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*The Inherent Dissonance of Heritage in
Contemporary Polish Museums*
Magister (MA) Thesis

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Abstract

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 represent the bravery and courage that emerged during Europe's darkest period. Despite both occurring in occupied Poland, the narratives have not both been universally accepted as part of the Polish collective memory, national identity, and heritage. In this thesis, I seek to analyze and understand how the narratives constructed by museums regarding the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1944 Warsaw Uprising illustrate the inherent dissonance of heritage in contemporary Poland. The influence of political powers, the inability to confront the difficult reality of the past, the boundaries of Polish identity, and the manipulation of memory have led to the attempt to construct a single, linear narrative of heritage that does not reflect the diversity of memory and illustrates its dissonance. As the events of the Second World War and Polish-Jewish relations continue to evoke heated discussions, the narratives portrayed by two of Poland's most prominent museums, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Warsaw Rising Museum, may provide a deeper understanding of how memory is selected, identity is formed, and heritage is constructed in contemporary Poland, and how dissonance is inherently part of these narratives.

Keywords: Poland, dissonant heritage, collective memory, identity, museums, Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and Warsaw Uprising.

Streszczenie

Powstanie w getcie warszawskim w 1943 oraz Powstanie Warszawskie w 1944 prezentują bohaterstwo i poświęcenie, które miało miejsce w czasie jednego z najczarniejszych okresów w historii Europy. Mimo, że oba wydarzenia miały miejsce w okupowanej Polsce, narracje obu tych wydarzeń nie zostały powszechnie przyjęte jako część wspólnej polskiej pamięci historycznej, tożsamości narodowej oraz dziedzictwa kulturowego. Na łamach tej pracy dyplomowej przeanalizuję oraz przedstawię, jak budowane przez muzea narracje na temat Powstania w getcie warszawskim w 1943 oraz Powstania Warszawskiego w 1944 ilustrują nieodłączny dysonans dziedzictwa we współczesnej Polsce. Wpływ sił politycznych, niemożność zmierzenia się z trudnymi realiami przeszłości, granice polskiej tożsamości narodowej oraz manipulowanie pamięcią doprowadziły do próby stworzenia pojedynczej, liniowej narracji dziedzictwa, która nie odzwierciedla różnorodności pamięci, tym samym pokazując jej dysonans. Ponieważ wydarzenia z czasów drugiej wojny światowej, a także polsko-żydowskie relacje, ciągle wywołują burzliwe dyskusje, narracje zaprezentowane przez dwa najbardziej znaczące polskie muzea: POLIN Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich oraz Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, mogą pomóc w dogłębnym zrozumieniu jak dochodzi do wybiórczości pamięci, kształtowania się tożsamości narodowej oraz konstruowania dziedzictwa we współczesnej Polsce, jednocześnie wykazując jak dysonans jest nierozłączną składową tych narracji.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska, dysonansowe dziedzictwo, pamięć zbiorowa, tożsamość, muzea, Powstanie w Getcie Warszawskim, Powstanie Warszawskie

“Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”
- George Orwell, 1984

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Introduction and Historical Context

This chapter will introduce the research that will be conducted regarding the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. It will introduce the topic, the main and sub-research questions that will be answered, and an outline of the chapters. The introduction will briefly provide the motivation for why this research was conducted and the main objectives to achieve. Additionally, a historical context will be provided for both uprisings that occurred in Warsaw, Poland. This will impart readers with the necessary background to understand how these events unfolded and the impact they had on both Polish Jews and non-Jewish Poles alike.

Introduction

Collective memory is a cornerstone in the creation of national heritage and identity. The narrative of the past plays a key role in the image of the future a nation strives for. Specific periods in history, especially those of wartime, serve as fundamental events in the creation of heritage, collective memory, and national identity as they are used to link the present to the past.¹ For Poland, the Second World War served as a cornerstone for the concretion of national identity and heritage in the post-war era. Nazi Germany sought to systematically destroy the entirety of the Polish nation as they were deemed ‘subhuman’.² The Nazi's plan to exterminate the Polish nation triggered a response amongst the Poles to protect and defend their culture, heritage, and identity, sentiments that are perpetuated to this day. National uprisings against occupying forces are immortalized in the collective memory to represent the comradeship and fighting spirit of the nation and its people. These narratives are often woven to reclaim national identity and heritage. This is the case of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising by the Polish Home Army. An event commemorated and remembered with pride decades later, the Warsaw ‘44 Uprising is a pinnacle point in the construction of post-war Polish identity and heritage. Often remembered on a lesser, distinctly different scale but equally a formidable act of resistance was the 1943 Ghetto Uprising by Warsaw’s Jews.

