Abstract

Holocaust museums are "dark tourist sites" dedicated to teaching about the attempted genocide of the Jewish people, memorializing six million victims, and warning about the dangers of leaving hate unchecked. They play a central role in educating millions of individuals about the Holocaust. However, visitors often arrive with little educational or psychological preparation for their encounter with difficult histories. This study examines the psychological effect of museum visits on students and the potential risks associated with having previously experienced a traumatic experience. This quantitative study utilizes three measures to explore the correlation among adverse childhood events, coping styles, and the ability of students to engage in potentially emotionally charged material presented during a visit to a Holocaust museum. First, the Museum Experience Scale (MES) focuses on the extent to which a student is immersed in the museum experience and assesses four aspects, including engagement, knowledge and learning, meaningful experience, and emotional connection. Next, the Brief COPE measures how much students use different coping styles to deal with the stressful nature of Holocaust education. Finally, the Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACE) measures potentially traumatic life events previously experienced by museum visitors. The measures were administered to high school-age students who visited a central Holocaust museum in New York City. The results reveal that there was not a significant relation between adverse childhood experiences and the museum experience. However, students who experienced violent adverse childhood experiences tended to have a less immersive museum experience, while those who had previously learned about the Holocaust in a way that was scary or distressing tended to have a more immersive learning experience. Out of the four coping measures, only religious coping tended to be positively

correlated with an immersive museum experience. Finally, there was some evidence that those who had previously met a Holocaust survivor were also more immersed in the museum experience. This study was conducted with the goal of improving the ability to provide proper psychological preparation and more psychological care during and after the program for students who visit Holocaust museums.

Vicarious Trauma Experienced by Visitors to a Central Holocaust Museum

by

Julie J. Golding

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by

Julie J. Golding

The committee for this doctoral dissertation consists of:

David Pelcovitz, PhD, Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University

Moshe Sokolow, PhD, Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University

Karen Shawn, PhD, The Emil A. & Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Yeshiva University

The Readers Are:

Michael Berenbaum, PhD, Sigi Ziering Institute at American Jewish University

Paul Radensky, PhD, Museum of Jewish Heritage

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"In my opinion happy is the person who picks himself up—and at that point he is even happier, because first he fell down and now he can appreciate his good fortune!"

(Rywka Lipszyc, Lodz Ghetto, January 26, 1944)

I am happy to have reached the culmination of this dissertation, one that is the product of many ups and downs over the last five years. Writing and researching about Holocaust education and secondary trauma has been a unique and meaningful journey, and I want to acknowledge the individuals who helped me accomplish this goal.

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As the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, my work is both professional and deeply personal. My grandmother, Helen (nee Bamberger) Hellmann, was a Danish Jew who fled to Sweden on a fishing boat in October 1943. My grandfather, Norbert Hellmann, was a German Jew whose entire family was murdered in Sobibor. He was the most resilient person I ever met, and he continued the family tradition of becoming an educator, teaching for more than 50 years. No doubt, the dichotomy of their experiences profoundly influenced my childhood memories, my decision to become a Holocaust educator, and my interest in the

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Dedication

In memory of my mother

Rivka bas Eliyahu ע״ה

who believed in me

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> *We are the generation after. The Shoah is almost eight decades behind us. It is tempting to leave it behind in the hoary shadows of grief that enveloped survivors. But we cannot. This is not simply because there are interesting theoretical issues about language, memory, and historiography that capture our attention as scholars of cultural history. We cannot because Holocaust denial and ignorance of its causes and implications are fiercely alive in our world today. (Schwarcz, 2015, p. 430)*

The Holocaust, also known as the Shoah or Churban Europe, was the systematic murder and destruction of European Jews and their communities between 1933 and 1945. During the Holocaust, some six million Jews were murdered by the Nazi German regime and their collaborators. It was a unique historical event that took place in recent memory, bringing death to millions of individuals across Europe and destruction to thousands of years of Jewish life and culture. Bauer (as cited in Lenga, 2020) suggests that the Holocaust is distinguished from other atrocities and genocides because of the extent to which the perpetrators sought to systematically annihilate every member of the Jewish people for ideological purposes. As a result, the Holocaust has become a “cornerstone of contemporary Western culture: ubiquitously memorialized in stone, film, and print” (Jinks, 2016, p. 1), and learning about it is considered a fundamental component of education around the world (Eckmann et al., 2017).

In recent years the number of Holocaust museums and informal education programs throughout the United States has increased dramatically. Older institutions, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Museum Houston, St. Louis Kaplan

Feldman Holocaust Museum, Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage have or are currently updating their original core exhibitions. Magid (2012) attributes this growth to the "shifting social and cultural circumstances" (p. 101) of American Jewry and a new ethnic definition of Jewishness that utilizes the Holocaust as part of its identity. It is a cultural shift occurring simultaneously with the passing of the Holocaust survivor generation, leaving Holocaust museums to assume an outsized role in preserving Holocaust memory in its place. Holocaust and genocide education has also increased as a response to the rise in antisemitism in the United States. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), there were over 2,700 antisemitic incidents in the United States in 2021, a 34% increase from the previous year and the highest number of incidents on record since the ADL began tracking antisemitic incidents (Anti-Defamation League, 2022). Museums' responses to antisemitism are evident in the many press releases, stakeholder reports, and revised mission statements of Holocaust museums across America. For example, after a local incident involving students drawing swastikas at a party, the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust noted in its Annual Report that the students received a tour of the museum. "Once the students came face to face with artifacts and heard testimonies firsthand from survivors, they understood what their actions represented. Our board made a strategic decision to expand our focus to become a statewide resource for Holocaust education" (Los Angeles Holocaust Museum, 2022).

Museums occupy a unique space in the field of Holocaust studies, serving as both independent institutions dedicated to preserving history and memory and as educational resource centers utilized as valuable resources by classroom educators (Bernard-Donals, 2012; Ehrenreich & Klinger, 2013; Piotrowska et al., 2018). Adults choose to visit Holocaust

museums and memorial sites of their own volition. They have various motivations for their visits, including curiosity about death, educational goals, cultural interests, and interest in genealogy (Buntman, 2008; Cohen, 2011; Farmaki & Antoniou, 2017). In contrast, nearly all student visits are involuntary; they come during scheduled times because of educational requirements. A common belief is that by teaching about atrocities during the Holocaust and integrating knowledge about man's inhumanity to man into the foundations of the educational experience, teachers can cultivate empathy in their students and train them to be morally responsible adults and citizens (Culbertson, 2016).

While nearly every high school throughout the country touches on the tragedy of the attempted genocide of the Jews during World War II in literature or history classes, a number of these schools include units or full semester courses to fulfill suggestions, recommendations, or mandates for Holocaust education that presently exist in over 20 states (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2021). Many schools take their students to visit local or national Holocaust museums, with more than 11 million students visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., since its opening. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Illinois Holocaust Museum (the second largest Holocaust museum in the United States) and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City both educated more than 60,000 student visitors every year (Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, 2022; Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, 2022).

During a visit to a Holocaust museum, students typically encounter text, photographs, historical footage, and recorded survivor testimony that has been curated to create an exhibition that connects them to the past (Aarons & Berger, 2017; de Jong, 2018). Sometimes they meet a survivor and hear firsthand testimony. Despite claims that exhibiting

images of atrocities objectifies victims and violates their privacy, graphic images continue to be used to jar viewers and raise consciousness about genocides and human rights (Dean, 2015). Many museums aim to affect the emotions of their visitors by creating exhibitions that shock or horrify them (Norris et al., 2012). For many visitors, it is an emotionally intense experience, and some become distressed because the horrific knowledge is too much for them to process cognitively or psychologically.

Most of what has been studied or written about Holocaust education in public spaces and museums has focused on the educational and historical information within the exhibit, not the emotional or psychological experience and welfare of the museum visitor. Surprisingly, there is a dearth of knowledge about the effectiveness of such educational programming and its effects on the beliefs or attitudes of the viewers. While Holocaust museums are dark tourist sites that link millions of people to death and tragedy each year (Johnson & Pickin, 2019), my extensive review of the literature uncovered very few empirical studies investigating student coping styles during museum tours and how Holocaust education may result in vicarious trauma for visitors. At the same time, many Holocaust educators speak anecdotally about students who are unable to process what they learn about the Holocaust, some who respond negatively to the information, and others who become obsessed with a need to learn more or talk and write about the material to integrate its meaning into their cognitive and emotional lives. The balance between teaching about Holocaust atrocities and considering the unique psychological and emotional needs of each student can be challenging, especially for museum docents who generally do not know much about their visitors and may lack training in trauma-informed pedagogy.

The goal of the current study is to examine the psychological impact of visiting a Holocaust museum and how students react and/or cope during this experience. More specifically, the study will examine the effects of vicarious trauma on student visitors and how encounters with difficult histories may affect students with traumatic pasts. It will look at the quality of the museum experience by measuring student engagement, knowledge gained, and emotional connections developed to Holocaust history and ask how previous associations with Holocaust knowledge or survivors may affect these factors. The study will draw from fields of literature related to Holocaust education, museum pedagogy, and the psychological development of traumatized students to explore how educators can better support their students before, during, and after a visit to a Holocaust museum.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this section is to review the existing literature and research on the topic of vicarious trauma and student coping styles as they relate to teaching and learning about the Holocaust in museums, exhibits, and classrooms in America. It begins with an introduction to the current state of Holocaust education and survivor testimonies today. Next, it provides philosophical and historiographical information about Holocaust pedagogy in classrooms, museums, and at sites such as concentration camps and memorials. It also explores museum engagement as it relates to design and curatorial techniques at Holocaust museums and the pedagogy of exhibiting difficult histories. There is a particular focus on the use and repercussions of promoting historical empathy among students. By examining the psychological and emotional impact of learning in these spaces, this section provides background on trauma, vicarious traumatization or secondary traumatic stress, posttraumatic stress disorder and growth, coping styles, and trauma-informed practices.

The State of Holocaust Education

The Holocaust has central significance in public commemoration and education across the globe. Along with other major historical events, the Holocaust occupies space in the national identities and historical foundations of Germany, Poland, and other major European countries (Michman, 2018). Although the Holocaust is a shared legacy throughout Europe, the impact of the event differs in each country resulting in different interpretations and discourses in each place (Eckmann et al., 2017). In Germany, there are strong demands for history education about National Socialism and the historical responsibility of the country, though studies show that the actual quality of education has historically been very poor (Meseth & Proske, 2015). After the establishment of the Memorial for the Murdered

Jews of Europe in Berlin in 2005, there was a stronger focus on teaching responsibility and focusing on active remembrance. However, recent waves of immigration and the arrival of record-high numbers of refugees (many of whom come from Arabic countries that have contentious histories with the Jewish people and Israel) are creating new challenges and opportunities for teaching about antisemitism and xenophobia (Vitale & Clothey, 2019).

In Israel, Holocaust memory and commemorations occupy a large part of national identity; they are a cornerstone of holidays, school curricula, civil dialogue, and part of the creation and justification of state and government policies (Gershenson, 2018). The subject is not without controversy; polarized messaging about the Holocaust vacillates between victimhood and heroism, weakness and power, and memory of the dead combined with an imperative to build a new nation so that such destruction will never happen again. At Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, these divergent messages are communicated with emphasis on the Jews as a group or collective, while resistance fighters are lauded for their individuality which in turn is key to the "collective resurrection" (Keynan, 2018, p. 100). There are approximately one million visitors to the Yad Vashem museum every year (Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance, 2022). The Holocaust is embedded in both formal and informal Israeli culture, "to the point where the vast majority of Israelis […] occasionally ponder what they would have done had they been in the Holocaust" (Friesem, 2018, p. 86).

In the United States, a recent report commissioned by The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (2018) found a significant lack of Holocaust knowledge, including the statistic that 45% of Americans could not name any of the 40,000 concentration camps and ghettos in German-occupied Europe. Shortly thereafter, the 116th Congress of the

United States (2019-2020) passed the "Never Again Education Act," which provides 10 million dollars for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to increase online and in-person educational programs that teach about intolerance, bigotry, and antisemitism through the context of the Holocaust. It was based on the premise that "learning how and why the Holocaust happened is an important component of the education of citizens of the United States" (Never Again Education Act, 2020). The bill to support increased Holocaust education passed unanimously in the Senate and received an impressively bipartisan House vote of 395-5 (Maloney, 2020).

However, the very fundamentals of Holocaust education, including its definition, purpose, and structure, remain debated. This mirrors the general discourse concerning Holocaust memory and restitution (Pearce, 2020). Plessow (2017) notes that conflicts are "waged around the globe to determine the Shoah's discursive position in memory and history" (p. 317). Even the date of the Holocaust commemoration has become a controversial subject (Weissberg & Neile, 2015). While January 27, the date of the liberation of Auschwitz, has been marked by the United Nations General Assembly, the European Union, and many other European countries as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Israeli government chose the 27th of the Hebrew month of Nissan for remembrance, calling it "Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah" (Yom HaShoah). This date was chosen to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and many Jewish communities around the world observe Yom HaShoah. At the same time, some Orthodox Jewish groups reject the date and commemorate the Holocaust on either the Tenth of Tevet or the Ninth of Av. These controversies have far-reaching consequences by contributing to and affecting the highly debated topics of the causes, definitions, and political repercussions of antisemitism (Gould, 2020).

With competing opinions on the importance and consequences of the Holocaust today, it is no wonder that the approaches will significantly differ depending on where it is taught. Pearce and Chapman (2017) note that while there is a National Curriculum in England that requires the teaching of the Holocaust, schools are free to decide how the curriculum will be structured and what information will be taught. There is also a largely autonomous educational framework for teaching about the Holocaust in the United States that grants classroom educators the opportunity to develop their curricula and select the resources that they deem most appropriate for their students (Plessow, 2017). Furthermore, competing educational organizations ascribe to countless models and pedagogical approaches, with little agreement about what exactly needs to be taught, leading to a situation where the teaching of the Holocaust in America lacks uniformity, clear objectives, and well-developed assessments (Fallace, 2008; Hillman, 2015).

My extensive review of the literature uncovered limited studies related to current educational offerings and teacher preparedness for teaching about the Holocaust in the United States. The National Study of Secondary Teaching Practices in Holocaust Education (2004) conducted by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum provides some information. This study continues to be used today in the literature that explores similarities and differences between Holocaust pedagogy in public schools and Jewish day schools in the United States. Some of the differences between the way the Holocaust is taught in public schools and Jewish day schools include the amount of time spent on the subject, the departments in which it is taught, and the goals of teaching about the Holocaust to young students.

Ellison (2017) found that the greatest difference in Holocaust education between these schools is the rationale for teaching it. In public schools, the goal of Holocaust education "relates to teaching about the dangers of prejudice and stereotypes and respect for human rights" (Ellison, 2017, p. 12). The subject is used as a means to an end, with the Holocaust seen as a launching point toward teaching about broader issues and topics. In contrast, in Jewish day schools, the "single most important rationale for teaching the Holocaust is the importance of the topic in terms of Jewish identity and Jewish history" (p. 8), along with "teaching a particular brand of prejudice and stereotyping, namely antisemitism" (p. 12).

Further, in public schools, information about the Holocaust is primarily taught in literature classes (69%) or history classes (31%), with the goal of showing America's role in defeating the Nazis or as a means of educating about human rights and multicultural societies (Donnelly, 2006; Ellison, 2017). In comparison, in Jewish day schools, it is often taught as a separate unit within the Judaic Studies department. Holocaust education is considered firmly rooted in the curricula of these schools, and most teachers believe that the knowledge of the Holocaust would continue to be taught in their school even if they would no longer be teaching there (Ellison, 2017).

Despite these many differences, there are some similarities between Holocaust pedagogy in public schools and Jewish day schools. Teachers report that their primary goal in teaching about the Holocaust is for historical and educational purposes, along with telling personal family histories (Donnelly, 2006). Ellison (2017) points out that "a key rationale for teaching the Holocaust in both Jewish day schools and public schools is to create students with a greater sense of morality, tolerance, empathy, and compassion" (p. 12).

As educators seek to create connections and meaningful lessons for students of Holocaust studies, they often ask students to make personal connections to the resources by reflecting upon similarities that can be drawn between their own lives and those who endured the Holocaust. Students are encouraged to "explore the facts against a backdrop informed by their own experiences and ideals" (Karn, 2012, p. 229). For example, the Holocaust is often used as a case study in teaching about the dangers of racism because racism in Nazi Germany was a contributing factor that led to genocide (Gross, 2018). Foster et al. (2020) note that this phenomenon can occur at the expense of teaching accurate historical contexts, risking the danger that "students might acquire simplistic moral and universal lessons which, though well-intentioned, typically will be ill-informed and fuel the prevalence of troubling myths and misconceptions" (p. 29).

