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# Coordination And Symbolic Convergence At The Candles Holocaust Museum And Education Center

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Coordination and Symbolic Convergence at the

CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center

(TITLE)

BY

Jessica McDonald

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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Coordination and Symbolic Convergence at the CANDLES Holocaust

Museum and Education Center

Jessica McDonald

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**Abstract**

Using Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) and Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), this study examines the ways in which meaning is managed between the messages of the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center and the visitors of the museum. The research shows that the museum and the museum visitors work together in order to create an overall rhetorical vision of the museum's main message, both within the museum space and beyond. Using the metaphor of conversation, this study demonstrates the three ways through which the museum and its visitors achieve the rhetorical vision: historical conversation, personal conversation, and residual conversation. In order for the rhetorical vision to be created, both the in-group (museum) and the out-group (museum visitors) must participate in the conversations surrounding the overall message of the museum. Practically, this study outlines a base for other museums to analyze how rhetorical visions are or are not functioning within the museum space and with museum visitors.

*Keywords:* communication, museum, coordinated management of meaning, symbolic convergence, rhetorical vision, conversation

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The very first time I interacted with a Holocaust survivor was my freshman year at East Richland High School in my hometown of Olney, Illinois. Eva Mozes Kor, a survivor of Auschwitz-Burkenau, founder of the CANDLES Museum, and a Mengele twin, came to my school to present her story and advocate for two things: forgiveness and to never forget. Eva spoke candidly about her experience in the camp and introduced a brand new perspective to the students of my school that differed from the textbook versions of the Holocaust we had read throughout our academic years. Eva put a face to the horrible events that had taken place so far away from our cozy hometown, and she served as the connection that brought us back in time to that place of her terrible past and allowed us to see the Holocaust in a more personal and impactful way. Each time I revisit this memory, I am fascinated by how she was able to achieve that: how did she get a whole room of high schoolers to connect and identify with an event that took place so long ago and so far away? How did she achieve educating us about the Holocaust in a way that we had not been exposed to before? How did she get nearly the whole room to have the same feelings and experiences with her story? Why were her story and the topic still important? These questions helped fuel my interest in pursuing a project surrounding the museum.

### **CANDLES**

The CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Terre Haute, IN first opened its doors in 1995 as a unique site of Holocaust memory (“History of CANDLES,” n.d.). Eva Kor, the museum founder, opened the museum with a specific purpose that had yet to be examined in other museums dedicated to the topic of the Holocaust and its survivors.

CANDLES stands as an acronym for “Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors,” which Eva and her twin sister represent. The Mozes twins were among the many young children who were subjected to the deadly lab experiments performed by Dr. Joseph Mengele at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp beginning in the Fall of 1943 (“History of CANDLES,” n.d.). The dangerous and often fatal genetic experiments were performed only on twins who entered the camps, with one twin used as the control subject and the other infected with a biological experiment in order to see the resulting differences between the two. Eva recalls that “three days a week, the children were taken to a lab in Birkenau where blood was drawn and they received injections of many unknown germs. One twin was the ‘guinea pig’; the other the control. If one twin died, the control twin was killed with an injection into the heart and comparative autopsies were done” (“History of CANDLES,” n.d.). The Mozes twins, as well as the other Mengele victims, were injected with many different diseases, biological weapon tests, and genetic modifiers so the Nazis could attempt to further the war into a genetic and biological plane (Kor & Buccieri, 2009).

When the NBC show “Holocaust” aired in 1978, Eva began to wonder what happened to the other children who had been liberated with Eva and her sister so many years ago (“History of CANDLES,” n.d.). The show inspired her to attempt to seek out any surviving Mengele children and see where they have been living since the war ended. Six years later, with the help of her sister, Miriam Mozes Zeiger, Eva founded the CANDLES Museum, with the hope that the museum would provide a place where surviving twins can come together, reunite, and share their own stories and memories from their experience in the Auschwitz camp. Today it is a museum and education center,

striving to “eliminate hatred and prejudice from our world” (“History of CANDLES,” n.d.). Eva, along with her staff, friends, and husband, still continue work on finding surviving twins all around the world. The museum now has a database registering all the twins they have found so far, as well as interviews with the twins in order to record their stories.

### **Rationale**

Throughout the United States, and the world, Holocaust Memorials have taken on many different shapes, sizes, and locations in order to preserve Holocaust stories and memories. In the United States there are as many as 35 museums/memorials dedicated to the subject of the Holocaust, with as many as 142 around the world (Israel Science and Technology Directory, 2012, New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, 2011). Many works have also been written about all facets of the Holocaust: memories, narratives, memorials, survivors, history, causes, and so on, continuing the study of the topic even today.

In a speech delivered at the opening of the Biomedical Sciences and Human Experimentation symposium in Germany, Eva described the importance of the museum and its efforts to educate and remember: “It does not help anyone to carry the burden of the past. We must learn to heal ourselves from the tragedies of the Holocaust and help our people to heal their aching souls” (Kor, 2001). Further, she points out the danger of letting such hurt and pain continue to suffer and grow in silence, stating that “the victims have passed on to their children a legacy of pain, fear, and anger. The victimizers have passed on to their children a legacy of pain, shame, and fear. How can we build a healthy, peaceful world while all these painful legacies are festering underneath the surface?”

(Kor, 2001). For Eva, the answer to that question has come from understanding her own turmoil as a victim of the Holocaust. In order to move on from the pain and shame of the Holocaust, survivors must educate and spread messages of hope, peace, and healing.

CANDLES is a physical representation of those messages, attempting to give victims and victimizers, old and new generations, an opportunity to share their stories and work together to prevent further genocides, wars, experiments without consent, and Auschwitzes (Kor, 2001). One particular example of the victimizer's story present at CANDLES is the story of Dr. Hans Munch:

Dr. Hans Munch was a Nazi doctor at Auschwitz who witnessed the selection process and gassing of thousands of innocent people. He was acquitted of war crimes at the Krakow War Crimes Trial in 1947. He agreed to meet with Auschwitz survivor Eva Kor at his home in 1993, where she videotaped an interview with him. After the meeting, Eva wrote Dr. Munch a letter of forgiveness. The two met in Auschwitz in 1995, where he signed documentation of the gas chambers. Eva also issued a declaration of amnesty to all Nazis ("Forgiveness," n.d.).

While the main storyline of the museum is dedicated to the victims, stories like Dr. Munch's also play a role in the work the museum is trying to accomplish.

Berenbaum (2005) of the University of Judaism shares the importance of keeping Holocaust memories at the forefront of public memory. During the question and answer session after the first episode of the PBS series "Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi state," Berenbaum (2005) was asked why another Holocaust documentary was made, despite the many other documentaries dedicated to subjects of the Holocaust. Berenbaum (2005)

responded with a sentiment similar to Eva's, stressing that "the youngest of the survivors are in their late 70s and early 80s, and this is the last moment we can hear from those who were there, and this is the moment we have a distance from the event and can look back in different ways." More survivors are dying every day, and with them the stories of their experiences, survival, and life after Auschwitz are dying too. Eva's own sister, Mariam, is among those who are no longer here. Mariam died in 1993 from cancer resulting from the Auschwitz experiments ("Eva Mozes Kor," n.d.).

During the same question and answer session, Berenbaum (2005) linked the importance of Holocaust memory to events happening now: "We have a world in which after this Herculean effort has been made to transmit the memory of the Holocaust and to scream 'never again' we've sat idly by while other genocides have taken place and are taking place...even as we speak." Eva agrees saying, "we have seen in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda, that victims have become victimizers and victimizers have become victims" (Kor, 2001). Koonz (2005) of Duke University finds education of the sanctity of human life provided by site of collective memory as one solution: "That's the bottom line. To sanction human life, not only to value highly human life that appears to be like us, but all human life, to respect difference, to love strangers, to take risks on behalf of people we don't know. This is a global world. We need education for a global effix." In order to prevent more wars and genocides from creating more victims throughout the world today, we must make efforts to learn from the Holocaust and teach future generations the important lessons learned from its survivors.

By 1984, Eva and her sister had located 122 survivors of the Twins' experiments. Today the search still continues, as the urgency of finding the survivors becomes more

prevalent each day. Aside from the stresses that time puts on recording the stories of survivors, other factors threaten to destroy Holocaust memories and attempts to educate the world on hatred and genocide. In 2003 the CANDLES Museum was burned down by supporters of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, who had been executed in Terre Haute in 2001 (Pickett, 2004). The supporters burned down the museum hoping to send a message to the community and the state that there are plenty more Timothy McVeighs out there to carry on anti-Semitic thoughts similar to the Nazi regime. The perpetrators burned the building and all the displays, books, photographs, and letters inside before painting “Remember Timmy McVeigh” on the side of the empty shell of the building left after the fire (Pickett, 2004). Studying these places of history and memory that sit right in our own backyard becomes more urgent every day as acts of terrorism and hate, like the arson, can remove the reminders from our communities.

### **Plan of Development**

I agree that in order to help prevent continued use of genocide and other horrible events in the future a constant and present memory of the past is not only extremely important, but critical to the education of future generations. And while much work has been done in the area of collective memory and the Holocaust, my research has shown that several gaps are still present in existing scholarly works. The majority of works are from sociological or psychological perspectives, and the research done from a communication perspective is growing. However, the focus of previous research tends to be on the effects of collective memory, the effects of memorials on people’s collective memories, or the limitations and benefits of collective memory and collective identity, with some use of memorials as examples (Barnier & Sutton, 2008; Gongaware, 2011;

Halbwachs, 1950; Gregory & Lewis, 1988; Berkowitz, 2010; Dickinson, Blair & Ott (Eds.), 2010). There are very few, if any, studies that put both the creation of the memorial and the response of visitors to the public memory/memorial in conversation with one another. Much more research needs to be done on the ways in which the memorials are able to promote particular memories and experiences and the ways in which audiences receive the memories/messages promoted by the memorials.

The CANDLES Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana is a site of public memory that attempts to keep the memory of the Holocaust active in the minds of people while also educating people of all ages about what can be done so that something like the killing of millions of people does not happen again, as well as spreading messages of peace and forgiveness. The particular focus of this thesis examines collective memory and memorials. In particular, I analyze the narratives and texts of the CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana to see the dynamic process of how collective memory shapes the way we “do” memorials as well as how memorials impact our collective memories of events in history: the way memorials represent events and periods in time and promote particular memories and experiences and how those representations in turn aid in public memory creation and maintenance. The following literature review looks at collective memory, the various forms it can take, and the cultural contexts in which it works.

The subsequent chapters review the literature of existing Holocaust memories and memorials as well as trends and studies already existing in the fields of psychology, sociology, and communication. A description of the methods used to collect data and the theoretical frameworks informing the study follows, as well as a discussion of the results



of the data analysis. The final chapter includes conclusions deduced from the analysis as well as areas for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The following literature review details several aspects of Holocaust scholarship that inform this thesis. In particular, the works analyzed here pertain to areas such as collective memory, museums and memorial space and artifacts, oral testimonies and narratives of tragedy survivors. There have been many works done on the Holocaust in different subject areas such as sociology, psychology, and media. The following works provide the framework for the study of this thesis. I have chosen these particular works because they are a mixture of foundational and contemporary works that help inform the basis for this communication-focused study. Because so little research has been done from a communication focus, the following works are necessary in order to create a framework for discussing CANDLES.

### **Collective/Public Memory**

Halbwachs (1992) looks at memory not only as something that happens in the mind, but also “a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are structured by social arrangements” (Olick, 2008, p. 7). Further, Halbwachs (1992) stresses the importance of group members in producing social memories stating, “Groups can even produce memories in individuals for events that they never experienced in any direct sense” (Olick, 2008, p. 7). Lee, Ramenzoni, and Holme (2010) attempt to examine how groups of people are able to maintain the common narratives of particular events in history, and how those common narratives represent the changes in the world through associations of social episodes (p. 1). They cite the importance of communication as a lens to see how communication “reinforces the memories of interacting individuals, and

it is through this process that associative arcs can spread in a population so that memory webs come to share common elements across people,” calling those memory webs “collective memories” (Lee, Ramenzoni, & Holme, 2010, p. 1). Collective memory plays a key role in examining the way a culture views particular events, both historical and contemporary, as well as how events are portrayed through media and physical objects and/or memorials.

Collective memory studies are typically housed in the field of sociology, with Halbwachs (1992), a sociologist, as one of the first to use collective memory in a way that considers it as a social construction (Olick, 2008). Halbwachs (1992) focuses on the symbols, rituals, and representations that are publicly available in order to study how collective memory works within cultures. An important point to distinguish for Halbwachs (1992) is the difference between history and collective memory, citing history as something that reaches us through historical records and collective memory as something that reaches us through shared experiences or stories (Olick, 2008, p. 7).

Similarly, Lee, Ramenzoni, and Holme (2010) think of collective memory as a shared experience among group members, and they attempt to investigate the associations that provided the bases for common narratives (memories). The researchers attempt to identify the network structure of memories and then apply a communication model to the networks to see how associations are created, how people influence one another in and through those associations, and how communication about history is facilitated and continued. They begin the study by creating “aggregated memory webs” by characterizing the structure of the network that they will use as a simulation later in the study (Lee, Ramenzoni, & Holme, 2010, p. 2). The researchers used interview-based

data to look at events and how influential they were, as well as how complex the cause of each event was. The communication model the researchers used had three basic assumptions: people influence each other's associations, the stronger the association the more likely people are to talk about them, and people are more likely to communicate with others they perceive as similar to them (Lee, Ramenzonie, & Holme, 2010). As a result, Lee, Ramenzonie, & Holme (2010) find that collective memory is based on five principles, which include experience, social networks, reinforcement, errors and misconceptions, and forgetting (p. 5). They found that collective memories are either very personal, or all agents think more or less the same, or there are distinct groups who share the same view of history (Lee, Ramenzonie, & Holme, 2010, p. 6). The researchers view their work as a contribution to the "exploration of the basic mechanisms that underlie collective memory construction and reconstruction" as well as to the quantitative tools that can be used to study collective memory (Lee, Ramenzonie, & Holme, 2010, p. 6)

Barber, Rajaram, and Fox (2012) study the effect of learning and remembering in groups on recall and collective memory. During their study they found that collaboration had a positive impact on the formation of collective memories. They define collective memories as "shared memories that shape group identity" (Barber, Rajaram, & Fox, 2012, p. 123). The researchers found that compared to individual recall, there were four key reasons why collaboration recall promotes collective memory formation: individuals can be re-exposed to items they had forgotten but a group member had remembered, it allows for "error pruning", has the potential to introduce shared error, and can lead to forgetting of related but not remembered information (Barber, Rajaram, & Fox, 2012, p.

124). As a result of their study, Barber, Rajaram, and Fox (2012) found that collaborative retrieval (remembering) played a stronger role than collaborative encoding during the group discussion. They attributed this to “the strong desire people have to create a shared perception of the world with others” (Barber, Rajaram, & Fox, 2012, p. 130). Barber et al. (2012) conclude that regardless of the negative effects of collaboration, people use collective memories to experience commonalities in perceptions, beliefs, and memories with fellow humans (p. 130).