¹ Danielle Drozdowski, Emma Waterton, and Shanti Sumartojo, “Cultural memory and identity in the context of war: Experiential, place-based and political concerns,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 101, no. 1 (2019): 252-253.

² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Poles: Victims of the Nazi Era,” USF, accessed on July 26, 2022, <https://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/people/USHMMPOL.HTM>.

To understand how one group's heritage is formed, it is important to examine how narratives that deviate from those officially perpetuated by the dominant group have traditionally been and continue to be excluded from that formation. The storytelling or narratives constructed in the museums is used to represent the past and structure the diversity. Narratives are used to try to connect the individual pieces together to construct a unified account, but history is not indisputable.³ The Warsaw Rising of 1944 is a core event in contemporary Polish collective memory and heritage of the contemporary Polish nation, but the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 remains largely absent from those narratives. The starting point for this research is established at the noticeable absence of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising from the dominant narratives constructed in Polish museums, reflecting its absence in the heritage.

Many scholars have researched the importance of the Warsaw Uprising for the construction of Polish heritage and identity⁴, as the Ghetto Uprising was for Europe's Jews. But there is an absence of a comparison between the two that seeks to understand why one is revered within Polish heritage and the other is relegated to a faded narrative. This gap in comparative research is extended to museum exhibits in contemporary Poland. Museums are one of many spaces where heritage is constructed, identity is negotiated, and memory is simultaneously commemorated and absent. The narratives constructed within contemporary Polish museums often illustrate the inherent dissonance within spaces of memory and heritage-making regarding the Polish Jewish minority and the history of Warsaw during the Second World War. It speaks to two significant issues. The first is the inherent dissonance that emerges in Polish heritage through the elevation of the 1944 Warsaw Rising and the absence of the 1943 Ghetto Uprising in commemorations and remembrance tied to collective memory. The second is the larger issue of who is essentially considered part of the Polish 'imagined community' through identification with the collective memory and heritage, whether considered as a member of the 'Us' vs 'Other'. A valued aspect of Polish heritage is the resilience of the people under occupation, but some struggles for freedom are more important and relevant for the creation of the dominant group's heritage, and thus its national identity.

³ Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 5-8.

⁴ Scholars include Norman Davies, Monika Zychlinska, Eric Fontana, and Marta Kuskowska-Buzdan.

This specific case study can contribute to the wider field of dissonant heritage, identity politics, and collective memory through a specific lens. One that specifically examines how historically persecuted ethnic and religious minorities fit into a nation's heritage, and thus its identity. The Warsaw '44 Uprising has often been used as an example of the resilience of the Polish people and the rejection of Nazi occupation, in both domestic and international dialogues. To an extent, the Warsaw Ghetto '43 Uprising has been included when issues of collaboration or the ever-tense conversations around concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Poland are rekindled. Issues of historic anti-Semitism within Poland have been a tense topic, even impacting the establishment of the POLIN Museum of Polish Jews which sits at the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. This leads me to question how divergent narratives regarding the uprisings are constructed in museums, and how those narratives illustrate the inherent dissonance of heritage within contemporary Poland.

Research Questions

In two historic displays of resilience, bravery, and rejection of Nazi occupation, I seek to solve what lies at the core of why one uprising is remembered more than another whilst contributing to the field of heritage, identity, and memory politics. The central question formulated to guide this research is as follows:

How do the museum narratives constructed to commemorate the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1944 Warsaw Uprising illustrate the inherent dissonance of contemporary Polish heritage?

The cases that will be analyzed to answer this research question are the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1944 Warsaw Rising, both taking place in Warsaw, Poland. Though this research question identifies the core objective of the research, the inherent dissonance of the heritage surrounding commemoration narratives constructed about the uprisings, there are other factors that need to be acknowledged and addressed. This is the reasoning behind the creation of additional sub-questions to fill in the conceptual and situational background of the primary research question.