Survivor Testimonies

Human beings are wired to listen to stories (Gottschall, 2013), such as those told by Holocaust survivors. Survivor testimony is frequently used in Holocaust education, and it is common practice for teachers to invite survivors to tell their stories to students (Preston, 2013). Storytelling is the art of using language to present a narrative in an interactive format. The interaction between the speaker and the listener(s) allows the audience to become co-creators in the story; through their perceptions and past experiences, they form an image of the events being narrated (National Storytelling Network, 2022). The experience of listening to stories has been found to have a calming and meditative effect on students. Students have described entering a "state of flow, losing sight of themselves, time, and space" (Ryan & Schatt, 2014, p. 145) because of rituals associated with listening to stories. Storytelling is an effective tool for both children and adult learners (Chancellor & Lee, 2016).

Teachers find survivor testimony a particularly effective and engaging method of pedagogy because when students listen to oral histories, an emotional connection is formed between the speaker and listener (Hillman, 2015). Survivors voices are authentic and urgent, with Schwarcz (2015) arguing that “in the end, the halting words of those who went through the death camps [are] all we have to counter the ignorance and disbelief spreading around the world” (p. 429). Although studies show that survivors of catastrophic and traumatic events often use linguistically favorable presentations of themselves, which casts doubt on the historicity of their oral testimony, they continue to tell their stories to audiences over time (Cantrell, 2017).

Students are encouraged to make personal connections to difficult subjects and traumatic events when they are introduced to survivor testimony. Testimony can be surprising and sometimes incongruent with prior knowledge or expectations of history. Through the eyes of the witness, unusual circumstances jar the reader or viewer into a new understanding and perspective of events they may have already known about. Survivor testimony as a pedagogical tool has long been recommended for teachers who “must in turn *testify*, make something *happen*, and not just transmit a passive knowledge, pass on information that is preconceived, substantified, believed to be known in advance, misguidedly believed, that is, to be (exclusively) a *given*” (Felman, 1991, p. 68). In Israeli educational settings, personal identification with the Jews of the Holocaust is assumed to create a commitment to remembering the event. The common approach is for survivor testimony to be presented in a sad and dramatic way so that listeners will be moved to create an emotional connection and personal identification with the victim (Bornstein & Naveh, 2017).

Since the 1970s, museums and institutions dedicated to Holocaust memory have dual roles: they provide memorialization ceremonies and are "temples of knowledge about the Holocaust" (Ofer, 2018, p. 104). The building of these spaces led to an increase in survivors telling their stories to larger and more diverse audiences, with survivor testimony considered foundational for Holocaust education since the 1980s (Marcus et al., 2022). As Greenspan (2019) observes, "During the first decades after the war, survivors were mostly pitied, poor souls to be indulged on 'special occasions.' Beginning in the 1970s, they were increasingly celebrated as 'heroic witnesses' and exemplars of 'resilience' and 'the human spirit'" (p. 361).

Today, almost the only survivors still alive are child survivors. The emphasis on child survivors telling their stories broadens the experience of the Holocaust but has the potential to minimize the horrors that occurred rather than underscore them. Anderson (2007) notes that "however legitimate the end, however well-intentioned the motive, the invocation of young victims easily leads to rhetorical and ideological distortion" (p. 19). Childhood is a stage of life that every individual experiences, and hearing stories about children or from the perspective of a child allows mainstream Christian and other non-Jewish audiences to easily identify with Jewish victims. *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a diary written by a teenage girl, and *Night*, a memoir written in the voice of a child, are examples of Holocaust literature that appeal to widespread audiences because of their universal perspectives. Additionally, the existence of child survivors speaks to life, not death. As a result, some researchers argue that the experience of hearing a child survivor tell their personal history of survival can reduce the emphasis on Nazi perpetrators, their allies, and those who remained silent in the face of genocide (Volková, 2021).

With the aging of survivors, video testimonies are increasingly used in place of live speakers. Many recordings are accessible through oral history projects such as the Visual History Archive at the USC Shoah Foundation, which holds over 55,000 survivor testimonies, and the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimony at Yale University, which holds more than 4,400 testimonies (Institute for Visual History and Education USC Shoah Foundation, 2022b; Yale Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, 2022). Oral testimonies are used in classrooms and museums because of the unique and personal insight that they provide. As Arnold de-Simine (2012) notes, these interviews speak "from inside a situation rather than from the outside in an objectifying manner" (p. 29).

Hillman (2015) suggests that educators have a responsibility to create an environment where survivors are viewed not as superheroes or living artifacts but valued for the personal life stories that they tell. She argues that this pedagogical approach is a critical component of Holocaust education because "individuals who survived the Shoah were neither the dehumanized caricatures of Nazi ideology, nor are they the epitomes of the current obsession with redemptive survival. Buying into either myth betrays an appalling intellectual laziness" (Hillman, 2015, p. 315). However, with the shift toward recorded video testimony in place of live testimony, students lose the opportunity to meet survivors in person, shake their hand, or give them a hug. Marcus et al. (2022) found that without the survivor present, students are more critical and feel comfortable questioning the authenticity of the testimony.

The USC Shoah Foundation's New Dimensions in Testimony Project is the latest attempt at using modern technology to interview and record the last of the survivors. Using high-definition holographic recordings, the project creates virtual Holocaust survivors who can be interviewed anywhere. The mission of the project is that "now and far into the future,

museum-goers, students, and others can have conversational interactions with these eyewitnesses to history to learn from those who were there" (Institute for Visual History and Education USC Shoah Foundation, 2022a). The project is a cinematic representation, or "mummification," whereby viewers can have continuous forms of engagement with survivors after they have passed on (Zalewska, 2016). Ng (2021) describes the virtual survivors as "ghosts returned to the living" (p. 184) with an "eternal resonance" (p. 185) since the age and status of mortality of the projected holographic survivor are ambiguous during the interview.

The video interviews conducted for oral history projects record not only major historical events, but also provide data and research into individual interpretations by probing "the depths of a person's life and documents for the historical record the normality and abnormality, the ordinary and extraordinary experiences of human circumstance" (Chancellor & Lee, 2016, p. 44). Some interviews are quite lengthy, and recordings exist of off-camera moments between the interviewer and interviewee. These "unseen moments" shed light on additional dialogue and provide further insight into different perspectives of the official interview (Shenker, 2016). An awareness that television and documentaries created for educational purposes significantly edit films and leave out fascinating raw data has led to the creation of new media archives that provide teachers the opportunity to compare and analyze the original, unedited versions with the finished products (Gaudelli et al., 2012).

There is a sense of urgency to record Holocaust survivors before they die so that the stories of how the atrocities affected individuals will continue to be told for generations. The extensive work of recording Holocaust survivors has influenced the genre of video testimony and other representations of cultural trauma, such as the African experience of slavery

(Arnold de-Simine, 2012). This new era is creating an "anxiety of historical transmission" (Marcus et al., 2022, p. 281) that is generating a shift in Holocaust education platforms, methodologies, and technologies, along with social and political discourse.

Holocaust Pedagogy

A unique aspect in the teaching of the Holocaust versus other history subjects is the emphasis on teaching and perpetuating memory. When teaching about the Holocaust, educators work to ensure that the memory of the event will endure. Leaders in Jewish communities "desire to keep the story alive by the most effective means possible" (Weissberg & Neile, 2015, p. 126). Novick (1999) refers to the general teaching of history as "historical consciousness" that focuses on "the historicity of events – that they took place then and not now" (p. 4) and were created under different circumstances than those that currently exist. In comparison, Holocaust education is a "collective memory" that "has no sense of the passage of time; it denies the 'pastness' of its objects and insists on their continuing presence" (Novick, 1999, p.4).

Educators have long felt that emotional attachments and empathy for Holocaust victims is an educational achievement that creates a connection between learners today and the past (Felman, 1991; Marcus et al., 2022). Empathy is an ambiguous term with historians and psychologists defining it differently. Scholars note that it is often confused with compassion and sympathy (Assmann & Detmers, 2016; Savenije & de Bruijn, 2017). Yilmaz (2007) defines historical empathy as not simply trying to "walk in the shoes of another" and feel what they may have felt, but rather a more sophisticated skill of "re-enact[ing] the thought of a historical agent in one's mind or the ability to view the world as it was seen by the people in the past without imposing today's values on the past" (p.331). Historical

empathy challenges students to differentiate between the cognitive act of trying to understand past events through logic and reasoning and the emotional act of connecting with the motivations of historical figures and emotions experienced in the past (Marcus et al., 2022).

Endacott and Brooks (2013) explain historical empathy as a synthesis among historical contextualization, affective connection to historical figures, and perspective taking that helps students "better understand and contextualize their lived experiences, decisions, or actions. [It] involves understanding how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted, and faced consequences within a specific historical and social context" (p. 41). Empathy provides the learner an imaginative entry into the lives of others because they think about how they would have reacted under similar circumstances. Sympathy, or simply feeling sorry for Holocaust victims, does not produce real change in the learner. Meaningful learning about the Holocaust requires empathy and a deep emotional connection with the victims (Baum, 1996).

When students are engaged in historical empathy, they have a new understanding of historical figures and view them as real human beings with real-life experiences. It "leads to a richer understanding than perspective taking alone" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43). Students find it easier to comprehend historical events when they find reminders and connections to their lives. Rosen (2013) explains that stories of individuals create an easy point of access within the narrative and "it is via the individual that empathy comes to the fore" (p.2). At the same time, a challenge to teaching empathy is the trend of viewing the past through the lens of the present, an act that Wineburg (as cited in Casale et al., 2018) characterizes as "presentism." This trend is natural and common among students, and it prevents them from contextualizing history and recognizing differences in norms between the

past and the present. Hillman (2015) suggests that while empathy is an important component of Holocaust education, it is a natural occurrence and one that cannot be forced upon student learners simply by watching survivor testimony.

Historical empathy is a pedagogical approach often promoted by Holocaust museums and educational centers. For example, IWitness, the online educational program created by the USC Shoah Foundation that grants access to interviews and testimonies, notes in their mission that “through powerful, thought-provoking engagement with first-person stories from survivors and witnesses of genocide, students worldwide develop empathy, understanding, and respect” (IWitness, 2022). Facing History and Ourselves is an organization that uses historical lessons to combat hatred and bigotry. The organization provides many lesson plans to teach empathy through storytelling and other techniques. For example, the mini-course *Teaching Holocaust and Human Behavior* is intended to allow “students to wrestle with profound moral questions raised by this history while fostering their skills in ethical and moral reasoning, critical analysis, empathy, and civic engagement” (Facing History and Ourselves, 2022).

Witcomb (2015) coined the term “a pedagogy of feeling” to explain the techniques used in some contemporary exhibitions to “stage affective encounters between viewer and viewed through the ways in which they use a range of devices to promote sensorial experiences that encourage introspective reflection on the part of visitors” (p. 322). Museum narratives are told through a combination of textual techniques and spatial arrangements. When combined, these pedagogical tools have a unique power to easily elicit empathetic understandings and emotional responses from their viewers (Savenije & de Bruijn, 2017). Encounters with historical objects encourage historical empathy by challenging students’

preexisting ideas and conceptions of difficult or traumatic events (Marcus et al., 2017). Smith (2011) notes that a key reason people visit historical museums is to feel and have an emotional experience. In a study of eight exhibitions about the British enslavement of African peoples, she found that museum visitors actively and passively used emotion to frame their responses about engagement during their visit.

The pedagogical approach of promoting empathy for victims of the Holocaust is utilized in classrooms and museums and during trips to Holocaust memorial sites. These trips have become increasingly popular in recent years. Since 1988 more than 260,000 individuals have participated in the March of the Living, an annual 3-kilometer memorial walk on Yom Hashoah from Auschwitz to Birkenau (International March of the Living, 2022). Trips to memorial sites in Eastern Europe provide an alternative to films and first-person survivor testimonies that are increasingly difficult to arrange as survivors age, become less mobile, and limit their in-person speaking engagements (Weissberg & Neile, 2015). The first educational trips to these sites were taken seriously, with educators and students dedicating themselves to preparing and studying for the experience. However, over time, the educational goal became more about eliciting emotional reactions among attendees and influencing their political, moral, and spiritual lives than enriching knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust (Keren, 2000; Weissberg & Neile, 2015).

Little research has been done on the effects of promoting empathy in Holocaust education, and research about historical empathy at large mostly focuses on empathy within student engagement rather than how educators conceptualize and foster it (Zembylas et al., 2020). Karayianni (2020) challenges common assumptions about Holocaust curricula, including the idea that all students will benefit from an intensive course about the Holocaust.

He suggests that using Holocaust education to inculcate positive values and attitudes among students is not always realized. Therefore, the decision to implement a course of Holocaust studies in a school must be accompanied by careful consideration of the way it is taught, its content and context, and the impact it will ultimately have on students.

Arnold de-Simine (2012) critiques strategies used to promote empathy and compassion among museum visitors because of the risks involved in humanizing such atrocities. She notes that “visitors might be tempted to attribute these crimes simply to individual cruelty and blend out the political decisions, economic interests, or ideological motifs that created and still create the framework in which individual cruelty can thrive” (Arnold de-Simine, 2012, p. 37). Savenije and de Bruijn (2017) take this a step further by suggesting that the emotions produced by historical empathy at museums inhibit a student’s ability to contextualize the time and place that a historical event occurred, limiting their ability to think critically in the museum space.

There is no consistency in the methods employed by educators who try to promote empathy in their Holocaust studies classes; teachers have the latitude to employ the resources that they subjectively believe will accomplish their goal (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). However, scholars like Oliver (2016) argue that it is misguided to believe one can come to understand the experience of another by paralleling or comparing experiences in their lives, viewing such actions as egotistical and lacking the multiple complexities required in historical empathy. While there are times that students will not reach the point of empathy, experience illusory identification with victims, or empathize with the perpetrators instead of the victims, it remains a core tactic of the pedagogy in classrooms and museums. This occurs because many educators believe that the experience of living vicariously through others (in

this instance “others” being Holocaust victims and survivors) is a core component of Holocaust education (Baum, 1996; Zembylas et al., 2020).

The results of encouraging empathy and association with individuals who lived and died during the Holocaust can vary. One possible result is that students will find that the chasm between their lives and the lives of the victims is too wide. If students cannot make the connections that the teacher is attempting to create, they may disassociate from the information and not engage in the materials. Alternatively, students with traumatic histories themselves may strongly identify with the materials and stories presented to them. Strong associations and identification with such Holocaust materials can cause students to trivialize the significance of their own life experiences in the face of the more horrific and traumatic ones experienced by the Jewish people during the Holocaust. It can also numb them to the information being taught, “paralyzing” them in the process (Gubkin, 2015). Schwarcz (2015) suggests that contemporary studies suggesting a lack of Holocaust knowledge and awareness among young Americans caused a proliferation of newly created Holocaust studies courses and materials, which in turn overwhelmed and turned away young people.

In many ways, the ubiquity of Holocaust studies has caused a universalization of the information in museums, classrooms, and other learning spaces, and has led to a shift in the way that the Holocaust is taught in both formal and informal settings. Gray (2014) suggests that this shift is “characterized by the fact that major urban centers in the United States, and many outside it as well, constructed vastly expensive, and vastly expansive, museums to make permanent its moral lessons” (p.60). There is also an increase in thematic teaching and using the Holocaust for moral lessons about humanity throughout various subjects and disciplines, and drawing moral lessons and implications from the Holocaust and difficult

texts is not unusual. These pedagogical approaches are frequently found in English literacy courses because English teachers try to do more than just improve student reading, writing, and speaking; they also aspire to "improve [their] students as moral persons – what nineteenth-century literacy educators referred to, in religious terms, as the 'cure of souls' and in more secular terms, as 'personal cultivation'" (Juzwik, 2013, p.303). At the same time, Juzwik (2013) questions if these didactic goals are actualized in the study of Holocaust texts. She recommends that educators temper their enthusiasm for creating moral compasses through the study of Holocaust literature and texts.