Confino (1997) presents a different angle of the study of collective memory with a critique of the methods used in the memory field. Confino (1997) links memory to culture, stating that memory has become the leading term when discussing and explaining cultural history (p. 1386). Also, he discusses that memory has come to represent the past through “vehicles of memory” such as books, movies, museums, and so on (Confino, 1997, p. 1386). However, Confino (1997) takes issue with the methods that are commonly used to study memory and cultural history. For Confino (1997), memory studies lack a clear focus and have become predictable, lacking critical reflection “on method and theory, as well as systematic evaluation of the field’s problems, approaches, and objects of study” (p. 1387).

Throughout his critique, Confino (1997) takes a look at Robert Mandrou’s history of mentality and Aby Warburg’s social memory (sociological approach). Mandrou’s history of mentality is useful because it not only looks at single representations of the past, but it also looks at people of the past and their common beliefs, practices, and symbols that made up their perceptions of the past (Confino, 1997). Warburg’s approach to memory studies focused on the connection between artistic representation and the

social world, deciphering art and symbols in order to trace images of the past from the primitive times to his own modern times (Confino, 1997). Confino (1997) found examining Warburg's approach useful because the approach studied culture and its symbols in a relational way, viewing memory as a key representation of the ways in which the social, symbolic, and political interact (p. 1391). This type of relationship is what Confino (1997) would like to see in memory studies, putting representations of the past together with the whole of the culture (and its symbols) in which the memory is functioning (p. 1391).

Confino (1997) cites three areas of convergence between the two approaches that could be useful to memory study: connection of the political with the social, the issue of reception and evidence, and the relationship among memories within a society (p. 1392). Confino (1997) then uses these areas to analyze several studies on memories, highlighting the particular characteristics he believes are representative of the current study of memory. He focuses on the methods and theories used in each study, provides an analysis of the strengths and limitations, and ends with a discussion on the additions he would like to see in memory studies, specifically, a greater relationship between the memory and the society/culture as a whole (Confino, 1997).

Gongaware (2011) discusses that the commitment of the members and their engagement with the event (i.e. the Holocaust) aligns their collective identity with their personal identity, which in turn assists in maintaining continuity within and among the group members. Members' commitment can also be explained through symbolic convergence theory (SCT) insofar as members are able to use SCT to discuss what has happened with the event and why it has happened (Bormann, 1983). Members construct

the culture of the event through talking, making inside jokes, stories, myths, and so forth. The ways in which the members communicate with each other create symbolic and shared meanings, which then translate into shared norms, stories, and rituals that are passed to new members and new generations (Bormann, 1983). SCT analyzes how the shared norms are organized into a shared consciousness, how the group's communication systems explain the shared consciousness, and finally why the members share the same consciousness and group narratives. SCT combines the communication symbols and process of groups and links them to shared sentiments and emotional involvement.

This relates to the small-group interactions that can take place within museum spaces, such as at CANDLES. When small groups of people interact within a museum, they are not only conversing with one another, but they are also listening and sharing stories, interacting with the museum (i.e. with staff, interactive displays, etc.), as well as participating in rituals, such as ceremonies, celebrations, holidays, and so forth. The members of the small group work in conjunction with the museum's displays, staff, and narratives in order to create symbolic and shared meaning within the space and context of the museum. One way to apply SCT is to examine the "dynamic sharing of group fantasies," or a dramatized message communicated through a narrative (Bormann, 1983, p. 103). Part of the study for this particular thesis involves examining the dramatized master narrative of Eva, both as a Holocaust surviving twin and as the founder of the CANDLES museum. The study attempts to identify the ways in which members of the museum staff as well as museum patrons become committed to the overall messages of the museum and the dramatized narrative of Eva's story.

Using the process of “collective memory associating,” Gongaware (2011) looks at the ways in which collective memory and collective identity retain continuity with the past, despite the development of changes (p. 40). Collective memory works by allowing participants to view new ideas as extensions of what the event/cause is already doing or has done previously. The process also “provides the interactive condition in which the past can then also influence the present” and therefore “the subsequent development of changes, then, occurs, along lines already established by the event” (Gongaware, 2011, p. 41). Gongaware (2011) explores just how the past and the members interact in these ways by examining Goffman’s processing of “keying.” Keying is a theoretical framework that creates layers of meaning by showing how something that already has meaning to participants can be changed into something that the participants know is related, but uniquely different (Goffman, 1974). Keying becomes the method Gongaware (2011) concluded that these groups maintained collective identity continuity by drawing on the group’s collective memories, such as through master collective action frames (narratives), new members introducing new ideas, and globalization for a wider involvement (p. 51).

Collective memory can be cited in many different studies with a variety of different topics. While the Holocaust was among the first and most commonly used events, collective memory studies have spanned into many other areas of history and culture. Hariman and Lucaites (2003) take a look at how collective memory and photojournalism work together by analyzing the photograph “Accidental Napalm.” Photojournalism, in specific iconic photos, allows members of the public to identify with people and situations that they would otherwise be unable to comprehend (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003, p. 38). They argue that this image and iconic images in general are



fragments of a greater public narrative (in the case of “Accidental Napalm,” the narrative of the Vietnam War). Strojilevich (2011) uses collective memory to study the genocide in Argentina and Club Atlético. She argues that the events that occurred there could never be forgotten because of the music, poetry, and voicing of memories keeping the memory alive and important. These elements that keep the memory alive become the links in which symbolic convergence can be applied as well.

Similarly, iconic Holocaust photos can be viewed as fragments of the greater narrative of the Holocaust. However, instead of having particular individual photos labeled as iconic, certain elements of Holocaust photos become the fragments that are part of the story. For example, bodies in Holocaust photographs have become iconic. At the Dachau Concentration Camp large photos of bodies, emaciated, tortured, and piled up together in mass graves, tell a story about the events that happened in the camp without ever needing a narrator to explain it. Struck (2008) writes, “Such cruel and humiliating images - over-used and under-explained - are commonly displayed on the walls of Holocaust museums and exhibitions in the UK, the USA and in Israel. They have become the iconography of the Holocaust” (p. 88). The horrifying images work with other elements of remembrance, such as stories, places, speakers, and so on, and they all become fragments of a greater narrative that must be passed on to future generations. Hirsch and Spitzer (2009) discuss how before, after, and during the Holocaust images aid in facilitating the changes that the lives of Jewish people underwent and how they can challenge what we assumedly already know about Holocaust history. Narrative alone cannot tell the whole story, so other fragments of public memory come together to try and paint a bigger picture.

Collective memory has been defined in a variety of ways, but a definition that is particularly accepted comes from a mass communication scholar. Hume (2010) defines collective memory as “the collective beliefs about the past that inform a social group, community, region, or nation’s present and future” and applies collective memory to mass communication in particular, attempting to understand how mass media becomes a means for people to understand the past (p. 181). Hume’s (2010) definition is important to this study because in order to fully define the ways in which the museum communicates to its patrons, the study must look at all varieties of communication that are employed: interpersonal, visual (displays, videos, pictures), speakers/education, and mass communication. This definition also builds on definitions from other disciplines and scholars, but in particular it situates studying collective memory directly in the field of communication. While research in public memory in communication is growing, there is still room to build upon what communication scholars, such as Hume (2010), have developed and continue to develop.

As a mass communication scholar, Hume (2010) attempts to add the importance of mass communication to previous definitions of collective memory, whereas before mass communication had been excluded. For this study, all parts of communication between the museum and its visitors become a part of the meanings that are managed within the museum space. Berkowitz (2010) applies collective memory to the shooting at Virginia Tech in order to see how mythical narratives and collective memory aid in the public healing process. He analyzed news stories to see how collective memory created a hero narrative and a collective identity in the public healing process. Collective memory can be seen in many different applications, each of which serves to analyze the way in

which collective memory works within a society to facilitate a relationship and identity with each event/object representing the past.

### **Memorials/Museums**

In addition to describing how memory works together in a society, Halbwachs (1950) writes of the importance of space and the collective memory. He notes not only the importance of the memories themselves, but also how the actual space surrounding the memories becomes an equally important factor in the significance of the collective memories (Halbwachs, 1950, p. 1). Halbwachs (1950) notes that “we can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved by our physical surroundings” (p. 7). Therefore, the space that our memories inhabit becomes the vehicle in which we understand and recapture the past. Crownshaw (2007) builds on the concept of space and memory introduced by Halbwachs (1950) by looking at how pieces of the space, such as photographs, narratives, and displays, interact with the space to create a particular form of memorialization. Crownshaw (2007) argues that the space works to transmit memories of topics, in his case of genocide, as a cultural memory accessible to those who did not actually witness the event (p. 176).

One of the major challenges facing Holocaust studies is theorizing how to transmit the memories and significance to those generations born after (Crownshaw, 2007, p. 1876). Again, space takes on a prominent role in that transference, becoming the “conduits of trauma” that aid in remembrance of things not witnessed (Crownshaw, 2007, p. 177). The architectural structures are specifically designed to evoke those memories, through vicarious or secondary witnesses, in such a way that collective memory is created and transmitted. The dynamics of the museum’s exhibition and memorial spaces allow

for memory, Holocaust memory in his case, to be conceptualized and realized in the actual physical museum itself (Crownshaw, 2007, p. 177).

The Dachau Concentration Camp in Southern Germany uses space within its memorial of the Holocaust not only to tell the story of the survivors, but also to allow memory transferal and empathy to form between those visiting, regardless of age or background, with the victims who once lived at the camp. During a trip to Germany in the summer of 2012, I had the opportunity to visit what was once the Dachau Concentration Camp during the Holocaust that is now the Dachau Concentration Camp Holocaust Memorial. The camp's use of space was very evident in the forming and transmitting of the collective memory of the Holocaust to the visitors of the camp. The tour that visitors go on is part guided and part unguided, allowing for some free walking to be done throughout the grounds that you did not see during the tour. During the guided tour, many of the exhibits use empty space to tell the story of what occurred there during World War II. For example, many of the barracks of the camp were destroyed during liberation, so rather than rebuilding all of the barracks for display, the memorial intentionally left the barracks spaces empty. The space itself becomes equally as important as the story that goes with it (Halbwachs, 1950). The result of this choice were many large, looming empty spaces that spanned as far as the eye could see around the center of the camp grounds. The shocking look of all the empty space that once held hundreds of thousands of prisoners allowed the story to be told to visitors without a single word from the tour guide.

The memorial also used prisoners' space to tell the memory of the victims of the camp and did not allow visitors to visit the SS guard area and residences. When my

particular tour guide reached the area for SS guards, he simply told us that the memorial did not want anyone to sympathize with the guards, but instead remain focused on the victims and their stories. In order to ensure that we did not sympathize with the guards, the guards' space was off-limits and not included in any part of the memorial. The tour guide described the living quarters of the SS guards as only a step above the prisoners' quarters most of the time, also eating poor food and living with mice and the risk of spreading disease. The guide expressed that despite the conditions of the living quarters, the SS guards still had lives far better than those of the prisoners they oversaw, and he stressed that seeing the space of the SS guards would detract from the dehumanizing and terrible conditions the guards imposed on the prisoners. Just seeing the space that the SS guards once inhabited was enough to spark sympathy and detract from the memories of the victims of the camp.

Rather than building a separate building to house the memorial, the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial decided to utilize the space of the preexisting camp in order to build stronger collective memories. As a visitor, you walk through many of the original buildings, including the crematorium and torture areas, as a guide describes in detail accounts from Holocaust survivors of the events that went on in the camp during the war. The choice to use the original space, despite the haunting reality that accompanied repurposing the space as a visitor-friendly location, allowed the memorial to reach a wider range of audience. Instead of relying on survivors and eye witnesses to rebuild how the camp looked and functioned in their own minds, the memorial utilizes the actual space to tell the story, create sympathy and empathy between visitors and victims, and create a collective memory of the Holocaust that is not only tied to the

stories recounted in the memorial, but also to the direct space of the memorial itself: the former Dachau Concentration Camp of Nazi Germany. Creating a connection between memory and physical space at the memorial allowed for visitors, like me, to experience a more direct connection with the victims, the space they inhabited, and a general collective memory of the Holocaust even though I did not witness the event. This connection, according to the tour guide, is one of the reasons why historical groups fought so hard to preserve the camp space and keep it open to visitors from around the world. The groups saw the importance of transcending generations with the collective memory of the Holocaust portrayed at Dachau.

Similar to Dachau, the Documentation Centre in Nuremberg, Germany uses the actual space from WWII Germany to tell the story of the Holocaust to its visitors. However, the Centre and the Party Rally Grounds use space to distinguish between two different accounts of the Holocaust: old Germany and new Germany. The distinction between the narratives was not evident in the audio guide, the displays, or the story lines. The distinction, however, became very apparent when examining the space in which the stories were displayed. During the tour of the Documentation Centre, the story of the Holocaust unfolded from beginning to end starting the Nazi rise to power and ending with the Nuremberg trials. A special section of the Centre was dedicated to the local Nuremberg area, showing how the Nazis had used the city as the center for Nazi Marches and the Party Rally Grounds. Throughout the entire museum, the displays are similar in function and content, telling each part of the story as it fits into the larger topic of World War II Germany. But as you came to the part of the Centre that shifted from WWII to post-WWII Germany, a subtle but powerful difference entered into the scene. The space

that the Centre had used to display the WWII and Nazi narratives was mostly made up of the original building, with walls that sectioned off different paths and areas, dark and crumbling, with very little light except on informational panels. The overall feeling of this part of the Centre was dark, isolating, and haunting. A consistent aesthetic continued as you passed through the rise of Nazi power, the beginning of Hitler's reign throughout Germany, and the Holocaust displays.

As you approach the displays dedicated to liberation, a dramatic shift in the Centre space separates visitors from the displays they had just visited. As the Centre moved on to discuss the end of the Nazi era, rebuilding in Germany, and the eventual flourishing of Germany and the European Union, the displays were surrounded by bright light, highlighted with bright walls and a large open display room. No longer did visitors feel separated, dark, and thrown back in the time of Nazi Germany. Now the aesthetic of the space felt hopeful and bright as the displays continued to tell you how the German people had overcome such a dark and traumatic past (Museen der Stadt Nürnberg, n.d.).

Unless you were truly paying attention to the rooms that held the displays, you were unlikely to notice the change in space surrounding the Centre narratives. The actual story being recited on the audio guide followed a logical chronological order moving from beginning of WWII to the present day Nuremberg and Germany. But the space of the Centre itself told a different story, working hard to separate between the Germany of the Nazi reign and the Germany of today, fully rebuilt and thriving with culture and overcoming a dark historical past. The Centre space provided a complete separation between Nazi Germany and Germany today in order to tell the visitors that much has changed without having to alter the narratives being displayed. The space of the Centre

provided the necessary distinction, assuring visitors that the old, dark, and terrifying Nazi Germany is far from the bright, hopeful, and forward moving Germany of today. So while still attempting to tell its own story of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, the Documentation Centre of Nuremburg was sure to also tell of a Germany that no longer has any sort of similarities to the Germany of the past.