Sub-Questions	Justification	Primary Data Used
How does dissonant heritage emerge from divergent narratives?	The objective of this question is to establish the conceptual framework for dissonant	-Narratives faded out from those constructed in the museum

	heritage and its reliance upon the emergence of divergent narratives. In answering this question, the conceptual context will be established on how dissonant narratives emerge to understand how it is then produced or reproduced in contemporary Poland.	-Relying upon: discourse constructed in the museums on the narratives, research by other sociologists and historians, and conceptual framework established for dissonant heritage in this research.
When and by what means are the uprisings commemorated?	This question is included to further support the use of museums as the primary medium for examining how the uprisings are commemorated. Specifically, analyzing when they are commemorated, in what capacity, and what tools or artifacts are used to weave the commemorative narrative.	-Commemoration ceremonies for both events (focusing mainly on the museum commemorations). -During these commemorations, what is the symbolic imagery used.
How are the uprisings integrated into the discourse on the construction of contemporary Polish national identity? -Is the memory of the Ghetto Uprising included in this narrative? -What is the influence of the contemporary political dimension?	As memory, identity, and heritage are intrinsically connected to one another, which will be explored further on, this question is included to analyze how these specific uprisings are present or absent in the creation of Polish national identity. The added backup questions provide specific points to address, namely the specific inclusion or absence of the Ghetto Uprising and the ever-present political dimension to memory.	-Museum exhibits (including written text, artifacts chosen, and other imagery, i.e., pictures, videos, national symbols). -Articles from well-established researchers both Polish (original language) and other Europeans.

Historical Context

In this section, historical backgrounds for both the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Brief summaries of the uprisings are given to provide readers with the historical background and context for the events that are included in exhibitions in the contemporary Polish museums that are analyzed in this research

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943

In October of 1940, the occupying Nazi German forces established Europe's largest ghetto in Warsaw. Prior to the outbreak of the war in 1939, Warsaw had a vibrant Jewish

community, about one-third of the city's total population. But on September 1, 1939, the peace was broken as the Jewish community became the prime target of brutal Nazi German policies in occupied Poland. Some of the first measures implemented by the Nazis include harsh laws stripping Jews of political, social, and economic rights as well as forced visual identification with the Star of David on an armband.⁵ The repressions against Jews would only mount as their human rights were stripped from them as the days went by, but the establishment of a ghetto marked a new bloody beginning.

The formation of the Warsaw Ghetto was decreed on October 2, 1940, by the Nazi Governor of Warsaw, Ludwig Fischer. Warsaw's entire Jewish population, about 375,000 people, was squeezed into an area that was situated on a mere 2.4% of the city's total surface area.⁶ Not only would the ghetto house Warsaw's Jews but it would also absorb thousands of Jews from other parts of Nazi-occupied Poland. In time, the Warsaw Ghetto would become the largest in Europe with over 450,000 living behind its walls by the beginning of 1941. The conditions behind the ghetto walls were horrid, with disease running rampant, severe overcrowding, and widespread starvation. The appalling conditions within the ghetto walls produced grim results, about 92,000 Jews died between October 1940 and July 1942 as a result of starvation, disease, and executions.⁷ The inspiration behind launching an uprising would come after the targeting of Jews marked a dark turn in 1942.

On July 22, 1942 'Gross-Aktion Warsaw' was implemented to deport the Warsaw ghetto's Jews to Treblinka, a Nazi extermination camp.⁸ 'Gross-Aktion Warsaw' marked the beginning of a deadly chapter for Warsaw's Jews as it was part of a larger Nazi plan known as the 'Final Solution' that sought to rid Europe of its Jewish population. Treblinka's extermination camp was the primary receiver of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, equipped with gas chambers aimed at killing as many people as possible. By September 1942, at least 85% of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto were killed in Treblinka.⁹ As news of the mass killings of Jews from Treblinka

⁵ "Warsaw Ghetto," Yad Vashem, accessed March 12, 2022, <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/ghettos/warsaw.html>.

⁶ "Warsaw," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 12, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/warsaw>.

⁷ "Daily Life in the Warsaw Ghetto," Imperial War Museum, accessed March 12, 2022, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/daily-life-in-the-warsaw-ghetto>.

⁸ Imperial War Museum, "Daily Life."

