the tailor section), I said it's true. Although I know it is true. It is quite emotional to know it's true and all these stories. I want to find more about where I come from (...). When you know where you came from, you know where you go. We have to know where we come from not only as individuals but also as people as human beings. We have to learn from the history. There are so many horrors since Holocaust. We have to change the countries' economies. Economies is the why people go to war(...). We need to learn from history, we need to preserve our history. People can engage either in a personal level. I have a personal connection. It means a lot for me.

JM11b: Erm, I've known uhm...my friend Stephanie for a couple of years, and her background is a very interesting background because of the mix of religions. So, and my background is fully Jewish, so I-I w-we have been talking about coming here for quite a long time, and so today was the day we decided to actually come here, but it's also very emotional for me...because of the Jewish background and keeping roots.

(JM11: Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)

For some of the participants, the reason that made them visit was to search their past, and pass that knowledge to the next generation. It was both an opportunity to learn more about their culture and attach themselves to their roots, and to build relationships and share the museum experience with their family, as these visitors explained:

JM11a: We're gonna go to the, hopefully to the section, do a little bit if I get time, but I would love to do a bit more research on my father 'cos erm trace him back to where he came from, my grandfather from Poland, so I'd like to find that out, I don't know if I've got time, how long it takes, but to know I have a personal connection in here means a lot to me. I'm sure it does to you.

JM11b: Um hmm, it's nice that I brought my friend, because I think it's going to help her...come to terms with her past.

JM11a: Yeah, yeah, well Olivia (her daughter) is just learning (laughs).

JM11b: To keep my roots alive. I am fully Jewish. We had been talking with my friend for long time to come here. I am excited to be here. It is also emotional for me to be here because of my background. Many people came to see here their families in the walls or somebody of their families. I am the last one (of my family). It is vital for me to keep something from my heritage and this provides a platform for my grandchildren to become the future. This place will always be here. It is a historical place not only for Jewish people. It is about the history of England.

(JM11: Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)

Similarly, the next comment from visitors' book shows the need of people to visit these exhibitions in order to seek their family past.

I was moved to see that not just the Auschwitz I, Birkenau and Treblinka camps were talked about, but over lesser known sites, such as Ravensbruck, Bergin-Belsen and Mathausen (Home to the Stairs of Death). My great-Aunt was a survivor of both Birkenau and Ravensbruck, yet, this is the only museum I have

found that has covered the history of the camp, allowing me to have further information as to what happened to her during the war.

(NHCM 19: Male, English)

At this point, I need to note that when comparing responses from the NHCM and the JM, it seemed that the JM was more successful in eliciting this type of memories. Only 3 visitors at the NHCM talked about personal memories, compared to 10 people at the JM. This could partly be due to the nature and the content of the exhibition (Chapter 4) which enhances and validates both collective and personal memory and identity. However, non-Jewish visitors also related what they saw in their own lives and experiences as it is indicated by visitor's fragment:

I think it's more than just intellectually and feeling sad, for me, because...uhm, I think you can relate this back to your own lives, or reflect on that, uhm, for you own situations or hardships or things. I mean not to the extent, clearly, but you still have to same feelings and emotions, er, for things personally, so you can kind of relate to some of those things, such as, you know, talking about childhood, you know, you can relate to your own childhood, so I think that makes it more emotional for me, and why I would be more towards that way.

(NHCM5: Female, HR, English)

Here, the young visitor empathized deeply and made sense of the past by using information provided by survivor talk, and drawing on her own experience. As she experienced an empathetic connection with the Holocaust survivor, this appeared to possibly have a further impact on her. Young visitors could not draw directly on family memories in relation to museum narratives. Nevertheless, they drew on a range of other personal links, for example, confirmation of their own experiences of discrimination. These personal connections led to deeper and personal reflections on the past and present. In both case studies, the visit prompted them to emotionally reframe their own history or identity and to relate what they saw in the museums with their own experiences. Furthermore, research indicated that family stories were salient as how people make sense of the past, particularly in the Jewish museum. Interestingly, older visitors and, in particular Jewish visitors in the JM, personalized

their experience and were willing to share their stories with me. It may be because they sought out a museum visit with a purpose or they had more familiar experiences with objects and stories, represented at the museums, than the younger visitors might had (Paris and Mercer 2002).

In general, visitors made meanings in relation to their own histories, identity, memories and cultural narratives, as one might expect. It is believed that visitors engage and understand the museum stories by linking their personal biographies to objects, stories and ideas represented within museum (Rosenzweig and Thelen 1998; Mason 2018). Hence, this connection made their experience more meaningful, emotional and memorable as visitors discover salient aspects of their own lives within museum. In the case of Jewish visitors, their journey into past was motivated and influenced by personal experiences and family memory that has been passed down by the older generations and personal experiences and leading in turn to a more meaningful experience for those visitors. Dicks (2000:205) suggests that heritage museums can function “as substitute heirlooms”, and she notes that museums preserve the heritage of past generations that has gradually disappeared from families,” thereby offering visitors pleasure of seeing their own personal realm displayed and verified in the public collection”. This connection between the self and the past shaped into narratives and makes sense of through memory and public stories, within and outside the museum (Dicks 2000). These intergenerational stories highlighted values, emotions and connections across the generations. Hence, these narratives can be considered significant to one person as they tend to influence both behavior and identity. Family stories are a means of understanding and connecting with the past by linking “little narratives to big ones”, that is, personal memories to history as Rowe et al. (2002) notes. The linkage between family stories and memories with the past and in particular, with the Holocaust history took place through the interaction with the objects and images, as it is discussed later on in this chapter.

Another element that influenced the museum experience in relation to museum memories is imagination. Campbell (2006) describes imagination as a key factor

which enables individuals to emotionally engage with the past in museums' exhibitions as well as to control the level of the emotional experience. This interconnection between emotion and imagination emerged out of the findings in both studies. Emotional engagement plays also a significant role in determining how an event is experienced as meaningful and, how it is remembered (Falk 2013). Significantly, it is the emotional engagement of visitors that played a major role in their ability to imagine, empathise in different levels and understand the past within museum (Bagnall 2003), as is analysed in the following section. Visitors related aspects of museum narratives to their own everyday lives and past experiences to construct meanings, and to enhance the process of emotional engagement with the past. Bagnall (2003) maintains that visitors do not randomly choose museum media and material to engage with, but they are selected based on their experience and personal biographies. Hence, it is important to understand the way in which visitors behave, use, and relate to the memories. Analysis of visitors' experience in both studies indicated that participants used their personal and cultural memories, to engage with the past. Indeed, visitors' narratives and memories were an important element in the meaning making process within the museum exhibitions.

7.2 EMOTIONAL NARRATIVES

Undoubtedly, the way that visitors comprehended and engaged with this period of history was not only a cognitive process but also thoroughly emotional one. The statistical representation of the data³⁴ helped in visually showing a range of emotions at both sites, allowing both the researcher and the reader to see any similarities or differences of emotional reactions that were elicited in the two case studies, and their intensity. The purpose of this was to then explore the effect of emotional approaches used by the museums on the visitors' engagement. The participants' emotional responses, as it is shown in figures 28 and 30 were interest,

³⁴ See methodology section 4.4

curiousness, upset, anger, shock, sadness and horror, but also hope, as well as empathetic responses. Drawing from the concept of “registers of engagement” by Smith (2011, 2020:66) was particularly useful in this research to help me understand the different and complex ways individuals engage with past and present in the museum space, and suggests two important “registers of engaging with and using these sites”; the intensity and valence of an emotional engagement. From this perspective, I firstly took into consideration the different levels of emotional engagement that varied from low, shallow, deep, elaborately detailed, or laconic based on the idea of hot and cold empathy (Chapter 3). In this research, data identified that neutral and lower levels of engagement were occasional and included cold empathy (people affected in a more intellectual way), low level of interest in the subject matter and the use of clichés as way to regulate emotions or to avoid getting emotionally involved by discussing highly emotional charged issues. Secondly, data revealed whether the museum engagement engendered positive/good feelings and thoughts or was characterised by negative/bad emotions and thoughts, or neutral or ambivalent responses.

This whole emotional experience performed within exhibitions stimulated mainly negative emotions that were evoked by different elements in the exhibitions. For example, the percentage of people, who felt the feeling of hope, was relatively low in both museums, with 8% of the visitors expressing feelings of hope at the JM, compared to 3% at the NHCM. This is because the purpose and desire of the JM is to bequeath, celebrate and keep alive British Jewish history, identity and culture, devoting less space to the Holocaust and focusing more on the strength and courage of the main character within the Holocaust gallery, who survived from this horrific event.³⁵ Participants commonly chose more than one emotion from the given list³⁶ and the intensity of the emotions felt by them at both museums appeared to scale 4-

³⁵ More analytical discussion around the two case studies institutions and their exhibition strategies is presented in chapter 5

³⁶ See appendix 1&2

5 (on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least affected and 5 the most affected). It is worth mentioning here that in 2017, the Jewish Museum conducted their own emotional evaluation project for all its galleries. The visitors' emotional reactions to the Holocaust gallery from the Jewish Museum's evaluation project, confirmed similar emotions, feelings, and thoughts that were found in my study, such as the high numbers of sadness given during feedback. However, this effort to capture and assess their audience's emotional involvement has limited use to my research, as it missed the opportunity to grasp in further depth as to how and why the museum narratives affected visitors' memories, emotions, ideas, and attitudes in certain ways.

Jewish Museum-Leon Greenman: Holocaust Gallery

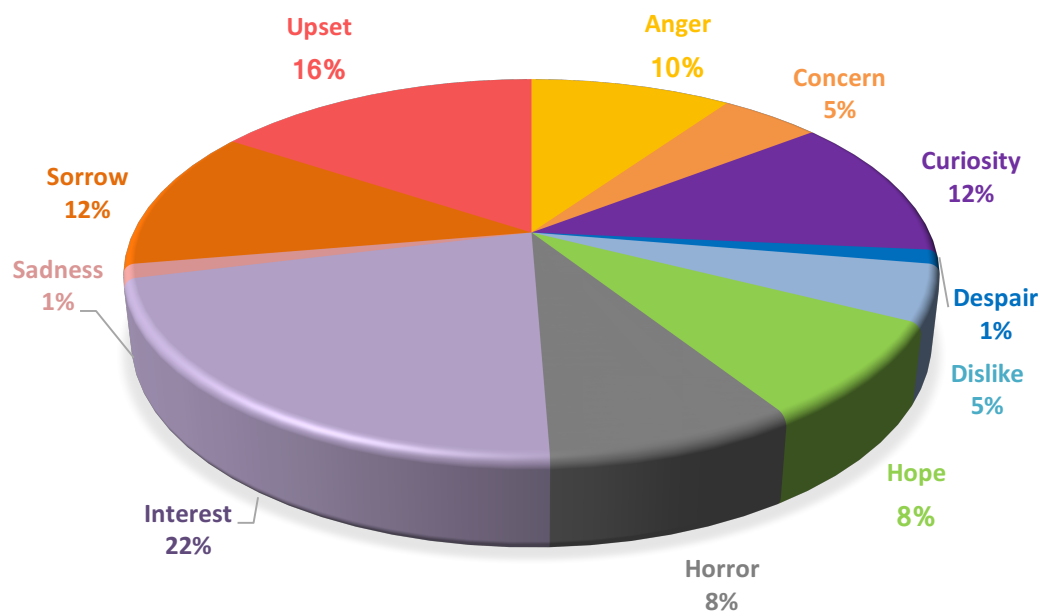


Figure 25. Visitors' emotions in the Holocaust Gallery at the JM based on my interview data.

Other permanent exhibitions at the Jewish Museum: Judaism Gallery and History Gallery

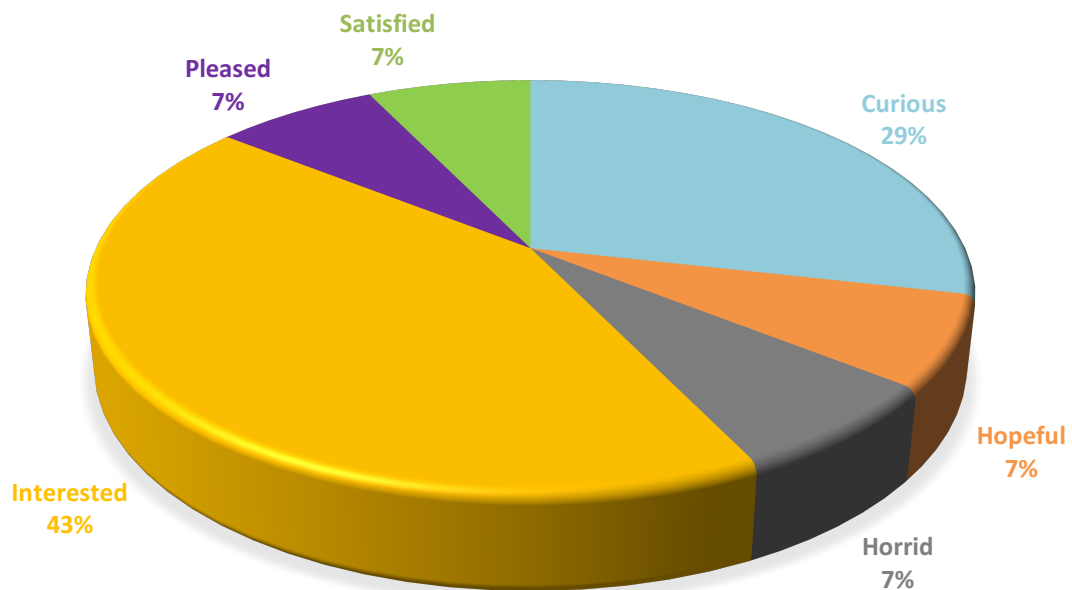


Figure 26. Visitors' emotional reactions in the other permanent exhibitions at the JM based on my interview data.

National Holocaust Centre and Museum

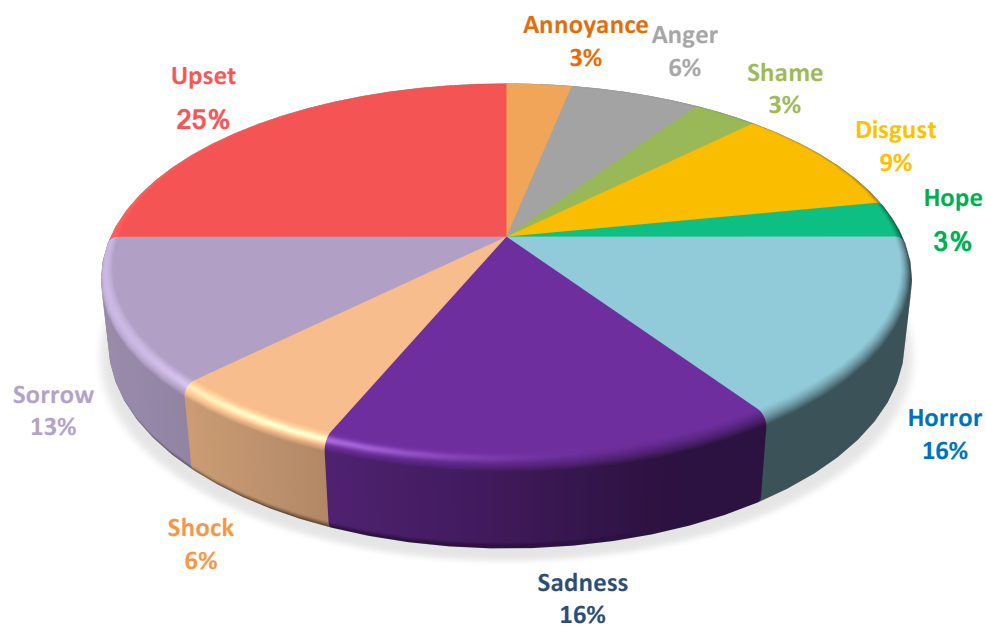


Figure 27. Visitors' emotions at the NHCM based on the interview data.

Comments from visitors' book confirmed that the NHCM had an emotional, intellectual and spiritual effect on them. The majority of these types of comments reflected the museum visit as *enlightening, touching, emotional, inspiring, sad, very informing and interesting experience and very though provoking excursion*. However, there were a few comments from visitor's book (eight out of the twenty) that indicated in more detail the way that individuals emotionally and intellectually interacted with historical narratives in the Centre, therefore these have been selected to enrich the main points that appeared from this study. What emerged from the interviews analysis is that both negative and positive emotions triggered from the same museum experiences encouraged superficial feelings as well as facilitated links people needed to deepen their understanding and enhance their engagement with the past through their visit, as the following example showed:

NHCM2a: All of it, it's all been very, you know obviously the uhm...reading about the poor children in the concentration camps and, er, when they got separated from their parents and that, that was that was interesting that, very sad obviously, but uh, yeah, brings you aware of, how, I would say how evil can be, people can be.

NHCM2b: Uhm, seeing all the photos of the...uh...

NHCM2c: Mine was uhm, the concentration camps section, but also the...they highlighted that it wasn't just Jewish people, which I obviously knew it wasn't but I didn't realise how many...non-Jewish people were killed. So, we can gain awareness isn't it, of the Holocaust and the cruelty to Jewish and...various other small minorities.

(NHCM2: Van Driver (a), Bus Driver (b) and IT System Auditor (c), English)

Yeah, I wrote...I felt interested, I felt curious just 'cos I'd never really heard that type of story before, thought it was really interesting, uhm, and it was just sad, uhm, like most Holocaust stories, they don't usually end that well...uhm he never married again, uhm...uhm but then I also checked off "I feel hope"

because he ended up, you know, like turning his story into a...sharing it you know.

(JM15: Female, Student, American Jewish)

People were interested in exploring Holocaust history, or their heritage, but as they were engaging with the past represented in a museum environment, they felt interested in but also, they narrated that Holocaust brought them feelings of horror and depression:

JM8: The exhibition upstairs was interesting, was showing the life of, uhm the artist, that's what we came to see. Erm, although the rest of it is interesting as well. Erm...but yean, we've just been looking at the, err, Holocaust...erm...which is always a bit depressing. Yeah, I mean erm...it's quite pleasing to see some of the history because I associate my parents with you know, that sort of period, and as they were growing up...in London...that's er, some of the exhibits about early...settlers in London's interesting. Err, just interesting and pleasure really, I didn't really feel any of those others.

(JM8: Male, Environmental Health Officer, Jewish English)

NHCM3b: Yeah, just the cruelty really let me down, yeah it was awful, I mean-

NHCM3a: -And just how many Jews were involved, really.

NHCM3b: I mean it said six, six million, was it?

NHCM3a: Yeah, six million, yeah, which I hadn't...realised, I think-

NHCM3b: I read that uhm, in these ghettos there were six per room, and its j- just awful, isn't it?

NHCM3a: Yeah, like three sharing a bed...and you know, you just, and obviously when they got... ill, you know everybody, got ill as well, and yeah, it was it was awful and if the-these people had survived something then they were taken

somewhere else, and then if they didn't survive that either they shot them or did something else, and you think, was it worth taking them somewhere else.

NHCM3b: Yeah, it's very hard.

(NHCM3: School Secretary (a) and Administrator (b), English)

Furthermore, visitors felt hopeful and optimistic about the future in both sites, considering Holocaust exhibitions as places of hope for a better present and future, this is also confirmed by a visitor's comment (NHCM10) left in visitors' book.

I suppose there's like that book there, that like kids have written in saying like never again and stuff, I mean it makes me kind of hope that the younger generations will learn and like...they won't do it again.