In addition to space, the ways in which memories are displayed in museums and memorials becomes of large importance in creating and transferring cultural memories. One of the most famous museums dedicated to the Holocaust in the U.S. is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C. The museum “spans three floors of the Museum building” and “presents a narrative history using more than 900 artifacts, 70 video monitors, and four theaters that include historic film footage and eyewitness testimonies” (“Exhibitions,” n.d.). The museum uses its displays in order to take visitors through three different parts chronologically: “Nazi Assault,” “Final Solution,” and “Last Chapter” (“Exhibitions,” n.d.). USHMM uses the artifacts presented in the museum as “a catalyst for thought and introspection,” attempting to guide the Holocaust narrative while still allowing visitors to come up with their own conclusions and interpretations about the displays, stories, and pictures they see throughout the museum.

The museum uses a variety of different displays and artifacts, attempting to reach as wide of a target audience as possible in order to spread awareness, remembrance, and education about the Holocaust to its visitors. It presents a comprehensive history of the Holocaust through artifacts, photographs, films, oral histories, and filmed eyewitness testimonies, as well as a space dedicated to sit in remembrance of the victims of the



Holocaust in the Hall of Remembrance (“What’s inside,” n.d.). Not only do the artifacts and displays in the museum work to move visitors through the story of the Holocaust, but they also serve as pieces of historical memory that visitors can connect with in order to link together his or her own individual memory with those witnesses of the actual events during the Holocaust.

Other types of museums and memorials dedicated to topics other than the Holocaust also present key examples of public memory and museums working together to transfer messages and meaning to those who did not witness the event. As mentioned by Crownshaw (2007), a major challenge is attempting to transfer memory and significance to new generations. *The New York Times* writer Boxer (2001) writes about creating the September 11<sup>th</sup> memorial and its role in shaping memory around 9/11. Boxer (2001) wondered what was to become of America’s ruins after the tragic event of 9/11, and what type of memorial would be constructed to capture the collective memory of the Twin Towers (p. 1). Hirst (2001), a psychologist at New School University, performed a series of interviews in order to figure out what types of memories people had of the event one month after it occurred and then again one year after the event. Hirst (2001) found that memory was susceptible to change, and that a memorial itself can be a shaper of memory that causes change. He found that a public memorial is “a scaffold, something on which collective memory can hang” and a good memorial “tells people how to remember, not what” (Boxer, 2001, p. 2).

The difficulty in constructing a memorial for 9/11 came in deciding just what the memorial would contain, and how much of the memorial would remain ruins. Boym (2001) among other scholars suggest that fragments of the ruins should be incorporated

into the September 11<sup>th</sup> memorial, because such a searing artifact would bring people back to exactly where they were and what they were doing at the time they first heard about the attack (Boxer, 2001, pg. 3). In doing so, the visitors of the memorial will be given an opportunity to mix their own individual memories of the event with the collective memories of the nation within the memorial. As Boym (2001) points out, a good memorial “doesn’t clean up history,” but instead “it leaves part of the mess, part of the argument” (Boxer, 2001, p. 3). By including raw artifacts such as the ruins from the attack, the memorial brings living history to its visitors and allows for what Boym (2001) calls “restorative nostalgia:” the tragic moment becomes parts of the memorial, which in turn becomes part of the living history for the visitors who come into contact with the artifacts (Boxer, 2001, p. 3). The artifact becomes the item that allows for those who did not witness the event to make a connection to the collective memory of 9/11.

According to Gregory and Lewis (1988), when constructing an analogy between the present and the past, “a representation is generated that supplies meaning for an event” (p. 215-216). In order to provide meaning to the present, the past must be referenced and incorporated. Gregory and Lewis (1988) explain that this analogy between past and present is one of the most important and complex elements because it provides us with an abstract and symbolic meaning that can be used in order to unite a collective memory and a community. In order to understand how the analogy of the past and present work in memorials, it is important to understand the social process involved in building memorials within a community. The five principles Lee, Ramenzonie, & Holme (2010) discussed become part of the social process that connects the memorial and the community. In order for the same groups to reach the same understanding of history,

elements such as social networks, misconceptions, and experience must be shared and linked together. In order to create the significance of the memorial and the analogy, “the social process of memorialization involves building an appropriate physical artifact that analogically links past community events with the present, establishing meaning for the collective memory, and thus enhancing community moral unity” (p. 216). Without the social process, the importance and meaning of an event would not be immediately evident. Public memorials, according to Gregory and Lewis (1988), are enmeshed in a network of social conventions.

Gregory and Lewis’s (1988) social process theory places key importance on the socialization of the community to the building of the memorial, and in order to do so, the community must make use of the analogy, past experiences, and artifacts that bring meaning to the event as part of the social process (p. 217). Building the memorial after an event is not enough to employ collective memory. In order to be able to interact with the community, the memorial building must be part of an ongoing community negotiation, in which an argument is made about the event and the community reaches a consensus to support it (Gregory & Lewis, 1988, p. 218). Gregory and Lewis (1988) demonstrate the social process model in an analysis of the Kent State Memorial. They examined three different categories in relation to the memorial: people, locations, and issues. People included the slain and wounded as well as the Ohio National Guard, locations included the Commons where the original confrontation took place, and issues were discussed in the form of questions dealing with the conflicts between the students at the event and the response from the Ohio National Guard.

Because the categories surrounding the memorial building were contested, getting the community socialized to the memorial was extremely important. In order to get the community on board with the analogy and artifacts proposed for the memorial, those in charge of building it had to make a case and use the socialization process to build a collective memory the community would support. In light of the controversies surrounding the event, the social process between the community and the memorial building used an analogy that linked the University to greater national issues, and in turn still recognized the local analogy without igniting further controversies between the groups of people directly involved with the event and/or politics surrounding it (Gregory & Lewis, 1988). The social process aided in creating an appropriate analogy that allowed the memorial to be built and supported by the community, while still attesting to greater national issues and minimizing confrontation and a fractured community collective memory.

### **Oral Testimony, Stories, and Narratives**

If you visit the CANDLES Museum, you can see how storytelling has become an integral part of the curriculum the docents use to inform visitors of the tragedies endured during the Holocaust and ways that we can attempt to help prevent other genocides throughout the world today. Koonz (2005) described the need for memory to be present and reflected upon in order to save atrocities, such as the Holocaust, from continuing to happen in the future. Eva began her advocacy with her own story, sharing it with others who shared the same passion for ending hatred and prejudice and bringing together a strong community. Eva has written two different books telling her story: one about her sister's and her own time at Auschwitz and the other is more focused on the Mengele

experiments specifically. *Echoes from Auschwitz* is Eva's own personal account of arriving, surviving and being liberated from Auschwitz, and it has become a significant part of her advocacy. Whenever given the opportunity Eva shares her story with museum guests, as a speaker for greater conferences and symposiums, in articles and interviews, and any other avenue that seeks the same goals as Eva and her museum. During a speech at CANDLES on the 2012 National Holocaust Remembrance Day, Eva told the audience pieces of her story, in hopes that it would "make a difference in the world." Other survivors also joined in telling their own stories, including Eva's husband, a survivor from another concentration camp, and a missionary who was in Rwanda and continues to work with the Rwandan people. Eva introduced each person to speak with the same message, "tikkun olam" which means "repair the world." She explained that by survivors telling their stories, whether they are victims or soldiers, witnesses or actors, the world can become more prepared to deal with hatred, violence, and prejudice in order to prevent more genocide and wars in the future.

Following the speeches, another important story was told through a dramatic performance by a group of young performers from Indiana. They performed a play telling the story of Irene Sendler, how she risked her life to save thousands of Jewish children during the Holocaust. Even though each of the stories was from a different perspective, and at times different time periods and locations, each added pieces to the collective memory Eva, the museum, and the guests participated in. As the ceremony closed, Eva once again reminded us that the stories of those in the Holocaust and other tragic genocides and wars should "approach healing, remembrance, and make a difference in the world. And never give up."

In the preface of Eva's biography, she highlights the importance of stories of the survivors of the Holocaust. During a speech given by President Reagan at the 1983 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors convention in Washington, D.C., Eva noticed that, "those children who died in Auschwitz have become a symbol and have acquired a greater glory for having died in Auschwitz than we who survived it" (Kor & Wright, 2002, p. v). Eva believed that those children who had survived Auschwitz are also just as deserving of glory as those children who had died there. Early in Eva's journey to find forgiveness for those victimizers during WWII, she was flooded with memories and emotions with each book and picture she saw that was dedicated to children in Auschwitz. However, she was also disconcerted by the errors of the accounts various authors were writing about which children had died and what they had experienced during their time at the camp (Kor & Wright, 2002, p. vii). As a response, Eva set out to write about her own experience as an Auschwitz child before, after, and during the Holocaust. She hoped that in writing an account about being a child who survived the Mengele experiments that "those children whom I [Eva] have not found will see this book, and come forward so that our stories, their stories, after all these long years, might at last be told" (Kor & Wright, 2002, p. vii). Her story became one of many that would later lead to her sister's and her discovery of other Auschwitz twins and the founding of CANDLES to continue telling the children's stories and finding others who have been lost for so many years.

Other survivors have spoken out about their stories during the time of the Holocaust. Fellow Auschwitz survivor and storyteller, Elie Wiesel, describes in his biography *Night* that he knew that he needed to write his story, but was unsure why or

what impact it could possibly have. He first asked questions about why he was writing, such as “Was it to leave behind a legacy of words, of memories, to help prevent history from repeating itself?” (Wiesel, 2006, p. vii). For Wiesel (2006), the importance of his story was not to tell how he survived the death camp, but rather was to fulfill a moral obligation to “try to prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing crimes to be erased from human memory” (p. viii). Wiesel (2006), like Eva, set out to tell his story in order to allow those who did not experience Auschwitz and the Holocaust to understand what he and his fellow prisoners knew as life during the “darkest zone of man” (p. ix). Wiesel (2006) knew the dangers of keeping the stories private and “having lived through this experience, one could not keep silent no matter how difficult, if not impossible, it was to speak” (p. x). In order for future generations to begin to understand, a common collective narrative needed to be presented by the survivors and their experiences, ensuring that their stories would not be silenced by further oppression and prejudice.

Among survivors, other scholars have noted the importance of oral testimony and storytelling in aiding the collective memory of the Holocaust and genocide prevention. Kraft (2006) used videotaped oral testimony of Holocaust survivors in order to see how memory of the horrific event continued to influence the lives of the survivors and those around them (p. 311). In order to convey memories of the Holocaust, Kraft (2006) noted that the survivors often “called upon narrative convention” in order to apply images or refer to Holocaust stories that had already been told (p. 311). The memories described by the survivors used narrative in order to give meaning to those listening who were not present during the event (Crownshaw, 2007). Kraft (2006) argues that when the survivors

voice their memories in narrative structures the memories then become functional, “memory is then meant to be communicated: to educate others and to document the lives of those who were murdered” (p. 312). Kraft (2006), a cognitive psychologist, archived the narratives of the survivors as they documented the personal experiences of each individual in the context of a larger historical event. He argued that the memories still continue that have a great influence on the individual survivors, other Holocaust survivors, and those around them in their daily lives (Kraft, 2006, p. 312).

However, Kraft (2006) also commented on the difficulty in analyzing the survivor testimonies, finding that the testimony is both complete and incomplete, thorough but not exhaustive. The testimony ends not because the memory is depleted but because the survivors have told what they consider to be their stories (p. 313). Because of this, Kraft (2006) found that the narratives and relationships among Holocaust survivors are highly important in completing the accounts of the experiences each survivor had during the Holocaust. In order to present a clear memory for future generations to interact with and understand, the collective memories of the survivors need to work with one another to complete each other’s stories and establish commonalities among their experiences. It is with difficulty that Holocaust survivors are able to translate such horrible and unbelievable stories into believable ones, and Kraft (2006) argues that in order to make the stories interpretable and understandable by others, the stories must work together to create a supportive collective memory with commonalities across testimonies. When the survivor testimonies work together, those who did not witness the event can receive the testimonies and be able to interact and understand them.



Cohler (2008) echoes the productivity that narratives of Holocaust survivors can have on future generations of readers. He discusses how survivors use life stories to remember their experiences in concentration camps, primarily Auschwitz. He defines life stories as “memoirs [that] reflect the interplay of autobiographical reasoning, and collective remembrance at a time and place when the memoirs were written” (Cohler, 2008, p. 1). Writing a life story “brings together into a personal account a presently remembered past, experienced present and anticipated future that fosters our sense of continuity of self or identity” (Cohler, 2008, p. 1). The memoirs analyzed by Cohler (2008) show how meaning changed from post-war to present by the personal accounts reflecting in the life story writings. Over the years, many life stories have been written and collected, and as a result, a larger, coherent life story has been constructed among the survivors who have shared their narratives and experiences. Halbwachs (1980) set to die in an extermination camp of the Third Reich himself, placed collective memory into a social-context of life writing. How we write narratives is strongly influenced by our socio-cultural contexts, and therefore, our narratives reflect communities of memory that have evolved from those social contexts (Cohler, 2008, p. 4).

Life writings by the Holocaust survivors highlight the connections and interplay between the narratives they have written and a larger collective remembrance (Kroft, 2006). Cohler (2008) cites that “there is a continual interplay between history and autobiography: each generation experiences unique social and historical changes that are reflected in the life writing of the members of that generation” (p. 4). The men and women who share their narratives of survival from the death camps offer up a collective remembrance among themselves and other witnesses of that generation, and also put

forward a specific collective remembrance for future generations that will be reading the narratives within a different context of history and novels and memoirs.

Pividori (2008) analyzed Rachel Seiffert's *Holocaust Tales* in order to see how the novel, much like the testimonies examined by Kraft (2006), contributes significantly to rediscovering the traumatic past of the Holocaust. The writing combines narrative and photography in order to depict particular Holocaust memories. In doing so, memories that have only previously been shared between one or two people were now collected and remembered and discovered by much larger groups of people. Pividori (2008) looked at how photography played a role in the Holocaust narrative, hereby expressing more of the story than could possibly be recounted by words alone. The photographs in the writing and the narrative work together, each supporting the story that is being told in different, but important ways. Pividori (2008) found that "the productive interaction between the visual and the linguistic has not only blurred the image-word boundary but also produced more hybrid modes of representation" (p. 79). The narrative itself must be interpreted, and so too must the photographs. A picture must also be read and interpreted and can lead to very different conclusions when working alone, without supporting narratives or context. Pividori (2008) found the connection between narrative and photography in *Holocaust Tales* to be particularly productive because of the nature of Holocaust memories. As another scholar, Goertz (1998), notes in regard to the novel, the German past "resides in a liminal zone between history and memory – that is between the past as object of dispassionate study and the past as an affective part of personal and collective consciousness" (Pividori, 2008, p. 80). The liminality must be defused in order for a

collective memory to be created that spans across generations and becomes a productive collective of past narratives and experiences.