⁹ "Deportations To and From the Warsaw Ghetto," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/deportations-to-and-from-the-warsaw-ghetto>.

to Chełmno reached Warsaw, sentiments of a rebellion grew.¹⁰ The deportations of hundreds of thousands of Jews from the ghetto served as a catalyst, spurring the remaining population to take up arms against the Nazis in a final act of defiance by leading an uprising in 1943. The decision to begin an uprising was further supported after leaders received word that the Germans were planning the full liquidation of the remaining Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto.¹¹

On April 19, 1943, after years of living in horrific conditions, the murder of innocents, and the deportation of hundreds of thousands of people, the remaining Jews led a courageous uprising. Though it was clear the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was doomed to fail, its participants knew their fate would end in death either way, many viewed it as dying with dignity. Behind the organization and execution of the Ghetto Uprising were two groups: the Jewish Combat Organization (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, ŻOB*) and the Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy, ŻZW*).¹² The decision to spark an uprising was not taken lightly, organizers and combatants recognized that the uprising would be a collective suicide mission, as no triumph over the Nazis could be achieved. The ŻOB and ŻZW faced considerable challenges, both morally and logistically. The realization that armed resistance would lead to the liquidation of the remaining Jewish survivors, acknowledging the lack of substantial armaments, and the acceptance of death permeated the debate on the planned uprising. The situation grew more desperate as realization set in that Nazi Germany had plans to wipe out the entirety of the Polish Jewish community. This solemn acknowledgment ignited flames of rebellion in the Warsaw Ghetto, most notably articulated by a Zionist leader who met with Jan Karski in 1943. This Zionist leader, whose name may have been A. Berman, said to Jan Karski, “The ghetto is going to go up in flames. We are not going to die in slow torment but fighting. We will declare war on Germany – the most hopeless declaration of war that has ever been made.”¹³ Even for those organizing, it was clear that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising would be their final act of resistance. Word reached the ŻOB that German forces were planning to liquidate the ghetto, prompting the group to begin official preparations for the uprising and warn civilians to seek safety.¹⁴ About

¹⁰ Marian Apfelbaum, *Two Flags: Return to the Warsaw Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publish House, 2007), 79.

¹¹ Apfelbaum, *Two Flags*, 199.

¹² “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 14, 2022, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/warsaw-ghetto-uprising>.

¹³ Jan Karski, *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World*, (Milton Keynes: Penguin Random House UK, 2019), 356.

¹⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.”

750 Jewish insurgents launched an uprising in the ghetto using guerilla warfare tactics, making it the first large-scale urban rebellion against occupying Nazi forces.¹⁵ Though not all Jews actively took up arms, civilians resisted in their own ways by hunkering down and disregarding the rules established by German forces. Jewish fighters were severely outnumbered by the larger and superior armed German forces that numbered a couple of thousands of troops. Despite the brave attempts by the Jewish resistance fighters, the uprising was harshly suppressed by the German forces on May 16, 1943. It is estimated that about 7,000 Jews were killed during the nearly month-long uprising, whilst German casualties numbered only a few hundred. Jürgen Stroop, the SS and Police Leader of Warsaw, infamously declared in his Report back to Berlin, “The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw is no more!”¹⁶ In an act of symbolic power and defeat of Warsaw’s Jews, Stroop’s forces blew up the Great Synagogue of Warsaw.¹⁷

As punishment for their resistance, the Warsaw Ghetto was entirely liquidated over the next three months. The remaining nearly 50,000 Jews were either killed on the spot or sent to the extermination camps at Treblinka or Majdanek.¹⁸ After the complete removal of the remaining Jews, the ghetto was razed to the ground. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising has been viewed as the single greatest act of resistance by Jews during the Second World War. The impact of such monumental resistance in the face of a far stronger enemy has led to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising being marked a holiday in Israel and commemorated in cities across Europe.¹⁹

Warsaw Uprising of 1944

After five years of Nazi German occupation and the impending ‘liberation’ by Soviet forces, the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) had begun to plan for a significant military operation in Warsaw. A year after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Polish Home Army had begun collecting arms and formulating a military strategy to regain control of Warsaw. Support for an uprising in Warsaw was not wholeheartedly supported by all Polish politicians, fearing the

¹⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.”

¹⁶ “The Stroop Report: its background, significance and whereabouts,” Institute of National Remembrance, last modified November 10, 2020, <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/6781,The-Stroop-Report-its-background-significance-and-whereabouts.html>.

¹⁷ At one time, the Great Synagogue of Warsaw (*Wielka Synagoga w Warszawie*) was the largest in the world. It was representative of how large the Jewish community was in Poland before the Second World War. Its destruction is symbolic of the destruction of Poland’s Jewish community.