(JM2a: Female, History Student, English)

The information presented in the Museum is both comprehensive and accessible, using the testimonials of survivors but also acknowledging the millions of people who aren't able to share their own stories with us. The work of the Museum to commemorate the past but also work towards a peaceful future is truly wonderful.

(NHCM10: English)

Referring to what Simon (2006) calls a "terrible gift" of difficult knowledge, he claims that some form of hope of a less violent present and future can be expressed as a result of the engagement with difficult pasts. From this view, visitors used the idea of "never happen again" and "don't forget" to communicate the feelings and thoughts for a peaceful present and future.

I imagine most people, well most people who come here are Jewish and sympathetic. People that...the people that persecute, uhm, don't come here, won't come here, so you won't change their attitude...erm this is more...for people that are part of the culture, that have already experienced it. I don't know whether it would change attitudes, erm...for younger people, I suppose

school children, youngsters growing up might come here...and be made aware of what's gone on in the past, particularly with the Jewish people, and hopefully the youngster's attitudes will change, erm, you know the ones that are growing up. The ones with the future. So, one would hope so, erm, most adults coming here would've...erm... would be...erm the persecuted, rather than the persecutors. Uhm, but yeah, I would hope that it would have some influence on the younger generation.

(NHCM7b: Male, Business Owner, Jewish English)

"It's difficult to complete some of these (questionnaire) with the memory of what I've just read about the Holocaust, so the idea of being...I suppose you can feel hope that...something like this would never happen again, so maybe that's the thing to say. And hopefully to provide some lessons for what's happening in the world today. I think it's important we don't forget what happened, yeah. To hopefully stop it happening again.

(JM9: Male, Retired Teacher, English)

Visitors appear to hope vaguely that similar atrocities will not happen again and seem to imply that this will depend not on their future actions so much as the future actions of society generally. This was reflected also in visitors' comments from visitor's book that described the NHCM as "a perfect place to learn about Holocaust and to remember the lost ones". Future actions depend on the individuals background, as well as on "having a platform for action- which facilitates a platform for action" (Bergevin 2019:353), with the hope that a museum visit can be seen as part of their inspiration and motivation to feel, think an act differently. The NHCM is both a museum and memorial centre that provides commemorative activities and encourages these kinds of emotions as well as aiming to challenge their audience to take positive actions (Chapter 4). The memorial character of the Centre is also apparent in its statement such as to "keep Holocaust memory alive and to preserve past" and indeed people felt sadness for and showed respect towards all the victims. Whereas, the Jewish museum does not aim to provide this "memorial effect", nevertheless, visitors at times interpreted the Holocaust exhibition as memorial space.



Figure 28. From the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

Commemoration is often about remembering the dead respectfully and acknowledging their suffering and sometimes sacrifice – it does not always lead to action though. It can be assumed within the commemoration process that people should learn from the past and try to avoid such things happening again. However, commemoration alone does not necessarily encourage people to act against the system or ideas that brought about the thing/people commemorated (Popescu 2020). Furthermore, remembering is a selective and a subjective process, hence, certain aspects of the past are more likely to be remembered while others to be dismissed.

Moreover, people expressed a sense of being informed or having deepened their understanding regarding the past, as well as feeling emotional, visiting the NHCM. The site brought clarity, reflection and critical thinking about particular topics. For instance, some visitors considered the museum engagement as a “reminder” and active way of remembering and acting in the present. The next comments (from the

visitor's book) are also examples of how the Centre inspired thoughts and feelings of social responsibility encouraging visitors to realize their "moral duties."

The centre provides a gentle reminder to people of what happens when evil is allowed to proliferate. It is obviously and rightly focused on the largest crime of the 20th Century, the Holocaust and genocide of 11,500,000 people by the German state in the 1930s and 1940s. Only by understanding this, do we ever stand a chance of ensuring such things never happen again!

(NHCM11: Male, English)

The story of the deportations, the ghettos and life in the concentration camps is movingly and horrifyingly told in photos, film and conversations - the focus on particular families and their stories brings everything into sharp focus. This isn't a day out or a jolly - it's a wakeup call to us all as we approach uncharted territory in our national and international future. We need to remember that peace has reigned in Europe for 75 years and maybe ask ourselves why this is. We must not assume that what happened in the 1940's could never happen again, it may be closer to home than we think.

(NHCM12: English)

We visited this moving reminder of the horrendous magnitude of man's cruelty and indifference to fellow human beings, not just the Jews but other groups of people such as gypsies, the disabled and mentally ill who were annihilated at the hands of the Nazis. Everyone over the age of 12 should go - it will be moving, disturbing, challenging but lessons must be learned for it is a timely reminder that we ALL have a responsibility to ensure history is not repeated. The beautiful sweet fragrance of gardens carries the very essence of those lost deep into your thoughts and reflections and begs the question, why?

(NHCM18: English)

It is important to acknowledge that moral messages are often encoded to these kind of exhibitions, but are also shaped greatly by the visitor's personal context and prior knowledge, as well as their social and cultural background (Popescu 2020).

Participants often gave cliché responses (both during the interviews and on visitor's

book) which were used as a way to express and negotiate difficult ideas/concepts, such as; “learning from the past so to prevent these atrocities from happening again”; “never again”; “should never be forgotten” and “will never be allowed to happen again”. In other words, they felt that the memory of the past should be used to motivate us to act and take social responsibility in the present. Although, these comments were frequently used to reveal that visitors had felt that they understood the significance of the messages of the exhibitions, and were also being used to show the emotional and intellectual impact of the exhibitions, there is no evidence here to indicate that this impact prompted them to take action.

Furthermore, there were participants who felt overwhelmed, or found it difficult to put into words how they felt at that time, and stressed that they needed more time for their emotions and thoughts to settle down. However, it is worth noting here that emotional engagement depends greatly on the visitors’ ability and willingness to choose to navigate difficult emotions/knowledge (Chapter 3).

Uhm...I think somewhere in the middle, because I think sometimes when you read it and then you need to go away, and digest it, because you read it but you’re not taking it all in because it’s so much that, sometimes when you’re away from it and then at home, you think “oh gosh” that was really...I mean it affects you when you’re here, but, for me personally, that is just how I work, I have to go home and digest information, and, and you know, sort of think about it then, and then it’d probably affect you, just slightly more than, but that’s just me personally really.

(NHCM3a: Female, School Secretary, English)

Uh...it just...I guess I kind of had a hard time walking in there, I stood outside of it for a little bit. It just, upsets me so much, every time I...confront it, so...yeah...it’s the little bit just over there.

(JM13: Female, History Student, American)

JM3: I think it's hard to describe the emotions...although... Not immediately. But, I may reflect on things...uhm...because I think that sometimes museums, erm, there's a lot of information that needs to be processed. Yeah.

{Interviewer: And, what do you feel you will take away with you from your visit? If there is anything.}

JM3: Just a lot of erm...things and details, uhm, some of the exhibits that erm...I felt drawn to I'll sort of reflect on and go over, yeah.

(JM3: Male, Retired, English)

I mean erm, but the train...that sort of thing was always very difficult...but in some ways it's good to be confronted with the, err, with the truth of where it's at.

(JM5, Male, Director, English)

According to Jost (2019), the term “difficult histories” introduced by Simon (2006, 2011), requires visitors to engage with uncertainty and ambiguity. Simon (2011: 434), also notes that knowledge will become difficult when “one’s conceptual frameworks, emotional attachments, and conscious and unconscious desires delimit one’s ability to settle the meaning of past events.” This may lead to visitors’ disengagement but can also cause confusion, disorientation and anxiety about knowing how to respond (Smith 2020: 188). An emotion or knowledge may be perceived as not difficult for one may be seen as difficult, unwelcoming or risky by someone else.

It's the same again, you just can't help but be...overwhelmed by erm...that exhibition. Umm yes, yeah, I mean as long as they go to the museums the difficulty that I'm assuming is getting everyone to go to exhibitions like that, because...I mean...I don't know if I could ever visit Auschwitz, like I know I'm...have some...great respect for people that can, but I don't think that I could ever do that, I mean because of the horror there, and yet perhaps this is at least

an alternative to visiting that, and uhm...so, as long as... I mean it should be compulsory on school curricula... to come to a museum.

(JM9: Male, Retired Teacher, English)

Moreover, emotional engagement, in both sites, was associated more with feelings of sympathy, compassion, sadness, and deep empathetic and personal identification with the Holocaust victims and their stories. Emotions, both positive and negative were important elements that moved visitors to reflect, negotiate, and discuss issues against racism, as these visitors did:

NHCM6b: All the way through the talk I was in tears. Very emotional, and I've got a lump in my throat right now, and it's done with but it's still there.

NHCM6a: Same.

{Interviewer: if you have to pick one feeling, one emotion, what would that be?}

NHCM6a: Sad.

NHCM6b: Uhm...upset.

NHCM6a: It is upset.

NHCM6b: Upset. I would say. Can you tell. Uh...uh...right at this moment...I mean it's fresh in my mind... it's um, I just feel...a way just towards the German people. I mean, the gentleman that gave the talk is a better human being [than me], because he's more forgiving, I wouldn't forgive, I could never forgive. I would not ever forgive...and I wasn't involved and I won't forgive, and it's not for me not to forgive, but...that's me.

NHCM6a: Yes...It's believe that people can be so cruel to other people isn't it really?

NHCM6b: It's amazing, [that the cruelty towards] another human being, that's why it should never be forgot.

NHCM6a: What they did to all those people.

NHCM6a: Uh, yeah, I mean, I'm not a racist person myself, it's just...I'm not racist towards...Germans, it's just...the history of-of Germany and what the race is capable of. But, I suppose a lot of race might be capable of doing the same, but we didn't do the same, you know, so...I just, I will never understand how someone can do something like that to another human being. Ever.

NHCM6b: Very cruel.

NHCM6a: Cruel. Spiteful. Hateful. Evil.

(NHCM6: Female and Male, Retired (a) and Miner (b), English)

On one hand, emotional engagement in the NHCM helped these visitors think about its larger reflections on society, and on the other hand, the museum narratives evoked both feelings and thoughts of not forgiving, which was not intended by their curatorial practices (Chapter 4). Furthermore, visitors' emotional engagement rarely generated feelings such as shame and guilt from the British visitors, besides these Holocaust exhibitions encouraged national and religious feelings.

NHCM3b: You feel ashamed don't you, that people can behave that way, I think it's...I mean cos' I read that even in the like 1200's, twelfth-century or whatever it was I can't remember now, that the British you know, were awful we were evil...there you know....

NHCM3a: It's uh, not the best is it (nervous laugh).

NHCM3b: Yeah, it's just disgusting, isn't it?

NHCM3a: As bad then really, so yeah, it's just mix, a total mixture of sort of...yeah...

NHCM3b: Emotions.

(NHCM3: School Secretary (a) and Administrator (b), English)

To feel proud of being Jewish, and to come and see the museum.

(JM12a: Unemployed, English Jewish)

Being a resident in the local area, we had only ever driven past this place before but with the pandemic having put paid to any holidays abroad this year, we decided to have a look at places in our local area instead. An interesting and moving account of the Holocaust and the horrors that took place, beautifully kept gardens displaying memorials to loved ones who perished in the Holocaust left by families, there is even a statue of Anne Frank there. So, glad that we were finally forced into finding out how much we have to offer in our county, it was as good as any Holocaust or wartime museum we have visited abroad.

(NHCM9: English)

Whilst others expressed feelings of “guilt” about their lack of feeling negative emotions (e.g. anger)

JM6: I kn...maybe now I feel bad because I haven't ticked anger or anything like this, but they don't make me angry actually.

{Interviewer: it is absolutely fine because it's not like wrong and right. It's just what you feel.}

JM6: Yeah, that's interesting, that's a very good...as a Buddhist that makes me feel very good.

{Interviewer: is it anything that like gave you a strong emotional reaction, or makes you feel like you'll remember it later?}

JM6: I remember seeing the postcard that he wrote to his dad, is very...err...quite upsetting just as you write that, and see it in pencil that someone's really done this and it's in front of me, yeah.

(JM6: Male, Graphic Designer, English)

Zembylas (2018: 207) argues for the need to understand both the intended and unintended consequences, of the possible emotional regimes that may be invoked in a museum based on pedagogies of feeling. But the point I would like to stress, is the need to acknowledge that emotional experiences regarding “difficult heritage” or what constitutes “difficult heritage” are changeable and fluid (Smith 2020; Simon 2011; Zembylas 2018). Thus, emotions can mobilise broad and diverse responses giving meaning to how museums and heritage sites are used. The objects and the personal stories encouraged many of the visitors to engage with the past in various ways, both in hot and cold empathy states (Chapter 3). What follows is a detailed analysis in the ways in which the visitors responded to the museum empathetic strategies.

7.3 EMPATHY AND ITS IMPACT ON VISITORS' ENGAGEMENT

Through the analysis of visitor interviews, it was possible to identify the varying ways in which people linked themselves with others who lived in the past which in turn, helped them engender a critical insight into past, in many cases. It is still unclear as to whether empathy can change beliefs, or encourage any action, but it appeared to contribute to visitors' engagement with the past in both exhibitions. Based on the interview analysis, in both sites, exhibition strategies and resources had a certain level of impact as to what type of identification visitors can establish with the stories and characters of the past. I will present them here, in order to provide a sense of these different levels of empathic engagement as well as the potential impact of this engagement in visitors' understanding, belief and attitude. According to Prown:

Affect is clearly a different way of engaging the past than abstractly through the written word. Instead of our minds making intellectual contact with the minds of the past, our senses make affective contact with the senses of the past (Prown 2001:65). {...} The affective mode, allows us to put ourselves, figuratively speaking, inside the skins of individuals ... to see with their eyes and touch with their hands, to identify with them empathetically. Affect is NOT empathy. Empathy is taking a perspective (Prown 2001: 64).

He suggests that the engagement with the past enables a powerful empathetic identification between us and those who once engaged the same site or object. Hence, empathy and imagination are equally important elements of museum experience that provide intellectual and emotional encounters with the past within museums, memorials centres and heritage institutions. It is vital for this thesis to understand the ways in which both cognitive and emotional engagement with the past emerges out of the relationship between museum and its visitors. In this study, empathy is perceived as both a feeling and understanding, with and for another's situation that may offer a critical thinking about the past as well as motive for action. However, empathy can be experienced between lower level of empathy -cold empathy (a cognitive form of empathetic reaction) and higher level of empathy -hot empathy (a highly emotional and affective response)³⁷ (Coplan and Goldie 2011).

The research showed that the process of engagement was shaped by individuals' background and is informed by knowledge, beliefs and emotions and a willingness to engage with the others" (Smith 2011; Endacott and Brooks 2013).

The initial thought was to additionally capture visitors' empathetic engagement with the aid of numerical quantifications. Thus, in order to explore whether individuals empathized in cold or hot state empathy, participants were asked if they felt that they have been affected emotionally, or intellectually, and on what scale 1-5 (with 1

³⁷ See chapter 7.

being the least empathetic or in other words intellectually empathetic and with 5 being the most empathetic), as it can be seen in figures 24 and 25. The participants often remained silent for a few seconds while they are contemplating their response. Unsurprisingly, participants who had a stronger emotional experience during their visit, mentioned that they had experienced hot empathy. Most of the responses ranged between the scale of 4 and 5, with few around 3. Respondents, who chose 3, seemed less emotionally affected during the interview.

Jewish Museum- Leon Greenman: Holocaust Gallery

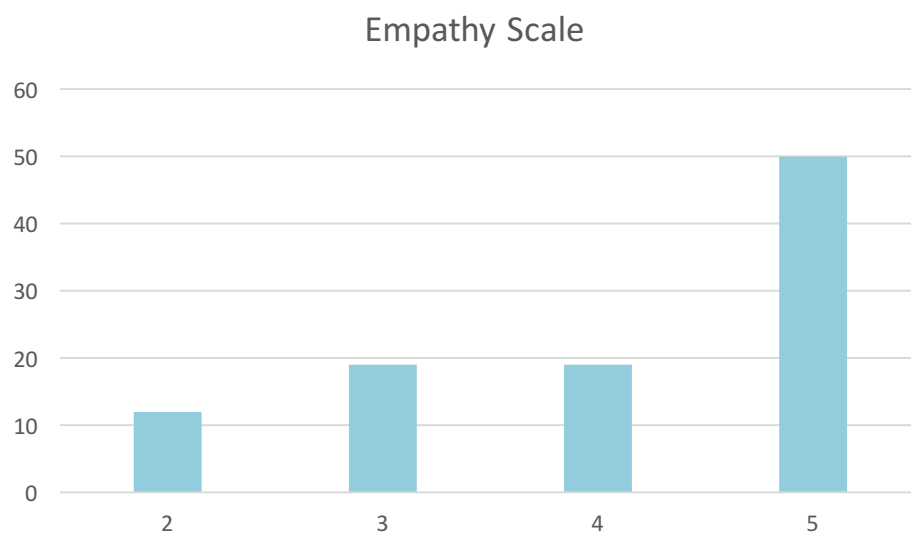


Figure 29. Empathy scale in the JM.

National Holocaust Centre and Museum

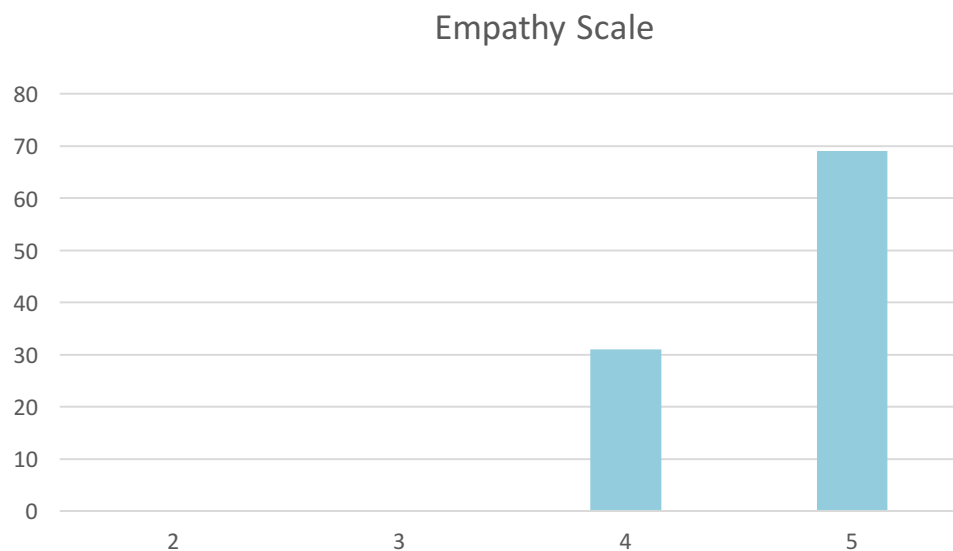


Figure 30. Empathy scale in the NHCM.

Visitors constructed meanings by empathetic connections for and with characters of the past, and their stories in both sites. Participants empathised with others at different states; some sympathised in a superficial way, keeping a distant relationship with the past whilst others became deeply emotionally involved with others experiences as they related museum stories to their own experiences. Here, I present instances from interviews with visitors at the JM and the NHCM:

NHCM2a: We just like his-our history, see what, see what, you know what happened in the past, and how...yeah...how you can learn things from what happened...

NHCM2b: We know it's here, we've been talking about coming for a long time...and today is the day we thought we'd, we'd come.

NHCM2c: I go to Auschwitz in December, so I thought it'd be quite good to...have a look round.

*(NHCM2: Van Driver (a), Bus Driver (b) and
IT System Auditor (c), English)*

We knew about this [Holocaust history] but you feel always emotional when you confront the reality of Holocaust (...) People who were there, they were people like us, and we could have been there.