The narrative of self, described by Pividori (2008), introduces the survivor's narrative to the readers, as it "mediate[s] between the reader and the photograph with a kind of intensity and resonance that readers cannot ignore" (p. 83). The readers are introduced to the emotional and moral significance of the scene they were just introduced to by text, which is reinforced by the photographs (Pividori, 2008, p. 83). However, Pividori (2008) warns that the photography alone does not have the same effect on readers as when paired with the narratives of the survivors. Exposure to traumatic photographs alone as a type of collective remembering "may in fact have the opposite effect: it may get viewers used to Holocaust atrocities to the point of neglecting contemporary acts of barbarism" (p. 83). In order to create an effective collective memory, the victim must narrate his or her own story, which will then be supported by photographs that reinforce the elements interpreted and understood by the readers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This thesis utilizes a communication focus in the area of social constructionism. As defined by Pearce (1995), social constructionism understands communication to be the primary social process and is "one of many approaches to understanding and engaging with processes of communication" (p. 88). Specifically, this thesis follows the idea that reality is a social construction, and takes on an investigation of symbols and human interactions that become part of the social process. The overall paradigm of social constructionism is marked by "far greater charity toward disparate voices, sharpened by a sensitivity to the processes by which knowledge claims are made and justified, with a

heightened moral concern, and a keener appreciation of the communal character of understanding” (p. 88). The processes by which knowledge claims are made and justified are be a part of the investigation of the CANDLES Holocaust Museum for this thesis. A major question that is asked by many social constructionists relates directly to the way in which we use language to determine our social world: “What is the nature of the social world, and how can we know it?” (Pearce, 1995, p. 94). Harré (1989) argued that “language is our medium for being as persons,” and the way in which we create meaning is through the language and dialogue we use within our daily lives (Pearce, 1995, p. 90).

The area of social constructionism that focuses on the negotiation between language and our social world focuses on the actual process of that negotiation. I, too, focus on the process of the creation of the social world and applying it to the realm of collective memory and Holocaust museums. Focusing on the process, rather than the products of the social world, foregrounds “the situated, interactional patterns that creatively evoke, sometimes validate, sometimes negotiate, sometimes embattle, sometimes transform, social selves, relations, and institutions” (Pearce, 1995, p. 94). Focusing on the process allows for researchers to see the social world as a continual process, constantly in a state of creation. When viewing the social world through the lens of social constructionism, humans are still being developed through communication: “When we communicate we are not just talking about the world, we are literally participating in the creation of the social universe” (p. 96). Social constructionists see the social process as creating the social world, with communication the major tool of the construction. Social constructionists are interested in knowing how our actions “fit into ongoing, unfinished patterns, contributing to the determination of the meaning of these

patterns” (Pearce, 1995, p. 100). Studies that follow the social constructionist paradigm attempt to investigate the social process by examining the communication and actions of those participating in order to see how their actions fit into a larger pattern of an already ongoing social process.

### **Coordinated Management of Meaning**

Underneath the umbrella of social constructionism there are many theories that lend to the examination of the various processes of communication. For this particular study, I use the theory of coordinated management of meaning as introduced by Pearce and Cronen (1980). Coordinated management of meaning (CMM) is a theory usually employed in interpersonal communication contexts and was originally introduced in 1976. CMM theory claims that human beings are “reciprocally causally related to forms of communication,” resulting in a process that uses a socially constructed language and vocabulary in order to communicate with each other (Pearce & Pearce, 2000, p. 418). All social actions occur in a context according to CMM theory, and our actions work together within a greater pattern of actions and behaviors within our social world. The CMM emphasis positions communication as the primary social process, using communication as the tool to construct events and objects in the social world.

The context in which the social process takes place also lends meaning to the communication process. According to Montgomery (2004), “People live and understand their lives through socially constructed ‘realities’ that they find meaningful” and in doing so, human beings “build these constructions about the world, both as individuals and as part of one or more groups, then act accordingly” (p. 350). CMM theory examines messages that are part of the social interaction. Cronen, Johnson, and Lannamann (1982)

and Pearce (1992) link messages to context, citing that, “a certain message has a certain meaning according to this context, and vice versa; the messages is part of the creation of the context” (Pearce & Pearce, 2000, p. 351). CMM theory is a model used to understand the ways in which the messages, context, and actions work together to socially construct the reality of the interaction and give it meaning. CMM theory analyzes elements such as “speech acts involved, the type of episode, relationship status, and culture” and how the elements shape the meaning of the interaction (Wiese & Farrugia, 2009, p. 1). In the context of museums, CMM theory is a model that can be used to analyze the ways in which the messages and meaning within the museum space are coordinated and managed between the creators of the space, such as museum staff and/or docents, and the visitors who come to the museum. Focusing on the connections between the messages, the contexts, and those involved in the interaction allows the researcher to understand the ways in which those connections create a social reality that is meaningful to those people acting within the interaction.

Pearce and Cronen (1980) discuss the ways in which meaning is made and created through stories told and stories lived, which leaves stories open to many interpretations. Specifically, meaning can be managed through what they call the “hierarchy of meaning,” a model that gives rank order to various elements of a given story in order to aid the audience’s interpretation (p. 75). The ranks include the episode, relationship, identity, and culture that encompass the story. The episode is “a sequence of speech acts with a beginning and an end that are held together by a story” (Pearce & Cronen, 2009, p. 76). The next rank is the relationship that is dynamically coordinated and managed through actions and meanings derived from the episode. The identity is an element that is

“continually crafted through the process of communication,” and according to Pearce and Cronen (2009), the identities crafted “become a context for how we manage meaning” (p. 77). The last element of the hierarchy of meaning in CMM is culture, which describes the webs of shared meaning and values that people involved in the episode have from various cultural backgrounds that can lead to interpreting messages differently from other cultures/cultural backgrounds. Each of the elements of the hierarchy of meaning is ranked according to the relative significance of the element to the communication context.

Another important aspect of CMM in addition to the hierarchy of meaning is coordination, or the “process by which persons collaborate in an attempt to bring into being their vision of what is necessary, noble, and good and to preclude the enactment of what they fear, hate, or despise” (Pearce & Cronen, 2009, p. 78). Coordination is about the process of meshing stories lived, not necessarily resulting in people reaching agreement with one another, but instead coordinating a joint action or course of action. For example, Pearce and Cronen (2009) describe the “peacemakers,” people working to enrich the world, use communication as a way to coordinate the particular values, needs, and actions they find necessary to address to create a social world of community, tolerance, and generosity (p. 78). The meshing of stories lived in coordination allows individuals from various backgrounds to reach a joint action on events and issues they deem valuable or necessary, and also it allows those individuals to coordinate behavior without necessarily having the same interpretation of the events or issues. The hierarchy of meaning and coordination are two parts of CMM theory that work together in order to see what is happening, who is participating, and the resulting action from the communication interaction.

### **Symbolic Convergence Theory**

In addition to CMM theory, I use symbolic convergence theory (SCT) as another lens for analysis. SCT examines how groups create a shared consciousness, the process of creating the shared consciousness, and why the consciousness is agreed upon and shared by the members of the group. According to Bormann (1983), symbolic convergence “creates, maintains, and allows people to achieve empathetic communion as well as a meeting of the minds” (p. 102). During this process, the members involved overlap private and public symbolic worlds with others, and in doing so come to share the same symbolic ground. The “dynamic sharing of group fantasies” referred to by Bormann (1983) describes how a group of people are able to share and participate in a particular narrative containing a dramatized message, such as Eva’s message, for example.

Bormann (1983) uses the term fantasies to describe the story or scenario in which persons are interacting with one another and sharing in the dynamic process of the unfolding story/scenario. When the members share the same group fantasies, “they have jointly experienced the same emotions; they have developed the same attitudes and emotional responses to the personae of the drama” (Bormann, 1983, p. 104). When people share the same “fantasy” as a group, the group creates a common social reality and experience that is shared among the group members, with the fantasy providing the key communication episodes in which the group members interact. Bormann (1983) describes the unified “putting together of the various shared fantasies” as the rhetorical vision, or the master analogy that pulls together all the elements of the shared fantasies (p. 114).

Bormann (1983) describes SCT in three parts: the demonstration of the evolution of shared consciousness, the description of dynamic tendencies within communication



systems that explain why observed practices took place, and the explanation of why people share the fantasies they do when they do. Each part of SCT works to combine communication episodes and the individuals who participate in the communication; “in addition to their current baggage of personal and shared group fantasies, the experiences they share as a part of the group culture, and the rhetorical skill with which the speakers present the fantasies” bring the individual emotional/background into the social of the group (Bormann, 1983, p. 101). Symbolic convergence then is the meeting of the minds within the communication episode. Symbolic convergence “creates, maintains, and allows people to achieve empathetic communion” within the episode and includes the “human tendency” (Bormann, 1983, p. 102). The human tendency describes the ways in which humans interpret signs and objects, thereby giving them meaning. Convergence refers to the meshing of two or more symbolic worlds toward each other, which can result in the worlds coming closer together or even overlapping during the communication process.

According to Bormann (1983), “symbolic convergence explains how people come to share enough symbolic ground to take part in logical negotiation processes to achieve coorientation [ongoing interpersonal episodes] and also explains how individuals come to share a common sentiment or emotional involvement and commitment to symbols” (p. 102). In other words, symbolic convergence explains the ways in which people are able to share both logical and emotional involvement and commitments in order to participate in communication processes during social interactions. By linking the social and the emotional, symbolic convergence allows members to share their experiences as well as their internal emotions and attitudes about the same messages and narratives.

I investigate how CMM and SCT work together in order to explain the ways in which the museum (its staff, docents, displays, etc.) works with its visitors in order to create and coordinate meaning and symbolic convergence within the museum space.

### **Conclusion**

My interest in this project, although at the time I did not realize it would become a project, began with Eva's story. However, in order to truly gauge the importance of her story, it must be placed in a context that emphasizes the need for keeping Holocaust survivors' stories alive. The literature reviewed here demonstrates that the stories become part of a larger picture of collective memory and living histories. Key themes from the literature inform the study and methods used to collect data, such as collective memory as a social construction, the importance of museum/memorial space and artifacts in portraying particular collective memories, and the use of oral testimony and storytelling in order to pass on narratives of survivors to those who were not witnesses or actors in the original event of the Holocaust. Going further, the following chapter outlines the theoretical framework used in this study as well as the methodology that is be used to collect and analyze data. During the study, the following research questions are addressed:

RQ 1: What context information do the visitors of the museum use to interpret and understand the messages displayed in the museum?

RQ 2: How is meaning managed between the museum messages and the visitors of the museum?

RQ 3: How does this meaning serve to create a larger rhetorical vision for the museum?

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework and the methods used for this thesis. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the communication theories chosen to analyze the data. I then discuss the two sections of data collection to be completed and follow with methods for data analysis.

### **Data Collection**

This thesis is a study of the CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana. The study attempted to see how messages are created by the museum and received by the visitors of the museum. I used CMM and SCT theories to analyze the message, context, and relationships between the museum and the visitors in order to see how meaning is created by the social interaction within the context of the museum. In order to see how the meaning is socially constructed, I combined two qualitative methods of data collection: interviews and focus groups.

### **Interviews**

I began the study by first interviewing key people who participate in creating the messages that are displayed throughout the museum. I conducted nine interviews with various museum staff and docents. I conducted the interviews face-to-face at the museum and digitally recorded each one, after which I transcribed verbatim in order to use them for analysis, resulting in 5 hours and 51 minutes of interviews and 71 pages of transcription. Field notes were also taken during the interviews as well as during the public lectures of each of the three museum docents. The same base interview questions were asked to each interviewee and follow-up questions were asked as needed.

**Focus Groups**

The second part of the study consisted of two focus groups conducted with visitors of the museum. I conducted two different focus groups on two separate Saturdays after the participants walked through the museum to view the displays and interacted with the staff and docents of the museums. In addition, each of the participants was present for Eva's public lecture, immediately after which the focus group was conducted. The focus groups were conducted in the lecture hall of the museum, with the participants and the single interviewer (I conducted each interview) sitting together in a semi-circle. I asked each question and the participants voluntarily offered answers, often responding to one-another's answers as well. Though the focus groups consisted only of those voluntarily participating, the lecture hall remained open to the public to view the displays in the room. The first focus group ran 12 minutes, and the second focus group ran 31 minutes, resulting in a total of 12 pages of verbatim transcription. Saturdays were chosen to conduct the focus groups because those were the two days in which the most adults were present after a docent lecture. Many of the weekday docent presentations are delivered to children under the age of 18.

**Participant Observation**

Before each of the focus groups as well as before the docent interviews, I observed each of the docent lectures (Eva, Walter, and Mickey). I took notes on the content of the presentations as field notes during my observations at the museum. However, these notes were only used for the purpose of informing interview questions. The study used only the interviews and focus group data for analysis.

## **Participants**

The nine interviews I conducted included Eva, the founder of the museum (also a museum docent), the museum Executive Director, the Operations Director, the Museum Coordinator, and the Membership and Donations Coordinator, two other museum docents, the Chair of the Board of Directors, and the current Mayor of Terre Haute, IN (former member of the CANDLES Board of Directors). Each interview consisted of open-ended interview questions, which are attached in the appendices section of this thesis. I recruited the interview participants through Kiel, the Executive Director of the museum, as well as contacted each participant individually. The participants were voluntary and chosen because they are either employed by the museum or work at the museum voluntarily, and each participant plays a key role in the overall museum operations and/or delivery of the museum's overall message. Permission was asked to use the interviewee's real names, and use of a pseudonym was used if the interviewee did not want his or her name used in the study. In the following chapters, the interviews are labeled as "personal communication" with the date the interview took place.

The two focus groups consisted of a total of 16 participants: seven in the first focus group and nine in the second focus group. The groups included of a mix of ages and genders, students and non-students, as well as both familiar and unfamiliar participants (some who came together and some strangers). Each participant was an adult over the age of 18 and was recruited on a volunteer basis. After each group completed a walk-through of the museum and heard Eva's lecture, I asked for volunteers to participate in the focus group and the volunteers sat in a semi-circle in the lecture hall where Eva had just delivered her story. The participants then collectively answered a series of

interview questions describing their experiences with the museum displays, docents, and Eva's lecture and the messages that they understood and interpreted during that time. No names or personal information of the focus group participants are used in this study. The focus groups will be labeled in the following chapters as "FG." The focus group questions are also included in the appendices section.

### **Approach to Analysis**

In order to analyze the data collected from the interviews and focus groups, constant comparison was used to go back and forth between the two categories of data. Thematic analysis of the data began after the first interview and continued through the completion of the focus groups. I began the thematic analysis by performing open coding on the field notes and transcripts, going line-by-line through each one and labeling words and phrases that stood out as important. I then grouped those codes into categories, eliminating the redundant and similar codes into a more manageable list, and finally grouped the categories into overarching themes that came from the notes and transcripts. Those themes in turn helped to answer my research questions. Owen (1984) states that there are three criteria necessary for a theme to be present. They must be recurrent (two or more concepts are in the same strand of meaning), repetitive (words or phrases are seen repeatedly), and forcible (the words/phrases stress the importance of the concept/theme). I then applied CMM and SCT theories to the themes culled from the data in order to make meaning of the data and find answers to the research questions.

### **Conclusion**

The final chapters provide the results of the study and continue with a discussion of the results and the relationships between the data and the research questions. In

addition, the final chapter includes the theoretical and practical implications of the study for the field of communication and communication theory, limitations of the study, and areas for further research.