¹⁸ Apfelbaum, *Two Flags*, 230.

¹⁹ Apfelbaum, *Two Flags*, 245.

outnumbered and weaker Polish Home Army forces could not be victorious, with the potential of hundreds of thousands of civilian lives lost. Much work had to be done to convince the London-based Polish government-in-exile of launching a military campaign in the city, especially as Allied support was shaky at best. The Polish Home Army initiated Operation Tempest in March 1944, the prelude to the Warsaw Uprising, to liberate and reclaim cities and territories occupied by Germany.²⁰ This military operation sought to push out the remaining German forces and reinstitute Polish independence over their territories before Soviet forces continued their push westward to Berlin. For four months, the AK engaged in fights with German forces in which they faced a variety of strategic and political shortfalls. The AK liberated cities such as Lublin and Lwów, amongst others in the east, from the Germans and fell under the control of Soviet forces. Despite assistance by the AK, Soviet officials labeled them as the enemy and refused to give control of liberated territories to the London-based Polish government-in-exile.²¹ Senior Polish military officials were forced to acknowledge that they would need to conduct a large-scale operation in Warsaw. With no time to spare, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski made the unilateral decision to authorize the Warsaw Uprising. Senior officials in the AK estimated that their forces could hold on for only a few days, contingent upon the swift removal of German forces and the aid of arriving Soviet forces. The day on which the Uprising would begin was unclear, but Polish officials were forced to make a decision as news spread of the Soviets arrival at the Vistula River. On August 1, 1944, at 17:00, the Battle for Warsaw began as Polish insurgent forces sought to liberate the city.

The main objective of the Polish Home Army forces was to drive out the Germans before the Soviet army entered the city, which would make Warsaw one of the first major European cities to be liberated. A primary factor in the rapid timing of the Warsaw Uprising was the imminent arrival of Soviet forces, whom many Poles hoped would support the partisans in defeating the Nazi forces. A secondary factor, but just as important, was the desire of Home Army forces to reinstate Polish sovereignty under the London-based government-in-exile rather than under the Polish Committee of National Liberation, which was effectively a Soviet puppet government. Civilians had no time to seek safety as tens of thousands of Polish fighters bearing

²⁰ Jennifer Popowycz, "Prelude to the Warsaw Uprising: Operation Tempest," *The National WWII Museum New Orleans*, August 23, 2021, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/operation-tempest-eastern-front>.

²¹ Popowycz, "Prelude to the Warsaw Uprising."

white-and-red armbands initiated the bombardment of German strongpoints throughout Warsaw. There were over 48,000 insurgents that fought in the Uprising, the overwhelming majority of them were young people with very little combat experience.²² On August 2nd, AK forces retook Stare Miasto, Śródmieście, Powiśle, and Czerniaków, all strategic areas of the capital city. German officials were enraged by the uprising, giving orders to carry out the mass killing of civilians. On August 5th, German soldiers began a multi-day killing spree of civilians in the Wola district, known as ‘Black Saturday’.²³ It is estimated that between 50,000 to 65,000 men, women, and children were killed as a result.²⁴ German forces were given orders to shoot on the spot, regardless of whether it was a civilian or an insurgent. By August 6th, the Home Army had made significant advances, retaking large swaths of Warsaw but was unable to fully drive the superior German forces out.²⁵ The uprising in Warsaw was a “David vs. Goliath” scenario as the Home Army was significantly less armed, with no heavy artillery and no air power.²⁶ As Polish forces fought on, Soviet forces sat opposite the Vistula refusing to support the resistance in the uprising. The United Kingdom and the United States attempted to deliver aid to Warsaw by airdrops, but the Soviets barred the Allies from using their airfields and airspace, forcing a reroute through Italy that proved disastrous.²⁷ Men, women, and children actively participated in the uprising, serving either as armed insurgents or in a supportive capacity by providing medical care and food. The Home Army forces continued to fight in an impressive display of resistance for 63 days, until the Warsaw Uprising collapsed on October 2, 1944.

On October 2, 1944, the Polish Home Army forces surrendered to the Germans in Ożarów, marking the end of a two-month campaign to liberate Warsaw. Polish Home Army forces were unable to sustain the armed conflict without greater assistance from Allied forces and the Soviets that witnessed from across the Vistula.²⁸ At least 16,000 Polish Home Army

²² “Powstanie Warszawskie – bój o wolną Polskę,” Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, accessed March 16, 2022, <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/41192,Powstanie-Warszawskie-boj-o-wolna-Polske.html>.