(JM19a: Male, Retired Professor, English)

Empathetic identifications encouraged critical insight of both the past and present in some cases, with the participants expressing ideas; against violence and racism; reflecting personal connections and experiences with ideas of fairness and mental health; and also showing feelings of appreciation for their current lives. For instance:

Yeah, I think it's, I think it's more than just intellectually and feeling sad, for me, because...uhm, I think you can relate this back to your own lives, or reflect on that, uhm, for you own situations or hardships or things (...) my view, and it does make you want to help and do more and, get involved or...share about it or come and see more of it. Uhm, so, I kind of, I think that's the reaction I've had, is that, and even I think understanding now and thinking how old some of the people are, you think "oh gosh, you might not have enough time to even speak to the people again" don't you, so...uhm, so yeah, I think that's a major, a major thing, and part of it. So yeah, and I think, and I don't know if it links back to our line of work, or my line of work anyway, or in any way, but, uhm, because it is about people and things like that, but...err, but yeah, I think, uhm understanding in my role about things like mental health and understanding disabilities, and things like that, this sort of thing and understanding the impact on people, for me is something throughout my life, I think that I experience and deal with and cope with, so, so this is my sort, this is why I enjoy coming isn't it, I suppose.

(NHCM5a: Female, HR, English)

As these museums attempt to invite visitors to consider their own responsibilities to act against similar situations, in the Holocaust display at the JM for instance, a large text panel reminds and invites visitors to "make a difference", participants were encouraged to discuss how violence carries on nowadays:

Other people can learn from that. It is repeated many times like in Serbia (...)

(JM11: Female, Businesswoman, English with Jewish Background)

JM12a: Always upset. Always upset.

{Interviewer: why you felt this way?}

JM12a: Because of the whole, the whole experience for people like us, uhm...is shocking and inhuman, and whereas we were saying-

JM12b: That people were treated like that is unbelievable-

JM12a: Treated like animals, not even animals, animals were treated better, and also that we said [that it's] not long ago, seventy years is not long,

JM12b: [Inhuman]

JM12a: And also, that history does repeat itself.

JM12b: And it's still [not any better, not really, it's just different]

JM12a: Still not better, no, people are treated, yeah...] not obviously in such an a...organised way...but killing for religious...

JM12b: It's still happening (h).

(JM12: Females, Unemployed (a) and (b), English Jewish)

JM1b: You've got a similar kind of thing happening in Myanmar, haven't you...Burma.

JM1a: Burma. Myanmar. Where you've got, where you've got Bengali people and they're called the Rohingya's and they're basically trying to get them out. You

know, and they're all tactics, all villages are getting taken out and stuff, so it is, in one sense, even on a smaller scale, but...those people aren't going to come here and visit, you know...and also, I know this probably isn't...right, you know not right for your...Masters, but my son was in Bosnia, and he saw first-hand that children had been killed, and uhm, that really has had an effect on him and his unit, that he was with. Uhm, to the point that two of them actually killed themselves...at later dates, but they say it was that, yeah.

JM1b: Post-traumatic stress.

JM1a: So, but it's just...you know, the same sort of thing on a smaller scale, isn't it, and so it...

JM1b: So many things that kill people, that are like natural causes, cancer...you know, being ill, whatever, malnutrition, dehydration, you know, there's so many natural things, yeah, when people go and take people's lives you kind of feel like actually...why? You know, there's enough things that are naturally happening, and it's disgusting.

*(JM1: Females, Cash Officer (a) and Civil Servant (b),
English with Jewish Background)*

Emotions evoked during visits used as a form of judgment of the subject matter and validated meanings and consequences for the present. While in the JM, visitors solely made critical reflection and connection between past and present, visitors' responses at the NHCM mentioned as how the Centre engendered feelings of social responsibility in present:

I think the one I'd add(feelings) is responsible, as well, it makes you feel so socially responsible, especially for..., recent events, uhm especially the bit about refugees how England and America turned away a lot of the refugees, uhm before the wars began, it makes you connect to what's happening now.

(NHCM1a: Female, Paralegal, English)

Though this museum talks a lot about Jewish Holocaust, but there is a hidden message and an alert to all civilised people to stand up against barbarism.

(NHCM17: English)

The emotional engagement with the past allowed visitors to link what happened to the past to more recent atrocities around the world. Prior ideas and experiences came together during their engagement with the exhibitions, and many of them contextualized the ideas and perspectives from the past presented by the museums, and connected them into current social issues allowing moral issue emerged.

Well, I've obviously you know, in my lifetime, I've read and seen a lot about it and it's always upsetting...erm to erm...I don't know if I felt anger, or horror, I think...oh, I felt, yeah, it's upsetting really, just to read about what people went through. Erm, they were terrible times...but it goes on doesn't it, you know. If it's not the Jews it's someone else that's getting persecuted somewhere else in the world, even today. But what I found interesting I mean the level of persecution from the very beginning, you know, they seem to have suffered...uhm, a great deal throughout history. I mean, particularly around the Second World War, but all through their, erm, immigration and history...they seem to, er...people seem to dislike the Jews for some reason ((laughed when saying the last three words)). And I've come across a little bit of prejudice in my life, not as much as what you see here, but uhm, it's still...it's still there, under the surface, not as quite evident, but you detect some now and again and you detect a little bit there under the surface.

(JM8: Male, Environmental Health Officer, Jewish English)

Personalised stories were also used to engage with feelings of empathy and compassion, which allowed visitors to reflect the impact of racism and discrimination, as the following interview at the JM showed:

JM1a: It's just the museum, we wanted to...come and learn.

JM1b: Learn, a little bit more a-and it's mainly I think, to show...well it's for us to read and see, but it's the get the -children's knowledge up, about what

happens and stuff like that, I mean it's emotionally, I think...I'm reading it and I'm feeling...really upset and stuff. But, just-

JM1a: And so were the children, they were upset.

JM1b: But, the reality of actually what happened and stuff, and it's kinda like a teaching, you know. You can't, treat people differently because of where they're from, what they look like, what their religion is, and it's...an impending thing isn't it, especially in this society and modern day...you kinda think...people do horrible things like that, and it's kinda not on you know.

JM1a: Well more or less the same, yeah. It's, uhm...I want Caleb to know that...you know, that these things happened, and, we want them to never happen again.

JM1a: And really, it's too easy to sort of sit down and then things overtake, and then, it's a small thing happens and it grows and grows, so it could happen again. Not just to, uhm, Jewish people, to anyone.

(JM1: Females, Cash Officer (a) and Civil Servant (b), English with Jewish Background)

Popescu (2020:231), by analysing the impact of Holocaust exhibition's design on visitors' understating of the past at the London IWM, notes that the use of darkness in Holocaust exhibitions may put the Holocaust in "an unreal setting" and link it with mystery and darkness while daylight might encourage connections between past and present violence and inspire people to place Holocaust in their world. While at the NHCM, in the main Holocaust exhibitions, the dark atmosphere prevails, the Holocaust in the JM is presented in white and well-lit space but in this study, both sites enabled visitors to critically reflect these association between now and then but without documenting any significant change in their understanding, attitude or action at that stage. The following narrative indicated that the impact of museum to mobilise their audience to change or act often relies on prior knowledge, ideology, visitors' agenda or deep interest in the subject matter.

NHCM2c: I've always been quite...uhm...I've never...approved of people being judged or...wrongly treated for being different, whether it's race, or the way you look, or the colour of your skin, or the way you speak, or if you've got a disability, so for me it's just confirmed how I felt anyway.

{Interviewer: Do you think after your visit here, uhm, you will contribute more, or it motivates you to do something against racism?}

NHCM2c: Uhm, I think it would depend on...opportunities that arose, I suppose. Uhm, I would like to, but I think it would depend on the environment that I was in.

(NHCM2: Female IT System Auditor (c), English)

In this view, Bergevin's (2019:352) research regarding the long-term impact of activist museums revealed that those who were motivated to take an action after their museum experience, had been emotionally involved during their visit and often had available opportunities already in their lives. The changes in behaviour or attitude of an individual is a result of a complex network of new and old experiences and memories, in which the museum may be a small part of it.

Overall, at the NHCM, individuals who showed feelings of deep empathy (hot state of empathy)³⁸ were more emotional, and keen to become actively involved in some way with social issues. For example, they were willing to read, learn and be aware to more things and ideas related to mental health and racism. Others mentioned their desire to either revisit the site, or to visit other Holocaust sites and exhibitions. Endacott and Brooks (2013) note that these affective connections do not always allow one to change his/her beliefs, but they can contribute to a better insight into past. Likewise, Johnson (2005: 42) notes, "to imagine alternative futures and presents, new ways of being and acting." Visitors comments evidenced that

³⁸See Chapter 3.

imaginative responses to the sites underpinned their thinking about happened in the past in the present time, questioning the actual impact of those feelings, as these visitors state:

NHCM4a: It'll bring it more to your forefront on your mind, you'll think about it more, more than just seeing it every so often on the news.

NHCM4b: Yeah, but, come tomorrow...

NHCM4a: Will it subside...

NHCM4b: Yeah, do you still think about it, or do you just get on with life and, yeah.

NHCM4b: Yeah, I've already messaged me mum saying I want to bring her, yeah.

(NHCM4: Builder (a) and Unemployed (b), English)

I would say that it's too early to tell. Who knows, maybe tomorrow I'll have a thought about it, but for now it's just too fresh in my mind to guess.

(JM6: Male, Graphic Designer, English)

Notably, there were also superficial responses or a lack of deep engagement, but emotions were elicited. In some cases, what was remembered from the exhibitions was less personal but not less emotional. As it has been discussed in Chapter two, Holocaust exhibitions often engender higher levels of imaginative or deep empathy and therefore based on "cosmopolitan affect" (Chapter 2), empathetic identifications facilitate forms of cultural engagement and reflective exploration with others. In this research, "cosmopolitan affect"³⁹ validated these sites, as places where people were to think about the events represented in the sites, translate

³⁹See Chapter 2

historical into moral lessons for the future, drawing on their feelings, and the capacity to connect those feelings to ongoing contemporary issues. In this context, Simon (2011:207) points out that “unfortunately there is ample evidence that an awareness and moral assessment of previous unjust violence and brutality does not automatically constitute a bridge for linking the past and present so as to diminish the recurrence of injustice.” Despite the complex nature of emotions, it is important to continue capturing and assessing visitors' emotional responses in order to better understand visitors' engagement within difficult history. In this research, following the Endacott and Brooks (2013:43) typology of empathetic identification, visitors' empathetic engagement had been studied in the following three ways:

1. **Historical Contextualization** — “a temporal sense “of differences that allows an understanding of the social, political, and social aspects of era, as well as information of the occasions driving up to the authentic circumstance, and other significant occasions that are happening concurrently.
2. **Perspective Taking** — experience through their eyes of “another’s lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs to get a comprehensive sense of how these people might have thought and felt”.
3. **Personalized Connections** — connect and consider individuals' lives, circumstances, or activities may have been impacted by emotions and feelings based on an association of one's similar life experiences.

1. Historical Contextualization

The NHCM was more successful in evoking empathy in the form of historical contextualisation and perspective taking, and less through personalised connections. In particular, testimonies enhanced empathetic connections between visitors (non-Jewish visitors) and Holocaust survivors in the NHCM. People who listened to the testimonies indicated a stronger level of emotional engagement. They appeared to be more emotional during the talk, as well as during the interview. One of the

respondents commented that the talk inspired hope, as well as motivation to visit the museum again:

I would say further towards that five. I think when we listened to Martin speak that gave us a lot of motivation to come back and...listen some more, didn't it? How anybody come dehumanise another person or race, or that Arek could turn out so nice, that helps to give hope.

(NHCM5b: Male, Staff in Energy Company, English)

The partner of the above visitor (*NHCM5b*) mentioned that the survivor testimony was powerfully emotional for her, as the speaker was talking about his experience as a child in the Holocaust. The strong emotional reactions that were evoked during the talk, facilitated a deeper engagement with the past, and allowed her to discuss and question moral issues regarding their Nazi decisions during the war:

Uhm, to relate to them, and to also ask them all questions, uhm, that's been a big thing, and again, I think that the stories as well, uhm, from the children, uhm, I think that emotionally does hit you, doesn't it? it was quite surprising that there was, a-a lack of compassion, but one thing I think that Arek-I wanted to understand is, or was thinking about, was why the officer didn't leave, er, why the officer left bread for him, uhm so that was interesting. But yeah, the... shocking point was the lack of compassion, and the fact that some of the, uh, people could just almost disconnect themselves and just go back on a family holiday, they come back and then, you know, kill children and so...

(NHCM5a: Female, HR, English)

These visitors noted that it was the sixth time they had visited the Centre within a year because of their desire to listen to survivors' testimonies. Notably, testimonies and personal belongings to the victims or to survivors have triggered the most powerful emotional reactions. Testimonies seemed to facilitate connections with survivors, as well as inspired positive attitudes to visitors. The latter is also reflected in comments from visitor's book at the NHCM, for example; "Janine (survivor) is truly inspirational and makes me believe I can get through anything". Historical narratives

and personal stories enabled the visitors' learning and awareness of what happened then, and deepened their understanding in both case studies institutions.

JM8: I think it's interesting from a personal angle. I think we...I think we already know the facts...the facts are pretty evident, erm, but just a sort of personal touch about what happened with one family just brings it home more. It's interesting.

(JM8: Male, Environmental Health Officer, Jewish English)

Many participants also in both sites, reflected that they were encouraged to imagine how life could be during the war and the Holocaust, and the condition under which those people lived. In doing so, they drew conclusions as to how much easier life was now, and how lucky they felt to be living in the present.

{Interviewer: in your opinion, what is the purpose of this museum?}

NHCM2a: To show horrific war can be. How people survive through...well the, all the traumas they've been through, like lots of others did do, and to make you realise how lucky we are, to be...you know, we don't have to, hopefully we don't have to go through that, so...but whether people do learn after what's happening in the world today...you know.

NHCM2b: Just, how evil people can be, basically.

NHCM2c: Just to raise awareness, I think. Uhm...yeah...awareness, I think does tap into your emotional side, they've tailored it so that it, obviously that is... why, but uhm, we've definitely tailored it to...

NHCM2b: Grabs your emotions.

NHCM2c: Yeah, yeah. They've used a lot of the children and the...yeah.

(NHCM2: Van Driver (a), Bus Driver (b) and IT System Auditor (c), English)

Realising how easy we've got it now. How are problems don't really compare.

(NHCM5b: Male, Staff in Energy Company, English)

The next visitors at the JM used the museum visit as an act to acquire more information about topics that they were interested in, and they felt that gained new knowledge. Their engagement and interest in museum narratives led them to make critical assessment and discussion as to why the Jewish were persecuted by the Nazis in Europe.

JM7b: Yeah that's quite a revelation because you, I knew that the Germans did that, and Nazi's didn't in Nazi Germany to differen...they wore the star of David on their, so I knew that. Also, we were in Norwich a couple of years ago...and Norwich was a place where the Jews were quite...busy, because of lending money to the king, because Norwich was a very...affluent area of the country because of the farming sheep, wool I think it was, and they found, they found a mass grave in Norwich. 900 people, and it sort of brings it home to you that the Nazi's weren't unique in picking on the Jews. It wasn't a novelty...the Germans were doing it, everyone was doing it...all the European countries.

JM7a: And since then, we've sort of discussed why were they so...err...against Jews.

JM7b: I think it's because they were industrious.

JM7a: Maybe...moneylenders...but then all their rights were taken away from them way way back. [It's what we've learnt today...]

JM7b: Well it's, it's probably erm jealousy. They had the money, the ordinary person on the street didn't they've had to borrow money from these foreigners...so they get vilified don't they. Easy target.

JM7a: What came across in the talk today was the fact that they would, erm, they left Britain, there were no Jews left...and so it gave an opportunity for people to show the...erm...what is the word I'm looking for...like...the Jewish

tailor, put them down, the boxer, the chap who was the boxer who then came forward and was trying to sort [of show Jews in a] yes, yeah, in a better light.

JM7b: [Prove they weren't weak] I think it's just that, there's a stereotypical image, of the Jews-

JM7a: Yes, they took three hundred years to sort of get everyone to understand that, that they were only showing that side of the Jews weren't they, and not the fact that they were so industrious and...good.

Museum narrative reinforced an emotional commitment with their identity and sense of patriotism. They expressed feelings of shock when they found out that the king of England Edward the first expelled the Jews in 1290 and realised that this ideology continued in the 20th century.

JM7b: Well I always, well I always regard, because I'm a great Anglophile, that this is the greatest nation on Earth in my opinion, erm, it's quite a shock to learn that the kings kicked the Jews out, all that, all that time in the sixteenth century or whenever it was. Which king was it....

JM7a: Edward the First, was it...

JM7b: Edward the First yeah, I mean it-it is a bit of a shock. The Germans were following a well-worn path.

(JM7: Retired Female (a) and Retired Male (b), English)

Their engagement was not only driven by museum practices, but also by visitors' ideology and interest. Smith (2020), points out that ideology influences what persons care about but also how one has been affected by this, an important dimension to understand whether museum visiting has political and social consequences.

2. Personalising Histories

Examples of empathetic involvement showed how interviewees reframed and re-contextualized their own lives, and experiences, in relation to Holocaust history and how their engagement with the past linked to their sense of personal identity. The next visitors are excellent examples of how people are related their own lives and identities to the Holocaust, confronted their own reality and reassessed their memories of the Holocaust within their identity and community. Here, I present an instance that comes from two Jewish women at the JM:

JM11a: Uhm...it's important that Jews know their roots and keep their heritage alive, and that other people understand, because it is a very persecuted...race always has been, and, uhm, I think we need to keep the Holocaust memories alive and understand where history went, and unfortunately it's been repeated many times...you know, in Serbia and all the rest, so we're still not learning, but uhm...yeah, people need to know where they come from, in order to know where they're going I think.

JM11b: I think for me because I've spent time in Israel, and uhm, I've been brought up Jewish my children have intermarried and have...intermarried into religious relationships, and so for me, I feel I'm the last of...a kind of...you know from my parents onwards that's actually going to carry this forward so I think it's vital that I keep something...of my heritage from that, and then this all, this provides a platform, so if my grandchildren ever like you've done...and come in the future this place will be, always be here.

(JM11: Females, Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)

Both of them experienced a very intimate connection to the past through their family/personal memories that helped them develop a bigger and more critical reflection, regarding the past in relation to the present. The museum visit was considered as a way to search and connect with their past and identity. They felt upset speaking not only about the harsh conditions of the past, but also about the fact that similar social issues that were related to the Holocaust are repeated

nowadays:

JM11a: Well for me I knew...uhm obviously word of mouth my father's told me my history 'cos all that generation have died now, my father was very old when he had me, so err, he told me that my grandfather was a Jewish tailor, and when I saw this here, that there were tailors, I was thinking "oh it's true" although I know it's true, it's quite emotional to know it really is true, and uhm, things my father told me you know, I had a Jewish upbringing but without the religion, and uhm, so it's...I want to find out more about where I come from, I know it was from Poland...and with the situation now w-with immigrants and you know, I say to people "look, I'm from...Eastern Europe (laugh)" you know what I mean, it's like I can't say, "you can't have immigrants here" it's ridiculous 'cos I'm from...immigrants...uhm...background, and er, fleeing persecution in the same way that a lot of people are. So, for me, uh yeah, it's eye opening really, to find out and hear the stories of the people, yeah.