Ignoring the actual history of the Holocaust or using a methodology that focuses on specific agenda items chosen by the educator is increasingly viewed as a dangerous practice. Salmons (2010) warns that not only does this approach fall short of a factually accurate history lesson, but it also "leaves young people open to manipulation and coercion from those who use the past to push their own social, political or other agendas" (p.58). In some cases, educators on a quest to fulfill their agendas misappropriate historical realities to such an extent that they leave students vulnerable to encountering difficult or frightening information through oversimplification or in emotionally unsafe spaces. He cites a study of more than 2,100 teachers conducted by the Institute of Education at the University of London that found that more teachers taught about the Holocaust with the goal of teaching about the dangers of stereotyping, racism, and genocide than with historical aims such as deepening their students' knowledge of World War II history or the actions and reactions of people during a major historical event (Salmons, 2010).

Language also plays an important role in the teaching of the Holocaust; in both classrooms and museums, curators and educators choose their language carefully to impart

certain messages or narratives for their audiences. On a macro level, language is important in the building of large memorials or museums in different communities. When considering narratives for new Holocaust exhibitions, curators and developers carefully craft their messages for their intended audiences and specific locations. Memorial sites in Europe, museums in cities with large Jewish populations, and exhibitions created for rural populations in Midwestern states each talk about the same events while highlighting different points or using different storytelling techniques. For example, to evoke emotion in a population that frequently utilizes branding of cattle, the Holocaust museum in Texas highlights the practice of tattooing prisoners with identification numbers at Auschwitz-Birkenau (M. Berenbaum, personal communication, 2016).

Employing different language approaches about the horrors of the Holocaust occurs on micro levels as well. In classrooms, teachers generally self-select what they consider age-appropriate language or texts for their students. Many gravitate toward positive terms as they grapple with teaching difficult subjects. Langer (1996) shows how the term “survivor” instead of “victim” and “martyrdom” instead of “murder” creates positive messaging about the horrors of the Holocaust. This technique conceals or diminishes the intensity of the event for the learner who puts up “verbal fences between the atrocities of the camps and ghettos and what we are mentally willing or able to face” (Langer, 1996, p. 6).

Oftentimes, careful language selection about the memory of the Holocaust evokes a redemptive narrative. At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, emphasis is placed on American soldiers and liberators as rescuers during the Nazi genocide. This specific memory of the Holocaust is intended to sensitize people to other genocides worldwide and influence their moral judgment and actions (Pinnock, 2007). In fact, the initial commission

formed by President Carter in 1978 recommended a living memorial for the American people that would serve as a “moral compass to keep America on course” (Sodaro, 2018, p. 31) and prevent such atrocities from happening again. The proposed project was three-pronged and included a Holocaust memorial/museum, an educational foundation, and a ‘committee on conscience’ that would alert the public and policymakers about (real or potential) genocide occurring anywhere in the world (Wiesel, 1979). What followed is decades of American culture in which there is a propensity toward screening Holocaust testimonies with redemptive narratives that include heroics and forgiveness. Former director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Walter Reich characterizes this bias as “Schindlerization” and critiques the trend because it compromises the memory of the most horrific and gruesome aspects of the Holocaust (Reich, 2006; Shenker, 2016).

Students bring preexisting religious identities and commitments that shape the way they absorb knowledge. While students of Holocaust history and literature sometimes shift their views during the learning process, it is their prior identities that continue to affect the way they hear and construct narratives (Spector, 2007). Different students, hearing or reading the same narrative, will leave with different takeaways and lessons because of their backgrounds. Lindquist (2010) argues that it is critical that students of Jewish descent, and especially those who are descendants of Holocaust survivors, acknowledge personal connections when studying the events of the Holocaust. It must be taught to them in a way that is not especially frightening because of their family backgrounds or in a way that encourages them to accept “the mantra of victimhood” because they descended from someone who survived the Holocaust (Lindquist, 2010, p. 86).

Museum Engagement

Museums – spaces dedicated to learning experiences through documents, objects, and narratives (Dorfsman & Horenczyk, 2018) – are found across the globe. In some cities, museums are ubiquitous, occupying full city blocks with grand architectural spaces of learning. These large museums utilize not just the content in their exhibits but also the spatial organization and layout of their buildings to guide, impact, and influence visitor attention (Tröndle, 2014). In other places, museums are small and hard to locate. They house carefully curated exhibitions created by a few dedicated individuals. Museum exhibits are developed with media, text, markers, and signage that are carefully arranged to convey meaning and interpretation for their visitors (Smith & Foote, 2017).

Despite size or location, Temiz (2021) notes that all contemporary museums serve a dual purpose. They are repositories for archival holdings charged with protecting and exhibiting historical collections. They are also efficient learning environments intended to promote effective teaching for learners of all ages. Through their collections of artifacts, photographs, and videos, history museums and cultural institutions bridge history and modernity.

Hendrickson (2016) suggests that "artifacts, material culture objects from the past, fascinate students" (p. 136), indicating that curiosity plays a key role in the museum visitor experience. Students are intrigued to think critically, research, and discover information about their identities when they encounter and touch unknown objects. Artifacts are portable objects with the flexibility to be moved to different places. They "store memories" and "allow us to live in the present while at the same time literally cling to the past" (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 43). Artifacts can tell stories about the past long after their owners have moved on or died.

Artifacts also play a unique role in humanizing history (Hendrickson, 2016). Objects can embody entire lives and histories of individuals, cultures, and nations (Schiavo, 2021). They serve as testimonials to the dead and the lives that were led, not as static objects of the present (Aarons & Berger, 2017). Coombs and Freeze (2018) investigated how using artifacts in literacy courses deepened connections between students and literature. They found that utilizing objects in such courses increased engagement and motivated students to cultivate personal connections with characters in novels.

In history museums, objects that are exhibited play a particular role in the viewer's experience because of their authenticity and connection to a specific time. They connect the viewer through a "special experience of history that cannot be attained in a cognitive, intellectual or discursive way" (de Jong, 2018, p.113). Artifacts, including letters, photographs, diaries, and other material items, are often featured in Holocaust museums and narratives. Aarons and Berger (2017) describe them as "incomplete but valuable portions of the story" (p. 226) that become part of the historical transmission. They provide an entryway for exploring lives lost and a reckoning of moral issues. Artifacts provide a contextualized narrative for museum viewers who learn about individual stories, giving names and details within larger histories. They grant visitors the opportunity to see history from other perspectives, such as those of people who struggled to maintain their dignity in the face of adversity (Ehrenreich & Klinger, 2013). Alpers (as cited in Lawless, 2014) uses the phrase "museum affect" (p. 393) to refer to cultural artifacts that become works of art through the viewers' eyes.

Photographs and videos are other mediums utilized to preserve and communicate memory within contemporary museum exhibits. Sturken (as cited in Gershenson, 2018)

explains that “photographic, cinematic, and video images are the raw materials used to construct personal histories: events remembered because they were photographed, moments forgotten because no images were preserved, and unphotographed memories that work in tension with camera memories” (p. 70). Almost all museums use photographs in their galleries and promotional materials. However, Porter (as cited in Edwards & Mead, 2013) suggests that there is a hierarchy of importance within the items that curators choose to put on exhibit, with photographs occupying the lowest rank, often used not only for their historical accuracy but also to accompany or authenticate other items on display. Sometimes they are marginalized and used in design elements.

Ehrenreich and Klinger (2013) note that in Holocaust museums, photographs often fail to accomplish their intended goal, which is to “return the humanity to all the people murdered in the chaos of war when the numbers discussed are literally incomprehensible” (p. 146). This is because black-and-white, grainy photographs and film footage taken during the war, traditionally exhibited in Holocaust museums, lack the power to bridge the gap between history and the modern museum visitor. At the same time, new technology is making it possible to colorize and redevelop negatives to produce crisper, colorized images from historical photos. These contemporary methods of colorizing photographs add a new dimension to visual experiences. Seeing images in color emphasizes the human element and allows viewers to see the world as people lived it (Jackson, 2018). Amaral and Jones (2018) posit that colorizing photographs increases emotions such as pity, horror, disgust, and empathy because it “challenges us to respond to history not simply as accountants and analysts, but as human beings, capable of the same fear, confusion, passion, ambition, anger, and love as those whose images we see” (p. 9). However, critics argue that colorization

methods distort the historical context in which the photographs were taken and downplay film history. Consequently, many archival policies require a statement to alert viewers that an image has been altered from its original form (Watkins, 2021).

Photographs and videos taken during the Holocaust also lack objectivity; most were taken by the Germans for propaganda purposes and to document their victories. Lower (2021) suggests that to “restore the victims as subjects, not objects, of history” (p. 26), we must refrain from studying images of victims of the Holocaust from the perpetrator’s perspective. Instead of watching the process of people heading to their deaths, one should investigate and expose the killers’ motives and hate. Her research into the identification of a family photographed during the mass murder in Miropol, Ukraine epitomizes this philosophy through the discovery of an additional (previously obscured) child seen just moments before he is shot into the mass grave.

There is also a danger that certain images become iconic representations of mass murder, leading visitors to view the images with indifference over time. Sontag (as cited in Böser, 2012) explains, “The problem is not that people remember through photographs, but that they remember only the photographs. This remembering through photographs eclipses other forms of understanding and remembering” (p. 52). As such, it is important for a Holocaust museum to emphasize the context in which each photograph was taken (Piotrowska et al., 2018).

In an analysis of four famous photographs of the Auschwitz crematoria taken by members of the Sonderkommando, which were smuggled out of the camp in a tube of toothpaste, Lawless (2014) suggests that their existence is not only historical evidence of atrocities and a ban on photography, but also representative of the controversies regarding the

value of exhibiting images of atrocities and the "conflict between the *mediated* and the *immediate*" (p. 404). Such images capture a single moment in time. Exhibiting them creates a temporal link between photography and historical atrocities, with the images serving as a mediator of social relationships between the victims and the viewers/witnesses. Are they primary evidence of horrific violence or witness to it? Are they aesthetic objects or historical documents? According to one scholar, exhibit photography in modern museums makes violent, unimaginable history accessible in sanitized spaces, such that "what remains invisible in this context is not the original experience of suffering, but the social relations of production whose invisibility is articulate as and articulates with the overwhelming experience of individual trauma" (Lawless, 2014, p. 411).

Visitors to museums generally assume that they will walk through an exhibit and experience a "one-way flow of information from museum exhibit to visitor" (King, 2013, p. 671). This creates opportunities for history and cultural museums to promote specific ideas or agendas. As a result, exhibit designers consider three elements when developing an exhibit: categories, narratives, and engagement. The foundations of the exhibit are the categories of information selected for display. The narrative shapes visitor perceptions and ideas about this information. When combined, categories and narratives provide interpretive language and exhibits that engage visitors in the space (Kratz, 2018).

The role of a museum curator is to connect the various elements in the museum to one another and finally the exhibit to the visitor. As Obrist (2015) notes, "The act of curating at its most basic is simply about connecting" (p.1). A study done at the National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) found it difficult to predict the places where visitors will have strong emotional responses. Visitors reflected on places where they

cried in the exhibit; some cried because “design and narrative were powerful enough to open that possibility; others mentioned aspects of the exhibit that held personal significance and associations” (Kratz, 2018, p. 249). Memories and recollections of personal events, relationships, and issues evoked this response. At the Holocaust Gallery in Warsaw, near the Rapoport Memorial to the Ghetto Heroes, the curatorial team relies heavily on a minimalistic technique. By limiting the text within the exhibit, they try to force visitors to engage closely with the information and enter a dialogue to construe personal meaning during their visit (Piotrowska et al., 2018, p. 37).

Trainer et al. (2012) assert that one must understand the motivation of a museum visitor to better create exhibits that capture their attention. They define five styles of motivated visitors, including the “explorer” who is generally curiosity-drive, the “facilitator” who organizes and enables group visits, the “professional/hobbyist” who feels a close personal or professional connection to specific content, the “experience seeker” who views the museum as an important destination for a one-time visit, and the “recharger” who seeks “contemplative, spiritual restorative experiences [and] use the museum as a refuge from the work-day world” (Trainer et al., 2012, p. 103).

Schreiber et al. (2013) investigated learner styles and how they influence the visitor experience at a museum. They divided museum-goers into three categories: “idea preference visitors” who seek information, facts, and statistics; “people preference visitors” primarily interested in emotions, stories, biographies, and photographs; and “object preference visitors” who seek reflective moments while viewing artifacts. Their research showed that visitors are mostly impacted by their unique learning styles and what they expect to get out of a visit, not necessarily what curators and museum staff hope to achieve (Schreiber et al., 2013). Curators

and museum staff who seek to engage the visitor need to understand learning styles and readjust exhibits to meet learners and their interests.

According to Garcia et al. (2012), “museum learning is unique, multi-faceted and inspires higher-order affective and cognitive development” (p. 47). Visitors appreciate when their standard method of thinking is challenged, and they are forced to learn information from competing narratives through museum exhibitions. It creates a “dissonance of a cacophony” that challenges “people to think again about their stereotypes, and to emerge from their museum experience feeling that they have had some profound encounter with the subject” (Webber, 2018, p. 142). Schools that recognize the value of these educational spaces schedule visits to meet academic goals. In doing so, they seek to complement or supplement school-based curricula. Educators bring students for focused programming and one-time field trips and will sometimes attend teacher training workshops offered by a museum.

The relationship between museums and schools is complex. In the past few decades, there has been “a major push to align more closely to academic content standards, to teach math, science, history, and language arts through art in the hopes that connecting to academic standards would provide the relevance needed to increase program numbers” (Jones, 2014, p. 176). Attendance numbers and visitor statistics have dictated the direction of exhibits and program offerings. At the same time, many museum educators disagree with this approach, believing that “objects have the power to illuminate so many of the dark regions of our minds and beings beyond those addressed in the classroom, and it is [their] responsibility to advocate for that power” (Garcia et al., 2012, p. 48). Some museums shifted to focus on fostering creativity and developing critical thinking skills so that they will no longer be seen as “playing handmaiden to schools and curriculum standards” (Jones, 2014, p. 176).

Grindle and Thomas (2017) note that several museums recently adopted a constructivist approach for authentic learning, suggesting that a "teacher's or curator's job is not to impart information but to make it possible for the learner to construct their own understanding of the topic" (p. 106). Workshops that ask students to act as curators encourage this style of learning. Lowe (2015) suggests that programs that engage visitors by teaching the challenges of narrating history "invite a new generation of visitors to help us take up the task" (p. 60). Museums also utilize marketing platforms, such as social media sites, podcasts, and blogs, to encourage participation both during and after the visit.

Pulh and Mencarelli (2015) point out that while these initiatives have made museum access and participation easier for many in the 21st century, "there is a parallel need to examine its potential for challenging museums authority and legitimacy and also the risk of disenchanting the museum-going experience" (p. 44). Balloffet et al. (2014) note a rise in similarities between museums and entertainment spaces. They use the phrase "edutainment" to describe the hybridization of museum learning and amusement-park-style attractions and shows that are increasingly utilized to attract and grow audiences.

Holocaust museums occupy a unique space in museum culture. They fall into the category of "dark tourism"—"places that are linked to death, violence, disaster or suffering" (Johnson & Pickin, 2019, p. 6). Such spaces operate with the goal of creating visitor-friendly, accessible educational experiences that connect visitors with atrocities and tragic moments in history. Dark tourism also includes memorial sites for terror attacks, concentration camps, cemetery tours, and prison museums. Bolin (2012) explains that dark tourism is popular because it plays into the human nature of "attraction and revulsion" (p. 201), which is the desire to see something fascinating while simultaneously trying to look away. Scholars note

that dark tourism and its accompanying field of studies have grown in popularity in recent years (Garrett, 2020; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). The rise in social media has not just increased awareness and knowledge about dark tourism but also added a new dimension to the visitor experience, such as taking and posting photographs and selfies at these sites (Price & Shores, 2017).

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Specifics about how, what, and when to teach children and adolescents about the Holocaust are debated. Guidelines for teaching and learning about the Holocaust published by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2019 suggest that the pedagogical approach of using graphic images from the Holocaust is problematic because this method reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews, degrades the victims, and can disturb viewers' feelings about modesty and trauma. The IHRA recommendations state that "the Holocaust can be taught effectively without using graphic photographs or film footage" (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2019, p. 28). Lenga (2020) disagrees and suggests that in today's world, atrocity images about the Holocaust circulate extensively and should be included in pedagogical settings where educators can provide historical context and support students' emotional reactions. Educators increasingly provide trigger warnings, alerts about encounters with graphic materials that are potentially traumatic, even though the benefits of these warnings are debated (Laguardia et al., 2017).