### **Chapter 4: Analysis**

When I was preparing to do my first interview for this project with Walter, a surviving German citizen who escaped from Europe after Kristallnacht, I realized that this topic had many more layers than I originally anticipated. I tried writing interview questions that were succinct, yet deep, exploratory, yet open. But how do you ask someone to sum up his or her story in a matter of an afternoon? How does one give another the necessary history, background, and poignant moments of his or her life so that the listener leaves fully understanding the message he or she just received? As I moved from data collection into analysis, I recognized that the CANDLES Museum functions in this way. In the following analysis section, I will outline several themes that aid in addressing the three research questions outlined in the previous chapters. I combine interviews with focus groups in order to illustrate the ways in which the museum and the museum staff/docents work with visitors to create meaning within the museum— to have a conversation.

#### **Historical Conversation**

The CANDLES Museum Executive Director, Kiel Majewski, describes the museum as having two parts. The first part of the conversation is historical. The museum presents not only Eva's story, but sets the historical stage for discussing the impact of World War I in Europe, Hitler's rise to power, the historical course of World War II, and finally liberation to the present. When visitors enter the museum, there are different displays dedicated to describing historical moments such as the Treaty of Versailles, the voyage of the St. Louis, the roots of the eugenics movement in the United States, and so forth. Walter Sommers docents each Friday afternoon at CANDLES, and he delivers a



presentation to visitors about the nature and historical account of the Holocaust from both a German and U.S. point of view, as a German citizen who immigrated to the U.S. during the beginning stages of the Holocaust. He begins with an historical survey of the lives of Jews in Europe, dating back to the middle of the 18th century. From there, Walter describes the history of WWI, specifically the involvement of Germany in the war and the resulting Treaty of Versailles. Walter stresses the importance of understanding the effect the Treaty of Versailles had on the German people:

And I talk about our personal experience just growing up, and I talk about the Treaty of Versailles and what it did to the German people. Now, that cannot be overemphasized. Because it was the conditions like the Treaty of Versailles and the way Germany was treated by the Allies, not America, America did not sign that treaty. Ok. Uh, that brought upon a Hitler. And then I have to explain how in the world the most cultural, uh uh, group of people in Europe, the Germans, who did so much in music and so much in literature, right? Ok. How could they stoop so low to elect a high school dropout to lead the nation? Who was filled with hate, hate against the Jews, hate against homosexuals, and this and that (personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Walter is one example of the historical approach the museum takes in telling the story of the Holocaust to its visitors.

A second example is the museum displays themselves, the actual panels on the walls, the photographs, and the artifacts that are spread throughout the two major rooms of the museum. In the Lecture Hall, the panel displays are set up chronologically, and all

three docents use that chronology to organize their presentations. For example, when Eva tells her story, she starts at the very beginning as a child on her family farm in Portz:

I always put them together by the way I lecture. They should fit, uh, the direction I am trying to give. And the best way to me to put anything together or lecture is in a chronological order. You don't start in the beginning in a film and go back. I go Hitler's rise to power, the different laws that have been passed, our own coping with the situation, then the ghetto, then deportation, then Auschwitz, then experiments, survival, liberation, and the lessons that I have learned (personal communication, March 22, 2013).

Like Eva, Walter also goes in a chronological order and adds first-hand details and experiences as he describes and highlights the important events that led up to the Holocaust and up to the liberation of the camps and the end of WWII.

Other topics that are included in the historical conversation within the museum include a portion of panels and displays that are part of the "Intertwined Lives" theme that has been growing in the museum. In addition to the story of Eva and her family, the museum also tells the story of Dr. Josef Mengele, the "God of Auschwitz" and the head of the twin experiments in Auschwitz, including his childhood and family. When I first saw Dr. Mengele's history right next to Eva and her family's history, I was a little taken aback. Why would his own personal history be important to the story? When I asked Eva why his story was a major part of the history of the Holocaust included in the museum, her answer was simple. She describes the panels as "trying to tell the story of intertwined lives, what was (*sic.*) the experiments all about and how that these two people, Mengele and me, their lives are intertwined in some way" (E. Kor, personal communication,

March 22, 2013). The inclusion of Dr. Mengele's story in with Eva's broadens the historical depiction of the Holocaust to not just the German citizens and the victims, but to those who had a hand in the creation of the Holocaust beyond just Hitler and his right hand men. In order for visitors to understand how truly complex the Holocaust was, and continues to be, the intricacies of the intertwined histories must become part of the conversation.

Another key piece of the historical conversation is describing the themes that all contributed to the unfolding of the Holocaust in its own particular way. Anti-Semitism, eugenics, and victimization are themes that can be found throughout the displays and presentations at CANDLES. Mickey, another docent and four-year survivor of the Buchenwald concentration camp, explains the role of anti-Semitism and hate in creating the Holocaust and the suffering of Jews, political opponents, homosexuals, the handicapped, gypsies, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Mickey describes Hitler and the Nazis as being "intoxicated with hate" and the role of hate and anti-Semitism in the Nazi propaganda that permeated the media, schools, and politics during Nazi reign that aided in changing people's attitudes toward the Jews. Likewise, Walter includes a discussion of the role of anti-Semitism in the Holocaust: "There was something that was started called anti-Semitism, persecution, and what have you not" (personal communication, March 15, 2013). Each of the docents, as well as a number of panels in the museum, attempt to outline the ways in which the spread of anti-Semitism toward the Jews was instrumental in changing the ways in which people from all over Europe viewed the Jews; instead of citizens of the particular countries that were land, business, and home owners, the Jews were beginning to be seen as dirty, dangerous, and less-than-human rodents.

In addition to the discussion of anti-Semitism throughout the museum, the discussion of eugenics in relation to the Holocaust is also prominent. Kiel describes the necessity of keeping the history of eugenics in the discussion:

So, eugenics, people have to understand this to know why Eva was at Auschwitz, why she was being used in experiments. So I think, um, in the vision that I described to you earlier there would be an introductory experience with maybe a ten minute film about the Holocaust setting the stage for the broader scope, and then either through the film or just some really focused exhibit pieces, an introduction into the idea of eugenics, who Mengele was, and what he was doing at Auschwitz. And that all sets the stage, now you get somewhat of the big picture and you step into one story (personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Setting the stage for the story of eugenics is one that is particularly interesting to see received by visitors. Many of the people who read the panels about eugenics were shocked that it began right here the United States, in Indiana, before being adopted as a tool for creating the perfect race by the Nazis. Eugenics by definition is controlled breeding, attempting to control the population by regulating who can or cannot conceive by sterilizing those deemed “unfit” for procreation. Indiana was using eugenics in order to screen out individuals, such as delinquents, mentally and physically handicapped, and so forth in order to keep them from bearing “bad” children. Hitler and Dr. Mengele, in attempting to create the perfect Aryan race and control the procreation of blue-eyed blonde children, adopted the idea of eugenics in order to try to control who could have children, the number of children, and also the sex of the children who were born.

Twins became the perfect specimens for this experiment, with one twin as the control and the other as the test subject, and thus leading to the intertwining of Eva and her sister, Miriam, in the Auschwitz experiments. When Eva tells her story, she gives the history of Dr. Mengele, Hitler's eugenics law, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute that oversaw Dr. Mengele's work, as well as other companies like Bayer that participated in the experiments of various drugs, diseases, and pharmaceuticals that were tested out on the twins in Auschwitz. The history of how experiments came to be employed in Auschwitz is important in order to, like Kiel said, provide a broad picture in order to see how one story, Eva's, fits into it.

While some historians and scholars write about the Holocaust specifically in regard to European Jews (Götz, 1999; Dawidowicz, 1986; Friedländer, 2007; Hilberg, 2003), the CANDLES Museum expands the genocide beyond only a Jewish atrocity. In each of the docents' presentations, this point is made very clearly. In addition to the over six million Jewish people killed in the Holocaust, there were over six million others, including Christians, who were also killed. Walter specifically, in his historical account of the Holocaust, lays out the figures for his audience in order to show that it was not just the Jewish population that suffered a horrifying loss, but other groups as well:

But, the Holocaust is about the worst thing that's ever happened in the history of humanity. When we talk about 6 million Jews, 1/3 of the Jewish people, and we talk about 6 million Christians, that is left out so often. They killed over 6 million Christians. And I, I don't know how many Muslims they killed. They killed, period. Whatever they wanted. The German army had strict orders as they broke

into Russia. Shoot, destroy everything in sight, children, men, women, buildings, whatever you can find. Destroy it (personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Other parts of the CANDLES Museum also remind visitors that the victims of the Holocaust were not only Jews. On a couple of the panels there are depictions of the various labels attached to the clothing of prisoners in the camps: symbols for Jews, political opponents, various countries, and so on. Also, in the windows of the museum are flags that various visitors have dedicated to the groups who were particularly persecuted by the Nazis: Jews, political prisoners, homosexuals, gypsies, the handicapped, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The historical conversation within CANDLES started because of one particular story, Eva Kor's. But as the museum has expanded, so have the pieces of history that are included. Today, the museum is very conscious in recognizing the history of the Holocaust as CANDLES defines it, stretched beyond just victimization of the Jews to those other groups who suffered at the hands of Hitler and the Nazis.

### **Personal Conversation**

The first piece of the museum, the historical conversation, works hand-in-hand with the second piece: the emotional/emotive conversation within the CANDLES Museum. The historical displays and narratives of the museum give the visitors context that set the stage for the emotional and personal connections to take place between the museum, the docents, and the visitors. While the displays mainly provide historical context, the presentations and narratives presented by the three docents, and particularly Eva, provide contexts of their own stories that work with visitors to create emotional and personal connections and meaning. One of the museum staff describes one of the reasons why people who have visited come back and bring others with them:

You know a lot of, um, people will say I've been here before or I've met Eva, or heard Eva's story, now here's my mom, or my kids, I wanted to bring my kids, so um, you really see how Eva's message will affect people enough for them to bring someone new and introduce them to her story (Museum staff, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

The personal stories of survival and history that visitors can hear from the docents enable the visitors to connect with the Holocaust in a personal and emotional way. The current Mayor of Terre Haute, Duke Bennett, who has served on the CANDLES Board of Directors, explains that the real, live experiences of hearing the docents' stories in the museum is something that cannot be achieved simply in a textbook or on the internet:

I think you really need to kinda experience and see the pictures, hear the story from Eva, I mean you can read, and I'm kind of a history guy, I like history, and like you know finding out something new. But sometimes it's hard to do with a subject that's kinda, it's difficult anyway, it's hard to understand why people would do something like that. But to really go down and look at the pictures and really observe, kinda walk through and just put yourself, it kinda gets you in the mind set of absorbing what happened, and to hear Eva speak then of course, then you're hearing a survivor. You don't always get that historical perspective from anybody, a lot of times you just, all you can do is read about it. And that gives you a piece, but it's kinda the full experience, you know. As long as Eva's alive it really makes it a living museum, you know. That's the thing that makes it really unique (personal communication, March 21, 2013).

Those who visit the museum and see a docent presentation receive a personal account of one person's particular experience during the Holocaust. Each day that the museum is open, there is at least one docent present in the afternoons to deliver a personal tour and story to visitors. All throughout the day many different groups of visitors, school groups, religious groups, Terre Haute community members, and visitors from all around the country and the world can schedule a presentation with any of the three docents. I have been to each docent's presentation at least once, and each presentation is a meshing of stories: historical with personal, past with present. This intentional meshing of stories also becomes enmeshed with the stories of the visitors. Each time before Eva starts her story, for example, she asks where each visitor is from and how he or she got to CANDLES. If there are children in the audience, she asks each of his or her names and ages. Throughout her lecture, Eva includes her audience members whenever she can, asking about their own experiences, relating her story directly to theirs (especially the children), and attempting to make the connections as concrete between her own story and the stories of her audience members.

Nicole, the Operations Director for CANDLES, describes what she sees everyday when people interact with a real life survivor at the museum:

Oh, interaction [referring to the role the museum plays that a textbook or the internet can't play]. I mean even if it's interaction between, on days we don't have docents I'll fill them in on my personal experience with Eva. Um, my personal trip to Auschwitz. But when they get lucky and they get a Holocaust survivor, people walk in here and they're like, oh this Eva Kor founded it. And I'm like yeah, you know, she's still, she's still alive? Yeah, she's here, and she's here? I



mean, so they can't get that on the internet, they can't get that out of a book. They get one on one interaction with Eva. Even if they're here with a group of 100, she talks to them, she signs all the books, she autographs them personally to whoever. Or Eva, I mean Mickey, you just saw his presentation, you don't get that. You can't even read something and get what you get from him. And when Walter's here, it's the same thing. I mean you get one on one attention when you come here. So you can read everything on the walls, but you're still not gonna get all this out of a book. So you get, yeah that's what you get, you get one on one. You get personalization. You get something in this museum you don't get anywhere else. Unique. All of us, all of us have something different to say. Especially if you get to spend it with Eva. I asked for a half an hour everyday when I first started with Eva, just to listen to her, some of the stories (personal communication, March 19, 2013).

By creating personal connections between the docents and the visitors, the museum is able to facilitate a conversation that allows visitors to create a personal and emotional connection with the museum. Kiel describes his own interest in the museum when he learned that he had his own interview with Mickey Kor during a research project, saying that when he interviewed Mickey "it became a little more personally meaningful for me, because in part, when I interviewed Mickey Kor, that was the first realization that these were real people" (personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Kiel uses the metaphor of a photo mosaic to explain personal connections to the Holocaust, describing how both first hand and future generations are all millions of smaller, individual pictures that create the larger picture of the Holocaust. Each person

who visits the museum not only gets to see others' small pictures, such as the survivors, the children of survivors, and those who work at CANDLES, but they also become their own smaller picture that becomes a part of the larger mosaic. For example, in one of the focus groups conducted at CANDLES, a woman describes how she personally connected to Eva's story:

Well, I think the emotions. We [the participants] may not understand, but we all understand fear, we all understand loneliness, we are all understand, I mean we can understand that even if we weren't in that particular situation. So, I mean, you picture yourself there or you picture your kids and going through that, you can't help but go...[begins crying] (FG).

Mayor Bennett also describes how people within the Terre Haute community become connected to Eva's story and the Holocaust in their own lives today. He says that people who hear the story "really just become connected" and "really feel that connection to the importance of it, the message that's given" (D. Bennett, personal communication, March 21, 2013). Another conversation with a separate focus group at the museum also describes the personal connections that they get from hearing a survivor's story:

To hear about it from a person, not a book, is indescribable. Hearing their stories and seeing them in real life makes you realize that they are here, living in the community, and how close you are to that event. The Holocaust was not really all that long ago, and talking with the survivors makes you realize how much your own life is connected to that event (FG).

Another observation from the focus groups is that talking with Eva was what really made the Holocaust seem real to them. Even though they could read about it, learn about it in

school, and see it on the walls, it was in hearing the stories in real time and talking with the survivors who really helped them make the connection to an event that they did not witness first hand. A central theme in each focus group was the emotional connection they felt to the survivors after the conversations they were able to have with them at the museum. As one focus group participant described the experience, “that personal touch” is something very unique to the CANDLES Museum, because you don’t just get the “cold facts, the names, and the dates,” but instead you get the “story, the expanded history” (FG). As Walter describes the experience, “the devil is in the details” (personal communication, March 15, 2013). When you are lucky enough to have a conversation about the Holocaust with a survivor, you get an experience that includes the details, the first-hand experiences, the personal stories, and the focus groups demonstrated that participants were able to make the connection between the survivors’ stories and their own lives through these conversations.