JM11b: I think yes, much the same way, it's to hear the stories and to...uhm...that has an emotional impact because it's about, it's not about some distant person, it's about you yourself, and you can relate, to the pictures, and the...and the things going on. You can relate to persecution, you can relate to this feeling of...erm...of, of the Jewish population not carrying on, so...

JM11a: I think for me the children is the key thing. Just seeing the children separated from their family, not knowing if they'll see their parents again. The Kindertrain, and uhm...yeah, that's....and also, I felt...curious, my father was in London during the Second World War and I don't know how he escaped, he was a special policeman h-how he escaped the bombings. (3.8s) Well I'm here so he must of survived, but you know what I mean it's uhm...how my father survived. I'm a visual person and it's nice to see pictures...and uhm...I quite like the, what about the actual, the way it's geared for children as well, so they can take an interest in it, yeah, it's important isn't it because they get bored in museums. (4.5s) My father was actually born in Leicester.

(JM11: Females, Businesswoman (a) and Teacher (b), Jewish English)

The narratives that were based on personal and emotional links facilitated critical thinking about the bigger picture of a nationhood. Different levels of engagement can be also seen in the ways that museum visits created feelings of community belonging while individuals brought their own sense of place in their museum engagement, as the following visitors commented:

JM11b: Museums now that I have been to in the last five years, they are amazing in writing, they have also visual things, the pictures (..) You have all these extra things about others' lives, a particular period, because of this, you can take an interest. Here it is a particularly harrowing museum because it relates to Holocaust. People have strong opinions about the Holocaust and this creates anti-Semitism. It is a powerful feeling. You have all these reminders, see the pictures, read. They can change someone. (..) You get the real sense of this community which disappeared whoever you are and wherever you come from.

(JM11b: Female, Teacher, Jewish English)

It's been...it's been very interesting, uhm, it's always good to look at the history of your people, and see what they've got...it's, it's quite informative, yeah.

(JM8: Male, Environmental Health Officer, Jewish English)

Clearly, this kind of engagement within the museum visit depends to a great extent on the visitors' entrance narratives that they bring with them into the museum (Doering and Pekarik 1996; Falk and Dierking 2013). Hence, connecting museum narratives to individuals' personal stories and vice versa, appears to be a salient feature of the museum visit (Schorch 2015).

3. Perspective Taking

Participants empathised by imagining themselves in the victims' position, and felt sad and upset with the Leon Greenman's faith and story, a Holocaust survivor whose story is hosted within the Jewish Museum's Holocaust exhibition. They stressed that it was difficult to either confront the reality, or in some cases to express their

feelings, particularly given the fact that Leon's papers that proved that his family and himself were British arrived 25 minutes after he was deported to a concentration camp. Perspective taking can be seen in the following examples by non-Jewish visitors at the JM:

Uhm...I guess for me...when I read about the part how they were trying, they were waiting for their papers, and they were, the papers came fifteen minutes after they left, that...just, uh, that's u-upset, that's very upsetting.

(JM13: Female, Student, American)

JM19a: We knew about this (Holocaust history) but you feel always emotional when you confront the reality of Holocaust (...) People who were there, they were people like us, and we could have been there.

{Interviewer: And, where did you spend the most of your time in the museum today?}

JM19b: Well mainly the Holocaust area I think. But not, but not, restricted to that, we looked at the history of the Jewish community in this country as well.

{Interviewer: was anything that gave you a strong emotional reaction?}

JM19a: Uhm, frankly no, because I know a lot about the subjects here from before, it's not the first time that I'm facing these questions, uhm, but it's always a strong emotion when we, get to be confronted with the realities of the Holocaust, because, erm immediate reaction is, the people who were taken and put in the camps, they were people like you or me, there was nothing-

JM19b: -Well it was our generation actually

JM19a: Yes

JM19b: We could've been involved.

JM19a: Yes, b-but for luck we could've been there.

*(JM19: Males, Retired Professor (a) and
Managing Consultant (b), English)*

For another visitor, the engagement with the past brought intense feelings that made him feel overwhelmed, and as a result it seemed that it led him to regulate his emotions and feelings.

Uhm...I mean...I suppose it's uhm...I mean the idea of the feeling of horror I mean, but, but, it's, there are so many stories like that I mean, they just, it's uhm...impossible to imagine what it must have been like and umm...how something like that could happen in the matter of last hundred years. It's the same again, you just can't help but be...overwhelmed by erm...that exhibition.

(JM19a: Male, Retired Professor, English)

Empathy and feelings of sadness that were evoked through museum narratives also encouraged interest, and brought awareness upon past events, as illustrated here at the NHCM:

NHCM2a: I don't know really. All of it, it's all been very, you know obviously the uhm...reading about the poor children in the concentration camps and, er, when they got separated from their parents and that, that was that was interesting that, very sad obviously, but uh, yeah, brings you aware of, how, I would say how evil can be, people can be.

NHCM2b: Uhm, seeing all the photos of the...uh...

NHCM2c: Mine was uhm, the concentration camps section, but also the...they highlighted that it wasn't just Jewish people, which I obviously knew it wasn't but I didn't realise how many...non-Jewish people were killed.

NHCM2a: Like Gypsies and stuff.

NHCM2c: And, the section about where Hitler had, uhm...racial...examiners to figure out like if you fit the bill, yeah, I don't like it but obviously I didn't know about it.

*(NHCM2: Van Driver (a), Bus Driver (b)
and IT System Auditor (c), English)*

Individuals felt strong negative emotions and feelings that nothing can really change over the years, however this emotional engagement led them to think in a broader context and critique national politics and narratives.

JM7b: Well yeah, I've just said despair at human nature. I think the older you get the more you are like that. One way or another. Nothing's changing. I don't think so.

JM7a: I'm trying to put it into words (softly spoken).

JM7a: Well, Leon.....from his story he wasn't just against, he didn't just feel, Jews shouldn't be persecuted that, he felt no one should be persecuted. Whatever their religion or... So, so, I'm trying to...

JM7a: So, the fact that he was, err, wanting-

JM7b: To help everybody.

JM7b: [Not just the Jewish] community.

JM7a: He just felt...there's a word for it but I can't remember what it is, but he was, erm,
he wanted anyone who was-

JM7b: -Felt persecuted, or are persecuted.

JM7a: That society should, err protect everybody, whatever they are or wherever they come from.

These interview instances showed the interplay between both cognitive and emotional dimensions of empathy. Based on the above ideas, it is possible to suggest that history was not only perceived as something that connected and rooted them in the past, but also as an element which played a role in their interpretation of the past, and its meaning into the present. The visitors' diverse responses showed that different levels of involvement with the past can take place within the museum visit: from acquiring understanding about the historical events, imagining the difficult conditions in which people lived during the war-and appreciating life today, to emphasizing with characters and their stories. This study showed that they are not fixed and expected responses, but rather, they depend on the ideology, willingness and desire of each individual to get emotionally involved, and to explore themselves and others. However, there is not enough evidence here to indicate how far visitors have been affected, and in what ways they continue to make use of the museum experience in the future.

When “hot empathy” took place, other personal factors also seemed to be involved that affected the experience, family memories and personal experiences. In many cases, visitors approached exhibitions in an intimate way, and became fully immersed within the museum. Most of the visitors experienced a variety of both positive and negative emotions. With regard to empathy, the extent to which museums can prompt empathetic connections effectively needs to be further researched; how this can affect individuals' engagement and understanding and how much of it is an involuntary or spontaneous expression that depends entirely on the visitor.

7.4 LEARNING, REINFORCEMENT AND AFFIRMATION

Many participants mentioned that the purpose of both museums is for learning (about a different religious and culture as well as learning from the past events) and

they saw their museum visit as an educational, informative and inspired experience, but more in relation to the next generations, or to other groups of people, as well as it being something that they felt they should be doing, even if they acknowledged that actually they were not.

(The purpose of the museum) To bring awareness, I would imagine. And, it's also t-to show to show, you know, I mean it's a Jewish Museum so it's awareness like I said, but I think to also show that side of the religion...and stuff like that, as I don't think, that many people go out of their way to find out about religions and stuff so...the more that you know, I think, the better it is I suppose, and knowledge...

(JM1a: Female, Cash Officer, English)

JM19a: Uhm, yes. Uhm, I know that you have an education programme in here, especially the schools that visit, and some of them, even in this day and age it'll be the first time they've se-they've met these kind of situations and problems, yeah.

JM19b: Oh, it's immensely valuable, but I suspect it's the interested people who come, uhm...it takes additional mechanisms to get to the people that know very little about it. Martin's wife actually, is a very significant in higher course education.

*(JM19: Males, Retired Professor (a) and
Managing Consultant (b), English)*

For me (the purpose of the museum) it is to educate Jewish and non-Jewish about Jewish culture and life. You can get some lessons also from what is happening in the world today.

(JM12: Female, Unemployed, English Jewish)

I did wonder if I'd learn anything new having visited a couple of Holocaust exhibits before, but there was so much information and all handled beautifully -

as you enter, seeing childhood pictures of Jewish citizens with music playing in the distance, you are instantly transported back in time.

(NHCM13: Male, English)

In terms of emotional and intellectual engagement, visitors talked a lot about how cruel, evil, and inhuman German Nazis were; “how did people do this stuff”, or they mentioned the number of people that suffered. Whilst, others were interested in learning about how the Holocaust happened, and engaged deeper with past, for example, they wanted to see the whole process that led to Holocaust or how Hitler came to power. Others spoke about the victims of the Holocaust who were not only Jewish. They considered what happened in the past in relation to the present and expressed ideas such as “to help prevent further persecution of not only Jews, but anyone who is singled out because of religion/disability/colour” and “the fact that he (testimony survivor) was there telling a story and it’s very important that the story should be continued” (NHCM). However, others felt surprised of what they finally found in the NHCM and expressed different ideas about the focus and purpose of the centre actually is:

Very interesting place, managed to arrive as a Survivor was sharing her interesting story. However, surprised to find no mention at all of those LGBT and disabled who were killed and tortured in the Holocaust and such a small entry about other groups such as blacks, mentally ill. More of a Jewish focused museum than National museum of whole Holocaust.

(NHCM20: English)

Furthermore, for many of the participants in this study, the museum visit was not simply about acquiring new knowledge, rather they were affirming and reinforcing their existing ideas, knowledge, beliefs and values. What was being affirmed and confirmed was often a sense of emotional engagement to particular narratives or social values. The museum experience reinforced what they already knew and felt, rather than their views and values being changed, or challenged by museum narratives:

JM2a: I think because I've learnt a lot about it before I think that I've seen a lot of things on it before I maybe don't feel...that differently but the first time I went to a museum, in that case I remember being like...thinking that I like understood more like the scale of it, maybe.

JM2b: Yeah, the same to be honest, I think that coming to an exhibition like this does kind of refresh all those feelings that you get about the Holocaust, like yeah.

(JM2a: Female, History Student, English)

I don't know, was there anything that err...I found...new or different? I mean I'm well aware of the, Jewish Holocaust so seeing that was obviously one man's story but...I was well aware of the, uhm, various concentration camps and what actually happened.

(JM5: Male, Director, English)

I've always had strong feelings about this kinda thing anyway, so it's just strengthened what I, I thought before, you see it on telly, you know you see these videos, yeah, just strengthens what you think before.

(NHCM2a Male, Van driver, English)

According to Smith (2011, 2020:48) and the findings of her research in cultural and history museums in the UK, America and Australia, individuals and groups may be expected to seek validation or understanding of their own, or another's; identity; historical; contemporary; social and economic experience. Thus, museums and heritage sites facilitate the process of affirming, reinforcing, negotiating, re/constructing and maintaining identities. However, this also raises questions such as how can museums achieve their role as an agent in promoting social change and cultural understanding, if visitors use museums primarily to reaffirm their own narratives and established ideas, and when their practices seem only to influence specific groups of individuals. So, I do not argue here that museums have not got the potential to influence views and attitudes. I suggest, instead, that more attention needs to be given to the different ways in which people respond to these museum

narratives which aim to support social justice (Chapter 4) and the social and political consequences of this engagement in long term.

Visitors' affirmation that took place during museum visit was influenced from personal connections in relation to community history, or to national identity. It was also based on personal acts of remembering, and political and social values. Examples of affirmation of visitors' feelings of national identity, knowledge or social identity from both sites illustrated here:

NHCM1a: Uhm, I think it reinforced how I feel about those things. Rather than...make me realise how I feel about it...because I...it reminded me of why I feel so strongly about things like that, rather than bring it to a new, new idea.

NHCM1b: Yeah, I agree. It reinforces-like you said it reinforces that feelings and thoughts I have already, and it kind of makes me open my eyes a lot more to, what's happening currently in like the world at the moment, and like events that are happening in Africa and further East, like that are happening which are very similar to what happened, here, but for some reason as a group we don't...it's not...we're just not doing anything about it when we should be.

*(NHCM1: Female and Male, Paralegal (a) and
Recruitment Staff (b), English)*

I mean I'm quite...I've already got strong views about that anyway, so I've followed the Sophie Lancaster, uhm, campaign and what not, and I abhor racism and intolerance of any form, don't I? But...the world is in an utter mess again, and I think Brexit is, a prime example, of that, and all the things that-you've got the tabloids doing like the Daily Mail and whatnot it's really just quite...repulsive at the moment, so I don't think it will have changed me in any way, I think all it does is reinforce it.

(NHCM5b: Male, Energy Company, English)

Affirmation occurred as they related to their own experiences and drew on their memories, leaving space for thinking:

NHCM5a: Yeah, I think it reinforces, yeah, my view, and it ma-it does make you want to help and do more and, get involved or...share about it or come and see more of it. Uhm, so, I kind of, I think that's the reaction I've had, is that, and even I think understanding now and thinking how old some of the people are, you think "oh gosh, you might not have enough time to even speak to the people again" don't you, so...uhm, so yeah, I think that's a major, a major thing, and part of it. So yeah, and I think, and I don't know if it links back to our line of work, or my line of work anyway, or in any way, but, uhm, because it is about people and things like that, but...err, but yeah, I think, uhm understanding in my role about things like mental health and understanding disabilities, and things like that, this sort of thing and understanding the impact on people, for me is something throughout my life, I think that I experience and deal with and cope with, so, so this is my sort, this is why I enjoy coming isn't it, I suppose

(NHCM5a: Female, HR Staff in Energy Company, English)

However, affirmation did not only happen through personal connections and experiences of injustice discrimination, nor did it necessarily facilitated any new learning, but it was particularly about reinforced beliefs and emotional commitment to a particular understanding about social justice. It is this emotional work and commitment that makes this museum/heritage engagement powerful (Smith 2020). The reinforcement of views, knowledge and feelings occurred also in relation to less strong emotional engagement with exhibitions.

Well as I said before, it's what I already know, so for me it doesn't really have any significant effect but....

(JM5: Male, Director, English)

Just so low...sad but, uhm... the same I felt, I mean this, I've dealt with this a lot, but yeah it reinforced how I felt before, yeah.

(JM13: History Student, American)

Additionally, in response to the question, *if they believe that museums can change*

attitudes, the majority spoke favourably about the potential impact of museums. However, they stressed that these kinds of exhibitions are more likely to attract specific individuals with certain ideas and beliefs related to the museum message. How visitors used personal ideological positions, values and interests to talk about the potential impact of museums on them and others is illustrated by the following examples:

They can do. I think it's...it's...not necessarily...uhm...er...a medium for engaging with a lot of the general public. So, it's only those who are curious enough to walk through the door that are going to be engaged with it.

(JM5: Male, Director, English)

Err...that story they have over there is very interesting, but I'm only really interested in it because they said it's interesting, so I've gone to take a look. There's also a piece of history here from my company, that we've donated to the museum, which is very interesting, so that's taken my interest, but otherwise, no I'm walking around and just *seeing what takes my interest*.

(JM6: Male, Graphic Designer, English)

JM15: Um...uhm...I think, so, I should tell you, so my Master's degree in Public Health and we're all about changing behaviours (laugh) so, I'd say I think a museum can play a part in it, but I don't think it's fully...can change someone's behaviour just by reading an exhibit, uhm...but I think that it could help someone think about something in a different way, uhm and maybe, uhm grow their interest more in maybe like...reading something they never thought of, and they'd be going home, and uhm doing more research, uhm...for myself even just like reading about...the refugees, like just framing the Holocaust as refugees, I always forget that because right now we're going through a huge refugee crisis, and...like...you know, the uh, one that we went through for World War Two like it wasn't that long ago, and it's just, I feel like sometimes those connections are lost. Uhm, so for me, even thinking about that was just like, I've thought about, I've learned about the Holocaust my whole life, but yet,

like I never really thought about it, like the refugees, and what's going on now, and just connecting it, so yeah, I think it can play a small part in it.

(JM15: Female, Student, American Jewish)

I definitely think they do, but it also just depends on the person. I feel like a lot of people...don't really absorb what they're looking at, and they don't open themselves up to it, so it can cut them off, but when they do it I definitely think that.

(JM13: Female, Student, American)

As Jost (2006) and Smith (2020) argue, ideology and knowledge of an event influence what people care about, and how they are affected by this. Visitors reinforced this point while they confirmed for one more time that the museum visit fostered their already established ideas and values:

{Interviewer: Do you think museums have the power to change how we think and act?}

JM1b: Can do, it depends...you know, you're dealing with modern day society-

JM1b: And a lot of people...you know, you like to think you can change the way somebody thinks, and the way that the chemical reaction is in their brain, but, it's not always like that 'cos some people are born...to live and think a certain way. I like to think that you could, do you know what I mean?

JM1a: But I wonder, if that type of person would actually come through the door anyway...to look...through history.

JM1b: It's true. But, uhm, I think it could have the power of doing it-

JM1b: You know, I'd like to think, you know, just...just, but you get this inside feeling that some people are just not that way of change. You know, people just

can't accept and embrace change as it is, can they, and stuff, it's a sad thing really.

{Interviewer: Do you feel any differently after your visit here?}

JM1a: Well I don't really, because I've always felt this way (h), so, uhm-

JM1a: It reinforced how I felt.

*(JM1: Females, Cash Officer (a) and Civil Servant (b),
English with Jewish Background)*

While others were tended to be more positive or hopeful that Holocaust exhibitions may influence one behaviour or attitude:

Uhm..., yes I think so, but I think...uhm...only to a limited extent because I think the people that would come here...are people that are generally sympathetic anyway. Whereas, people that might really need to hear it, won't necessarily...come in, but, I suppose for some people if they don't know anything at all, then actually finding out might change and that's an achievement.

(JM10: Male, Teacher, English)

NHCM7b: It's hard because we're Jewish, but I would hope that people that come here...would change attitude and maybe change other people's attitudes.

NHCM7b: I don't know how many people come, a year. I would...I would hesitate a guess and say...

NHCM7a: I would like to think so, better to have the museum then not have it

NHCM7b: Oh, absolutely, uhm, do enough people know about it though...that's, that's the question. Uhm, I'm not sure just how well publicised the whole thing is, er, it may well be publicised to a certain...educational standard, but...to

people who don't much care...I, you know, I don't know...you understand where I'm coming from...

NHCM7b: I think...I think that the...has the children's story always been there, within the museum? Because that's the important part, is to get...to get

NHCM7a: That's why they bring the schools

NHCM7b: Yeah, to bring the schools, that's...

NHCM7a: For the next generation.

NHCM7b: Yeah, that is, that is the important bit.