The American Psychological Association (2022) defines trauma as "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster." Death is tragic; the response and suffering by others in relation to that death constitute trauma (Garrett, 2020). Caruth (as cited in Lawless, 2014) suggests that "what causes trauma is a shock that appears

to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time" and frames trauma as "a barrier of sensation and knowledge that protects the organism by placing stimulation within an ordered system of time" (p. 399). Trauma is an underlying presence that can manifest through physical manifestations such as tics or jokes (Lawless, 2014). Silence was often considered an important part of trauma, but this symptom has changed in the modern digital age, with people feeling more comfortable sharing their experiences on social media than they would have in a face to face conversation (Menyhért, 2017).

Childhood trauma is common, with as many as 68% of children in the United States experiencing some form of a traumatic experience, and about 30% of students with emotional and behavioral disorders experiencing traumatic events or showing signs of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Cavanaugh, 2016). Children can experience varying types of traumas. Complex trauma refers to the impact of persistent and severe neglect, abuse, or violence, while adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) refer to deleterious childhood abuse or prolonged familial dysfunction (Rumsey & Milsom, 2018).

ACEs reflect ten adverse experiences grouped into categories of neglect, abuse, and household dysfunction. The 2016 National Survey of Children's Health conducted by Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI, 2018) found that approximately 45% of children in the United States have experienced at least one ACE, and one in ten children have experienced three or more. Stress reactions among children with ACEs can affect physical and mental development and include feelings of terror, fear, and helplessness. Additionally, negative effects including drug abuse, suicide, depression, obesity, and alcoholism can continue into adulthood (Sacks & Murphey, 2018). The Harvard Center on

the Developing Child introduced the phrase "toxic stress" in 2005 to create awareness about the effects of ACEs on students and to combat stereotypes, negative assumptions, and predictions of doom for these children (Galinsky, 2020, p. 47).

Childhood trauma can interfere with learning and behavior at school (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2022). Researchers have found that increased ACEs and traumatic stress affect growth and development, attendance and suspension rates among students, and chronic health conditions (Kataoka et al., 2018; McLaughlin & Sheridan, 2016). In a study of trauma-related behaviors in the classroom after a tornado in Alabama, Ray and Hocutt (2016) found students exhibited fears, physical and emotional distress, and disruptive classroom behaviors following the natural disaster. Research shows that students who experienced trauma are less likely to be engaged in the classroom and graduate from high school; dropout rates among students who have experienced trauma are 19.79%, while among those who have not experienced trauma are only 12.97% (Rumsey & Milsom, 2018). According to McLaughlin and Sheridan (2016), exposure to environmental threats (including domestic violence and abuse) condition children to specific fear responses and affect development. This pattern of externalization in response to fear and safety stimuli was found among students with threat exposure but not deprivation.

Krondorfer (2016) suggests that trauma has a long-lasting effect and is often described as "a shattering of self and the world" (p. 91). It can continue intergenerationally by creating traumatic patterns that are transmitted within families as well as transgenerationally, with such patterns and symptoms becoming evident within social systems. However, while trauma is an important concept, it has become a common phrase often synonymous with horror, atrocity, and genocide. Some researchers argue that as a

result, trauma loses both its uniqueness and its associations with other terrible and tragic human experiences. Greenspan et al. (2014) write that this is “equivalent to using ‘Auschwitz’ as a synonym for Holocaust history as a whole. It works rhetorically, as many examples show, but is severely limited empirically” (p. 215).

PTSD is a mental illness that can be experienced after an actual or potential traumatic or life-threatening event (Laguardia et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022). It presents as involuntary memory of unresolved events. Young (as cited in Pinchevski, 2019) explains that “it permits the past (memory) to relive itself in the present, in the form of intrusive images and thoughts and in the patient’s compulsion to replay old events” (p. 18). Some people who suffer from PTSD can be triggered to remember the traumatic events by different sights, sounds, tastes, or smells. Triggers are personal and can cause a range of responses, from avoidance to angry or violent outbursts (Laguardia et al., 2017). Therapists typically recommend that, as part of the healing process, trauma victims should work to integrate the trauma into their life history (Greenspan, 2019). The American Psychiatric Association classified PTSD as a disease in 1980, and cultural trauma studies in the following decades examined re-traumatization and post-memory concepts as it relates to reading, researching, and working with Holocaust survivor testimonies and archives (Menyhért, 2017).

Secondary traumatic stress (STS), also known as vicarious trauma (VT) or compassion fatigue (CF), refers to the stress, physical or emotional responses, and negative changes in worldviews that are experienced by people who are exposed to the trauma of others (Evces, 2015). It is often work-related and commonly occurs among professionals in mental health care, relief workers at disaster sites, and wives of soldiers returning from war

(Leung et al., 2022; Nuttman-Shwartz, 2015). People who frequently view graphic images, such as human rights investigators, may experience negative cognitive and behavioral effects because of their indirect exposure to violence (Baker et al., 2020).

Mental health practitioners with anxiety disorders or personal trauma histories are at increased risk of emotional exhaustion and burnout (Wagaman et al., 2015). Leung et al. (2022) found that while trauma history was not associated with emotional exhaustion, it was associated with negative changes in self-perception and worse mental health. Teachers who work with students affected by trauma commonly experience emotional distancing and difficulty feeling academically or emotionally present with their students because of STS (Rankin, 2020). It is recommended that trauma researchers, who regularly listen to interviews of trauma victims, receive psychological support for the vicarious traumatization they experience (van der Merwe & Hunt, 2019).

Miller (2013) suggests that trauma creates a ripple effect and recommends for pedagogical purposes separating VT into two parts: secondary trauma and tertiary trauma. Secondary trauma refers to hearing about traumatic experiences directly from the primary victims of the event, while tertiary trauma refers to the experience of "someone exposed to the traumatizing events through the mediation of witnesses' accounts, texts, photographs, and so on" (Miller, 2013, p. 159). Figley and Ludick (2017) propose that vicarious traumatization results when empathy and interpersonal relationships create a gateway for deeply feeling the pain of others. They compare it to the effects of breathing in second-hand smoke. Laub (as cited in Davis, 2018) suggests that hearing or learning about atrocities and crises is a powerful experience and that "the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner

of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself" (p. 12).

Trauma has become associated with certain memory dynamics and occurs when an event is not fully processed at the time of occurrence. This means that survivor testimonies "do not so much retrieve experiences from memory but enable even the person who lived through the traumatic event to experience it for the first time" (Caruth as cited in Arnold de-Simine, 2012, p. 33). Arnold de-Simine (2012) suggests that the act of witnessing or hearing a narrated past is what creates the testimony itself, making the listener a witness to the trauma. Memory work is a difficult task that forces people to confront and engage with troubling pasts. Krondorfer (2016) suggests that a positive value of this task is that it "unsettles empathy" and can liberate individuals from traumatic pasts. Wierviorka (as cited in Greenspan et al., 2014) notes the cathartic component of survivors providing testimony, which is "sometimes seen as a way to liberate oneself from trauma" (p. 219). The problem with listeners becoming firsthand witnesses during testimony is that listeners have a responsibility to validate the experience of survivors during these interactions, and the narrated past becomes meaningful only because of the current emotional engagement between the listeners and the narrator (Arnold de-Simine, 2012).

Davis (2018) coined the term "trauma envy" (p. 27) to describe the propensity of those who, after listening to survivor testimony, seek to appropriate a piece of the suffering for themselves. Trauma envy invites the listener to confront tragedy as a first-person victim rather than learning about it second-hand. This is a form of vicarious trauma that "invites members of a society to confront, rather than conceal, catastrophes, and in that way might be useful. On the other hand, it might arouse anxiety and trigger defense against further

exposure" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 87). Davis (2018) suggests that those who teach difficult histories should seek to minimize both primary and vicarious trauma since it may not be sufficiently worked through in the space of a classroom. Additionally, one who did not experience the Holocaust and the pain of the victims does not have the ability or right to speak in place of survivors. He argues that such individuals do not participate in or co-own the other's trauma; the sense or desire that they do should be resisted because it gives them the potentially self-serving illusion of empathetic understanding.

In Israel, Holocaust education is approached differently than in the United States. The memory of the Holocaust is ingrained in the very fabric of Israeli education and culture, with different streets, synagogues, and neighborhoods named for Holocaust victims and fighters. Keynan (2018) suggests that trauma manifests in a nation similarly to the way it manifests in an individual: a change in memory patterns that leads to "an insatiable craving for security" (p. 99). This craving is directed both outwardly toward other nations as it asserts its national identity and security, and inwardly among its citizens and soldiers, demanding resilience and strength from its people.

In 1985 Holocaust education became mandatory in all Israeli high schools and organized education trips to Poland became popular a few years later (Ofer, 2013). Israeli students visit Yad Vashem, and each year, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, a siren is sounded to remember the victims of the Holocaust. All those who hear the siren are expected to stop their activities and remain still for the duration of the siren. The limited literature that exists about secondary trauma in Holocaust education (and how it affects students who are forced to confront Holocaust history and memory) was found mainly in Israeli studies related to Holocaust Remembrance Day. Bornstein and Naveh (2017) posit that the sound of the

Holocaust Remembrance Day siren is a “metonymic representation of the Holocaust, symbolizing trauma and, in turn, evoking other traumas” (p. 14). They found that students experienced secondary trauma while participating in memorial ceremonies.

Dark tourism creates an intentional intersection between modern visitors and horrific pasts. Bolin (2012) found that at Rwandan genocide memorials, all visitors’ responses had three common themes: etiquette, emotions, and lessons. Etiquette includes taking photographs, giving donations, signing a guestbook, and paying respect to the dead. Emotions, usually exhibited or worded strongly, are often seen during and after the visit. Lessons encompass political, educational, and humanitarian takeaways. These patterns are unspoken but powerfully experienced by nearly every single visitor. While many individuals find dark tourist sites too morbid to visit, some people are drawn to these spaces.

In 2019, 2,320,000 people visited Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau, the site of the former German concentration camp in Poland. It is the largest Holocaust-related dark tourist site in the world. There are 340 guides who conduct tours of the camp in 21 languages (Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2020). The Auschwitz museum is both a cemetery and an exhibition space. Most of the Jewish tour groups to Poland focus mainly on the death camps that they visit rather than the centuries of Jewish life and culture that were destroyed (Webber, 2018). Bilewicz and Wojcik (2017) suggest there are potential risks to the psychological well-being of emotionally vulnerable visitors during confrontations with Holocaust history sites. They found that trips to sites that relate to past atrocities can elicit secondary trauma among visitors.

Britzman (as cited in Zembylas, 2017) uses the term “difficult” histories instead of “controversial” histories to reflect the affective component and discomfort that is felt when

teaching or learning “histories rooted in the traumas, suffering and violent oppression of groups of people – such as racism, apartheid, genocides and the like” (p. 660). She first used the phrase in reference to the diary of Anne Frank, where the reader’s confrontation with victimization and hatred signifies the intersection of pedagogy and historical atrocities (Zembylas, 2014). In such cases, there is a “dynamic interplay between being told too much and knowing too little that occurs when one attempts to engage in learning about the unimaginable but terrifyingly real situations of genocide” (Britzman as cited in Garrett, 2020, p. 22). Zembylas et al. (2020) add that “some history can be difficult because it is traumatic; because it is difficult for most people in the present to fathom; or because it raises issues of identity, marginalization, and oppression that are more easily ignored than addressed for many students and teachers” (p. 4).

Garrett (2020) suggests that anxiety arises when encountering difficult knowledge because it forces us to confront our vulnerability and of those we know and love. It also occurs with the realization that atrocities and genocide like the Holocaust are not mistakes of the human experience; they occur through calculated intentional and legal actions. It is challenging to consider this because “not only was the Holocaust consciously enacted, it was done so with the very tools of modernity that were supposed to, and continue to be supposed to, provide everyone access to progress and the good life. So what can a lesson hope to accomplish?” (Garrett, 2020, pp. 26-27). Miller (2013) refers to this concept as “terrible knowledge,” suggesting that this understanding is “so appalling it seems to damage, rather than empower us” (p. 159).

Felman (as cited in Britzman, 2013; Garrett, 2020) insists that teaching must address or include a crisis because of the human nature to connect through emotions of vulnerability

and unpredictability that are felt when hearing about a crisis. She posits that teaching about crises will deepen student engagement and knowledge in the same way that featuring crises in new reports increases viewership and interest in the media. In her view, "my job as a teacher, paradoxical as it may sound, was that of creating in the class the highest state of crisis that it could withstand, without 'driving the students crazy,' without compromising the students' bounds" (as cited in Zembylas, 2015, p. 164).

There are ethical concerns about engaging students in narratives about violence and suffering (Zembylas, 2015). Gubkin (2015) suggests that educators need to be aware of the challenges and dangers of teaching these difficult histories at both formal and informal learning sites, especially when students have traumatic backgrounds themselves. This is because "bringing traumatic knowledge front and center into the classroom presents ethical challenges… especially if empathetic understanding is employed as a primary pedagogical strategy" (Gubkin, 2015, p.108). LaCapra (as cited in Krondorfer, 2016) suggests an encounter with traumatic history requires a "dialogical exchange with the past" when one has cognitive self-awareness of their history or identity along with how it relates to the historical subject matter. Rather than "declaring an amorphous 'we are all humans' approach, intercultural memory work depends on the willingness and ability of participants to clarify their agency (or 'subject position') vis-à-vis the historical trauma that defines contentious social relations" (Krondorfer, 2016, p. 98).

Researchers have increasingly begun to look at the age of students learning about the Holocaust and other difficult subjects as contributing factors in how they process and learn about it. Pawlowicz and Grunden (2015) note that while all states have codes and standards that regulate ethical conduct within the classroom, it is often left to the teacher to interpret

what is considered emotionally safe and age-appropriate for their students. While discussions frequently revolve around the introduction of the Holocaust and difficult subjects in early grades, it is important to recognize developmental differences found even among freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high schools. Additionally, teachers must determine a universal standard for student exposure in the classroom, keeping in mind that while some students are overexposed to violence and graphic content, others are not.

Teachers often resist teaching or engaging pedagogically with certain aspects of history for a multiplicity of reasons, including feeling disturbed about traumatic content, fear of students' emotionally charged responses in the classroom, conflicting political views of the subject, and opposition or discomfort toward their values (Zembylas, 2017). Teachers may be hesitant to teach difficult histories because of the complexities of presenting multiple perspectives or their lack of knowledge. They may assume it is too controversial or politically charged to be considered in an official curriculum (Stoddard et al., 2017).

In a study of Estonian and Latvian teachers tasked with teaching sensitive and controversial issues (SCIs) in history, Kello (2015) found that teachers would try to hide or avoid teaching topics they disagreed with. In a divided society, teachers were more likely to teach sensitive topics if their convictions matched those of the national perspective. She recommends professional development designed to support educators working through their own emotional and political perspectives while teaching SCIs. Concerning the teaching of the 1945 nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by America, Miller (2013) suggests that teachers must become comfortable with the fact that certain difficult histories are complex and leave many questions unanswered, forcing them to leave some issues open in their classrooms and possibly even for generations. In an action research study focused on

representations of the Vietnam War in American documentary films, Gaudelli et al. (2012) found that using documentaries and outtakes increased teacher willingness to engage in difficult histories and address multiple perspectives on difficult histories.

Difficult Exhibitions

Despite their morbidity, exhibitions about death and other difficult subjects continuously attract large audiences. For example, between October 2015 and March 2016, the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery hosted two exhibitions about death and dying. These installations were among the museum's most successful special exhibitions, with "Death: Is It Your Right to Choose?" (an exhibition about assisted suicide) hosting more than 62,000 visitors in the first five months after the opening (Graves, 2017). Curators of the exhibit note that these exhibits opened viewers' minds to "a multitude of thoughts and ideas" and suggest that similar modern exhibits about difficult subjects could be "a place perhaps where challenging topics are explored, and where the visitor is engaged and encouraged to discuss issues that are relevant to society today, in a safe and balanced environment" (Graves, 2017, p. 49).

Norris et al. (2012) investigated the balance between exhibiting horrific atrocities and considering the emotional safety of museum visitors. About the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in Manhattan, Mann (in Norris et al., 2012) suggests that curators and guides recognize that visitors' emotions may overwhelm their rational thinking. They should present the most challenging moments in the narrative with a "safe buffer for visitors" where they are "allowed to grieve, to shake their heads in dismay, to be angry, to cry, and even to be numb" (p. 19). She also suggests that ignoring this history can backfire since there is a "human tendency to fill in the blanks and personalize material which can sometimes be more

traumatizing than even the most graphic documentary evidence of an atrocity" (Norris et al., p. 19).