Another way in which the museum and visitors work together in making those connections is through the Auschwitz trip that the museum leads. Eva has returned to Auschwitz many times over the years, and decided that she would take some other people with her on the trip in 1985: teachers, friends, associates, and other survivors. The group was relatively small, and it did not have any sort of formal planning or organization in the beginning. Now, Eva and the museum take a group of people to Auschwitz every two and half years, and last year the group reached 100 people from 18 different states and three different countries. The people who go on the trip are composed of a wide range of occupations, ages, nationalities, and connections to Eva, CANDLES, or to the Holocaust in general. The group tours Auschwitz I and II (Birkenau) twice while on the trip: once

with Eva as the tour guide, telling her own story, and once with a tour guide from Poland, to tell the historical version of the story of the camps. Nicole, who is in charge of recruiting people to go on the trip and planning the trip, says that by going through the camps twice with two different guides, you not only get to hear Eva's story, but you also get to hear the Polish historical account of the camps, which includes parts that Eva didn't know about or didn't see while she was there. She also points out that there is a battle between both perspectives, between the survivor's and the historical perspective, and that both are right, and you have to learn from both.

During her trip with Eva to Auschwitz, Nicole describes one particular instance where she was able to witness a group of kids interacting with Eva at the camps:

It's no longer something in a book they cannot connect with. Especially when they see her tattoo. And she has no problem, and you know how many people asked to see her tattoo when we were in Poland? I mean, yeah, there was this group, I cannot remember where they were from. Um, and it just, it escapes me now. But sixteen and seventeen year old kids. They had no communication skills with us, but they were, they wanted to see, there was one translator with us, and they wanted to see her tattoo. And that was the connection, that made it real for them. They started crying, the girls started crying. And so this trip, for a lot of adults, for somebody even like me, I've been here everyday and you almost get conditioned, you see the pictures, you watch the movies, you hear the reports, you hear her stories, which are amazing stories of far beyond the actual war, it makes it real. I felt it, I seen it, I smelled it. I mean I came back and I couldn't even process it all. You know, it just, it makes it real. And for our guests that come in

here, our participants all over the country where she goes, it gives them a chance to, you know, mix up with Eva a bit more, and it makes it real and they can spread the message (personal communication, March 19, 2013).

One member of one of the focus groups had also been on one of the trips to Auschwitz with Eva, and she shares the same sense of connection that Nicole described:

No one can compare to her. When we went to Auschwitz, she was like a celebrity. I mean they just followed her like a movie star. It was unbelievable. This synagogue in London, England took a tour to Poland and Auschwitz, and they were just tripping and falling all over her. I mean they just wanted to talk to her (FG).

Another woman in the group agrees, stating that it's her personal experience that grabs, and another participant says that it is the first-person experience that makes the Holocaust real and tangible. Kiel, who had also gone on the trip with Eva described the trip as a "branding experience," and one that, no matter how many times you had heard Eva's story, was an experience that completely changes your perspective and becomes a part of your own personal experience now too:

You're journeying across the globe with 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 people on the last trip, most of them you've never met from Adam, you know on this trip we have people from 21 or 22 different states, and you don't know them at all but in a sense you do, because there's this underlying connection like, why are we all interested in this same thing? And there's something unspoken, a bond that you share even without talking about it. And then you sit on a plane for 10 hours next to this person and you go around a foreign city with this person and you know, you're in

the hotel and you're having fun and you're having this unforgettable experience in Auschwitz with people, and it's just all those connections you never forget, you know. I'm still connected with all the people on the 2010 trip and the 2012 trip, and I'm building connections with all the people on the 2013 trip, and you realize you're part of, you find your tribe. You know it's, you can go through this world and feel like you're struggling all alone and then suddenly you're with 75 people who are part of your tribe, and that's a very empowering feeling, you feel like there's support. There's a network of people and maybe if we all band together we can keep this world from spinning off its axis, you know (K. Majewski, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

What's unique about visiting the Auschwitz camps through CANDLES is the emotional connections to the event through not only the historical account, but also Eva's personal account of what happened there during the Holocaust. The other focus group participants mentioned that Eva's perspective was the key to making the experience, both on the Auschwitz trip and the CANDLES Museum, unique and different from other museums: "You learn things that you cannot learn from history books, films, or even the camps sometimes. It's the connection to someone who is real and whose story is real that makes you remember" (FG). It is through the emotional and personal connections and conversations with survivors that visitors are able to create meaning from the Holocaust in their own personal lives.

### **Residual Conversation**

While the historical and personal pieces work together to help make meaning for visitors, the two pieces alone are still not enough. The final piece of the equation is the

conversation that continues after the interaction at CANDLES has ended. As I have mentioned, the CANDLES Holocaust Museum is unique in several different ways, and presents both a historical and personal connection to its visitors. In addition, the museum also creates lasting impacts and residual conversations with its visitors that result in the visitors connecting with the museum in different ways, such as through donations, repeat visits, working with the museum, and taking the museum's message into a variety of different contexts that are still active and working today.

While the main communication about the museum happens in the museum space itself, Eva and the CANDLES staff also take her story all around the world, to schools, conferences, forums, and take as many other opportunities as possible, to tell the story (or stories). Many times the places that Eva visits are ones that have invited her to come and speak as a special guest. People have heard about Eva through her books, her documentary *Forgiving Dr. Mengele*, and hearing her speak at other places. One person describes how many of the donations have come to the museum:

We have a lot of cool like people entered in there. You know they hear about Eva, this person or this way, or she met someone on a plane and now they've been donating since 2007. It's just um, it's really neat, you know how people get involved. But, um, you know a lot of it is from Eva traveling and from that, you know the movie, the book, you know like I said, we have a strong Terre Haute you know, community support, but a lot of it is random, um, spread out all over the country, um, all over the state really. So, um, yeah, it's just people who have came, stop by, visited, and were really impacted. You know and that says a lot for, you know a large portion of our donations, not coming from just Terre Haute,

just Indiana. It's that she left a lasting impression on people that even though they're not here everyday seeing and you know hearing what's going on within the museum, they do get to hear and see about it. They're signed up for our newsletters and stuff and they support us. So, that's really cool, that's really cool (Museum staff, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

People who continue to support the museum are in many other ways still involved in the conversation that the museum creates. For example, many teachers, community members, and others who have been to the museum, heard Eva speak, or gone on the Auschwitz trip return to become a part of the Board, volunteer, or help with the museum in some other fashion. One local Terre Haute teacher who has been on the Auschwitz trip continues to go and take new teachers with him each year. The museum's message also impacts those outside of the local community. During Eva's recent visit to Brooking, South Dakota, she stayed for three hours after the presentation to talk with the audience members and sign books for them. During that time she encountered a mother and her daughter who had travelled two hours to come see Eva speak:

I am accessible. And that makes it real for young people, when I was in just yesterday I got back from Brooking, South Dakota State University, they were, after the lecture I stayed three hours because I had that long a line for people waiting to buy books and get my signature, take a picture. Three hours. And I asked a mother, where are you from. She said well we drove two hours to get here. I said why, she said cause my daughter has done a report on your book *Surviving the Angel of Death*, and we read in the paper you would be here, there was no way that we were going to pass that opportunity. And my daughter finally



realized that the book that she has read and liked, there is a real person that she can meet. Now what is more exciting than that (E. Kor, personal communication, March 22, 2013)?

Eva continues to travel to all of these different locations to continue spreading her message to as many people and places as possible, and especially to younger people.

It is not enough to just read about the Holocaust in history books, it is the conversation that surrounds the important lessons learned from the Holocaust that are being spread by Eva and CANDLES. It is engaging with the topic in a way that can positively impact not only the people that hear it, but also the community, the society of the United States, and the world. For Eva, part of that conversation is about educating the world. Specifically, it's about educating the world on how to remember the Holocaust, heal from tragedy, and repair the world. "Tikkun olam" is a Hebrew phrase that is on the marquis underneath the CANDLES sign meaning "repair the world," and Eva notes that in order to do so, we all must be willing to understand how the Holocaust came to happen and what we can do to prevent other genocides from happening today. She says that tragedies, like the Holocaust, do not end after liberation. "The afterwards, after survivors, there is a coping after that and dealing with the memories" (E. Kor, personal communication, March 22, 2013). According to Eva, in order to cope with those memories, and end the continuous cycle of pain and victimization, we must educate the world not on how to forgive and forget, but on how to forgive and heal. This is a controversial idea because not all Holocaust survivors agree with Eva's ideas of healing and forgiveness, and many survivors have a negative reaction toward the thought of

forgiving the Nazis. As a response to those who may disagree, Eva explains her suggestion for forgiving and healing:

So that whole idea mentality of forgive and forget is wrong, it doesn't exist, and it's a fallacy. How about forgive and heal? Because that's really what's happening. And why isn't the world, the world is yielding to change very, very slowly. The way people function, the way people understand things they're very set in their ways. It's not a revolutionary idea what I'm trying, I'm just saying it's ok to live without pain. And you have that power to do so, so why, what's wrong with it? But people will attack me like I was trying to blow up the whole world, and the country, I'm trying to save it. Because if you remain victim, there is no redeeming value to it. You might be, and you often do, pass on the pain to the children and grandchildren, and then they feel justified in lashing out maybe at the children or grandchildren of the victimizers. And then become the new wave of persecution, victimization, and counter-victimization, and now you have a group of people who have not done anything wrong, and they are being victimized because somebody was lashing out (E. Kor, personal communication, March 22, 2013).

Eva, the docents, and the CANDLES staff are all working towards educating the world on the consequences and aftermath of genocides. That is why the museum is actually the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center, so that it can not only tell the story of the Holocaust, but it can then continue the conversation into events and matters that are happening right now, in communities around the United States and the world. Kiel says that the museum's main purpose is not historical, but instead is

[. . .] taking the historical experience and helping visitors to see it as, um a message that they can take with them. And providing them with some insight into areas where they can apply it in their own lives. So, intrapersonally, interpersonally, in the community, on the planet, what can we do (personal communication, March 19, 2013).

CANDLES attempts to give people a message that can continue in their own lives and personal conversations around the world. As Eva states, “Education is the biggest and best tool to change the world” (personal communication, March 22, 2013).

CANDLES is also continuing the conversation about educating communities on issues such as war, genocide, hate, and others through several other means. The museum has movie events about both Holocaust and non-Holocaust issues that are open to the Terre Haute community. For example, the museum has hosted movie nights, put together by Sally, the Museum Coordinator, dealing with topics of genocide, Rwanda, interreligious conflict, and other topics that align with the museum’s message. However, the museum does not just show the movie, but also facilitates a discussion with the community about the movie and the questions and issues that it raises. The filmmaker or advocate or some person or persons linked to the topic will be present to discuss the meanings the audience got from the film and how those meanings connect to the community, the world, and the personal lives of the audience members. The movie nights are specifically dedicated to topics and events that are happening today. The movie nights take the messages from the museum and link them to current events and urgent issues that are happening right now around the world. The conversation in the movie nights also

continues on into the local schools in Terre Haute, such as through the STAND, an anti-genocide group, and the Amnesty International group and the local high schools:

I think that what I'm really, really proud of is kids at Terre Haute South high school who started a STAND chapter. It's a national organization that, it's a student movement to end genocide. And they started a local chapter at Terre Haute South. And we feared that when the first class of seniors graduated that that would be it. But they've kept up the activities and ramped up the activities and they raise money every year and they help us bring in speakers, they partner with us on programs, and it's for them, I have them in mind a lot when we bring in speakers, like these young people are going to get so much out of this. And they do, and they show up when we have a film screening, they show up like 50 or 60 at a time. And I was realizing not too long ago that there's a generation of high school students passing through Vigo County schools now who are going to be citizens equipped to face the reality of genocide, and that is man, that is so important to me, and I think so important to someone like Eva who had to live through it (K. Majewski, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Through events such as the movie nights, town hall meetings, and forgiveness conferences that have been hosted at CANDLES previously, the museum attempts to provoke the community to think about and ask questions that would not normally have otherwise been thought about. By "cultivating the conversation," Kiel and the rest of the docents and staff want to push the community to become more conscious about issues going on in the world such as genocide, equality, acceptance, and so forth: "we have a message with a global audience" (K. Majewski, personal communication, March 19,

2013). What Eva and CANDLES attempt to do in sharing her message and stories are apparent in the discussion within the focus groups:

And this museum brings in other people that it's happened to. That we have the opportunity not just for one person but, you know, several, or you see a documentary, wasn't too long ago there was one on Irena Sendlar. You know, that I just feel like that if this wasn't here, I wouldn't have that opportunity. I think very, probably very few people have gotten to hear 4 or 5 survivors, and we've been exposed to that (FG).

Aside from events that the museum hosts, the overall message of the museum itself also leads to residual conversations that continue after visitors' interaction with the museum. Another way in which the museum is unique is the positive message that it attempts to leave with its visitors. As Eva points out, many other museums can leave visitors feeling burdened, overwhelmed, dark, or depressed, "it is a heavy burden to carry" (personal communication, March 22, 2013). Yes, a terrible thing happened, but now what is one supposed to do with that knowledge? Instead, Eva wants to leave the visitors of her museum feeling hopeful, positive, and with life lessons that are accessible and applicable.

I would hope that every person who leaves here, they leave with a smile on their face and hope in their heart. The hope is that in spite of Mengele, in spite of Hitler, in spite of Auschwitz, we survived. Second, that some of us survived and are no longer bitter and angry. What I hope, with the educational part, and with the museum, to repeat what I said, when I talked to the legislatures in Indianapolis that there is hope after disaster. That there is a tomorrow after despair. And if we

really, really try and work hard at it we can overcome any difficulties. And that is the life lesson that is good for anybody (E. Kor, personal communication, March 22, 2013).

The museum becomes a vehicle with which Eva and the other docents can tell their stories and in addition, leave the visitors with some life lessons, hope, and positive thinking. The overall message in the museum has been described in several different ways, and with several different words from both visitors and staff/docents of the museum: never give up, survival, hope, forgiveness, healing, empowerment. All of these words become part of the overall message that Eva described; there is a tomorrow after despair. While awareness and education are main foci of the museum, the positive message that one can triumph over such an atrocity is something that is unique to the CANDLES museum.

In each of the focus groups, these positive words and/or themes were also present. When asked what the overall message of the museum was, both focus groups were unanimous in their replies: hope, never give up, the power of the human spirit, optimism, forgiveness, and survival. Each group described how the message they learned from hearing the story of the survivors was a positive, inspiring, and empowering experience: “The message that I took away was never, ever give up. No matter how bad things are, you just keep going” (FG). “There’s a partial depression, but yet there’s also that hope” (FG). “The will to survive is just awesome. It’s awesome” (FG). “As long as you’ve got hope, you’ll keep fighting” (FG). The positive message that visitors receive from the museum continues long after the interaction at CANDLES has ended. Eva remembers a particular story that a mother told her about her son:

And a lady came up to me today and said, my son came here last week, and he's attending one of the junior high schools, and he's been arguing with his friends and they have been mean to one another, and oh and she said I and my husband have been trying to tell him that it's time to let go, forgive and go on, and they wouldn't let go and everybody was miserable, and he came home last week after listening to your lecture. And said, if Mrs. Kor can forgive the Nazis for what they did to her, I have no problem forgiving the kids who have been mean to me. And now it's all gone. So she wanted to thank me, she came here today to thank me. I think that's the reason it has an impact (personal communication, March 22, 2013).