*(NHCM7: Female and Male, Retired (a) and
Business owner (b), Jewish English)*

These comments, bring into question how museums can evoke empathic reactions to individuals who don't share the same background, ideas, and values with the group of people who are represented in the museum. Importantly, there were also people who felt not only that they gained new knowledge but also, they commented that their thoughts and attitude have been/ can be affected by these sites, as illustrated by these responses:

NHCM7b: I've learnt. I've learnt more. I don't feel any different because I've always had that, my opinions...are quite strong on this subject because of...because of my...way I've looked, seen both wars and all the ways that Jews have been treated. So, it hasn't changed that, but it's quite interesting...I didn't realise that...the effect the Jewish community has, and had in London, and how they were persecuted in this country, which is a bit worrying, but, sure.

{Interviewer: if there is one thing that you will take away from your visit today, what would that be?}

NHCM7b: Err...the Jewish resilience...probably. Particularly the gentleman there looking at Leon Greenman in the Holocaust exhibition.

NHCM7a: Yes, I think the same thing. The fact that he was there telling a story and it's very important that the story should be continued-

NHCM7b: Isn't it ironic he was born in England and got caught [up in that mess].

NHCM7a: The story should be told and for anybody in any...it's not just for, what happened with the Jews, but with anyone that's persecuted in any country.

NHCM7b: Yeah, that's right. That's why people need to see it, whether they be Jews, Blacks or whoever you know.

NHCM7a: The slave trade, which unfortunately is still...carrying on.

NHCM7b: Immigrants.

*(NHCM7: Female and Male, Retired (a) and
Business owner (b), Jewish English)*

NHCM3a: I found the, like the documentation you know, yeah...that sort of thing, reading and that sort of thing because I didn't know about the ghettos and that sort of thing, so I was able to learn about that, so I found...yeah visual I'd say.

{Interviewer: Do you feel any differently now after your visit?}

NHCM3a: Yeah, I think so. Uhm...yeah, I think you do, because...you know...well actually you know it happened, you don't realise in what scale, definitely...it happened, so yes, I think it will, but again I need to digest that later, yeah. But it thinks it, you know it does, it's awful what happened yeah.

NHCM3b: I think as well yeah, it makes you think, more, doesn't it?

NHCM3a: It does definitely yeah, I think it's something that you know, you come to these places and then...it's sort of got to have an effect on you really. You do think, you do change a bit or you attitude change.

(NHCM3: School Secretary (a) and Administrator (b), English)

You'll see downstairs they've got all the, erm, cultural...uhm, items, menorah's and scrolls and stuff, and a Muslim couple came in, a-and uhm, Isobel was talking to them and she said "oh, what made you come in to see this?" you know, and she said, "I want to see what the Jewish culture is all about, I don't know I've never been taught in my own" [in her own background, they don't know], they have not been taught of what Jews, they're just taught to hate, they're taught to hate Jews but they don't know anything about Jews, so it's, so she wanted to learn.

(JM12b: Female, Unemployed, English Jewish)

The way that people experienced and related their current lives to narratives of the past was shaped by collective and individual memories. Memory research and analysis seek to explore the interpenetrative relationships between memory, identity, and ideology. In this research, identity reinforcement and validation influenced visitors' emotional and intellectual engagement with the past in museum. Here, it is clear that visitors' entrance narratives and perceptions influenced the way that they engaged and interpreted the past to a great degree.

7.5 MATERIAL CULTURE AND PERSONAL NARRATIVES

The museum provides a space to engage with the past, through the connection between the material culture and narratives. Most respondents at both museums agreed that artefacts including images and personal objects such as clothes allowed them to increase their engagement with the exhibition: "they made it more interesting" and "they made the experience feel a lot more real". Moreover, visitors

at the NHCM mentioned that the engagement with images let them follow the stories of individuals rather than a group of people and create a sense of connection with the chapters of the historical narrative. Material culture in both sites is not only historical pieces of evidence which testify to a survivor's experience when they are no longer here, but also to demonstrate the individuals' physical and emotional journey. Objects speak about the past but also provide a sense of survivors' heritage and views. The main exhibition in the NHCM is heavily reliant on visual material such as photographic documentation, film footage, and survivor testimonies. The diversity and variety of media (textual, aural, and visual) as well as the number of objects encourage visitors provoked a diverse of responses, for instance, some stated that "images and video provided many different forms and ways of acquiring information" while for others provoked feelings of empathy or sympathy. The few authentic artefacts emotionally and intellectually document the key events during the Holocaust like perpetrators' actions, and the Jewish experience through all stages of persecution, mass extermination, hiding and liberation (Chapter 4). For many participants, it was the combined effect of material artefacts alongside photographs and video footage which proved to be particularly powerful. In the *Journey* exhibition at the NHCM, forgotten voices are also heard through the stories which relate to a particular object, as the stories of the parents are also told as the survivors' recount of how their loved ones helped to pack their items. The "Journey" exhibition at the NHCM was an important part of the museum visit for many visitors as it gave stronger emotional reactions to visitors than the main exhibition achieved. Artefacts are regarded as effective tools to "explore the experiences of real people", according to visitors. It is the second permanent exhibition and follows the story of Leo Stein, a 10-year-old German Jewish boy, who came to Great Britain as a refuge from Nazi persecution⁴⁰. This exhibition focuses on how personal objects can tell a survivor's story. Leo's journey unfolds in seven rooms, comprising his home, school, street, tailor shop, hiding space, train carriage

⁴⁰ Leo is a composite character based on Holocaust survivor testimonies. Through his story, visitors explore how the lives of Jewish children changed under growing Nazi persecution.

and refuge. The exhibition's layout assisted visitors to navigate and make sense of the storyline which they regarded as coherent and clear. Additionally, none of the visitors reflected on the overabundance of reading materials. Participants felt more connected with the individual characters and their stories and in some cases, they reflected that in their own experience:

In the Journey exhibition, you connect with a character specifically, you see it all from the first person and I think about it, the whole exhibition is from individual rather than talking about a group of people generally. You have a lot of pictures of individuals. You look at family photo and you think how was this picture was taken? What was going on at that time? So, you really connect how individuals' lives have been affected.

(NHCM1: Female, Paralegal, English)

The "Journey" exhibition also includes seating areas used to facilitate visitors' focus on video-audio recordings of survivor testimonies who escaped on the Kindertransport, and information about conditions in the Kindertransport. During my visits, I found that seating areas encourage visitors to perform behaviors reminiscent of those performed by victims and survivors. For example, visitors can seat on benches in an immersive train carriage experiencing how it felt to travel in the Kindertransport.

The Journey is a better way to understand, learn and remember, you can sit down and experience. It is more of an experience. It adds more to emotions.

(NHCM5a: Female, HR, English)

Through Leon's story, visitors explore what life may have been like for a Jewish child refugee at this time through videos, objects, being immersed in historic rooms and watching footage of survivor testimonies. The interaction with museum objects and their stories might generate unexpected and novel response that might influence ones' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, as scholars note (Silverman 1995; Hein 1998). Furthermore, Bruner (1986) refers to the difference between scientific knowing, personal ways of knowing and notes that narratives become meaningful

stories as they connect people with objects and events. The transactional view of museum visits also emphasizes the relationship between objects and people, and the importance of the stories that visitors create (Paris and Mercer 2003). Although in the JM, there is a small gallery devoted to the Holocaust, personal objects and video testimonies construct a historical narrative which aims to tell the story of Jewish persecution and survival in an affective tone. In Holocaust exhibitions, original artefacts create 'close encounters and the "right" atmosphere to help the visitor enter the "experience" of the Holocaust: arousing emotions and often forms of identification' (Holtzman 2011: 98). The power of authentic artefacts has been used to engage visitors with past, empathised with the victims and to convey the relevance of this history in the present. At the JM visitors encountered objects and stories, which allowed many of them to recreate and recall their personal memories, to express their experiences and to share the stories with others. The next visitor developed a personal and intimate connection with the contents of the museum, and thus, was able to relate to the past through interacting with objects that were significant for them.

My mother was Jewish and when she was young, she was working in a hat factory. Here (in the exhibition) they have some models with hats. My mother died a couple of years ago and I was looking through some pictures (he showed me a picture of his mother when she was working in the hat factory). My friend pointed at a hat from the display that was the exact same with the one in my mother's picture. I didn't notice before today. See it there and then here, it brought a little bit of the reality. So, I will take away a memory, a living memory.

(JM8: Male, Environmental Health Officer, Jewish English)

Paris and Mercer (2003:404) contend that objects that hold personal connections attract more easily visitors to view them closely, read the labels and talk about them to others, more than objects without connections to the self. Similarly, the data indicated that objects acted as triggers generated interest and encouraged them to learn about the story behind an artefact. The next visitors' interview showed that

material culture linked with an emotional story had a particularly strong impact on them.

JM16b: Two things made me feel tearful. There's a lock of hair...in the Leon exhibition, of his child, and the shoes. Seeing those made me cry, and also listening to the story of how she-the girl found her parents, but it was in 1950.

JM16b: The strongest thing was the talk about the lady, but I can't remember her name, but the lady who came in the Kindertransport, you have may just said this, yeah, but her personal belongings were there and it makes it very real.

JM16a: In the little video clip of the man who was, who was at Cable Street and it ends, as it closes, he said, as he's walking away, he's limping and he said something like...but you must...you must be proud if you've done the right thing, and then he walks away...

(JM16: Female and Male, Teacher (a) and Handyman (b), English)



Figure 31. "The Holocaust Galley" at the JM Source: Sofia Katharaki



Figure 32. "The Holocaust Galley" at the JM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

All this substantiates the argument that some artefacts have meaningful character because of the stories associated with them (Downes et al. 2018) that become stimuli for visitors to feel and create their own meanings. In this research, visitors engaged with the past, by interacting with objects and stories around them that evoked memories and feelings, or appeared to be relevant to their own personal lives, stories and interests. Although there is certainly a personal factor involved in the to which extent visitors emotionally engaged with the museum narratives, some of the exhibits seemed more effective at eliciting empathic responses. For example, at the NHCM, visitors mentioned that objects, images and individuals' stories made them realise that "it [the Holocaust] actually happened" and that "it is all real". Visitors' interviews also indicated that the museum visit provided a real experience of what happened in the past and how people lived then, compared with other media (films and books) representing similar stories. As being able to see real traces

of the past (images, objects and persons), and listen to oral testimonies from the survivors, the museum visit for them became a confrontation with reality.

I mean for me, I think it's more about making it real, because I've read a lot about...the Holocaust, I've watched a lot of things on TV about it, and World War history is a bit of a hobby, so I-I'm quite familiar with the history of it, but this makes it real, and this makes you feel it, rather than just learn about it. And actually, I think that's probably the biggest impact this has had, is listening to Mark, and listening to Arek, as well as being able to see the exhibition, just makes it...more real.

(NHCM5b: Male, Staff in Energy Company, English)

You read the diary of Anne Frank already, I've done that at school, right. So, I've seen, I've done a documentary about that, a really small one that I've done that, and read the book, so you know that this kind of stuff happens, you've read about it and you've learnt the history of what a vile man Hitler was, and that kind of stuff. You know, so you've seen...things, and then yeah, it just solidifies actually what you've read, what you've seen and stuff like that, and it actually is more realistic with their artefacts, isn't it, it's kind of like...wow, yeah.

(JM1a: Females, Cash Officer, English with Jewish Background)

I know my history. My father told me my history. My granddad was a Jewish tailor. When I saw it here (the tailor section), I said it's true. Although I know it is true. It is quite emotional to know it's true and all these stories. I want to find more about where I come from (..).

(JM11a: Female, Businesswoman, Jewish English)

Visual representation of the past influenced the way that individuals both saw and engaged with it, as they imagined how people lived back then. At the NHCM, the majority found the photographic documentation (such as families' photographs of Jewish people before the war as well as pictures of people who survived) one of the most powerful part of the exhibition. For example, the following visitor described what he found most interesting for him:

When we went through the main exhibition, when you got the star with the faces on it, they are pictures of living people, they're not pictures of someone who has been killed, that was quite hard, wasn't it? It makes you stop and think. It is quite powerful.

(NHCM5b: Male, Staff in Energy Company, English)

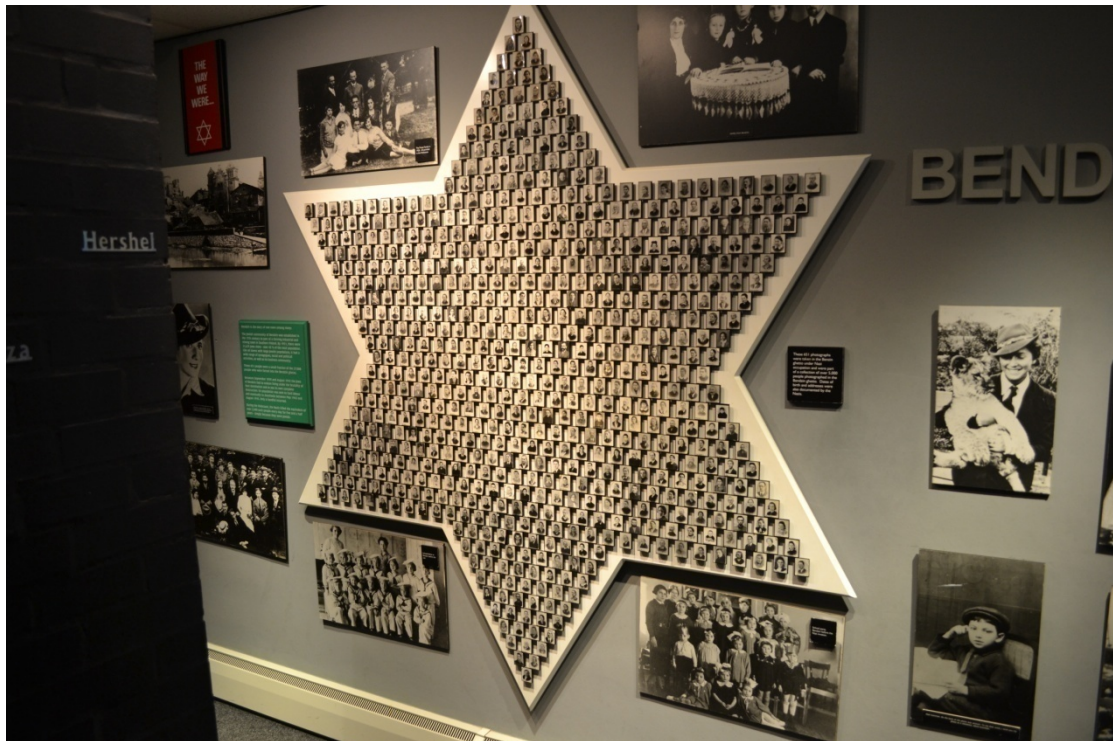


Figure 33. Permanent exhibition at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

For others, historical photographs created encounters that helped them to immerse the “experience” of the Holocaust but also informed them about the historical main events:

NHCM3a: So, we can gain awareness isn't it, of the Holocaust and the cruelty to Jewish and...various other small minorities.

NHCM3a: Yeah, because I think...once you know about it, you don't know that much possibly in detail, which obviously this goes through, so, yes...

NHCM3b: Makes it seems more real doesn't it, like seeing the photos and various things.

NHCM3a: Yeah, it's a bigger impact isn't it.

{Interviewer: What part of the museum did you find the most important and why?}

NHCM3b: I found the, like the documentation you know, yeah...that sort of thing, reading and that sort of thing because I didn't know about the ghettos and that sort of thing, so I was able to learn about that, so I found...yeah visual I'd say.

NHCM3a: Yeah, and so the photographs and then you were able to read...about it. I didn't always, watch the films, but...because I just wanted, I just saw the...photos, yeah...uhm...

(NHCM3: School Secretary (a) and Administrator (b), English)

It is not surprising that for many visitors in both sites, the combination of material culture (like personal objects or clothing worn by victims), historical photographs and video testimonies/ footage provoked emotional reactions, and facilitated a close connection with this history. At the JM, artefacts such as hats, pieces of clothing, photographs, furniture, suitcase, and posters seemed to prompt personal or family memories more than the material culture in the NHCM, as many of the visitors in the JM had Jewish background or connection. Artefacts also evoked emotions to visitors who related material culture to their own lives or interests.

{Interviewer: And, are you particularly interested in something within the museum?}

JM15: Uhm, yeah. So, I really liked the piece on the Jewish photographer, I forget his name, but the wedding photographer. Uhm...I know that was really cool. Uhm, I love photography and, and also just the wedding dress display was just gorgeous, uhm I thought that was really...different I never...had heard of him before.

(JM15: Female, Student, American Jewish)

{Interviewer: ask you, in what part did you spend most of your time in this floor?}

JM6: I would say, by the banner, because it was...the most beautiful as well, it's gorgeous red with embroidery, and also there's a plate behind it with a little text, I don't know if you've seen it-

JM6: "I'm proud of being Jewish", that's also a really beautiful, emotional so I liked it.

(JM6: Male, Graphic Designer, English)

Furthermore, in both sites participants intensely described that the survivors' personal stories presented in the exhibitions were emotionally powerful. Following the story of one person and looking at their objects enabled visitors to emotionally connect with the character. This made their experience with the past more lively and authentic to them.

I think it's interesting from a personal angle. I think we...I think we already know the facts...the facts are pretty evident, erm, but just a sort of personal touch about what happened with one family just brings it home more. It's interesting.

(JM8: Male, Environmental Health Officer, Jewish English)

To listen to someone who's actually been through it, because I think in many years to come there won't be no one there...to say...give us a first-hand, you know...

(NHCM6b: Male, Miner, English)

Uh, the film, I think, uh, the film of the Holocaust survivor was the most important to me, even though I've visited Auschwitz-Birkenau I still found...that his story, and having somebody there, that actually...yes, made it very, very real.

(NHCM7a: Female, Retired, Jewish English)

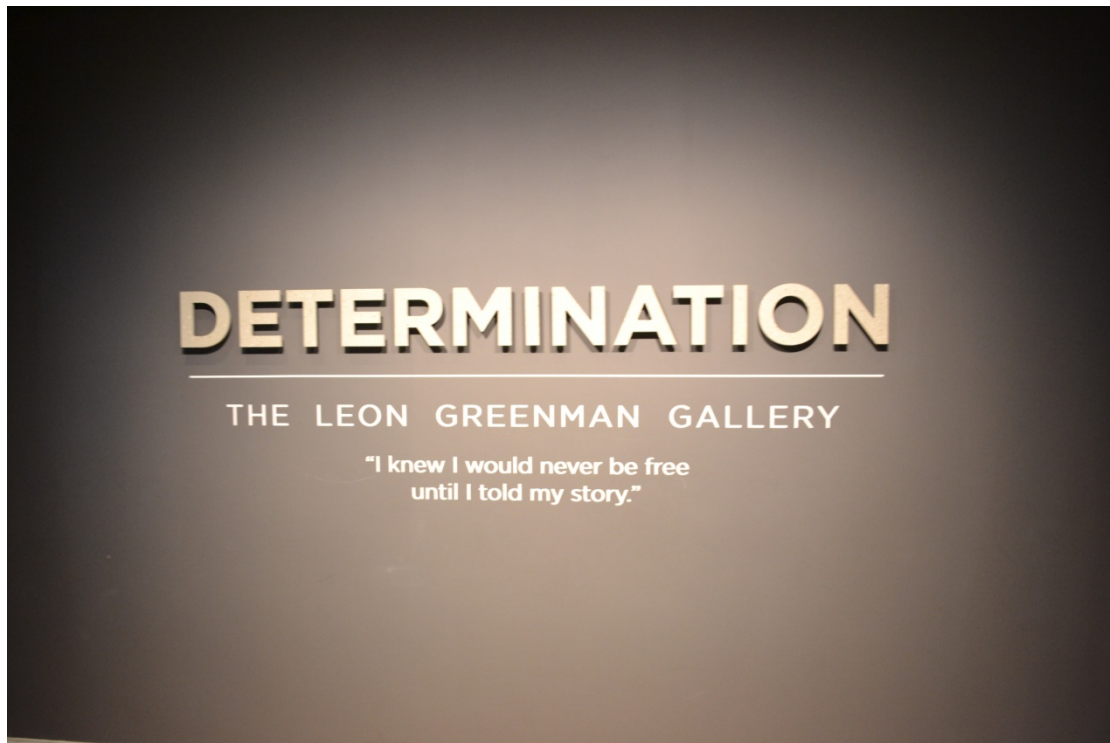


Figure 34. From the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

The significant impact of material culture along with the authenticity of the story allowed also people to have a personal and emotional engagement, as is illustrated by the following example. The visitors were remembering the emotional ups and downs of the story, as well as the tensions and emotional links they had to one another. What is important here, is the authentic feelings triggered by material culture rather than the authentic material themselves. From this perspective, the next visitors narrated:

{Interviewer: In which part of these exhibitions did you spend most of your time?}

JM1a: Well, we've only been to that, the...Leon

JM1b: We've only been there so far.