Zembylas et al. (2020) note that "psychologists and sociologists have shown that overexposure to empathy-arousing representations of suffering can have a paralyzing effect, acting as a barrier to rather as a motivator of action" (p. 3). Cohen (in Norris et al., 2012) writes:

> Too often, I've seen Holocaust museums appear to be designed in a way that intentionally encourages shock or sadness: the use of sentimental music within a survivor's testimony video, larger-than-life-sized photographs of open mass graves, and museum elevators that resemble gas chambers. I've also observed museum guides using emotionally loaded statements and language (such as, "What you're about to see is quite shocking") that forces onto visitors' particular expectations. Yet, when visitors reach particular sections within exhibitions that use unnecessary and crude treatments, or when guides provide loaded commentary, I've seen visitors shut down. Silence replaces questions and ideas. (p. 19)

Manipulating visitors' reactions and responses prevent them from thinking critically about the information in the exhibit, downplaying or even preventing important perspectives and history lessons from being learned.

Film is increasingly popularized in contemporary museums because the combination of visual and audial techniques of video installations creates a visceral experience that disturbs and provokes visitors' emotions. According to Arnold de-Simine (2012, p. 23), "the moving image has become ubiquitous in museums that deal with traumatic, violent, and difficult histories and could be described as 'memorial museums'." However, individuals

may be hesitant to engage in difficult histories shown on a screen because they are concerned about their emotional responses and reactions to the trauma being shown. Stoddard et al. (2017) found that in viewing historical representations of plantations and enslaved communities, African Americans were particularly apprehensive because they descend from enslaved people and still experience racism and discrimination today.

Videos and photographs, such as those found in Holocaust museums, allow individuals to see events without being physically present at the site of a crime. In a study of secondary traumatic stress experienced by human rights investigators, Baker et al. (2020) investigated mental health risks and mitigation techniques for viewing war crimes and human rights violations. They found that visual and audial content has more impact than written content and documentation. Their research focused on strategies for reviewing content (limiting exposure to sound and graphic imagery, working for short periods and taking breaks, working in public spaces or with a partner/as part of a team, and watching or reading something funny afterward), community support techniques (talking with friends, family, fellow students, teammates, or a mental health counselor), and self-care practices (exercising, meditating, practicing mindfulness, sleeping more, and limiting graphic exposure outside of work). They recommend that to mitigate secondary trauma when viewing graphic imagery and disturbing content on film, and one should use safer viewing techniques, including taking breaks, muting audio, focusing on only one corner of the screen, minimizing the size of the content on screen, and quickly clicking through a film to preview and prevent surprising encounters with disturbing materials.

As evident in the plethora of Holocaust museums and memorials around the world, “nowhere are the stakes in the mediation of traumatic memory higher than in discussion

about Holocaust remembrance" (Pinchevski, 2019, p. 10). These are places where students, survivors, dignitaries, and visitors of all backgrounds and cultures willingly engage in difficult history for the sake of remembrance. Bickman and Hamner (1998) noted that "given the symbolic importance and centrality of these settings in the education of the public, the lack of knowledge about the effects of these museums is remarkable" (p. 436). The original museum at Yad Vashem in Israel opened in 1957; it was criticized for the lack of connection between exhibit developers and the education department, leaving exhibit conceptualization and design based solely on historical perspectives. More contemporary Holocaust museums aim to focus on both cognitive and emotional visitor responses. They often emphasize the emotional elements of the narrative while focusing on promoting empathetic identification among visitors (Trofanenko, 2014). Witcomb (as cited in Trofanenko, 2014) suggests that some Holocaust museums now have a primary goal of evoking emotional responses among visitors at the expense of intellectual engagement. She posits that curators at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles had physical spaces designed in a way that "prevented opportunities to engage intellectually" and instead "sought to appeal to an emotional response" (p. 26).

One goal of the Museum Planning Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. 1984 was to create points of connection so that visitors would relate to individuals during the Holocaust. Regarding photographic content in the Hall of Witness, Anna Cohn, the director of museum development (who left the project before the plans were created), argued in favor of using museum design to invoke in visitors a memory that is "so strong – so traumatic – as to refuse integration into the historical narrative that leads from the Shoah to the historical present" (Bernard-Donals, 2012, p. 425).

As seen in the Documents of the Museum Planning Committee, she suggested that in viewing the gruesome photographs, visitors become witnesses. Cohn noted that she didn't "want to give the visitor an easy out […]. If the message you want to convey is sharper than quiet solemnity, then you need to deliver it immediately" (as cited in Bernard-Donals, 2012, p. 425).

A major debate of the content committee at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum centered around displaying hair from Auschwitz, some of which was still plaited or braided after having been shaved off victims upon their arrival in the concentration camp. Since ancient times, hair has been viewed as an object of immortality, and in Victorian culture families saved locks of hair of loved ones after their deaths. The ritual places hair as an enduring symbol of life that can be preserved and woven into artwork, portraiture, or jewelry (Harmeyer, 2018). The hair from Auschwitz items evoked a visceral reaction among the museum committee members and they questioned if these items were considered human remains or had become historical artifacts. A memo written by Michael Berenbaum, project director of the museum, noted that the hair was not considered human remains "either according to Jewish law or to common sense" (Bernard-Donals, 2012, pp. 430-431). Alice Greenwald, lead design consultant at the museum, argued against exhibiting the hair and advised that memorial sites and concentration camps in Europe were more suitable places to house the "sacred" hair since those sites function as "what might be logically true is not always emotionally true + this museum will be affecting people's emotions" (as cited in Bernard-Donals, 2012, p. 431). While two-thirds of the committee voted to display the hair, ultimately it did not make it into the final museum design. This decision was based upon arguments and testimony from women survivors who suggested that it was possible for their

hair to be in the bundles, and it would be traumatic for them to see their hair on exhibit in a museum (M. Berenbaum, personal communication, 2016).

Raoul Hilberg (as cited in Bernard-Donals, 2012) argued that “some aspects [of the Holocaust] cannot be shown because they are not represented in objects. When we do have specific objects, we should show them. The hair and [a dissecting] table are elements of ultimate rationality amidst [a] process no one can understand” (p. 429). Discussions around exhibiting other objects at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (including shoes and boxcars) addressed questions of their tactility and their function as evidence of the crimes committed. To support the inclusion of shoes in the final museum design as witnesses to the events of the Holocaust, the narrative featured above the display of shoes includes a quote from the Yiddish poet Moshe Schulstein:

> We are the shoes, we are the last witnesses.
>
> We are shoes from grandchildren and grandfathers,
>
> From Prague, Paris and Amsterdam,
>
> And because we are only made of stuff and leather
>
> And not of blood and flesh, each one of us avoided the hellfire.

Bernard-Donals (2012) reviewed thousands of visitors’ comments left after visits to the museum and found that some objects troubled some visitors’ connections to the Holocaust. Comments included “I was overcome with nausea” and “it was quite hard to take all of it in” (p. 418). He suggests that this occurs when items (like shoes) do not function in a metonymic sense (standing in for, or linking to, a historical event) but rather in a synecdochic manner (becoming a substitution for a larger event). Synecdochic representations can trouble

viewers' relationships with the past. The focus on one particular item can distance them from an event and distract them from the larger historical narrative.

Curators at the museum were deliberate in their design practices and historical representations, debating how to create a museum that would accurately portray the most macabre elements of the Holocaust while remaining an emotionally safe space for young visitors. They placed privacy walls in front of monitors that portrayed the most graphic and disturbing images so that visitors could choose whether to view the images or not. Ehrenreich and Klinger (2013) note that in hindsight this was seen as a mistake because it played into the voyeuristic fascination with horror and human nature of wanting to view something that is off-limits. The technique backfired because people saw these spaces as an attraction to "the good stuff" (Ehrenreich & Klinger, 2013, p. 145). In a 1993 essay, shortly after the museum opened, Gourevitch (as cited in Gross, 2018) summarized the content of the exhibits as "Peep-show format. Snuff films. Naked women led to execution. People being shot. Into the ditch shot, spasms, collapse, dirt thrown in over. Crowds of naked people. Naked people standing about to be killed, naked people lying down dead" (p. 418). He referred to the museum as a theme park and questioned its motive of seeking to provide an authentic understanding of the Holocaust and moral lessons for its visitors. This essay, however, was one of the rare negative reviews of the new museum. Wieseltier (1993) billed the museum as a "pedagogical masterpiece" for the balanced narrative that it presented and the "provision for shock" (p. 20) offered by the Hall of Remembrance. The hall, described as a "six-sided, classically proportioned chamber of limestone, a chaste vacancy, seventy feet high, unencumbered by iconography, washed in a kind of halting light, in a light that seems

anxious about its own appropriateness" (Wieseltier, 1993, p. 20), was designed as a space for visitors to sit in silence and reflect immediately after leaving the exhibition.

Coping Styles

On Martin Luther King Day in 1994, a well-publicized incident of inappropriate student responses to Holocaust imagery occurred when a group of African American and Latino students in a movie theatre in Oakland, California, began to laugh during a screening of *Schindler's List*. The film was paused until all the students from Castlemont High School left the theatre (Spolar, March 10, 1994). Students were strongly reprimanded and accused of antisemitism. The episode attracted national attention, with Steven Spielberg visiting the school to speak with students. Public opinion was mostly critical, including the idea that "clearly, these students experienced the wrong emotions. To laugh at images of human torture and violence exposes oneself as insensitive at best, immoral and depraved at worst" (Baum, 1996, p. 47). However, the *New York Times* (April 13, 1994) reported that Mark Rader, the teacher who organized the trip, explained the laughter as a defense mechanism exhibited by immature students experiencing peer pressure to avoid having their classmates see them cry or be sad about the Holocaust. Bruns (2000) suggests that the students' laughter can be explored through alternative viewpoints. Some possibilities include differences between cruel laughter and reparative laughter, laughter as a response to sudden change within the script, and laughter as "a response to the utter absurdity of the situation" (p. 9).

Encounters with difficult subjects and traumatic histories in classrooms and museums are confrontations with previously unimaginable histories and personalities that can create strange effects on students (Tarc, 2013). In response, students will utilize various coping styles, some positive and some negative, to minimize their discomfort. According to Lazarus

and Folkman (as cited in Peng et al., 2012), coping is defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 513). They note that coping serves two purposes: to address and solve an objective problem, demand, or task, and to deal with an individual’s emotional state by modifying or reducing the cognitive, emotional, and physical stress of the situation (Gustems-Carnicer & Calderón, 2013).

The primary feeling associated with the Holocaust is sadness; it is uncomfortable for an individual to relive or experience this sadness (Krieg, 2015). Trying to understand the gruesome experiences of Holocaust victims often drives people to “techniques of aversion, suppression, erasure, detachment, minimalization, sentimentalization, and eventually ‘normalization’ of victims’ suffering and experience” (Zembylas et al., 2020, p. 2). Sometimes an individual will experience emotions of sadness, anger, or outrage during an encounter with injustice (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012). As Garrett (2020) explains, “when a student’s sensibility about the world is disquieted, the disquieted individual seeks to steady themselves and their now-turbulent footing in the way they experience the world. This steadying is not always pleasant” (p. 31). The anger sometimes manifests in accusations of racism or bias. Krieg (2015) notes that anger and resistance can arise when an individual is forced to have specific emotions.

Coping strategies are used by individuals experiencing long-term suffering or trauma and during emergencies or moments of crisis. They are personal resources that affect stress management (Grinstein-Cohen et al., 2017). Different people will employ different strategies to cope with the events. Some coping mechanisms have positive results, while others, such as substance abuse, result in negative outcomes (Kasi et al., 2012). Coping is considered a

normal stress response, and researchers are interested in understanding ways that individuals can use coping more effectively to minimize the effects of stress. Effective coping is associated with positive outcomes, while negative coping is associated with anger and distress (Wright et al., 2015). Emotion regulation and self-awareness are cognitive components of empathy that can be learned and used to protect oneself from the negative effects of vicarious traumatization (Wagaman et al., 2015). For example, Van der Kolk (2015) explores behavioral coping mechanisms among children as a way for them to feel safe and in control.

Active forms of coping and methods employed to cope directly with a problem or event are associated with better stress management and lower stress levels (Mayordomo-Rodríguez et al., 2015). Research shows that active coping and the use of instrumental supports predict posttraumatic growth and self-compassion among trauma survivors (Munroe et al., 2022). A study of parents with babies in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) found that active coping included talking and scrapbooking (Huenink et al., 2017). In a study exploring coping styles and combat motivations of soldiers in the Israel Defense Force, Ben-Shalom and Benbenisty (2016) found that active coping is an effective method of dealing with stress and that soldiers reported that faith-based coping was more helpful in dealing with their combat missions than emotional coping (e.g., relaxation, crying, disconnecting from oneself, and self-talk).

Religious coping has been identified as an effective method for dealing with trauma because it gives meaning to the situation and provides a sense of control (McIntire & Duncan, 2013). Religious coping can manifest in two ways: positive and negative. Positive religious coping is associated with better outcomes and includes seeking spiritual support and

praying. Negative religious coping manifests as discontent or doubt about religious beliefs and is associated with increased depression and anxiety (Zukerman et al., 2016). Krägeloh et al. (2012) investigated how personal levels of spirituality and religiosity are associated with the expression of religious coping compared to other coping styles. They found that among individuals with high levels of spirituality and religiosity, religious coping was related to problem-focused coping styles. At the same time, low levels of spirituality and religiosity were associated with avoidant coping strategies. Negative religious coping has been found to increase stress, "adding to the burden already placed on someone grappling with a stressful situation" (Mayordomo-Rodríguez et al., 2015, p. 486-487).

Negative coping includes avoidance and disengagement. It is often associated with emotional symptoms including high anxiety and behavioral misconduct (Boxer & Sloan-Power, 2013). Research shows a link between trauma and coping. Traumatized individuals exhibit poor coping styles (such as avoidance) and adverse mental health outcomes (Jenzer et al., 2020). Avoidance has been linked to negative psychological attitudes (Gustems-Carnicer & Calderón, 2013). In a study of mothers experiencing parental distress (including those with and without mental illness), Malka et al. (2020) found that disengagement and other negative coping styles were associated with parental distress.

In a study of secondary traumatization among Israeli students following a terror attack, Ben-Zur et al. (2012) investigated access to resources, coping styles, and distress symptoms. They found that students with greater access to resources exhibited lower levels of posttraumatic distress. Higher levels of distress were related to increased media exposure and the use of avoidance coping mechanisms. Perhaps unsurprisingly, increased exposure to violence on the internet has been linked to increased violence and fighting among school-age

students (Wang et al., 2021). Among victims of terror attacks, Weinberg et al. (2014) found that willingness to forgive and problem-focused copying styles were positively associated with decreased symptoms of PTSD while avoidance coping was not.

Trauma-Informed Practice

Research shows that educators can play a critical role in mitigating trauma and its effects (Ray & Hocutt, 2016), yet teachers and museum guides who teach and create conversations about horrors and atrocities have few tools to accomplish this. The challenge lies in identifying traumatized students and then addressing their emotional difficulties to help them move beyond "the sensational experience of trauma and towards a restorative grasp of themselves and [the] world" (Gaudelli et al., 2012, p. 23). Educators have found that children who experience trauma can benefit from additional support in the classroom including reminders, advanced warnings, and information about transitions or changes in routines (Cavanaugh, 2016). With the growing interest in understanding how ACEs affect student learning, trauma-informed learning practices are on the rise (Sacks & Murphey, 2018).

Trauma-informed care contains two elements: healing weaknesses and building strengths (Brunzell et al., 2016). Trauma-sensitive schools and classrooms provide safe environments for students to thrive (Cavanaugh, 2016). According to Kataoka et al. (2018), while there is "no one-size fits all approach" (p. 424), a successful trauma-informed model will integrate culture, collaboration, empowerment, peer support, and trust. Zembylas (2015) suggests that no educational space can be entirely free of stress or discomfort for students; therefore safe spaces are "not about the absence of discomfort, but rather [are] a way of thinking, feeling, and acting that fosters students' critical rigor" (p. 166).