In addition to the positive message, visitors also receive a much more in-depth understanding of the lessons learned from the Holocaust: "The hope is that they come to serve those platitudes [Sally's term for preconceived, cliché knowledge about the Holocaust] and they leave with something a little bit more substantial" (S. Wallenstein, personal communication, March 19, 2013). Those visitors who find the more substantial and impactful connections to the museum want to in turn share those same connections with others:

You know, interesting, I just saw a lady come in here, um, I think she's bringing her father, um, he was foreign so he couldn't talk, he was like (blah blah blah) with his daughter, and I think it's because they want to share her message, share, you have to meet this woman, she's strong, she's a survivor, she forgave. She actually forgave after the horrible things she had been through, and that's amazing. I mean, that's, mostly you have to meet this person, you have to hear her

story. So I think it's just her strong, because you know she's, she's said some things, she's done some things that we're like, wow, how does she get away with that. But it's because of her overwhelming survival, I'm gonna survive and I'm going to teach people to forgive, and overall everybody loves her and they just want to me, want to bring their family and friends to meet her. You know, and try somehow to suck some of that survival instinct out of her and have forgiveness somehow rub off. I mean I've seen people on the trip, they just want to sit at her table. They just wanted to walk closer to her. They just somehow wanted to get some of her time, some of her energy, some of her Eva (N. Sconce, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Eva herself also continues the conversations with others around the world through travelling, email, Skype, and letters. Kevin, Chair of the Board, is among the staff who receive copies of the thousands of emails Eva receives and responds to, asking her questions about her message of healing, forgiveness, and her story. People can ask her questions and she will respond to all of them, spreading her message and her story around the world. Some letters are from other survivors of tragedies and genocide. She continues the conversation with any person who is interested and willing to listen. Kevin sums up Eva's mission quite succinctly:

Eva only uses what happens as a vehicle to get to the message. And so, uh, our focus, yes we talk about the Holocaust, yes we talk about what happened to her and others like her in Mengele's labs, um, but that's only a vehicle by which you can show that through all of that pain, you can still heal yourself (personal communication, March 21, 2013).



The vehicle described by Kevin is still extremely instrumental in continuing to apply Eva's message to events happening today.

The three types of conversations that stem from the overall message of the museum not only build historical context in order for the visitors to understand the Holocaust, WWI and II, liberation, etc., but also they allow visitors to feel personal connections to the Holocaust, particularly through Eva's story. The combination of the historical conversations and the personal conversations result in residual conversations that continue beyond the initial interactions between visitors and the museum; residual conversations also continue beyond the subject of the Holocaust to contexts, events, and issues that are in need of discussion and action today, and they can even be facilitated by the CANDLES museum, Eva, and the positive message the museum is trying to spread.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The displays and narratives of the historical and personal accounts of the Holocaust, combined with the impact of the lesson learned from the Holocaust and the applications of those lessons today, creates the overall conversation that the museum has with its visitors and those members who received its message. Through creating historical, personal, and contemporary connections to its visitors, the CANDLES Museum and visitors work together, to create and maintain meaning and action both within the museum space as well beyond its walls. During all three stages of the conversation, historical, personal, and residual, the museum and its visitors are conversing together, co-constructing the reality of the messages being interchanged within the museum space and beyond. The summary of findings that follows will discuss the conclusions of each category discussed in the analysis section, theoretical and practical implications of the study, and limitations and areas for further research.

### **Summary of Findings**

#### **Coordinated Meaning**

When I began this study, I investigated three research questions: What context information do the visitors of the museum use to interpret and understand the message displayed in the museum? How is meaning managed between the museum messages and the visitors of the museum? How does this meaning serve to create a larger rhetorical vision for the museum? In analyzing the data I received from interviews with the museum staff and focus groups in the museum, I have constructed three major categories of conversations that occur surrounding the museum and its message.

**Historical Conversations.** The historical conversations that are part of the museum's overall conversation give the audience the context and background of the topic in order for them to be able to situate and understand the smaller, personal stories, like Eva's, Walter's, and Mickey's, in relation to the larger picture of the Holocaust and the residual conversations that stem from the topic today. Pearce and Cronen (1980) present CMM as "a practical theory crafted to help make life better for real people in a real world" (p. 69). The real people who are within this theory are described as persons-in-conversation, and within the CANDLES Museum, the museum staff, docents, and visitors are also persons-in-conversation. More important than simply the content of the displays or artifacts at the museum, the social discussion that takes place between the museum (by way of staff and docents) and its visitors becomes the substance in which the persons-in-conversation are able to make meaning, or create a "bond of union" (Pearce & Cronen, YEAR, p. 72). During the interaction of the persons-in-conversation at the museum, meaning is managed by moving the conversation through various contexts as the interaction continues: through historical, personal, and ultimately residual contexts that work together to create a combined meaning in the larger conversation of the CANDLES Holocaust Museum.

**Personal conversations.** As persons-in-conversation, the museum and its visitors are engaged in two frames that are paramount to the particular interactions that take place within the museum. Pearce and Cronen's (1980) hierarchy of meaning describes four ranks that have relative significance during particular interaction contexts. The episode entails the sequence of speech acts that have a beginning, middle, and end held together by a story. The relationship rank in the hierarchy emerges from the dynamic coordination

of actions and meanings within the interaction, and in turn it suggests how the interaction might be interpreted. The identity rank on the hierarchy pertains to the identities that are continually crafted through the communication process, which becomes a context in which meaning is managed. Last, the culture rank is the web of shared meanings and values within a culture. Various cultures may interpret messages differently because of the differences between the web of meanings and values.

Using two ranks from the hierarchy of meaning, I found that the interactions that take place within the conversation of the museum place two of the ranks on the same level, rather than one specific rank as the most significant: the episode and the relationship between parties. In this study, the episode is the sequences of speech acts that the visitors encounter at the museum, such as Eva's story, another docent's story, or the stories within the museum displays. Examples of the relationship rank in the museum are the back-and-forth of conversation, story sharing, and interchanges between the visitors and the museum staff/docents. The relationship between Eva and her visitors, for instance, is a relationship that is a dynamic push and pull of both Eva and the visitors coordinating and managing meaning through their particular speech acts or stories. As described in the analysis, in order for the museum's message to be received by its visitors, both the connection to the survivors (through their stories) as well as the particular interactions with those stories are both necessary in order to create meaning. The episode within the museum is, as described by the Chair of the Board for CANDLES, a three-act play:

It's a three-act play. And if you listen to her speak or you go to the museum, it's a classic three-act play, not too different than a Greek tragedy. You have the

exposition, which is the rise in action and you're introduced to the character, young Eva and her sister Miriam, they lived on a farm in Portz, they, and suddenly they're in a cattle car in Auschwitz. So the introduction to the characters. And then you have the rise in tension, the second act of the play, she arrives in Auschwitz, she loses her father, Jaffa, Edith, and Aliz, her two sisters and her mother, uh, and it's just Miriam and her. Then a rise in the tension as she goes through the Mengele experiments and she's, you know, deprived of both the love of her family, her food, and then in, uh, the climax isn't leaving Auschwitz. It's not ah, we got saved, because she left nothing, she was an orphan in Communist Romania. And so, and then she comes to America, she has kids, but still the pain, the suffering that's with her, like many other Holocaust survivors that are on anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, the climax to the story is her forgiveness in Auschwitz and then being free from pain. So that's the three-act story. When you look at any classic play or movie, it doesn't matter if it's *Star Wars*, they all follow the same template, the exposition, rise in conflict, climax, and resolution. There's not point to a story without the climax and resolution. To tell a story without the climax, without the resolution is an unfinished story (K. Bolinger, personal communication, March 21, 2013).

The three-act play is evident in the three-part conversation that takes place between the museum's docents, staff, and the visitors. When a visitor hears Eva's story, there is a beginning, a middle, an end, and a takeaway, such as her three life lessons. Likewise, when a visitor engages with each of the conversations, historical, personal, and residual,

the visitor follows a particular interaction, staged by three various contexts that work together to lead the visitor from the beginning to the end of the story.

While the historical conversations set the stage, the personal conversations are where visitors and the museum formulate the relationships and the dynamic coordination and management of meaning. It is through the two groups, visitors and the museum, talking and interacting with each other during the episode that the relationships are able to form. In order for the museum's message to be facilitated, the episode and the relationships must be present in the interactions in the museum.

**Residual conversations.** While the episode is extremely important in the process of managing meaning for the visitor, the relationship between the visitor and the museum is of equal importance. Pearce (1980) describes the relationship as emerging from "the dynamic dance over coordinated actions and managed meaning" (p. 77). The way in which the visitors of the museums interact with the stories, episodes, they hear is through the emerging connections and relationship that become part of their experiences at CANDLES. The connections described in the personal conversation section in the analysis are the ways in which the visitors form relationships with the stories, the survivors, and the museum. The ways in which persons-in-conversation in the museum interpret the meaning of the message of CANDLES is a result of the relationships that emerge from their participation in the episode. Giving the visitors the historical context alone is not enough to foster the relationships between the visitors and the messages; there needs to be those personal connections that draw in the visitors and allow them understand and interpret the message the museum is attempting to portray.

CANDLES is a unique conversation that includes an intentional meshing of many different stories, including those of the visitors. All three pieces of the conversation discussed in the analysis build on the overall message of the museum by introducing different stories throughout the episode: historical, contextual, personal, current, residual, as well as those of the visitors. In enmeshing the stories of the persons-in-conversation, the museum and its visitors are working towards what Pearce and Cronen (1980) call “joint action,” and specifically toward a joint action of functioning as “peace makers,” “providing a way of intelligently joining into the activity of the world so as to enrich it” (p. 78). Persons-in-conversation in the context of CANDLES are working together in order to coordinate and make life better for people in the world. The residual conversations that take place after the interaction with the stories at CANDLES has ended are instrumental in continuing the conversation of the Holocaust, war, genocide, hate, victimization and so forth. Pearce and Cronen (1980) write, “CMM reminds us that communication has the power to create a social universe of alienation, anger, and malice – or one of community, tolerance, and generosity” (p. 78). The conversation between the museum and its visitors attempts to leave the visitors with a message of positivity, hope, survival, and ways in which the life lessons Eva presents can be utilized to make the world a more generous and communal place for all. Eva explains:

I will give you a very simple example. I was contacted two years ago by a survivor, well actually fourth generation survivor of the Armenian genocide. And she said to me she was working on her Master’s degree and she researched me and she couldn’t believe that I forgave them, the Nazis, because she could not still forgive the Turks. Her great grandfather was a victim. Wow, how long will that

go on, excuse me? And so I said to read my book and to look at our website, both my DVD and both my books and on occasion ask me questions and how would I answer those, and I responded. About two months ago she called me, she said she finally has forgiven. And she now understands it. All that burden she was carrying for the Armenia genocide was on her shoulders. And she felt like somehow she was going to dishonor the memory of her great grandfather if she was not going to be angry and carry the burden. But she said it is really a tremendous weight of changing and helping and now she's working on educating other Armenians that they don't have to carry that burden (personal communication, March 22, 2013).

Persons-in-conversation at the museum manage together what tragedies such as the Holocaust and the aftermath and consequences mean for us today, as survivors, victims, second, third, fourth generation witnesses. Even though there may be no simple answer on how to prevent other genocides or another Holocaust from happening, by meshing together the past and the present, history and personal, and the stories of the survivors with the stories of the visitors, the museum and visitors work together to manage and coordinate meaning and a joint action that extends beyond the interaction or episode at the museum.

**Fostering conversation.** The purpose of sharing the personal stories of the Holocaust at CANDLES is not to push all visitors toward some singular, specific meaning. Instead it is to foster and provoke a conversation about the Holocaust, how it affected those who experienced it, and how it is still affecting people, actions, and events today. Even if visitors do not necessarily agree with the museum's message, or Eva's life lessons for example, what is important is not avoiding the conversation and continuing a



cycle of victims and tragedies. Even with a controversial topic in the museum such as forgiveness, getting people to at least begin to discuss the idea is a really important movement toward healing and prevention. As Eva says:

I think if you taught little children who go to kindergarten and are called fatso, because kids will pick on one another without mercy, or four eyes, or nigger, or yellow skin, or whatever they call, kids are going to be mean to one another and we have to accept it. We have to teach them how to behave. So if somebody calls you all these names and you are upset, what happens? Now let's see what happens in this scenario, the kid goes home and tells the parents. And the parents might say one of two things: ignore it. And the little kid cannot ignore it. Little chubby kids instead of trying to go on some diet they are going to become fatter. A little kid with glasses, and they look so innocent with those glasses, but they are called four eyes, and they resent that too. Or the other thing that a parent might say, well, so and so beat you up and tomorrow I expect you to go punch him out. Now what are we giving the child? We are teaching them to be bullies, to fight or to be violent. I think that if we teach the child, let's say we say to Johnny, go back to school tomorrow, what Jim do to you was awful and terrible, but if you can go up to him and say to him, you know what you did yesterday or a week ago really hurt my feelings and was very bad and it was wrong but I forgive you, I think the whole idea that you have the power over somebody to tell them what you think, and have that magnimity [*sic.*] of spirit, that I forgive you, I think it gives tremendous power to even a little kid. It does make them feel superior, and in my opinion, they are superior. It, but you have got to give, this is where the power

comes in forgiveness, you can do something without hurting anybody, that actually will change the relationship between these people. And your relationship to them. I think if we could teach that in schools through some classes, some books, some cartoons, we would see a tremendous change in the world (personal communication, March 22, 2013).

One doesn't necessarily need to agree that forgiveness is what you, as the victim, should do, but instead the importance is to agree that the world needs something in order to stop the perpetuation of violence, victimization, hurting, and pain. By creating a conversation that is attempting to better life for people in the Terre Haute community and around the world, persons-in-conversation at CANDLES are communicating ways to understand the implications of events like the Holocaust today, move toward some sort of joint action, and act wisely in critical moments.

### **Symbolic Convergence**

Using Bormann's (1982) discussion of symbolic interaction adds another layer of depth to the discussion of persons-in-conversation within the context of the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center. When I use the metaphor of the museum as a conversation, I am referring to the rhetorical vision that is the overall message/conversation of the museum. Bormann (1982) describes a rhetorical vision as a putting together of shared fantasies that in turn allow participants to have a broader view of the organization and its relationship to the external environment, "often integrated by a master analogy that pulls the various elements together" (p. 114). The museum's overall message functions as the rhetorical vision, with each of the three smaller conversations, historical, personal, and residual, as the various elements being pulled together by the

master conversation of the overall museum and its message. While I use the metaphor of a conversation to describe the museum, Kiel uses a different metaphor:

So, my metaphor is if you look at a guy like Martin Luther King, Jr. and you thought of a museum about Martin Luther King, Jr. the things that people would learn from it would be what he stood for, which would be things like equality, and justice, and civil rights, but to understand, to really get those values, you have to understand the historical reality of the civil rights movement. So, kind of the same thing here. What we're really about is the value as espoused by Eva. To, for those values to hit home or take route, you have to understand, you have to enter through the door of the Holocaust (personal communication, March 19, 2013).