JM1a: His story.

JM1b: Yeah, his story.

JM1a: And that was very harrowing, had quite an impact.

{Interviewer: So, did you find anything to be the most interesting or important in the exhibition?}

JM1b: The artefacts, that he was basically able to pass them to, non-Jewish people, and they took care of his things, and then he got them back, and now they're in a museum today. So, you are kind of following his story, but also you have the things to look at...the dress that she dyed so that she could wear it to you know, an evening event, and stuff like that, it was just...it's emotional isn't it, like you kind of have this...empathy don't you.

JM1a: And when they were taken away, uhm, together as a family, how they pledged that they would...never marry, um, a person who wouldn't look after their son, and how close they were to receiving their papers, and-

JM1b: Fifteen minutes, [yeah].

JM1a: [Yeah], and just...it brings it all, it makes it more real. You know, when you go through one individuals story, one person's story, you know you kind of get very involved, uhm, it makes it...real, doesn't it?

*(JM1: Females, Cash Officer (a) and Civil Servant (b),
English with Jewish Background)*

Nonetheless, museum experience does not involve only a mere interaction with material culture but also, it is a more complex process that is associated to identity, memory, emotions and values. The following Jewish visitor felt connected and deeply engaged with the photographs on display, by empathizing with the people depicted on the images and imagining that she herself could have been one of the victims. She held my hand while she was explaining to me that she felt shocked with one of the photos of a little girl in the main exhibition who looked like her as she mentioned "it could be me".

{Interviewer: could you describe how you felt today during your visit, was there anything that gave you a strong emotional reaction?}

NHCM7a: Most of the things that were downstairs were interesting. But, being Jewish I understood, it was nothing new to me, I understood what everything was about, apart from the fact that I did see a photograph on the wall downstairs, of a little girl...but it could've been me, it looks so much like me ((voice wavered when saying "so much like me")) as a child that it really gave me a bit of a, of a shock. {...}

NHCM7a: The end of the film I think, the end of the film...

{Interviewer: And, which film was that?}

NHCM7a: It was, it was quite horrific when they were, it was the babies-

NHCM7b: Oh, yeah

NHCM7a: The Germans had hold of little tiny babies and that really...I grabbed his hand and sat, because that's what really-

NHCM7b: Well, then, I mean, the part of being dehumanised and then, and him saying about you became a number not a name, but that, that last bit just showed you the...I say we, because...it's us, we're absolutely nothing in their eyes, we were nothing, we were chucked...as if we were nothing.

NHCM7a: And, you know what Sofia, I still don't understand...why? Why? What did we do that was so terrible, that was so bad? Why?

{Interviewer: if you have to pick one feeling, one emotion, that was the strongest within you today, what would that be?}

NHCM7a: Sad. Very Sad.

NHCM7b: Yeah. Sad, uhm, and angry. Yeah.

*(NHCM7: Female and Male, Retired (a) and
Business owner (b), Jewish English)*



Figure 35. Permanent exhibition at the NHCM. Source: Sofia Katharaki

The participant's experiences arose out of emotive and sentimental object interaction, a process of active engagement between self and material cultural. The NHCM encourages direct visualization of historical narratives/events and that seemed to evoke of certain types of memories and emotions, much more than the photographic documentations of the JM did. This may be explained due to the vast photographic collection that depicts family pictures and everyday life of Jewish

people before the war. For example, some created an emotional attachment and elicited empathy, or memories; because they were authentic; because they were perceived to have symbolic or “historic” significance; or because they showed what the past looked like. After all, objects and stories about the past in the museum are linked to the historical culture and memory where they are immersed. This range of diverse and rich ways, in which visitors linked to the material world, as Dudley indicated, objects in museums are “not only a gateway to “education” or learning - in terms of a cognitive understanding of certain information - but also to powerful emotions and sensory experiences, such as wonder” (Dudley 2012:3,7).

In the both case studies, interactive media are used to enhance historical knowledge and to provide access to content. Participants in this study did find hands-on interactions to be an effective way to gain insight and shape their historical knowledge and understanding. The design elements at both museums encourage empathetic identification with victims (Alison Landsberg 2004; Jens Andermann and Silke Arnold-de Simine 2012), but also facilitate selective engagement with the subject matter, leading attention to specific characters (victims) of the historical narrative, whilst downplaying others. Visitors at both sites reacted positively to the spatial layout of the exhibitions. Overall, their responses reflected a perception of the Holocaust exhibitions as rich, coherent and well organized, with a focused and clear narrative. However, some visitors described that felt overwhelmed with the length of the displays and information provided in the Holocaust exhibitions while others especially in the NHCM, noted the need of a tour guide in the main exhibition.

This analysis showed that visitors can use the museum for identity purposes without necessarily engaging with everything in the display, and in detail. Instead, they sought out objects and stories that have immediate personal and emotional resonances, and ignore those elements that do not. However, not all visitors in both museums were able to talk about their experience with the objects displayed in the exhibition. Most of the visitors described their museum experience, without particularly making references to specific objects, apart from a few cases. What stand out from the interviews, is that the personal stories and testimonies triggered

highly emotional reactions in both sites. In general, the visitors' personal biographies, interest and prior knowledge, encountered with the material world and stories attached to them. Accordingly, narratives allowed participants not merely to acquire new knowledge, but also, it seemed to facilitate their engagement and appreciation of another culture. Although the exhibitions in both case studies do not intend to tell visitors how to feel, I argue that the exhibitions strategies (photographic documentation, artefacts, film footage, video and live testimonies) provoked emotional and intellectual responses and inevitably shaped visitors' engagement and should therefore be subjected to a deeper scholarly examination, as I have done above.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was not to offer a generalisation in regard to how visitors' emotional engagement looks like within Holocaust exhibitions. Instead, it aimed to answer how, and why, individuals interacted with the museums narratives the way they did, and therefore contribute to the discourse about how different individuals (Jewish and non-Jewish visitors) respond to Holocaust exhibitions. Hence, this chapter presented the analysis of the visitor research, carried out over 26 interviews with 35 interviewees at the Jewish Museum and the Holocaust Centre and Memorial. Through semi-structured and conversational interviews, I was able to generate data in order to understand how the museum's emotional narratives about the past impact peoples' understanding and attitude. I specifically looked at visitors' experiences and perceptions - how they emotionally and intellectually constructed meanings regarding the past and its meaning in the present. A sociocultural approach shed light on the non-fixed, highly fluid and diverse visitors' emotional responses, where the complex and varying interplay of individual and sociocultural parameters played a role in visitors' engagement with the past in present. Through an interpretive approach, I analysed the interviews, and suggested that visitors experienced, related to, and made sense of the past through different approaches. Not all of them were merely rational or emotional. Their engagement with the past

was affected by the use of; personal memory; their identity; interest; motivation; curiosity about what living in the past would have been like; how they established hot or cold empathy with people from the past; and how they interacted with the material word and the exhibition design. All of the emotions that were felt by visitors shaped their emotional and intellectual engagement. The visitors' responses were personal, but they also discussed and negotiated broader ideas of current violence and racism. Practices within "pedagogies of feeling" inevitably show the complex nature of emotions, but this does not mean to not draw attention to them, rather it is required to work on practices of addressing affect/emotion, as Zembylas (2018) suggests, besides to rethink the different uses of the museum environment that visitors make.

The analysis also allowed me to identify specific points in which there seem to be differences in the way visitors experienced the past in the NHCM and the JM. Empathy, imagination, negative and positive emotions were important for visitors' emotional engagement, and for the meaning making process. The engagement was often personal, but also, they engaged in a broader context with the subject matter. Empathy did not always motivate learning, action or change, but it seemed that in many cases it affected visitors' thoughts and feelings. Zembylas (2018) points out that "pedagogy of feeling" can have an impact depending on the multifaceted nature of visitors' experience and skills, in recognising and mediating emotions. This research showed that emotions influenced motivations, judgements and meanings made through emotional engagement, then understanding the emotional process that takes place within museum can help develop curatorial practices, to work through complex emotions facilitating critical reflections that may lead to positive responses in the future.

Based on the above analysis of the two cases studies institutions, it is possible to suggest that the JM clearly fostered more memories, specifically in the Jewish visitors, through a more material-based reflection of history compared to the NHCM. But, the NHCM was more successful in creating a range of emotions and empathetic encounters. Findings of this study can be considered as ways to facilitate

personalized engagement and critical reflection within the museum space and has proposed a way of thinking about how to look at emotions within the museum. The varied processes through which visitors made sense of the past were not fixed, but rather complex; they constantly used, and shifted between different approaches. After all, human identity and behaviour is so complex and polymorphous, that it is difficult to grasp every aspect of it during the interview process. Emotional and empathetic engagement was experienced and shaped by one's memory and identity narratives, knowledge, ideas, emotions and desire to engage with "others". Identity involves a range of social cultural factors that impact upon the visit, the purpose of the visit, and the media to interact with, along with prior experience and knowledge. All these come together and shape not only what is learned, but how people made meanings and thus, how they saw and understood themselves, and in turn others. Curatorial practices in both case studies promoted an experience which appeals to both cognition and emotion facilitating new knowledge to be gained, but also created an emotionally charged space allowing critical reflection as well as superficial emotional responses and passive knowledge. Shoshana Felman explains that learning about the Holocaust lays "not merely in new information, but primarily, in the capacity of their recipients to *transform themselves* in view of the newness of that information" (Felman and Laub 1992: 53). The transformation of information into an action, or change as a result of Holocaust engagement within museum maybe be challenging to validate by empirical research, but understanding and exploring how and why visitors respond to museum narratives in certain way over the long-term, is possible.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.1 WHAT HAS THIS RESEARCH DONE?

This thesis presented and analysed the results of research carried out at Holocaust exhibitions in the UK, with the aim to explore and understand how and why visitors responded to the emotional engagement at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum, and the Jewish Museum in the way they did. Furthermore, this study examined the impact of emotional engagement on the visitors' understanding, feelings, and attitude, in relation to the past and its contemporary meaning. The thesis has also not only discussed the efficacy of Holocaust exhibitions to offer opportunities not only to enhance an understanding human rights, social justice, and multiculturalism related issues, but also the museum's role in encouraging individually social responsibility and positive action. Finally, this thesis asked why people prefer to visit/revisit these exhibitions; what meanings were attached to such experiences that make these visits so popular; how people made meanings about the past; and what role emotions played within this engagement and experience. These were some of the questions that triggered and inspired me to undertake this research.

One of the key factors that drove my interest in this research was our poor, until recently, understanding of the power of emotions within difficult exhibitions, and most importantly the limited research regarding the impact of emotions on the visitors' responses. Therefore, the thesis, asked how and why emotions affect our ideas, behaviours, and actions both inside and outside museum; and how emotions are used by the museum and its visitors to make sense of the past. My research was based on the premise put forward by several authors, that the museum experience can be as much an emotional, as an intellectual, experience shared (Falk and

Dierking 1997: 92; Bagnall 2003; Poria 2006; Witcomb 2010, 2013, 2014; Smith 2011, 2015; Watson 2013, 2016, 2018; Fleming 2014). This is because different visitors both have and seek a wide range of different emotional responses in museums, which play an essential role in shaping their museum experience; as Falk (2009:176) points out “all visitors will be particularly prone to remember those things that struck an emotionally positive chord for them”. Moreover, visitors engaged emotionally and intellectually with the museums’ narratives, whether they had intended to or not (Watson 2016, 2018; Smith 2015). We often mention that we have been moved or we are affected by a situation, but what does this actually mean, and how do emotions affect our minds and our hearts? It is the effect that emotional engagement has on the visitor's experience and understanding which was the focus of this research. In this thesis, visitor studies were essential in order to explore the museum experience, as they allowed me to comprehend the visitors’ feelings, behaviours, thoughts, attitudes, interests, and motivations. The decision to explore the impact of emotions within Holocaust exhibitions by carrying out visitors' qualitative research offered the best methodological path to explore the multifaceted and complex phenomenon of an individual's experiences. The examination of visitors' emotions and thoughts helps us to better understand the role that museums might play in enhancing cultural understanding, and potentially promoting an action. This thesis argued that emotions are crucial to museum practices, as they have the potential to foster thoughts, memories, and feelings, along with being seen as a tool to better understand how people perceive the world

The present research focused on Holocaust museums and their role as social actors, but it did so through the lens of the visitors' emotional experiences. In doing so, as Sandell (2007) points out, the analysis is not about the exhibition or the visitor, but rather, the specifics of the relationship between the museum and visitor. This study, in particular, contributed additional evidence of how different individuals both responded and constructed meanings in relation to the museum’s emotional narratives within difficult exhibitions. This thesis aimed to investigate the nature of the interaction between historical narratives - presented by Holocaust exhibitions and visitors through the meaning making process, therefore a multiple case study

design was deemed the most suitable method to achieve this. Due to the nature of the subject matter, a qualitative path was required for nuanced and in-depth research in visitors' emotional responses and human behaviour. Open-ended and semi-structured interviews enabled a conversation with participants, to explore and understand their motivations, emotions, and thoughts around their museum experience.

My approach was to focus on how individuals, who chose voluntarily to visit the Holocaust exhibitions, responded to emotional practices of Holocaust exhibitions. They were interviewed immediately after their visit on a specific day and time. The interview testimonies generated by this research, were approached as personal stories from which meaning derived, not only by the theoretical links that I had established, but also by an in-depth exploration of the individuals' own stories, in regard to their engagement with the past.

8.2 SUMMARY AND REVIEW OF THE THESIS RESULTS

This research has sought to contribute to our understanding of the role of emotional engagement within Holocaust exhibitions in the UK context. This thesis looked at the emotional and intellectual perceptions of visitors towards the past and present. The majority of visitors were English, whose nation has had no direct experience of, nor involvement in Holocaust suffering.⁴¹ Even though the Holocaust happened and concerned mostly in the Eastern European countries such as Germany, Poland and the Netherlands, Britain's role as liberator, in addition to being a host country for thousands of Jewish refugees including children during the war, has played an important role in the UK society, pedagogy and politics in the post war era and this in

⁴¹ Three Jewish residents from Guernsey died in the camp's gas chambers, whilst 21 islanders from Jersey were imprisoned in Nazi camps across Europe.

turn will have affected the ways in which British public responds to museum narratives of this topic.⁴²

It is this thesis' understanding that emotions and the interplay between identity, memory, imagination, personal and social narratives played a central role in the way visitors responded to the museums' narratives. The visitors' stories indicated the diverse ways in which they engaged and made sense of the past. They also revealed different kinds of emotions, and levels of emotional involvement that can take place within a museum visit. In particular, the visitors' engagement with the past is influenced by five main elements; 1. By specific memories that related to the visitors' biographies. The museum visit triggered an emotional engagement with the past through personal and families' memories, especially to visitors with Jewish background; 2. Through the imagination of how things happened in the past, and how victims and survivors of the Holocaust lived and experienced the past; 3. By empathetic connections with and for peoples' lives, stories and testimonies from the past represented by the museums; 4. By interacting with objects that evoked memories, or appeared to be relevant to their own personal lives, stories, and interests. This autobiographical connection elicited important feelings related to their lives. In general, victims' testimonies as well as the stories attached to the objects evoked strong emotions and feelings to visitors who related these stories to their own experience; 5. By recognising aspects of their own identity within the Holocaust exhibitions. These approaches of the past appeared to be flexible and changeable where visitors shifted from one to another and at times visitors experienced them simultaneously. Thus, the museum experience does not only involve a mere interaction with objects, or connections to personal and family memories, it is a much more complex emotional and psychological process, that is associated to the relationship between identity, memory, emotions, ideas and values.

⁴² See Chapter 3

Furthermore, visitors conceived the Holocaust exhibitions as a place where they could acquire more information about the past, addressing moral and civic values, seeing the museum as a means of preserving history, and passing knowledge of the past to the next generations. Many participants made personal and emotional connections to exhibitions, and used their visit to invest emotionally in those connections. For example, the visitors who perceived heritage as personal, desired to engage with their past, connect with their own heritage and validate their identity. Similarly, visitors with no Jewish background or personal connection with the Holocaust were willing to emotionally engage with Holocaust history, and experience the past by relating aspects of it to their own biographies. The emerging finding of the study confirms Mason et al.'s (2018) argument that visitors' emotional engagement and understanding of museum narratives is indeed an individualised process. This thesis contributed to adding knowledge about the distinct and very personal ways in which people respond to museum narratives. These emotional and personal experiences became meaningful to visitors, and possibly memorable, as visitors discovered salient aspects of their own lives within the museum.

Regarding the impact of emotional engagement, the research data identified the complex interaction between self and others, through the different levels of empathetic connections with the victims. For instance, the “hot empathy” state was triggered by family/personal memories and experiences, and in turn affected museum visit. As a result of this, visitors approached exhibitions in an intimate and personal way, and became fully immersed within the museums' narratives. Both museums use emotional strategies to educate their audience about the Holocaust, offer a space where individuals can emotionally experience the dreadful events of the past, and interpret these experiences (the trauma and suffering from the past) into historical consciousness. Both case study institutions are narrative history museums with strong pedagogical potential. They use material culture and interpretative approaches to tell the stories of individuals', bridging the past and present, and representing the museum's narrative through the eyes of the victims. These personal narratives in both museums affected the visitors intellectually, as well as emotionally. They encouraged empathetic identification where visitors

projected themselves into the story and experienced it as insiders, whilst at the same time, this experience remained distant, with them interpreting these stories from their own personal point of view. Thus, the meanings created, were not only intellectually based, but also emotionally, affected by different aspects of human behaviour and expression. These connections between thoughts and emotions add to the conversations about the influence of emotions on our ideas, thoughts and the way we perceive the past and the present. Empathic identification with characters of the past and their stories encouraged, in many cases, critical insight of the past and the present, in addition to merely emotional reactions. For example, visitors reflected personal connections and experiences with social aspects of the Holocaust, such as ideas against hostility, violence, ideas of fairness, and mental health.