Students who confront difficult subjects will typically exhibit signs of discomfort and unease (Garrett, 2020). Berardi and Morton (2017) note while some students who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder will exhibit heightened anxiety or panicked behavior in the classroom, others may freeze, appear defiant, or use other coping methods to manage their stress. Educators often discipline these students for noncompliance and defiance in the classroom when they should be viewing such behaviors and functioning through a trauma-informed lens, recognizing when children's behaviors are a result of loss and trauma. Recent emphasis on trauma-informed care has positively influenced educational spaces, with teachers showing more patience and care for students who act out and principals or school directors less eager to expel students with challenging behaviors (Galinsky, 2020). Educators should be aware of the dangers of using difficult histories as a pedagogical tool; when they do, "an ethic of empathy and caring is necessary to provide a safe place for students to examine, challenge, and change their cherished beliefs and assumptions" (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012, p. 56)

Creating these spaces requires educators to shift their thinking about teaching and learning. Some teachers feel a conflict between their traditional teaching roles and the new expectations of them to act as mental health workers (Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017), where they need to act as "front-line trauma workers for young people who do not have access to clinical care" (Brunzell et al., 2016, p. 220). Training in how to respond to children who have suffered trauma is essential to ensure that children are comfortable and feel secure in the classroom so that they can access their education. However, classroom staff is often expected to manage difficult student behavior influenced by trauma or toxic stress with little to no training (Anderson et al., 2015). While little research exists on trauma-informed practices in

museum spaces that deal with difficult histories, the current study draws upon research conducted in classrooms to better understand the experience of museum visitors.

Chapter 3: Research Questions & Hypotheses

The hypotheses listed below are designed to help assess whether adverse childhood events affect the engagement of middle school and high school students when they learn about the Holocaust and if a particular coping style is associated with higher engagement levels when they visit exhibitions in Holocaust museums.

Research Question 1: Does a middle or high school student with greater exposure to adverse childhood events, as measured by the adapted ACE, have more difficulty engaging, learning, finding meaning, or emotionally connecting during a visit to a Holocaust museum, as measured by the MES?

Hypothesis 1: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble engaging in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Hypothesis 2: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble learning in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Hypothesis 3: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble finding meaning in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Hypothesis 4: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble emotionally connecting in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Research Question 2: Will adolescents have different levels of engagement, learning, finding meaning, and emotional connection in the Holocaust education process, as measured by the adapted MES, depending on their style of coping with stressful materials, as measured by the Brief COPE?

Hypothesis 5: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and use of religious support will show higher levels of engagement with the educational materials in a museum setting.

Hypothesis 6: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and use of religious support will show higher levels of engagement with the educational materials in a museum setting.

Hypothesis 7: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and religious support will show higher levels of finding meaning in the educational materials in a museum setting.

Hypothesis 8: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and use of religious support will show higher levels of emotionally connecting to the educational materials in a museum setting.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Participants

Participants included students in grades 10-12 who visited the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan and received a guided tour of the exhibition "Auschwitz: Not Long Ago, Not Far Away." All schools that visited the museum beginning in January of 2020 were offered the opportunity to participate in the study. A total of 61 students participated in the study. Many students did not complete the entire survey, so the sample sizes in the analyses were smaller than 61. Pairwise deletion was used to retain as much of the data as possible.

Procedures

When a teacher scheduled a field trip to the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the teacher was offered the opportunity to participate in this study by a member of the Museum of Jewish Heritage Education Department staff. Any school that chose to participate in the study was given instructions by the museum staff.

Schools were instructed to email the Holocaust Museum Study Information and Parent Assent Form (See Appendix A) to all parents of children below the age of 18 to obtain passive consent. This form informed them about the nature and specifics of the study and gave them the opportunity to opt out of their child's participation in the study by sending an email before the visit. Schools were instructed to give the Holocaust Museum Study Information and Student Assent Form (See Appendix B) to all students aged 18 and older. This form provided information about the nature of the study and how they could opt out of the survey at the time of their visit to the museum. Assent was also obtained directly from students, with all students given the opportunity to opt out at the time of the survey.

At the time of the visit, students experienced a guided tour led by a trained museum docent. At the conclusion of the tour, they were taken to a classroom where the surveys were given out by a member of the Museum of Jewish Heritage Education Department staff. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. At the time of administration, students were informed that they could stop the survey at any time and that their answers would remain confidential.

The survey included the following measures (described further below): the adapted Museum Experience Scale (MES; see Appendix C), the adapted Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACE; see Appendix D), and the Brief COPE (see Appendix E). Surveys were administered through answer sheets that were scanned to Zip-Grade, an application that is password protected and encrypts the data. They were saved in a password-protected computer and electronic device. Student data was kept anonymous. The original paper copies were stored in a locked cabinet until the completion of the study, at which point they were destroyed.

This study was devised with the intention of getting a robust and varied sample. This meant collecting data from visitors at two different museums, utilizing both individuals within the Jewish day school system and students outside of the Jewish day school system. It was meant to have a variety of schools within the Jewish day school system to represent Jewish students from diverse backgrounds and varying levels of religious observance. It was intended to study students in non-Jewish day schools in terms of religiosity, ethnic/racial backgrounds, and socioeconomic status. It was designed and situated at museums that would provide access to student visitors from traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools. There also was the intention to get a diverse age group, ranging from students in

sixth grade to twelfth grade, and to have a population that included males, females, and non-binary students.

The study began in January 2020 with the intention of surveying students from as many schools as possible during the spring semester when many schools typically schedule end-of-year field trips to Holocaust museums. The intention was to have a large sample size with a wide representation of a diverse student body which would allow for enough statistical power to be able to find statistical significance in the analyses and to allow for sub-group analyses (e.g., testing for gender differences and school type differences).

Unfortunately, shortly after the study began, Covid-19 lockdowns occurred, and the study had to be prematurely terminated. As a result, the final sample contained only data from two schools that visited one museum. One of the schools was a Jewish day school. The other one was a specialized public school that had a unique mission statement that differentiated it substantially from traditional public schools in terms of curricular methods and the type of student that they recruited. One of the schools brought only tenth graders and the other brought only twelfth graders to the museum. Both schools had only female students. The sample size was therefore very small and not representative of the intended demographics.

The analyses need to be interpreted with caution because of the restricted sample size and the lack of diverse representation. The nature of the sample prohibited meaningful sub-group analyses. For example, it was not possible to look at gender comparisons because the whole sample identified as female. Many confounds prevented meaningful age comparisons because the two different age groups came from distinct populations. Many confounds also prevented meaningful school comparisons because there were differences between the

schools in factors such as age, school type, religion, and/or demographic backgrounds. Any of these factors could be the reason for the differences that emerged.

Measures

Demographic Information

Participants filled out basic demographic information, including their status as a student, their date of birth, grade, gender, the type of school they attended, if they were learning about the Holocaust in class, their religion, if they were descendants of Holocaust survivors and if they had ever met a Holocaust survivor or heard them speak about their experiences. See Appendix F for the full demographic questionnaire.

Museum Experience

The adapted Museum Experience Scale (MES; Othman, et al., 2011) consists of 19 items with a 5-point Likert scale rating with higher scores reflecting a better and more enriched museum experience. This brief self-reporting scale comprises four factors for measuring visitors' experiences at museums and other cultural spaces. The measure was initially developed for a science museum and was adapted to assess the experience factors at a Holocaust museum, which deals with stressful and tragic information.

There is no extensive research utilizing this scale; this study will provide descriptive statistics and information about the psychometric properties of the scale. The factors of the MES are listed below:

- **Engagement.** This 5-item subscale refers to engagement with the exhibits (e.g., "The exhibition held my attention").

- **Learning/Knowledge.** This 7-item subscale refers to the knowledge gained from the exhibits and the preferred method of pedagogical instruction (e.g., "I learned new information about the Holocaust during my visit").
- **Meaningful Experience.** This 3-item subscale refers to the quality of interaction with the exhibits and other visitors (e.g., "During my visit, I was able to reflect on the significance of the exhibits and their meaning").
- **Emotional Connection.** This 4-item subscale refers to the emotional attachment to the context and contents of the exhibits (e.g., "The exhibition made me think about my past").

The four factors were derived through factor analysis, indicating that there were four distinct subscales that were correlated with one another. However, upon reviewing the individual items in each subscale, there appeared to be some conceptual overlap in content. Therefore, all analyses will be done for the four separate subscales and then once again using a scale total that is derived by averaging all the items on the subscales. The internal consistency for the scale total was .93 and the subscales ranged from .79 -.89. The total scale and the subscales were therefore internally consistent.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

The Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACE) measures all types of abuse, neglect, and other potentially traumatic experiences of people under 18. ACE has demonstrated an association between childhood trauma and health problems later in life. Scores were computed by totaling the number of items participants indicated they experienced, with higher scores reflecting more adverse experiences. In this study, the

measure is modified to provide a linguistically shorter survey for students while incorporating additional potentially traumatic major life events.

Coping Styles

The Brief COPE (Carver, 1997) is a 28-item measure of the coping style used by individuals facing a variety of stressful situations. It has been used extensively in research studies ranging from investigations of coping with breast cancer to individuals facing natural disasters. The Brief COPE was adapted for a study investigating coping styles used by students engaged in Holocaust educational materials in a classroom (K. Shawn, personal communication, January 2019). In this study, the adapted version was further modified to reflect students' experiences in a Holocaust museum. The measure explored how students deal with the stressful nature of Holocaust education.

The nature of the Brief COPE is that the instructions are modified depending on the stressor being measured. Consequently, the measure was modified to make it relevant to the potential stress inherent in learning about the Holocaust. Specifically, the introductory section of the Brief COPE used for this study stated: "The statements below deal with ways you have been coping with learning about the Holocaust during your trip to the museum. There are many ways to try to deal with learning about the Holocaust. These statements reflect the ways you may have been coping with this learning."

For the current study, four factors were examined. The four factors were internally consistent with their Chronbach's alphas ranging from .71 - .84. The four factors that were examined are listed below:

- **Behavioral Disengagement**. This measures if a student has given up trying to process the Holocaust museum experience (e.g., “I have given up the attempt to cope with the pain and despair in the exhibit information”).
- **Active Coping.** This measures student interest in taking action in response to the Holocaust museum experience (“e.g., I’ve been concentrating my efforts on what I can do because of what I’ve been learning”).
- **Instrumental Support.** This measures students seeking or receiving advice on how to manage the feelings associated with the Holocaust museum experience. (e.g., “I’ve been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do with my feelings during this visit”).
- **Religious Support.** This measures student use of religion in processing the Holocaust museum experience (e.g., “I’ve been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs”).

Chapter 5: Results

Screening the Data

All data were entered into SPSS statistical software and screened for unusual, out of range, or extreme scores. Next, data were screened for univariate outliers and normality. No univariate outliers were identified. However, several of the variables were mildly skewed and/or kurtotic. Three of the four subscales on the Brief COPE showed evidence of non-normality. The instrumental support scale was mildly positively skewed. The behavioral disengagement scale was kurtotic and mildly positively skewed. The religion scale was mildly kurtotic. Logarithmic transformations were applied to reduce the skewness. However, only the behavioral disengagement subscale showed improvement. The primary hypotheses were then tested with the original behavioral disengagement scale and the transformed behavioral disengagement scale, and the pattern of results was nearly identical. Therefore, the original variable was retained.

Descriptive Statistics

As shown in Table 1, the MES subscales have a midpoint of 3, representing "neither agree nor disagree." The means for this sample tended to be around four which represents that they "agree" with the statements. This suggests that on average the students agreed that they were engaged with the exhibits, learned and gained knowledge from the exhibits, had a meaningful experience, and felt an emotional connection during the museum visit.

The range of mean scores for the Brief COPE subscales was from 1.50 to 2.68. The two lower means were for behavioral disengagement and instrumental support. This indicates that on average students stated that they "haven't been doing this at all" to "been doing this a little bit." This suggests that students on average do not tend to use behavioral disengagement

and instrumental support as coping strategies when visiting the museum. The two higher means were for active coping and religion. This indicates that on average students stated that they have "been doing this a little bit" to "been doing this a medium amount." This suggests that these two strategies of coping tend to be utilized more when students visit the museum.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Primary Study Variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	Range	
			Min	Max
MES Engagement	4.13	.78	2.00	5.00
MES Learning/Knowledge	4.26	.57	2.86	5.00
MES Meaningful Experience	4.20	.69	2.67	5.00
MES Emotional Connection	3.77	.88	1.75	5.00
Adverse Childhood Experiences [a]	4.94	2.57	.00	10.00
BC Behavioral Disengagement	1.50	.79	1.00	4.00
BC Active Coping	2.21	.92	1.00	4.00
BC Instrumental Support	1.58	.90	1.00	4.00
BC Religion	2.68	1.11	1.00	4.00

Notes. MES = Museum Experience Scale; BC = Brief COPE. [a] Total number of items endorsed.

Intercorrelations

Table 2 shows the intercorrelations between all variables. The MES scale has subscales that should be positively correlated with one another. The four subscales were strongly correlated, with the correlations ranging from .56 to .83. The four subscales also correlated strongly with the total museum experience score (*r*s range from .81-.92). Additional correlations are discussed in the research questions and hypotheses section below.

The four different coping styles measured by the Brief COPE were highly positively correlated with one another. The exception was that religious coping was only mildly positively correlated with behavioral disengagement and instrumental support. Of note, the correlation between behavioral disengagement and instrumental support was very high (r = .82), suggesting that those who feel they can no longer cope with the experience also often turn to others to find ways to channel their emotions.

Table 2

Intercorrelations for the Primary Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. MES Engagement	__								
2. MES Learning/Knowledge	.83***	__							
3. MES Meaningful Experience	.73***	.73***	__						
4. MES Emotional Connection	.60***	.56***	.67***	__					
5. MES Total	.92***	.90***	.86***	.81***	__				
6. ACE	.03	.04	-.07	-.00	.01	__			
7. BC Behavioral Disengagement	-.38*	-.28	-.19	.07	-.22	.03	__		
8. BC Active Coping	-.16	-.24	.00	.07	-.11	.23	.51***	__	
9. BC Instrumental Support	-.27	-.23	-.08	.05	-.16	.14	.82***	.48***	__
10. BC Religion	.37*	.18	.37*	.31*	.35*	.08	.18	.51***	.17

Note. MES = Museum Experience Scale; ACE = Adverse Childhood Experiences; BC = Brief COPE. * p <.05, ***p<.001.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Does a middle school or high school student with greater exposure to adverse childhood events, as measured by the modified Adverse Childhood Experience scale (ACE), have more difficulty engaging, learning, finding meaning, or emotionally connecting during a visit to a Holocaust museum, as measured by the MES?

Hypothesis 1: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble engaging in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Hypothesis 2: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble learning in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Hypothesis 3: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble finding meaning in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Hypothesis 4: Students who have experienced more adverse childhood events will be more likely to have trouble emotionally connecting in a museum exhibition about the Holocaust.

Limited support was found for research question 1. None of the associations reached significance. However, an exploration examining trends to understand patterns of association was conducted. ACE scores were relatively unrelated to all four subscales of the MES and the total MES score, with correlations ranging from -.07 to .04. Given that the ACE assessed a wide array of adversities ranging from being assaulted to being teased, the two items that related to violence (i.e., being a victim of violence or sexual assault) were used to calculate a violent adversity measure. Exploratory analyses revealed that experiencing violence was moderately negatively correlated with museum engagement, knowledge, and the total MES

score. For meaning and emotional connection, the correlations were smaller and mildly negative. This suggests some relations may exist between the experience of violence and aspects of the museum experience. Another aspect of the ACE is that it had a single item that directly assessed if students had previously learned about the Holocaust in a way that was scary or distressing. Those who experience fear or distress scored significantly higher on all four subscales of the MES and the total MES score. This indicates that a student who had an original learning experience that caused fear or emotional distress tended to be immersed more deeply in the museum experience (i.e., higher MES total).

Research Question 2: Will adolescents have different levels of engagement, learning, finding meaning, and emotional connection in the Holocaust education process, as measured by the adapted MES, depending on their style of coping with stressful materials, as measured by the Brief COPE?

Hypothesis 5: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and use of religious support will show higher levels of engagement with the educational materials in a museum setting.

Hypothesis 6: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and use of religious support will show higher levels of engagement with educational materials in a museum setting.

Hypothesis 7: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and religious support will

show higher levels of finding meaning in the educational materials in a museum setting.

Hypothesis 8: Adolescents with lower scores on behavioral disengagement and higher scores on active coping, use of instrumental support, and use of religious support will show higher levels of emotionally connecting to the educational materials in a museum setting.