So in order to make the rhetorical vision of the museum come to life, it takes both groups, the docents and staff of the museum as well as the museum visitors, working together to position the museum in the greater conversation of the Holocaust and of genocide prevention and education.

Each of the three themes or smaller conversations housed within CANDLES directly correlates to symbolic convergence theory that Bormann (1982) defines. Each stage of the conversation, beginning with the historical context, making connections to the personal stories, and finally leaving with the residual conversations, aids in the evolution of shared consciousness between the visitors of the museum and the museum's staff and docents: each group shares in the overall message of the museum.

When applying SCT theory to CANDLES, we can see how the museum staff/docents function as the in-group: providing the narratives, stories, and contexts for the visitors. The visitors of the museum function as the out-group: they are outsiders

coming into the museum as a separate group, with separate symbolic worlds and contexts. Aside from being present to hear the stories and messages of the museum, the out-group serves particular roles in order to complete the rhetorical vision of the museum. For example, the STAND group at the local school is one way in which the out-group is taking the message of the museum and putting it into work in the current community of Terre Haute. The group is actively participating in trying to stop genocide and hate, and it functions as a physical representation of the residual conversation of the museum working today. Delivering the message to the out-group only serves the purpose of the museum so far. In order to extend that message beyond the museum and its programs, the out-group serves as those that continue the conversation in schools, personal lives, other communities, and circles beyond the reach of CANDLES. Without the out-group, the museum's message would have more difficulty reaching those that don't visit the museum or one of Eva's lectures. The in-group and the out-group work together to create the rhetorical vision that is the museum's message. Two separate worlds, the world of the museum and the worlds of the visitors, converge together in order to combine the worlds during the communication interaction with the museum. The in-group delivers its message, the out-group shares their own personal stories and experiences, and together the two group create connections to the museum's message and purpose. Because the two groups coordinate and share in making and managing meaning, they are participating in a dynamic sharing of group fantasies, the individual connections and understandings of the museum/the Holocaust, and creating the overall fantasy theme, or the overall message of the museum, the overall message of the museum then moves them toward coherent actions and thoughts. Without the two groups working and interacting together, the in-

group and the out-group, the overall message of the museum would not be created and functioning. Both groups are necessary for the conversation to take place and for meanings to converge.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Using CMM to analyze the CANDLES Museum helps us to understand the ways in which museum visitors interpret the overall message of the museum, and how the museum staff/docents work with the visitors to manage meaning within the museum space and into other contexts after their interactions. The application of CMM shows how the museum and its visitors co-construct meaning through historical context, personal connections, and expanding the message into other, current contexts beyond the museum. The findings of this study in particular also attempt to expand the hierarchy of meaning in order to show that the rankings of the hierarchy are not fixed, but instead can be fluid and some ranks can be equally crucial to the communication situation in certain contexts. By reworking the hierarchy of meaning to situate the episode and relationships on the same plane, the hierarchy is more appropriate to describe the ways in which the museum and its visitors coordinate and manage meaning within the museum space and beyond.

By combining CMM with SCT, we can see how the persons-in-conversation in the museum are comprised of the in-group and out-group. In addition, we can see how management of meaning for the museum's message is achieved through the two groups working together to communicate the rhetorical vision of the museum. Combining particular elements of the two theories draws out the dynamic sharing of the group fantasy theme, the museum, and the ways in which the museum and its visitors converge

worlds to create and manage a meeting of the minds as the personal worlds of the visitors converge with the historical, personal, and public world of the museum.

In addition to adding to theory, this study also expands the literature of public memory. Participants in the focus groups state the importance of keeping memories such as Eva's story, other survivors' stories, and the Holocaust, included in history education and public memory:

And a lot today, in schools and in history books, they want to wipe out the history. They're putting stuff in there, and they're taking out, and they're making up their own story. We need to tell the truth, we need to tell our children, because our children need to know for their sake, and for their children's sake. So we won't make the same mistakes again (FG).

Another participant picks up from this comment to add her own personal story of the revisions attempting to be made on various parts of history:

Yeah, there is revision going on in America. I have a daughter who's getting a Ph.D. in political science, and um, when I talk about things in my, the years that I grew up, that I was a witness, that I experienced, not something I read in a book, my grown child can tell me, oh it wasn't like that (comments of agreement from other participants in the background). And I said, no it was like that, and you know, that, I think, that revisionist thing, it really bothers me, cause all it takes is a generation. And it's happening. It is happening right now. And that really, really, really concerns me (FG).

There are people around the world that still argue that the Holocaust did not exist, that it was just a lie that people have been spreading for decades. However, places like

CANDLES are a way to respond to those people and ensure that the memories of the event, the lives lost, the survivors, and the aftermath are not forgotten. Also, places like CANDLES serve as reminders that tragedies and genocides can be prevented as long as people are willing to try and educate each other and stand up for fellow human beings. When discussing the importance of places like CANDLES existing today with one of the focus groups, Eva stated:

Actually, Hitler said that if you repeat a lie for many, many, many years, people will begin to believe it. And that's exactly the way he rose to power. So really, to hold people to the truth is very important, not just a little lie, because it starts with one little lie and another little lie, and so on, no. The truth will set us free. We have got to stick to it and not let anybody revise it (personal communication, March 22, 2013).

In order to ensure that the Holocaust and those affected by it are remembered, and future events and atrocities like it are prevented, projects and studies must continue to be done on places of public memory such as CANDLES to ensure that they are not removed from historical accounts, schools, and public memory.

As I mentioned in the very beginning of this study, there is much room for public memory and museum studies to grow in Communication Studies. While there is a growing number of communication scholars and theorists working on analyzing memorials, public memory, living histories, and so forth, more work needs to continue in this area in order to add to the ways in which public memory and the sharing of memories between museums and their visitors function as social and communicative processes. The two groups, the museum and its visitors, need to be put in conversation with one another

in order to see how they work together, one influences another, and the relevance of that communication beyond the museum walls.

### **Practical Implications**

Practically, studying the CANDLES Museum and its messages is still a very urgent topic that relates to contemporary issues and current events. In my interview with Walter, he described how CANDLES attempts to help with any current events that are dealing with situations such as in the Sudan, Darfur, and locally in the United States and Terre Haute. Using CMM to analyze the ways in which the message of CANDLES and the overall conversation of the Holocaust help us to understand how the lesson learned from the events that led to it happening as well as the aftermath still apply today. Specifically, Eva points out that there are many things happening today such as a bad economy and job loss that are eerily similar to the conditions that allowed Hitler to rise to power:

To say that I am not worried about what's going on, I really cannot say, because people will ask me what I think made the Holocaust possible. And I'm saying look around. Can you imagine in Germany 38% of the people were out of work? Society was falling apart. That is not an excuse for what happened, but it's definitely a very big reason the people of Germany who were educated, who were more evolved than any other nation in the world would listen to a cockamamie guy like Hitler. Because they needed hope, and Hitler told them what they wanted to hear and because of the economic situations were such that he made them feel better they joined him (personal communication, March 22, 2013).



The museum attempts to address current events that align with its message in a positive, optimistic, and educational way. Rather than hosting protests surrounding topics such as racism, hate, and so forth, the museum uses its space and the Terre Haute community to host positive rallies and town hall meetings to discuss the issues and the best courses of action to take. Studying the ways in which the museum connect with its visitors, the Terre Haute community at large, and issues around the world is extremely important so that we can understand how the topic of the Holocaust and its messages are still extremely relevant so many years later.

Also, studies such as this aid in promoting awareness of the Holocaust. When asking what she thinks visitors to the museum take away as a message, Eva replies, “My hope is that number one, they have no doubt about it that unfortunately the Holocaust happened” (personal communication, March 22, 2013). Likewise, the focus groups point out the importance of continuing to discuss and remember the Holocaust:

I think it’s an awareness to learn. Cause I think as a society we do not learn from history, primarily because we don’t learn history. Um, and so an awareness of just like you said, look around us right now, the things that are going on, very reminiscent of how things started there (FG).

Another participant adds:

It’s also the role of speaking out about the Holocaust and it is, it’s, we consider it a sin to be silent. Not to speak when something like that, that, you know something that’s going on like that, just think if the people would have spoken up, you know, or taken some action or banded together, you know, it’s just, it’s good to speak out (FG).

Still another participant adds another comment:

It's also, we can pass on to the next generation and the next generation, we met the real people that experienced this. You know, so they could be hearing more and more, it wasn't real, it wasn't real, but we can tell them, hey, I met the real, a real person that this happened to (FG).

Before one can even begin to describe the important lessons to be taken away from atrocities like the Holocaust, people must be aware of the topic and the role it played in history. The study of CANDLES plays a small role in continuing to tell the story of the Holocaust in different settings, preserving the memory and raising awareness that these places, museums like CANDLES, still exist and are helping to repair the world today.

Even though the goal of this study was not to generalize to other museums, there are some practical applications for other museums that can be determined from the findings. Smaller museums, such as CANDLES, that are facing similar struggles as to what the future of the museum may be can analyze the ways in which the museum and its visitors may or may not be creating a rhetorical vision. In order to create a rhetorical vision, the museum must understand the ways in which the in-group (staff, docents, etc.) and the out-group (visitors, donors, etc.) work, or do not work, together. As I described in the analysis and conclusion of this study, the two groups must work together in order to create the rhetorical vision. The conversation of the overall message(s) of the museum must be reciprocal, delivering information to the visitors and in turn fostering the residual conversations that continue beyond the museum walls to other visitors, community members and leaders, and so forth. The rhetorical vision is larger and goes beyond simply the museum itself; in order for smaller museums with more unique narratives like

CANDLES to continue to function and exist, the rhetorical vision must be working within and beyond the museum to move the message among various groups of people, both in the local community and outside of it. The two groups must work together in order to create the connections to the museum's message and purpose that reverberate beyond the museum into the lives of others, spreading the message and the importance of retelling that message for many more generations.

### **Limitations and Areas for Further Research**

This study is not generalizable to other Holocaust museum or museums in general, and the study was conducted with a small sample size. However, the goal of the study was to try and examine the unique message that the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center has and the ways in which the visitors interpret that message. Because of the unique message, there are a variety of different questions that can further the study, such as how one can examine the work being done at CANDLES in relation to the work being done at other Holocaust museums. Kevin adds:

There is no place like CANDLES. I've been to a lot of Holocaust museums, museums of any kind all around the world, I travel quite extensively. And museums in general are to inform people, a history museum to inform them about what it was like in the past, and it's interesting. You can go to some oddball museums, they've got a museum of operating and medical procedures from the 19<sup>th</sup> century in London that I went to. And it was interesting, and it's fun stuff to look at, um, but this museum is more of a proactive tool. It's not intended simply that you gain some information and empathy about the survivors, but that you transform yourself through that experience. And so that's why I say there's no

place like CANDLES. It's not a grandiose statement about the greatness of the museum, it's just the mission and message are so clearly focused on transforming the visitor and not informing the visitor (personal communication, March 21, 2013).

Another interesting challenge presented to the study is the museum and Eva as interchangeable, as Sally describes, Eva and the museum are one. When analyzing the museum, one cannot separate the two. As Eva approaches her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the museum staff are trying to prepare for a time when Eva is no longer present to tell her story and be the lightning rod that sparks interest in the museum. Moving forward, the museum is going to have to try and figure out how to keep the conversation going in the museum without Eva and the museum being as one unit. A question for future research could be how does one infuse a place, building, and displays with the emotion, connection, personality, and soul of a person? Moving forward, CANDLES is attempting to redo the museum to include a more engaging and emotive experience for visitors, without necessarily requiring Eva to be the one there telling the story. Kiel describes his vision for the future of CANDLES:

I think it's going to be totally, totally different. Uh, so this is all, um, static and two dimensional, for the most part. I'm envisioning something that is three dimensional, and um, I would say atmospheric. So, uh, the point would be to, my philosophy is that as we move further away from the Holocaust, we will have to incorporate more dramatic elements to make an impact on visitors. Especially with kids who are so easily stimulated by screens, phones, laptops, um, tablets, those sorts of things. I think um, we face a real challenge and opportunity uh, in

incorporating a lot of that into what we do, but we're also competing with um, those mediums in a way. So, uh, I think what we do has to be engaging enough that it would hold a person's attention. So this sort of thing, if it's something that I could put as a jpeg on a website, then it's not engaging enough, I feel. So what I'm envisioning, and this is starting out with my vision and I'm trying to check this with other people and build support for it, is to have sort of an emotive based three dimensional walk through of Eva's story (personal communication, March 19, 2013).

Looking forward, I see a major area for further research in three parts. First, a future study can examine the ways in which the museum attempts to translate the current conversation of the museum into a 3-D, exploratory and emotive experience for visitors. Secondly, the response of visitors now could be compared to visitors of the museum after the changes have been put in place. Lastly, a similar study as this one could be conducted again in order to see how the conversation has changed, if at all, and in what ways with Eva no longer present as the inseparable counterpart to the museum. CANDLES has a great challenge ahead in preserving and maintaining the conversation that CANDLES began in 1995 so that future generations for years to come are able to participate in the historical, personal, and residual conversations and connections that Eva and the CANDLES Museum have set into motion.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How did you get started at CANDLES?
2. What is/are/have been your roles/main duties at CANDLES?
3. Do you tell your own personal story as well as Eva's/the historical story?
4. Who selects and creates the displays? How? What is the process?
5. What events are held here/for the museum? Who plans? How?
6. In what ways is the museum space used? Who decides? How is it decided?
7. How often do displays change/new displays brought in? Which ones are permanent?
8. What methods of relaying information does the museum use? (i.e. stories, displays, speakers, videos, etc.)
9. What is the overall message that CANDLES is communicating to its visitors?
10. How does the museum address other issues such as genocide, war, culture, etc?
11. Why do you think it is important for places like CANDLES to exist, both now and in the future?
12. What role does the museum play that cannot be fulfilled by other means, such as the Internet textbooks, etc.?
13. How does CANDLES interact with the community of Terre Haute?
14. How do members of the Terre Haute community interact with CANDLES?

## Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

1. What brought you to visit the CANDLES Museum?
2. For those of you who have been here before, what brought you back?
3. How and when did you first hear about the museum?
4. After looking through the museum displays, what did you learn?
5. After hearing Eva's lecture, what did you learn?
6. What do you think is the main goal of the museum?
7. What do you think is/are the main messages of the museum displays? Of the narratives? Of the museum in general?
8. What do you think was the most effective way of delivering the museum's messages to visitors?
9. Why do you think it is important for places like CANDLES to exist, both now and in the future?
10. What role does the museum play that cannot be fulfilled by other means, such as the Internet textbooks, etc.?
11. How does CANDLES interact with the community of Terre Haute?
12. How do members of the Terre Haute community interact with CANDLES?