Continuing onto the impact of emotional engagement, most of the participants felt that their ideas and views were reinforced by their engagement with the past. For instance, it is the understanding of this study that the museum visit was not simply about knowledge seeking, but more importantly, it was about reinforcing the sense of what they already knew and felt. In both sites, visitors linked what happened in the past to more recent genocides and violent acts around the world. Prior ideas, knowledge, interest and experiences came to light during their engagement with the exhibitions, and allowed them to construct their own meanings. In doing so, they translated the Holocaust into moral lessons for the future, drawing on their feelings, and the capability to connect those feelings to ongoing issues. From the analysis undertaken, this thesis proposes that history was perceived both as something that connected visitors with the past, and led them to interpret the present and think about future. The visitors seemed to engage and understand with the museum's message towards social justice, and expressed feelings and thoughts of social responsibility through the act of remembering of past atrocities. They critically reflected upon their experiences, and deepened their understanding of the causes and consequences of the Holocaust. Along with this, they also discussed racial and multicultural issues within current society, but without new meanings or learning to be occurring, especially for those who were familiar with the Holocaust or closely

related topics, I also found that it was harder for the visitors to be pushed into any form of action.

In particular, some visitors found answers to their questions about the overall context of Jewish Diaspora history and culture, others acquired more knowledge around historical events and their political and social aspects from different points of view. Many engaged with the victim's stories, and empathised with them in a similar way to how we have emotional engagement with characters when reading a novel, or watching a play. For others, traces of past prompted personal memories within museum space while other visitors saw the museums as public repositories of Holocaust memory and history that will also inform next generations. Both museums encourage pluralistic meanings and use different media (such as photographs, personal objects, sound, video interviews and geographical maps) to promote their messages by utilising similar strategies for exhibiting what happened in the past. The most powerful medium of personalising the Holocaust was the oral histories, made up of the survivors' testimonies, as well as other Holocaust related audio and video testimonies. The testimonies were the strongest element of the whole museum experience at the NHCM, and visitors emphasised the significance of the survivors' testimonies keeping the history alive, along with them providing an authentic experience of the past, as the Holocaust becomes more distant and survivors pass away. However, in this study, it is uncertain whether emotional engagement led to the visitors turning their museum experience into action in present or future, as the museums' aims and visions intended.

In addition, one of the reasons for this diversity in visitors' responses is attributed to the diverse roles the museums reflect within society (Kavanagh 1990:5). Specifically, Holocaust museums attempt to convey the severity of the atrocities through personal stories, and the multiple and complex meanings and consequences of the Holocaust, in ways that are both commemorative and educational. For example, the NHCM is more than a memorial centre. It reflects strong educational messages by representing historic events before, during and after the Holocaust involving victims, perpetrators, bystanders and liberators, thus promoting high levels of public

sensitivity and moral responsibility. On the other hand, the JM does not conceal its intention to memorialise the past. The past is regarded as a means of representing and recognising aspects of ethnic and cultural identity, and encouraging universal messages for humanity (Chapter 5). Both the NHCM and JM offer opportunities for self-reflection, evocation of feelings of respect, pride, empathy, hope and understanding. Visitors also experienced negative emotions such as sadness, anger and horror towards the horrific and traumatic events of the Holocaust. Both, the positive and negative emotions clearly had an effect upon the visitors' engagement with the past, and it was central to the development of meanings.

In this study, the visitors constructed meanings influenced by abstract and particular ideas, historical events, moral concepts, and individual experiences. The visitors' subjective understanding is shaped by personal and social experiences and ideology, as well as by the museum's purposes, influences and context. Thus, inevitably the past can be understood and experienced through the lens of the present, and each of these two Holocaust exhibitions represent different "textures of memory" (Laidler 2009:13; Young 2013). In other words, Holocaust museums are influenced by current ideologies, context, media and aesthetics, and these museums have the ability to inform various meanings, knowledge and understanding. In turn, individuals may apply these meanings embedded in Holocaust events to their own contemporary experiences and lives.

The analysis of the way people made sense of what they had seen and felt and the way they framed this, was an essential aspect of this research, as it contributed to finding out the way in which the visitors interpreted the past both emotionally and intellectually. In both case studies, individuals from different backgrounds indicated similar patterns of talking about certain ideas, events and characters, for example, they expressed ideas against violence and racism, as well as showing feelings of appreciation for their current lives. Based on the analysis of interviews, it is suggested that whilst there is an individual dimension to how people make sense of the past, there are also shared readings within groups based on socio-cultural context. But also, visitors engaged with the museum narrative and made their own

personal interpretations which had links to their own lives, experiences and memories, and finally, they shared their ideas with others. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the visitors' motivations and entry narratives have a translation into individuals' actions - in the way they engaged with these museums. For this thesis, it was also important to identify reasons and motivations behind the visit of Holocaust exhibitions to better understand the way individuals engage and understand the past. Visitors came to museums with mixed motivations, for example, some visitors were interested in visiting to reaffirm elements of their identity by exploring more about their family past and background. In general, visitors utilised aspects of their identity that allowed them to validate their self-vision. In doing so, it is this thesis' interpretation that individuals made sense of past through the lens of their own sense. The sense of self was strengthened, modified and extended through the museum experience.

The analysis of interviews indicated that the same individuals were interested in several simultaneous experiences at the same site. For instance, individuals who visited the museum to acquire knowledge about the Holocaust, or had a very specific interest linked with the museum content, were emotionally involved with museum's narratives, interacting with artefacts and personal stories and were interested to share this experience with their family or friends. The intellectual, emotional, social, and physical experiences were overlapping and affecting their visit in that way. Hence, the museum experience is proved to be complicated and multidimensional. Looking at the visitors' identity-related motivations contributed to shedding light on not only their reasons for visiting a museum, but also the various ways in which they made their own meanings in museums. The reasons which inspired and motivated people to visit sites like Holocaust exhibitions also proved to be rather complex. Different individuals are looking for different experiences during the same visit, and their motives can be rather diverse. I found as much about how emotional responses in individuals are shaped, as I did about the visitor experience generally.

In sum, based on thesis's research questions regarding the nature of the experiences and levels of engagement with Holocaust history, the research findings initially led

me to suggest that the museum experience is an emotional journey, and the visitors' emotional and intellectual responses are shaped by identity, memory, imagination, personal narratives, and social-culture background. People empathised with others at different states; some sympathised in a superficial way, keeping a distant relationship with the past, whilst others became deeply emotional involved with other experiences. Furthermore, my research indicated that participants who expressed a greater number of neutral emotional responses, and some (those visiting Holocaust exhibitions for first time) who felt overwhelmed by the museums content, regulated their feelings or planned to come back and continue their visit. There were also those who visited the Holocaust exhibitions to search for their identity or look into their past, thus seeking an emotional experience; those who felt that visits to Holocaust exhibitions were a "must-see" developed emotional responses; and individuals coming to the museum to gain knowledge. The exploration of the level of engagement at the museum allowed me to capture and understand visitors' responses, and in turn the impact of this engagement upon the individuals' thoughts and attitudes.

Secondly, these emotional experiences were meaningful to the visitors lives precisely as they interacted with objects, ideas, memories and narratives relevant to them, and this engagement led them to reinforce their own identities, access their memories, and confirming existing ideas. For instance, visitors recalled objects that were meaningful for them, or ideas and concepts relevant to their lives, and this engagement elicited emotions and feelings as well as thoughts related to their own personal identity. The data has revealed the clear links between these individuals' museum experiences, and their own lives and memories. Identity involves conceptualising ourselves through establishing narratives and stories of our lives. These stories can be changed, fostered, or removed over the years. Memory can bring them to the surface again, and then new and old ideas, thoughts, and feelings, can be triggered. In this research, both the case studies prompted personal memories and identity narratives which influenced visitors' emotional engagement, and meanings about the significance of the past.

Thirdly, with respect to the question of the impact of emotional engagement within Holocaust exhibitions on visitors' feelings, thoughts and attitudes, the results suggested that the visitors reinforced their already established ideas and feelings regarding the past and the present, rather than have their views and values being changed, or challenged by museum narratives. The question still remains whether individuals are ready to go beyond themselves, re-evaluate some of their ideas and feelings and finally understand and engage with others. Visitors in this study primarily developed an understating of the "self" during the museum study. Finding self can be taken as a first step in contributing towards engagement, and real understanding of others.

This can be considered as a challenge for museum professionals, who are concerned with how to represent sensitive histories, promote cultural understanding and empower communities. It is necessary to continue identifying how individuals respond to museum representation and interpretation. Similarly, one of the main understandings of this thesis, is that many of the above findings are connected with historical conditions, and the certain representation of Britain's role (as the liberator) during the Nazi area that have shaped this country's socio-cultural background in relation to the Holocaust.⁴³ Visitors in this study were mainly English citizens (forty out of forty-two were English and two were Americans), who engaged and interpreted museum narratives in their own unique way, through the prism of their social and cultural community. Additionally, there was not any noticeable difference in the ways that the two different nationalities engaged with Holocaust, given the unintentional small sample of international interviewees. Importantly, socio-cultural and political conditions have undoubtedly played a significant role in all visitors' emotional responses.

⁴³ See Chapter 3

8.3 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF MY STUDY

As discussed in previous chapters, limited research with some notable exceptions (Smith 2011, 2013; Schorch et al. 2016; Mason et al. 2018) has been undertaken regarding visitors' emotional responses to difficult histories exhibitions, as well as the impact of this engagement on visitors' thoughts and feelings. The research has made several noteworthy contributions, not only about the value of emotions in museum/heritage experience, but also in terms of how and why emotions are used by both museums and visitors when dealing with difficult histories. In addition, examining the social role of the museum through the lens of emotional engagement proved to be quite a challenging task. It was difficult to effectively demonstrate whether the emotional engagement with the past within museums had a fundamental influence on the visitors' values, challenged their views, or motivated them to take any action in the future. Visitors engaged emotionally during their visit in their own personal way based on their background. However, in this research there is not enough evidence to indicate how far they have been affected, and in what ways they continue to make use of the museum experience in the future. Considering my methodology, this research was conducted in a specific context (UK) and time period. This may have had a specific effect on people's attitudes, emotions and perceptions regarding their engagement with the Holocaust, and their future behaviour. However, examining the complexity of emotions that are employed by museums and felt by visitors in other nations with or without direct involvement in the Holocaust, or to other ethnic groups within the UK, might have yielded very different results.

In this thesis, some of the potential limitations include the small number of case studies and the relatively small number of individuals, however, the qualitative data I obtained was sufficient for me to come to some interesting conclusions. With respect to my initial fieldwork, due to the lack of previous empirical studies in this subject matter, this research has led me to think deeply about how to approach and explore emotional responses within a sensitive history, such as the Holocaust. In this context, I have found most of the academic literature useful, as both my

methodology and theoretical framework derive from dark tourism studies in Jerusalem (Poria et al. 2007), Poland (Biran et al. 2011) and Netherlands (Nawijn et al. 2015), studies examining different registers (levels) of emotional engagement to heritage in the context of the UK, US, and Australia (Smith 2011, 2013), debates about the use and impact of emotional practices within museum education in the UK (Jones 2011), and research around emotional engagement in museum/heritage sites in Australia (Witcomb 2013b) and the US (Trofanenko 2014). After the completion of the first round of fieldwork at the NHCM, it became apparent that merely utilizing methods to measure emotions could not allow for a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of human experience and behaviour. As Scherer (2005) highlights, the nature of emotions is rather complex, including many different components that can make effective measurement unlikely to be plausible. Thus, the only way to find out how visitors experienced, felt and thought after their museum visit was to talk to them, and let their own stories shed light on their experience. However, all these challenges are inevitable when dealing with in-depth and multidimensional issues.

Due to the complex nature of emotions, the difficulty of exploring them, and understanding how behaviours and thoughts are affected by emotions, made the development of the interview questions more challenging and the amendments of the questions became inevitable. The difficulty of communicating with curatorial and educational staff in both case study locations made the interviews with staff, and capturing their points of view, unachievable. Additionally, following the empirical studies with regards to the visitors' motivation in difficult/dark heritage sites and media psychology, I proceeded on the assumption that the visits to difficult exhibitions are rewarding and meaningful in relation to the personal biographies of those visitors who wish to come back to the museum. Data pointed out that some of these participants experienced their encounter with the difficult history of the Holocaust, as a positive outcome for their own lives. But this thesis has not gathered sufficient data to suggest if, and why, this happens. Some suggestions are made in the next section for further work that reflects and builds on the problems I encountered during my research. Such problems have been identified and discussed within the study at the relevant point. As a researcher, it is important to recognize

the weaknesses of one's work, and understand that under different circumstances it could be expanded and strengthened through further analysis.

8.4 PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH

This research study, albeit at a small scale, has shown that emotion is a significant factor in museum engagement, and showed that emotions influence the way people perceive the past, the present and the future based on their life experiences. My aspiration was the development of a discourse regarding the power of emotions, in relation to difficult exhibitions, with the aim to engage their audience with historical narratives, and to enhance positive responses regarding social justice. Considering the wide-range issues which my thesis involved, there are many possible contributions and applications from my study. Some of the possible applications of this research can be summarized within the following:

The research's theoretical framework and data can be considered as a way of thinking about how to look at emotions in the museum, and a pattern to comprehensively understand the complex ways in which people engage with, and interpret history, develop meanings about past and the use of it in the present and future. The methodology and findings can also be used to explore the engagement and historical consciousness within histories close to us (recent genocides, for example), as well as far distant events (such as slavery).

In addition, this study provided valuable insights and interpretations of the relationship and interaction between visitors and the museum. To know their motivations, their expectations, their emotions/feelings and thoughts, what they value in those interactions with the museum, and why these are meaningful to them can be significant to understanding the museum's function as social symbol. There is a need to recognize and understand these human behaviours and the different ways the audience responds to the museum experience in relation to the issues of identity, memory, and personal narratives. Furthermore, exploring the role played by

Holocaust museums as social agents, and by analysing visitor responses through the lens of emotional engagement, can be of relevance to museum practitioners who are carrying out similar practices. Furthermore, this study offered concepts and provoked thoughts, as to what extent Holocaust museums fulfil their potential for social impact. In this context, I tend to agree with Sandell (2017: 130) that “the impacts and consequences that stem from museum narratives are difficult to grasp and assess and it would be naive to attempt to establish a direct line of cause and effect” between the museum and its social practices. Their potential contribution to social change can bring challenges as well as possibilities.

It is this thesis's understanding that visitors engaged with the past in a certain way, as they were influenced by their own personal identities, experiences, interests, past or current emotions, feelings and mood. All these elements are part of our identity and are multifaceted, fluid and changeable. As a museum can be an emotional place, the emotions evoked during a museum visit can contribute towards validating meanings and consequences of the present. Therefore, by looking at museum engagement through emotional narratives, I consider museums as social and cultural institutions, that have the potential to create interactions and connections within society, and enhance understanding between oneself and others. However, further examination is required to assess the range of people's emotional and intellectual responses during different moments, “which are able to capture and make sense of the felt experience of the visit” (Mason et al. 2018:146). It is equally important for museum practitioners to create multi-layered narratives which can be experienced in diverse ways, allowing access to a variety of visitor responses to exhibitions, and the opportunity to add their views and to contribute to a dialogue inspired by museum narratives.

Using the results of my thesis, they can recognise the multifaceted ways that individuals can emotionally and intellectually engage with the museum. My fieldwork, also demonstrates not only the meanings visitors constructed in relation to the complex aspects of the Holocaust, but also, the way in which these meanings were made. Finally, I would hope that advancements in museum practices would be

consequently reflected in wider society. Museums have the potential to not only impact people and their communities that are represented, but also how individuals interact with each other outside the museum.

8.5 THESIS CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Regarding the particular contribution that this thesis may claim to make, I would argue that, to the best of my knowledge this thesis' research focus is novel in the field of emotional engagement with the Holocaust. This thesis has made an initial contribution to not only stressing the importance of emotions to cognition, but also the potential effect of emotional engagement on how people make sense of the past and the use of it in order to understand themselves and others. In particular, it offered important insights into the way which we can look deeper into visitors' emotional responses, and understand how museum experience can be related to peoples' lives, and experiences, and how this engagement connects with the collective memory and the wider community.

My fieldwork was set up primarily to obtain new information about the importance of emotions in decision making inside, and consequently outside, the museum walls. Also, it contributed in adding to the knowledge of how emotions and empathy are used by visitors, and museums, and both the challenges and potential implications that this kind of engagement might have - an area that is not yet fully understood. Secondly, my study helped to understand in-depth that emotions are not only socially and culturally shaped, but shed light on the interplay between emotions, cognition, memory, remembering, identity narratives and imagination, which in turn influences the individuals' emotional responses. Most importantly, this thesis enhanced our understanding that emotional responses are not always expected, spontaneous and uncontrollable (Smith 2013), but rather based on multi-layered interactions and the ability of individuals to desire, seek and regulate emotions (Mayer et al. 2008; Smith 2013).

Concurrently, my fieldwork data provided original information about how visitors make meanings about difficult pasts like the Holocaust, and its significant meanings about the present and future. By exploring the emotional responses, it has allowed us to comprehend not only how the past and present is understood, but also, how the past is used in the context of the present, and this ranges from personal and ethnic identity, to political-social ideas. According to the results, the visitors' emotional experiences with past events, and how these reinforced their understanding and views about themselves and others, indicated the importance of personal and social narratives within the museum experience. Specifically, this study showed that the museum visit was an individual process which relied on critical reflection and ideology. Hence, the visitors' responses are not fixed and expected responses, but rather, they depended on the willingness and desire of the individuals to explore and share their stories, as they connect with objects and ideas related to their own lives, personal and family's memories, and identities within the museum exhibition.

Last but not least, my thesis contained further information about the complex nature of human behaviour, and therefore the multifaceted and complicated nature of the museum experience. My fieldwork discovered multi-layered motivations in regard to visiting difficult history exhibitions, and how these motivations informed different levels and styles of museum engagement and experience at the same time. Furthermore, my suggestion about the reasons why people choose to visit repeatedly difficult exhibitions that are not considered as personal heritage can be a valuable piece of knowledge within different areas of museum practices (such as museum education, marketing or dark heritage tourism). This study has suggested that museums are places that visitors go to in order to feel and seek emotional involvement, regardless of whether they consider that past as personal heritage, but at the same time they can choose to manage and regulate their emotions. This can have important possibilities and implications for developing interpretive strategies at museum and heritage sites, and it allows us to reconsider how these cultural and social institutions can be used effectively by individuals.

8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has offered new possibilities for further research both in academic fields, and museum practice. The constraints of time and length inscribed in thesis' research design, along with the limitation of this study, highlights the need for further empirical study of different areas. These limitations are for instance, the geographical location, the sample size, as well as the long-term impact of the museum engagement. Given more time, it could be prolonged to further academic research and museum practices, which could take different forms. This thesis suggests four main areas to be further explored in future research.

Firstly, it would be useful to undertake further research on a much larger scale. Although, the qualitative data emerged from my case studies were ample for this thesis, a larger number of participants would provide more nuanced information about how and why individuals engaged with difficult past and constructed meanings. Secondly, research could carry on based on the same methodology but in different locations. This thesis concluded that the political, social, and cultural norms, affect not only how we shape and express emotions and thoughts over time, but concurrently how museum reconstructs and portrays emotional regimes of the past. My research focused solely in the UK context. However, it would be interesting to continue the research in another geographical location to capture different individuals' emotional responses, and examine the meanings of those responses in relation to their understanding and engagement with historical narratives and memories. It would also be valuable to compare this thesis's results with similar research, conducted among a more diverse group of people in the UK and/or at Holocaust museums in countries such as Germany, Poland, France or the Netherlands, which have different relationships and involvements with the Holocaust. Moreover, in terms of methodology, further research would continue at other difficult exhibitions that are emotionally charged. This can reveal more about the role of emotions in relation to the museum's social purpose, particularly its effect on difficult history. This is because the ways individuals feel and express

emotions affects how historical narratives are interpreted within and outside museum, and consequently they reflect how people develop meanings and values towards the present and future (Watson 2015).