Partial support was found for research question 2. Due to low power, only correlations greater than .3 reached statistical significance. Given the small sample size and to ease interpretation, correlations in excess of +/- .2 (small to medium) were interpreted as potentially being associated, while correlations smaller than +/- .2 were deemed relatively unrelated. See Table 2 for specific correlations and level of significance.

Museum engagement was moderately negatively correlated with the use of instrumental support (r = -.27) and behavioral disengagement (r = -.38) but was moderately positively correlated with religious coping (r = .37). Museum knowledge was moderately negatively correlated with the use of behavioral disengagement (r = -.28) and (unexpectedly) also moderately negatively correlated to active coping (r = -.24) and the use of instrumental support (r = -.23). Meaningful experience (r = .37) and emotional connection (r = .31) were both moderately positively correlated to only religious coping. Religious coping was moderately positively correlated (r = .35) to the total museum experience score, and behavioral disengagement was weakly to moderately negatively correlated (r = -.22) with the total museum experience score. Overall, religious coping tended to be positively correlated with the museum experience while active coping, instrumental support, and behavioral disengagement tended to be unrelated or negatively associated with the museum experience.

Two sets of supplementary analyses (see Table 3) were conducted to examine if there were significant differences in the museum experience for students who were descendants of a Holocaust survivor or had previously met a Holocaust survivor before visiting the museum. Those who were a descendant of a Holocaust survivor found significantly more meaning during their visit to the museum compared to those who were not a descendant. Descendants of Holocaust survivors were also more engaged than who were not descendants; however, the difference was only marginally significant. There were no significant differences in knowledge, emotional connection, and overall immersive experience for those who were a descendant of a Holocaust survivor compared to those who were not. Although there was no significant difference, the pattern did suggest that being a descendant scored slightly higher on these three MES variables.

Additionally, individuals who had met a Holocaust survivor were significantly more engaged, had a more meaningful experience, and had an overall more immersive experience at the museum compared to those who had not met a Holocaust survivor. Individuals who had met a Holocaust survivor gained more knowledge and had a stronger emotional connection to the exhibits compared to those who had not met a Holocaust survivor; however, these differences were only marginal.

Table 3

The Effects of Being a Descendant of a Holocaust Survivor or Having Met a Holocaust Survivor on the Museum Experience Scale (MES)

Variable	No		Yes		*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
			Are you a descendant?				
MES Engagement	3.97	.81	4.36	.67	-1.936	.058	-.516
MES Learning/Knowledge	4.27	.57	4.26	.59	.078	.938	.021
MES Meaningful Experience	4.05	.68	4.42	.66	-2.026*	.048	-.543
MES Emotional Connection	3.62	.91	3.99	.80	-1.626	.110	-.433
MES total	4.00	.63	4.25	.61	-1.512	.136	-.403
			Have you met a Holocaust survivor?				
MES Engagement	3.50	.77	4.37	.64	-4.354***	<.001	-1.283
MES Learning/Knowledge	4.04	.65	4.34	.52	-1.882	.065	-.541
MES Meaningful Experience	3.90	.76	4.32	.64	-2.108*	.040	-.624
MES Emotional Connection	3.44	.94	3.91	.84	-1.851	.070	-.546
MES total	3.73	.65	4.25	.59	-2.953**	.005	-.870

* *p* <.05, ***p*<.01, ****p*<.001.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter provides an analysis of the findings of the above study and considers its implications as they relate to the literature review. It notes contributions that the study adds to the field of Holocaust museum education and proposes future research that could be undertaken on this topic. It also addresses the limitations of the study, particularly those that were created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study was undertaken with the goal of understanding how and why different students react differently during a visit to a Holocaust museum and if a student who experienced an adverse childhood event will cope differently when learning about this difficult and tragic history. The current study is important because it considers the emotional implications for students who visit Holocaust museums and could influence how museum professionals maximize the educational impact of the visit. Before turning to a discussion about the individual hypotheses and results, it is important to understand the significance of this conversation. The study is intended to inform the pedagogical practices of Holocaust educators and create awareness about the emotional and psychological needs of students before, during, and after a visit to a Holocaust museum.

Traditionally, educators who teach about the Holocaust have focused on imparting knowledge and information about World War II and Holocaust history. Educational content centers around accounts of gruesome wars and genocide. Using photographs, video testimony, and object-based learning approaches, educators try to impact the emotions and attitudes of their students while influencing their attitudes towards specific issues such as politics, antisemitism, and Jewish identity (Keren, 2000; Weissberg & Neile, 2015). They

often rely on storytelling techniques and (live or recorded) survivor testimony to create empathetic connections to the historical content and keep the memories alive (Felman, 1991; Marcus et al., 2022; Novick, 1999; Weissberg & Neile, 2015). Instructional trainings and seminars offered to Holocaust educators often prioritize research, materials, and information about the history of the Holocaust, not pedagogical approaches for transmitting this difficult history. As a result, educators are forced to adapt existing knowledge about instructional models for the teaching of Holocaust history. Many museum docents are retired classroom educators and/or second-generation children of survivors who are passionate about the goal of teaching the Holocaust but have little experience or knowledge about the best methods for doing so.

What is perplexing is that while today's educators generally seek to provide a safe physical and emotional space for all learners, in the case of Holocaust education, triggering student reactions and emotions such as sadness, anger, and despair are considered achievements. While awareness and trainings about trauma-informed education are on the rise (Brunzell et al., 2016; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017; Wright & Ryan, 2014), Holocaust educators continue to use images and testimonies about atrocities, often with little consideration about how and why some students may struggle or use negative coping styles during an encounter with such difficult knowledge. At the same time, research shows that symptoms of PTSD can develop from vicarious exposure to trauma such as hearing or reading about violence in the media or having a first-person connection to the victim of an attack (Zukerman & Korn, 2014). Visitors to sites related to historical traumatization have been shown to exhibit PTSD, and a longitudinal study conducted at the Auschwitz memorial museum in Poland found that students who visited the site experienced secondary traumatic

stress (Bilewicz & Wojcik, 2017). It would seem obvious that in a field that measures success by the impact it makes on a learner's sense of self and attitude toward others, leaders would pay attention to the intricacies and specifics of the means used to accomplish this.

My extensive research into studies about Holocaust museum visitors did not uncover any data sets related to emotional or psychological responses of visitors. While the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum conducted broad audience studies in 2004 and 2018, the studies investigated the knowledge and expectations that visitors brought to the museum, learning outcomes gained from their visits, and the effectiveness of new storytelling techniques. The studies did not explore the emotional responses of visitors or seek to identify traumatic stress symptoms that individuals might have experienced when visiting the exhibition. It is intellectually intriguing that Holocaust museums play it safe and do not explore the psychological effects that their exhibitions have on visitors.

At this time, the experience of the Holocaust museum visitor can be better understood by turning to the first group of hypotheses that investigates the association between adverse childhood experiences and the museum experience. Limited support was found showing that students who have previously experienced an adverse childhood event have more difficulty engaging, learning, finding meaning, and emotionally connecting in a museum exhibit about the Holocaust. One possibility for this finding is that the items included on the ACE survey are too varied, with only a few of the items related specifically to violence and events that worsen existing issues of traumatic stress when visiting a Holocaust museum. This idea becomes evident in the secondary analysis conducted on ACE questions exclusively related to violence. While results of the individual and total MES scores did not reach significance with these ACE questions, results calculated using a violence adversity measure did suggest

that experiencing violence is associated with less engagement and learning as well as a more negative overall immersive experience at the museum. These students may also have difficulty finding meaning and creating emotional connections within the exhibit.

PTSD influences the way an individual perceives the world, with the intensity and severity of the traumatic event influencing the impact and stress response a person will have (Wright & Ryan, 2014). As previously noted, research shows that students with higher ACE scores have increased learning and behavioral problems including difficulty in sustaining attention, sequencing information, and maintaining concentration in academic materials because of stress hormones triggered by trauma (Jeske & Klas, 2016; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017). Specifically, a child who experiences violence (either directly or indirectly) by witnessing violent interactions in their home will often exhibit disruptive behaviors and psychological barriers in an educational environment (Lloyd, 2018). Additionally, experiencing domestic violence or witnessing extreme violence (such as a school shooting) has been shown to have a severe impact on student achievement (Beland & Kim, 2016; McGavock & Spratt, 2017). Educators should not be surprised when students who have previously experienced violence are triggered when learning about horrific massacres and harms perpetrated during the Holocaust. The strain of witnessing violent acts, especially the extensive graphic footage, images of atrocities, and survivor testimonies that are typically on exhibit in a Holocaust museum, may cause a neurobiological "flight or fight" response that prevents a student from engaging and learning during their visit.

In addition, the results of the ACE did indicate that students who had previously learned about the Holocaust in a way that was scary or distressing were more engaged, had increased learning and knowledge, found more meaning, and created more emotional

connections than students who had not learned about the Holocaust in this manner. The results of this finding were significant and need to be explored further. It is possible that students who previously learned about the Holocaust in a way that was scary or distressing had a heightened awareness about the knowledge that would be on exhibit and were therefore more alert, aware of their surroundings, and open to the museum tour information. A previous traumatic educational experience may have prepared them to expect certain information, creating a situation where they were more sensitive and alert to the Holocaust museum experience. This is aligned with the literature that shows that traumatic experiences create a state of hypervigilance and shape the way individuals view the world around them (Bilewicz & Wojcik, 2017; Wright & Ryan, 2014).

It is also possible that these students had greater empathic connectivity or dispositions of sensitivity and openness to experiences that allowed them to feel the emotions and connections of the exhibit more deeply than other students, in turn creating a situation where they learned more and were more deeply immersed in the museum experience. As previously noted, contemporary exhibitions use techniques that promote introspective reflection and empathetic connections between the viewer and the past (Marcus et al., 2017; Witcomb, 2015). Dispositions and personality are created by several elements, including human development and situational factors (Michelson, 2014). Studies show that some dispositions are context-specific and that dispositions can change, even during a short period (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000; Driscoll & Wells, 2012). Some dispositions manifest under certain circumstances (Jenkins & Nolan, 2012).

Turning to the second group of hypotheses, the current study examines if adolescents have different levels of engagement, learning, finding meaning, and emotional connection in

the Holocaust education process depending on their style of coping with stressful materials. Partial support was found for this aspect of the study, with museum engagement moderately negatively correlated with instrumental support and behavioral disengagement. Museum knowledge was moderately negatively correlated with the use of behavioral disengagement, instrumental support, and active coping. Overall, religious coping tended to be positively correlated with the museum experience. Conversely, active coping, instrumental support, and behavioral disengagement tended to be unrelated or negatively associated with the museum experience.

The negative correlation between museum knowledge and the use of instrumental support and active coping was surprising because these forms of coping are generally associated with better stress management and lower stress levels—an emotional state that is conducive to increased learning and the absorption of knowledge (Mayordomo-Rodríguez et al., 2015). Research shows that active coping and the use of instrumental supports are beneficial for posttraumatic growth (Munroe et al., 2022). It is possible that the limited timeframe of the museum visit and the immediate subsequent completion of the surveys did not provide sufficient time for students to utilize these coping styles or reflect upon how they may have relied on them during the tour. It is also possible that the number of measures listed on the Brief COPE were too limited and more survey questions would need to be provided to get a more accurate assessment of how these coping styles were used.

The positive correlation between religious coping and a student's experience at a Holocaust museum is aligned with the literature that shows that faith-based coping is helpful in dealing with stressful situations and is an effective method for dealing with trauma because it gives meaning to the situation and provides a sense of control (Ben-Shalom &

Benbenisty, 2016; McIntire & Duncan, 2013). Religious coping may improve emotional regulation, helping the individual develop a less negative view of the event or act as a buffer between the external force of the traumatic event and internal previously held beliefs (Zukerman & Korn, 2014). Religious coping is complex and can vary based on factors such as age, gender, and an individual's level of religiosity and spirituality (Krägeloh et al., 2012; Terreri & Glenwick, 2013).

Krägeloh et al. (2012) note that most coping styles are classified as either problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping, with the former addressing the root of the stressor and the latter aiming to change one's response to stress. Religious coping is unique because it does not fall exclusively under either category. Individuals with higher levels of spirituality and religiosity tend to use religious coping in a problem-focused manner to address the issue directly, while individuals with lower levels of religiosity use it in an emotion-focused manner, often for distraction or avoidance of stress. A Holocaust museum visitor can manifest religious coping in several ways, including praying for the dead, questioning where God was during the Holocaust, viewing the event as a punishment from God, reframing negative events as opportunities to connect with God, or turning toward religious ideas and texts that provide consolation or spiritual perspectives on tragedy.

Turning to the supplementary analyses, the findings suggest that descendants of Holocaust survivors were more engaged and found significantly more meaning during their visit to a Holocaust museum compared to those who were not descendants of Holocaust survivors. This aligns with the literature suggesting that the Holocaust is a lens through which victims and their descendants view identity, culture, religion, and political events (Canetti, et al., 2018; Jacobs, 2015). Today's students who are descendants of Holocaust

survivors are third or fourth generation from the event, and they approach the topic differently from other students who see themselves on the periphery of the event. Students who are descendants have either met a Holocaust survivor or have a personal connection to the survivor's story through their parent or grandparent. In descendant families, there is a direct connection to the Holocaust and many students attach a feeling of ownership to their family's Holocaust history, sometimes identifying from a perspective of victimhood (Lindquist, 2010).

Research shows that the trauma experienced by a Holocaust survivor affects their descendants not just psychologically and culturally, but also physiologically. Trauma is intergenerational and can affect second and third generations of Holocaust survivors. Studies in the growing field of epigenetics show that trauma is transgenerational because of physiological manifestations that alter the genetic sequencing in offspring (Yehuda, R., 2011). Like Holocaust survivors, their descendants have low levels of cortisol, a hormone that helps the body return to normal after experiencing stress (Rodriguez, 2015). Even children who are not raised by their traumatized parents inherit traumatic effects (Krippner & Barrett, 2019). Canetti et al. (2018) explain that inherited trauma is generally more subtle than direct trauma and rarely presents diagnosable PTSD. However, individuals who experience intergenerational trauma "may exhibit heightened individual and collective fear, feelings of vulnerability, inured national pride, and humiliation" (Canetti et al., 2018, p. 4).

The current study also found that individuals who had met a Holocaust survivor were significantly more engaged, had a more meaningful experience, and had an overall more immersive experience at the museum compared to those who had not met a Holocaust survivor. Those who had met a Holocaust survivor also gained more knowledge and felt a

stronger emotional connection during their visit. These findings highlight the power of survivor testimony and oral history in Holocaust education. As outlined above, educators have long recognized the value of survivor testimony as a pedagogical approach because it encourages an emotional and personal connection to the material (Hillman, 2015; Schwarcz, 2015). It provides a new perspective for listeners, one that is often surprising and challenges existing knowledge (Felman, 1991). However, as time passes and the number of living survivors dwindles, educators are increasingly turning towards video testimony in place of the live survivor testimony experience. Students are usually more critical and do not give the same attention and respect to recorded testimonies as they do to live speakers (Marcus et al., 2022). Furthermore, video testimony is not a replacement for a live speaker since it is complicated by several factors (including when and where it was recorded, the organization that collected the testimony, and the audience for which it was originally intended).

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study is original in its focus on Holocaust education, museum engagement, and student coping styles. Although several significant findings were obtained in the study, there are several limitations that warrant consideration.

The first and most observable limitation is the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the sample size and homogeneity of participants. The study began in January 2020 and was intended to be completed in July 2020, with data collected at two different Holocaust museums in the New York area. The study was designed to be conducted during a time when traditionally thousands of students have year-end field trips to museums to learn about the Holocaust. When Covid-19 began, museums closed their doors and the study was unintentionally cut short, thereby limiting the number of responses collected.

The sample size of the current study is small and future research could replicate the study with more museums and a larger, more diverse audience of student visitors. A larger scale will provide a more normative sample and allow researchers to look at personal factors, including age, gender, and religion, that could alter results. A larger sample size could also be used to measure school effects such as the difference between Jewish and non-Jewish schools, and a variety of Jewish day schools with students of different religious observances. Researchers have already begun studying the traumatic impact of students living during the Covid-19 pandemic, and future studies could be conducted to understand how the experience of living through a pandemic may impact museum visitors. The Covid-19 pandemic could even be incorporated in trauma studies as a shared experience associated with extensive loss (including the loss of human life).

Additionally, the responses collected in the current study were self-reported by student visitors to Holocaust museums. Self-reporting measures are subjective by nature and can have inherent bias or accuracy concerns. Future studies may wish to utilize measures that include behavioral observations of students during the tour, since watching what students do may be a way of getting a more objective and nuanced understanding of student engagement. A direct assessment that incorporates measures to test student knowledge before and after a visit to a Holocaust museum could also be used to objectively assess the knowledge gained during a visit. Future qualitative or quantitative studies could also investigate pedagogical practices of museum educators to identify what visitors are taught and any gaps between those intentions and the outcomes of educational tours.

It is worth noting that the MES scale is an adapted measure and is not intended for a museum exhibition that contains strong emotional content. The scale did not address the use

of atrocity images and firsthand testimony that contain violent and graphic content, such as instruments of torture and dead bodies. Additionally, while the factors were empirically designed and highly correlated, there was some overlap in the questions provided for different factors. Being able to make more distinct factors in the future—for example having the knowledge questions assess more factual responses than the emotion questions—would be useful to understand improved differential predictions for each factor.

The Brief COPE also had a few limitations that need to be addressed. First, the original use of the Brief COPE was to measure coping and regulating cognitions in response to stressful life events. It is mainly used for long-term stressors such as having an illness or caring for someone with an illness or dementia. The use of the Brief COPE for a stressful event that takes place during a shorter timeframe, such as a one-time museum visit, may limit its efficacy. An alternative measure that directly assesses individual coping styles and reactions during short-term stressful life events could be considered during future research.

Additionally, the Brief COPE only provides two items on each subscale and the correlations between the measures on each subscale are not uniform (some of the measures are distinct while others are intercorrelated). Future research should consider modifying the current measure or utilizing a measure that contains more items on each subscale and is empirically validated through a confirmatory factor analysis of the structure. This would allow researchers to test the factor structure and make modifications for a more analytically driven factor structure. Modifications to the current measure could include adding constructs for a more robust measure or modifying existing constructs to better fit the data.

Importantly, the two measures on the Brief COPE about religious coping addressed positive religious coping and did not investigate possible negative religious coping. As noted

earlier, religious coping can manifest as either positive or negative. While positive religious coping is associated with better outcomes and includes behaviors such as seeking spiritual support and praying, negative religious coping manifests as discontent or doubt about religious beliefs and is associated with increased depression and anxiety (Zukerman et al., 2016). Studies show that positive religious coping generally reduces stress, and sometimes a stressful situation can mobilize positive religious coping in students who normally would not have such a response (Khan et al., 2016). Future studies could investigate the religious experience of students visiting Holocaust museums and the effects of negative religious coping in students during their visit. Another area of study could be the results indicating increased positive religious coping during a visit to better understand if this is reflective of student reliance on existing religious beliefs or if the experience of visiting a Holocaust museum encourages increased religious coping in students.

Finally, the current study was a concurrent cross-sectional design that measures students during a one-time visit to a Holocaust museum. To further investigate this topic, it would be ideal to add measures and/or conduct a study with a longitudinal design, measuring student knowledge and attitudes before and after their visit to the museum. An additional measure could assess student attitudes toward the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Holocaust denial. The implication would be that visitors would have greater connection or disengagement based on these factors. Another helpful measure could be one that assesses student empathy and dispositions to better understand the experience and reactions of visitors with different natures and levels of responsiveness to human suffering. Researchers could also use a longitudinal design to study immediate changes and long-term effects on visitors to better understand the effectiveness of Holocaust museum education. Future studies should

consider attitudinal changes about important issues including empathy, connection to historical events, and the growing trend of antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

Implications and Contributions

The current study represents one of the few efforts to research the educational and psychological experiences of Holocaust museum visitors. The study found that students who experienced violent adverse childhood events or previously learned about the Holocaust in a way that was scary or distressing may experience symptoms of trauma during their visit to a Holocaust museum. The study also found that students relied on different coping styles during their visit to a museum and that students who used positive religious coping tended to have a more immersive experience. Although the current findings were limited in extent, they have several implications for future research.

Museum educators are in a unique position where they meet visitors shortly before providing a tour or workshop and then have little (if any) follow-up after the visit. They are almost always unaware of violent childhood experiences previously experienced by students or other circumstances that may trigger traumatic stress reactions during a visit to a Holocaust museum. Without following up after the visit, museum educators do not know the psychological impact of their educational program and any long-term effects that students may experience because of viewing graphic images or learning difficult histories. Every student should always feel physically and emotionally safe during a museum tour, and the current study provides a framework for museum educators to understand how and why students may experience vicarious trauma or strong stress reactions during their visit to a Holocaust museum.

The current study will be helpful to museums and organizations that train educators to

teach about the Holocaust or other genocides and offers an understanding of trauma-informed pedagogy to be used when teaching difficult histories in various settings. As mentioned previously in the literature review, Holocaust museums are situated within a larger field of dark tourist sites that provide visitors the opportunity to connect with tragic moments in history (Johnson & Pickin, 2019). The possibilities of PTSD or other strong stress responses being triggered during a visit to a museum or memorial site dedicated to issues such as slavery, genocide, prisons, etc., are very real. This study provides a framework to understand the association between curatorial practices, education, and the emotional safety of visitors to such sites.

The study also describes different coping styles used by student visitors and the positive and negative effects of these coping mechanisms. Of note, the correlation between behavioral disengagement and instrumental support was very high ($r = .82$), suggesting that those who feel they can no longer cope with the experience also often turn to others to find ways to channel their emotions. When students seem disengaged, they may need to be brought back to the exhibit through educational means. At a time when they are reaching out to others for support, perhaps educators could provide a meaningful pathway for them to return to the educational experience. While students may be overwhelmed and need to disconnect for some time, educators could seek ways to re-engage them in the material instead of quieting them or asking them to leave the space.

The current study also found that students who had a previous connection to Holocaust history, by being a descendant of a Holocaust survivor or having previously met a survivor, have a more immersive experience at a Holocaust museum than those who did not. These findings have implications for parents, classroom educators, and school administrators

who prepare students before their visits. A visit to a Holocaust museum should not be considered a solitary educational experience or scheduled as an introduction to a unit on Holocaust history. Students should be provided extensive preparation before the visit to maximize the learning opportunities at the museum. Additionally, every effort should be made to continue intergenerational programming and dialogue between students and survivors, ideally before the museum visit. While the study does not examine the effects of watching video testimony before a visit to a museum, it may be helpful for future research to consider the effects of video and holographic testimony on students, how viewing recorded testimony compares to witnessing live testimony, and when such testimony is most beneficial to be screened to students. Furthermore, these findings could help inform educational policymakers involved in state mandates for Holocaust education in developing specific requirements.

Bilewicz and Wojcik (2017) recommend that intense preparations before visiting memorial sites with traumatic histories can help visitors prepare psychologically for their visit and reduce the detrimental psychological effects that may be experienced. This recommendation should be applied to visitors at Holocaust museums to minimize the impact of an unprepared confrontation with difficult history and the vicarious trauma that can be experienced in museum spaces. At the same time, when teaching about the Holocaust, educators should look toward a trauma-informed lens as a pedagogical approach and a tool to help their students. Educators should be prepared to not just teach history but also manage the psychological effects of learning about the Holocaust in students. Seemingly negative effects such as disengagement and hypervigilance can be potential conduits for increased learning opportunities. As Wright and Ryan (2014) note, “Rather than devaluing the trauma

response skills that children bring […], we should honor these ways of responding as strengths in other parts of their lives" (p. 90).

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Appendix A

Holocaust Museum Study
Information and Parent Assent Form

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study entitled: *Holocaust Museum Study.* The study is being conducted by Julie Golding M.A, M.A.Ed, a doctoral fellow at Yeshiva University, under the supervision of David Pelcovitz, PhD. The goal of gathering this information is to learn about student engagement and coping styles in Holocaust museums. While your child may not directly benefit from being in this research study, the information learned may, in the future, benefit other young people visiting Holocaust museums or otherwise involved in Holocaust education.

Your child's participation is completely voluntary and should take no more than a total of 10 minutes. Your child will be asked to complete a form with demographic information like their age, gender, etc., They will be asked questions about their childhood experiences and engagement during the museum visit. Their answers will be kept confidential, and the teachers, administrators, and parents will not know how they responded. The museum will arrange for participation with the least interruption to their school visit.

All data will be completely anonymous. The research records will be kept in a secured manner, computer records will be password protected, and the researchers who review the data will have no way of identifying who participated in the study.

All children will be invited to participate in the study and will have the option to opt out of participation at the time of their visit. There will be no repercussions for not participating. If you have a child under the age of 18 and you *do not* want your child to take part in this study, please email xxxx@mail.yu.edu with the Subject: OPT-OUT and your child's name, school, and grade in the text of the email. Your decision will not affect how they are treated at the museum.

We hope your child will be able to participate.
Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix B

Holocaust Museum Study
Information and Student Assent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study entitled: Holocaust Museum Study. The study is being conducted by Julie Golding M.A, M.A.Ed, a doctoral fellow at Yeshiva University (xxxx@mail.yu.edu), under the supervision of David Pelcovitz, PhD. While you may not directly benefit from being in this research study, the information learned may, in the future, benefit other young people visiting Holocaust museums or otherwise involved in Holocaust education. The goal of gathering this information is to learn about student engagement and coping styles in Holocaust museums. Your participation is completely voluntary and should take no more than a total of 10 minutes.

You will be asked to complete a form with demographic information like your age, gender, etc., You will be asked questions about your childhood experiences and engagement during the museum visit. Your answers will be kept confidential, and the teachers, administrators, and parents will not know how you responded. The museum will arrange for participation with the least interruption to your school visit.

All data will be completely anonymous. The research records will be kept in a secured manner, computer records will be password protected, and the researchers who review the data will have no way of identifying who participated in the study.

The information about this study will be reviewed at the time of your visit to the museum. You will have the opportunity to participate in the survey at that time. If you do not wish to take part in the study, you can opt-out at the time of the survey. Your decision will not affect how you are treated at the museum.

Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix C

Adapted Museum Experience Scale (MES)

Instructions: Please complete the following survey to reflect your opinions as accurately as possible. For each statement indicate whether you: [a]*Strongly Agree* [b]*Agree* [c]*Neither Agree Nor Disagree* [d]*Disagree* or [e]*Strongly Disagree*

	Strongly Agree	*Agree*	*Neither Agree Nor Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*
Engagement					
My visit to the exhibition was very interesting					
I felt focused during my visit					
My visit to the exhibition was inspiring					
The exhibition held my attention					
I felt emotionally involved with the exhibition					
Knowledge/Learning					
The information provided was clear and understandable					
I learned new information about the Holocaust during my visit					
I gained knowledge that I can use as a result of my visit					
I appreciated the *objects* in the exhibits					
I appreciated the *photographs* in the exhibits					
I appreciated hearing the *survivor testimony* in the exhibits					
I appreciated reading *text-based information* as supporting material in the exhibitions					
Meaningful Experience					
During my visit, I was able to reflect on the significance of the exhibits and their meaning					
During my visit, I put a lot of effort into thinking about the exhibition					

After visiting the exhibition, I am still interested to learn more about the Holocaust					
Emotional Connection					
I felt connected with the exhibits					
I was overwhelmed by the experience					
The exhibition made me think about my past					
The exhibition encouraged me to think about my personal family history					

Appendix D

Adapted Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE)

Listed below are a number of difficult or stressful things that sometimes happen to people. For each event check (a) YES – it happened to you or (B) NO – it did not happen to you Be sure to consider your *entire life* (growing up as well as adulthood) as you go through the list of events.

Event	***Yes***	***No***
Have you experienced a fire, explosion, or natural disaster (flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake)?		
Have you experienced a transportation accident (car accident, boat accident, train wreck, plane crash) or other serious accident?		
Have you experienced being sworn at, insulted frequently, or been put down verbally?		
Have you been the victim of violence (physical abuse, mugged, or assaulted)?		
Has anyone touched you inappropriately or sexually abused you?		
Have you often felt that no one in your family loved you, or looked out for you, or felt close to you?		
Were your parents/guardians ever separated or divorced?		
Have you ever had a household member who was mentally ill, depressed, or committed suicide?		
Have you ever had a household member go to jail/prison or be deported?		
Have you experienced the death of a very close friend or family member?		
Have you or a close family member ever been extremely ill or injured?		
Have you previously learned about the Holocaust in a way that was scary or distressing to you?		
Have you experienced any other very stressful event or experience?		

Appendix E

Adapted Brief COPE

How Have You Been Coping With Learning about the Holocaust?

The statements below deal with ways you've been coping with thinking about the Holocaust during your trip to the museum. There are many ways to try to deal with learning about the Holocaust. These statements reflect the ways you may have been coping with this learning.

Obviously, different people deal with things in different ways, but I'm interested in how **you've** tried to deal with it.

Each statement says something about a particular way of coping during the visit. I want to know to what extent, how much or how frequently, you've been doing what the statement says. Don't answer on the basis of whether it seems to be helping or not, just whether or not you're doing it. In your thinking, try to separate each statement from the others, and rate each individually. Make your answers as true **FOR YOU** as you can.

Use these response choices. Circle the number that most closely reflects the amount of your responses:

1 = I haven't been doing this at all.
2 = I've been doing this a little bit.
3 = I've been doing this a medium amount.
4 = I've been doing this a lot.

1. I've been turning to other thoughts to take my mind off the things I've been learning.
   1 2 3 4

2. I've been concentrating my efforts on what I can do because of what I've been learning.
   1 2 3 4

3. I've been saying to myself, "I can't imagine that these events really happened."
   1 2 3 4

4. I've been fidgeting with my hands or clothing during the tour to make myself feel better. 1 2 3 4

5. I've been getting emotional support from others by sharing my feelings about this subject. 1 2 3 4

6. I've given up trying to deal with the Holocaust. 1 2 3 4

7. I've want to taking action to try to make current related situations better.
1 2 3 4

8. I've been refusing to think about the fact that these events really happened.
1 2 3 4

9. I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.
1 2 3 4

10. I've been getting advice from other people about how to channel my feelings about this visit. 1 2 3 4

11. I've taken a food or drink break to help me process what I'm learning.
1 2 3 4

12. I've been trying to see the Holocaust in a different light, to draw some positive lessons from it. 1 2 3 4

13. I've been criticizing my grandparents' generation when I think about what they did. 1 2 3 4

14. I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do with this information now. 1 2 3 4

15. I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.
1 2 3 4

16. I've given up the attempt to cope with the pain and despair in the exhibit information.
1 2 3 4

17. I've been looking for something good in what happened.
1 2 3 4

18. I've been making jokes about the subject. 1 2 3 4

19. I've been wandering away from my group so that I can think less about what the tour guide is saying.
1 2 3 4

20. I've been accepting the reality of the fact that these things happened.
1 2 3 4

21. I've been expressing my negative feelings. 1 2 3 4

22. I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.
    1 2 3 4

23. I've been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do with my feelings during this visit. 1 2 3 4

24. I'm trying to live with the knowledge of the Holocaust.
    1 2 3 4

25. I've been thinking hard about what steps I might take now.
    1 2 3 4

26. I've been blaming my grandparents' generation for things that happened.
    1 2 3 4

27. I've been praying or meditating. 1 2 3 4

28. I've been making light of the situation. 1 2 3 4

Scales are computed as follows:

Self-distraction, items 1 and 19
Active coping, items 2 and 7
Denial, items 3 and 8
Self-soothing, items 4 and 11
Use of emotional support, items 5 and 15
Use of instrumental support, items 10 and 23
Behavioral disengagement, items 6 and 16
Venting, items 9 and 21
Positive reframing, items 12 and 17
Planning, items 14 and 25
Humor, items 18 and 28
Acceptance, items 20 and 24
Religion, items 22 and 27
Blaming, items 13 and 26

Appendix F

Student Demographic Information

While student responses are anonymous, the following demographic information will be collected for the purpose of identifying external factors that may influence student responses. Date of birth is being collected to measure relative age per grade effects. Students will be instructed to select one response to each of the following questions:

- **Are you a student?** Yes No
- **D.O.B.** ______________
- **Grade:** 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- **Gender:** Male Female Prefer not to answer
- **What type of school do you attend?** Public Private/Parochial
- **Are you learning about the Holocaust in class?** Yes No
- **Do you practice any of the following religions?** Jewish Christian Muslim Buddhist Hindu Other None
- **Are you a grandchild/great-grandchild of a Holocaust survivor?** Yes No
- **Have you ever met a Holocaust survivor or heard a survivor speak about their experiences during the Holocaust?** Yes No