Secondly, interesting perspectives could be produced, by undertaking research where history museums are analysed in relation to other cultural forms (such as universities, schools, local institutions or films and social media) that influence individuals' emotions and perceptions about the past and the present. As Roger (2014:207) argues "it is important to recognize that not one exhibit should be held accountable for either altering beliefs and attitudes or instigating action in the world". In this sense, to better understand the extent to which visits to museums with activist aims encourage the visitors' ability or desire to commit with ideas and actions related to social justice, it is important, not to rely solely on the museum-visitor encounter, but also to look widely at the role of the museums, and its potential influence outside the institution (Simon 2014; Sandell 2017). We need to acknowledge that the museum visit is part of a myriad of other experiences, such as visits to other cultural institutions, and the use of different media.

Thirdly, this study explored visitors' responses and perceptions at a specific moment of time, immediately after their exhibition visit. Although there would be considerable methodological challenges to conduct a long-term research. An additional undertaking of research is needed to examine how the individuals' thinking, views, emotions and feelings induced after their museum experience; have they been transformed over time. Such, further research could also shed light on the long-term impact of the museums social role. It would also provide interesting insights into the ways that individuals emotionally engage with the past, a research that would take into account how specific characteristics of the visitors such gender or age may affect their engagement, and understanding with difficult past. Understanding the museum-visitor relationship can allow for a better understanding of the current position of museums, as well as how they increase their efficacy.

Ultimately, future research could seek to shed light into the level of engagement targeted on individuals with no personal connection to the Holocaust, especially those who tend to revisit the same museum over time. Visitors who were highly motivated, were willing and interested in getting emotionally involved. Those visitors were, in most of the cases, individuals who perceived sites as part of their own heritage. This highlights the need for more research on how museum practices encourage empathetic responses to those individuals who do not share the same background with the group who are represented in the museum. In addition, it is essential that more attention needs to be paid to the visitors' motivations to visit difficult heritage sites, in order to understand who these people are, and why they are interested in visiting these exhibitions. This thesis suggested that visitors' motivations and experiences are polymorphic. Individuals may be interested in different simultaneous experiences, they can be motivated by different reasons for future visits and have diverse levels of engagement to a site related to their own heritage or interest. This clearly demonstrates that motivation and human behaviours are complex concepts that should be addressed in future studies.

8.7 SOME LAST THOUGHTS

Four years ago, I started this research with the conviction that museums have the potential to impact on social change, by opening up new possibilities for dialogue towards social concerns. It was the purpose of this study to explore and understand both theoretically and empirically, how and why individuals respond emotionally to difficult exhibitions, with particular social intentions. Inspired by authors (Dodd and Sandell 1998; MacDonald 1998; Hooper- Greenhill 2000; Fleming 2001; Sandell 2007, 2017) who have discussed, and looked in great depth at the potential and challenges of museums as social agencies, I explored in-detail the level of the visitors' engagement, and the character of the meanings produced by the visitors about difficult past, all the while hoping that this study would contribute to the improvement of the relationship between the museum and the visitor, and that would be reflected in society in general.

Early on in my research journey, I became aware of the multiple roles of Holocaust museums, in addition to the complex and multifaceted nature of human behaviour. According to the results, museums are also places that evoke a wide range of emotions, imagination, and empathy, as well as being places for commemoration and remembering. Thus, the visitors' narratives indicated that engagement with the past that is often emotional and identity-focused. Holocaust museums intend to engage their audience with the significance of the Holocaust, aiming not only to stimulate feelings of sadness, and horror of what happened in the past, but to also promote critical reflection. In this light, one of the most important findings of this thesis, regarding the way visitors experience Holocaust history, was that individuals used the museum visit to mainly validate their own identity and ideas.

Overall, this thesis investigated the museums' social role in offering more possibilities for discourse over equality, mutual understanding, and respect through emotive museum strategies. Broadly speaking, museums have the capacity to enable conversations about understanding others, and influence the visitors' ideas and behaviour (MacDonald 2002; Sandell 2007). In this context, museum practitioners need not only to reflect on messages represented within exhibitions, but also, they must openly recognise the wide range of ways in which museum narratives can be viewed by visitors, regardless of the museum's intentions. The individuals' responses gave valuable insight into how the visitors' constructed meanings, and this might contribute to reconsidering the ways, the challenges, and the limitations of the museums as social actors in the future. Thus, it could yield many positive results, both for society in general and for the parties involved. The particular explanations and interpretations that I have provided have been influenced by many factors, including my own worldview and experience. Finally, this research does not look to offer guidelines on how to curate exhibitions, address difficult pasts, but rather it seeks to present thoughts and issues on the potential impact of emotional engagement on peoples' understanding and attitude towards the past and its relation to the present and future. This research represents a step forward in this

direction with the hope that academics, museum practitioners, and readers alike, will find some of the ideas presented here engaging.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Sample of Interview Protocol for Museum Visitors at the NHCM (October-November 2017).

Personal / Biographical context

1. Individuals information
2. Where you have come from?
3. What is your occupation?
4. Age group
 - ☐ 20-30
 - ☐ 40-50
 - ☐ 60-70

Visitors' motivations/expectations

5. What made you visit the museum today?
6. Have you ever visited a similar museum (Any museum focused around war crimes/genocide)?
7. Do you like visiting museums in general? Or are you interested either in Holocaust exhibitions/ genocides/war?
8. Can you recall what you expected to find here before you arrived?

9. In your opinion, what is the purpose of the museum?

Prior knowledge and/or interest

10. Do you have any knowledge in the subject matter of this museum?

11. Are you particularly interested in something in this museum?

Museum Experience/Personal Narratives

12. What part of the museum did you find most important, and why?

13. What part of the museum did you find the least interesting, and why?

14. Were there any particular parts of the museum that made you to pause for discussion or to share your thoughts with your group? If yes, what was that?

Visitors' opinions regarding their emotional and empathetic engagement

15. Could you describe how you felt during the visit? For example, was there anything that gave you a strong emotional reaction and why?

- ☐ I felt interest
- ☐ I felt concern
- ☐ I felt sorry
- ☐ I felt upset
- ☐ I felt hope
- ☐ I felt sadness


- ☐ I felt dislike
- ☐ I felt offended
- ☐ I felt disgust
- ☐ I felt horror

On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel it?



1 2 3 4 5

16. On a scale of 1-5, how far do you think that you have you been affected emotionally with 1 being sympathetic (least affected/intellectually affected) and 5 being very moved?



1 2 3 4 5

The impact of the museum

17. Is anything that you feel differently about, after your visit?

18. What do you feel you will take away from your visit?

***Appendix 2: Sample of Final Interview Protocol for Museum Visitors at
the JM (May 2018).***

Personal / Biographical context

1. Where have you come from?

2. What is your occupation?

3. Age group

☐ 21-30

☐ 40-50

☐ 60-70

Visitors' motivations/expectations

4. What made you visit the museum today?

5. With whom are you today?

Friends/ Family/ Alone/Group

6. Have you ever visited the museum before? / What others museum have visited you lately?

If yes, when did you last visit that museum?

This year/ Last year/ 5+ Years

7. How many times have you visited it?

8. What you did expect to find here before you arrived?

9. In your opinion, what is the purpose of the museum?

Prior knowledge and/or interest

10. Do you have any knowledge in the subject matter of this museum?

11. Are you particularly interested in something in this museum? What is that?

Museum Experience/Personal Narratives

12. What part of the museum did you find most important, and why? /where did you spend most time?

13. What part of the museum did you find the least interesting, and why?

14. Were there any particular parts of the museum that made you to pause for discussion or to share your thoughts with your group? If yes, what was that?

Visitors' opinions regarding their emotional and empathetic engagement

15. Could you describe how you felt during the visit? For example, was there anything that gave you a strong emotional reaction and why?

- ☐ I felt interest
- ☐ I felt curious
- ☐ I felt upset
- ☐ I felt sadness


- ☐ I felt hope
- ☐ I felt dislike
- ☐ I felt angry
- ☐ I felt horror
- ☐ Anything else

On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel it?



1 2 3 4 5

16. On a scale of 1-5, how far do you think that you have you been affected emotionally with 1 being sympathetic (least affected emotionally/intellectually affected) and 5 being very moved?



1 2 3 4 5

The impact of the museum

17. Do you think that museums can impact people's attitudes and behaviors?

18. What do you feel you will take away from your visit?

Appendix 3: Sample of Informed Consent Form

Research Consent form

I agree to take part in the Emotional engagement at Holocaust Museums: a qualitative study exploring the role of emotions in museum learning. The study is part of PhD research at the University of Leicester's School of Museum Studies.

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read the Information sheet about the project which I may keep for my records.

I understand that this study will be carried out in accordance with the University of Leicester's Code of Research Ethics which can be viewed at http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/researchsupport/policyandstrategy/research-code-of-conduct-and-ethics-1/research-code-of-conduct-and-ethics?uol_r=9071f3fe

I understand that the material I provide as part of this study will be treated as confidential and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I have read and I understand the information sheet	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and they were answered to my satisfaction	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the interview being recorded and my words being used in a student assignment	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my words being used in related academic publications, including on the Internet	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission for the following personal details to be used in connection with any words I have said or information I have passed on:	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I request that my real name is acknowledged in any publications that references the comments that I have made	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name [PRINT] GRACE BOOTH

Signature [Signature]

Date 12/11/17

Appendix 4: Research Ethics Approval Letter



University Ethics Sub-Committee for Science and Engineering
and Arts Humanities

24/07/2017

Ethics Reference: 11476-sk664-museumstudies

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Sofia Katharaki

Department: Museum Studies

Research Project Title: Emotional engagement at Holocaust Memorial Museums: a qualitative study exploring the role of emotions in museum learning.

Dear Sofia Katharaki,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Science and Engineering and Arts Humanities has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1. Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2. Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:
approved

3. General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4. Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol
- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5. Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

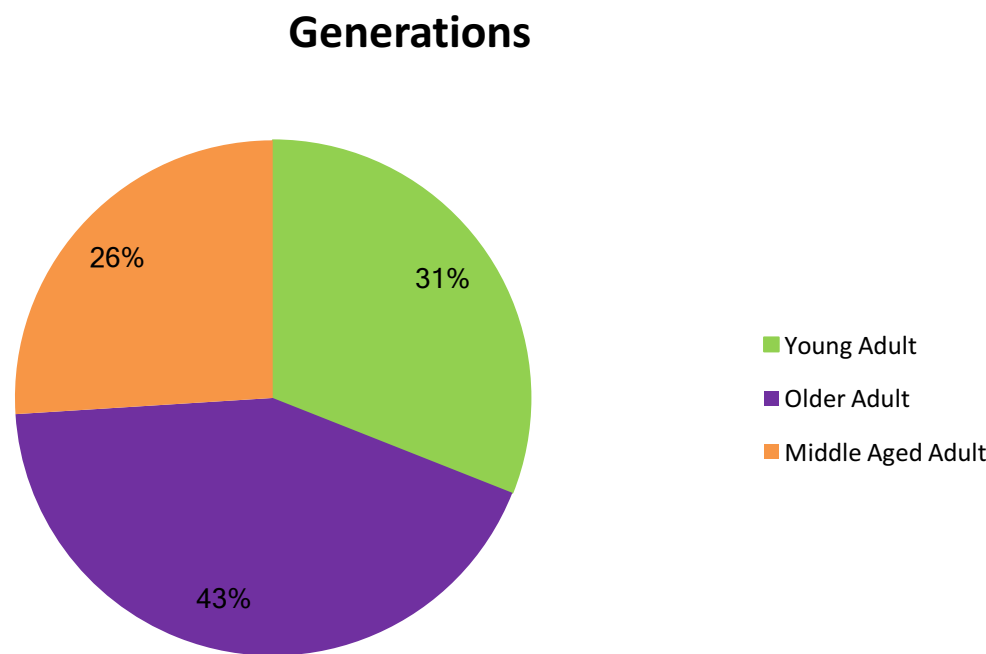
Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

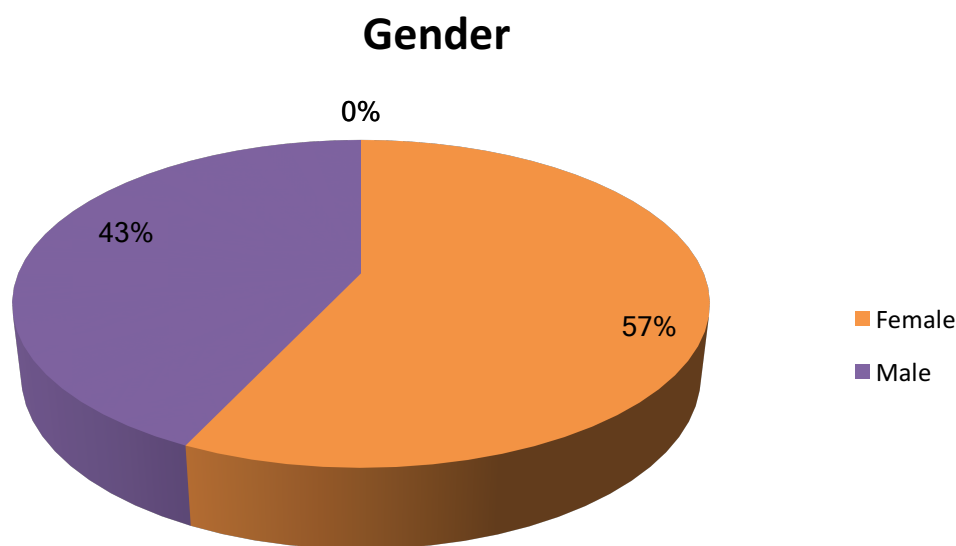
Prof. Paul Cullis
Chair

Appendix 5: Charts of Profiles of Interviewed Visitors

Age of Visitors by “Generation”:



Gender of Participants:



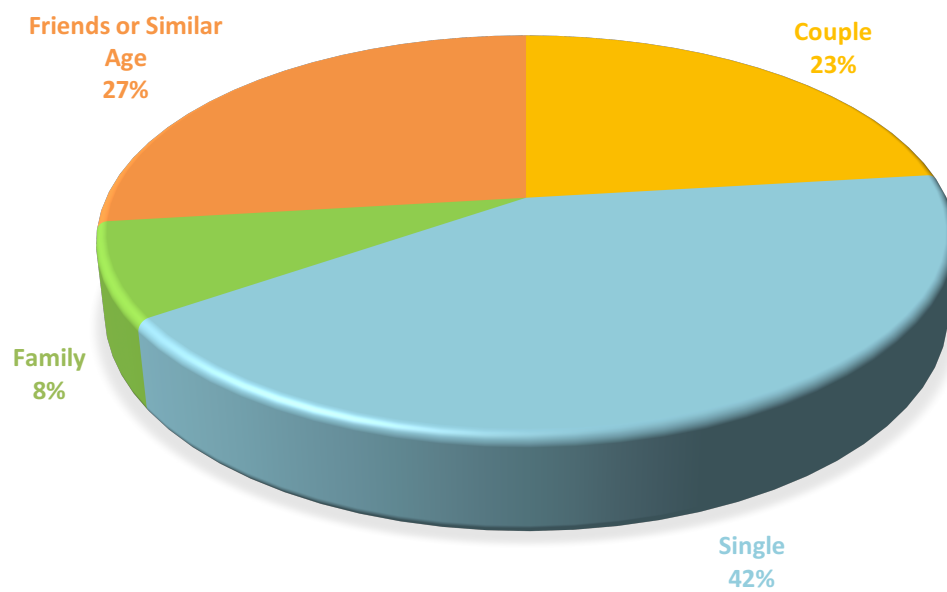
Interview Members:

Couple: Partner, Husband or Wife.

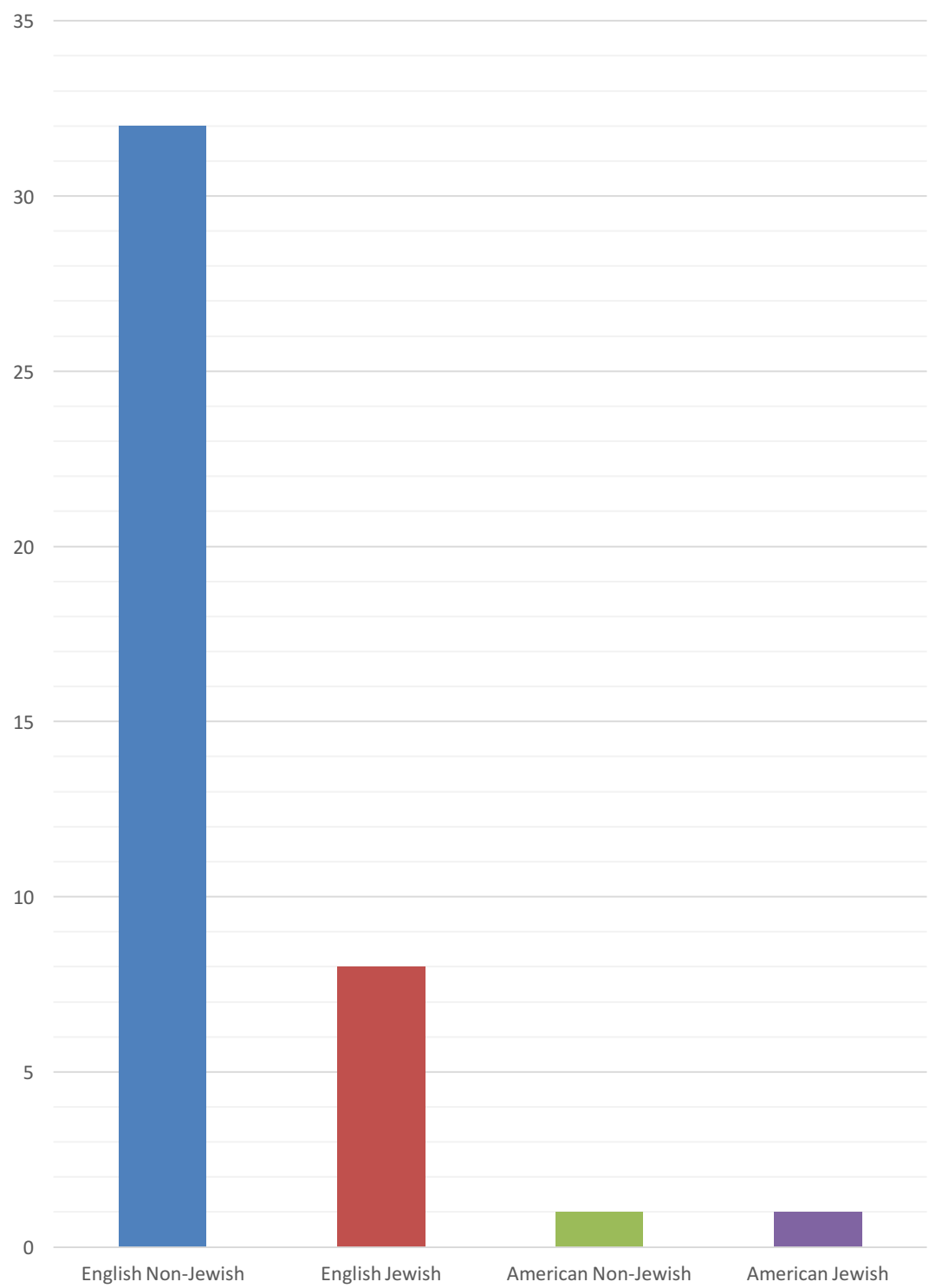
Friends or Similar Age: Friends or Siblings

Family (Different Generations): Parents and Children, Grandparents and Children

Single: People Interviewed on Their Own



Nationality of interviewees



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