²³ “Warsaw Uprising,” Warsaw Tour, accessed March 16, 2022, <https://warsawtour.pl/en/warsaw-uprising/>.

²⁴ “5 sierpnia – ‘Czarna sobota,’” Narodowe Centrum Kultury, last modified August 5, 2017, <https://nck.pl/en/projekty-kulturalne/aktualnosci/5-sierpnia-czarna-sobota->

²⁵ Norman Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw*, (London: Pan Books, 2018), 248.

²⁶ Davis, *Rising '44*, 253.

²⁷ Jennifer Popowycz, “The Allied Responses to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944,” *The National WWII Museum New Orleans*, January 18, 2022, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/allied-responses-warsaw-uprising-1944>.

²⁸ Lt. Col. (ppłk) Ryszard Najczuk, “Powstanie Warszawskie 1944 r.,” *Wojsko Polskie*, <https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/powstanie-warszawskie/>.

fighters, about 10,000 German soldiers, and over 200,000 civilians were killed.²⁹ The Germans were ruthless in their punishment against the Poles in Warsaw. Any surviving fighters and civilians were deported to death camps in occupied Poland. Warsaw was razed to the ground, destroying every remaining building in the capital city, and looting its cultural heritage. It was not until January 17, 1945, that Soviet forces “liberated” Warsaw during their push west towards Berlin.³⁰ After the Soviets claimed victory over Warsaw, they wasted no time in establishing a Soviet puppet state with the installation of a communist government known as the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*). The Warsaw Uprising of 1944 became a symbol of the brave resistance of Polish nationalists during the Second World War that fought to reaffirm Poland’s commitment to and status as a great democracy of Europe.

²⁹ “Warsaw Revolt begins,” This Day in History, History.com, last modified August 1, 2021, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/warsaw-revolt-begins>.

³⁰ History.com, “Warsaw Revolt begins.”

1. Conceptual Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

A plethora of scholars have sought to dissect and conceptualize collective memory, heritage, and identity, resulting in many varied academic perspectives. This chapter will explore the pre-existing literature on the three most relevant aforementioned concepts to this research paper. In the foundation of our national identities, heritage, and societies lies a collective memory, an invisible thread of remembrances and commemorations of the past that tie those communities together. Narratives are woven from these memories to establish a dominant heritage, but dissonance is inherent as heritage remains malleable and prone to manipulation. Upon the foundations of memory and heritage, national identity is constructed by individuals of a cultural community. Heritage, memory, and identity are deeply intertwined with one another, making it necessary to discuss all when attempting to research one. In this chapter, the concepts of collective memory, identity, and heritage will be discussed in length by drawing from the work of researchers before. By discussing and analyzing the pre-existing literature, the conceptual basis for each will be formed that is most relevant to this research.

1.2 Collective Memory

Attached to history but distinctly different, memory assumes varied characteristics that illustrate its relevance to both heritage and identity formation. Maria Stepanova ruminated on this difference, “Memory is handed down, history is written down; memory is concerned with justice, history with preciseness; memory moralizes, history tallies up and corrects; memory is personal, history dreams of objectivity; memory is based not on knowledge, but on experience.”³¹ Stepanova attempts to capture how memory is a selective, deeply personal experience that is emotionally charged and engrained in the community, traits that differ from the objectivity that history traditionally strives for. Andrzej Szpociński ruminated on this aspect of memory, writing, “Let us assume that collective memory is what remains from the past in the experiences of a group member or what they make their past – a collection of memories about events (real or imaginary), experienced directly or indirectly in which knowledge is passed down from generation to generation through tradition.”³² A unitary conceptualization of memory, as a

³¹ Maria Stepanova, *In Memory of Memory*, trans. Sasha Dugdale (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), 103.

³² Andrzej Szpociński, “Pamięć zbiorowa a mass media,” *Kultura Współczesna* nr. 4 (December 1999), https://www.nck.pl/upload/archiwum_kw_files/artykuly/4._andrzej_szpocinski_-_pamiec_zbiorowa_a_mass_media.pdf.

dozen different characterizations have emerged, such as official versus unofficial, private versus public, and local versus national.³³ For the purpose of this research, the most relevant conceptualization base is that of collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs defined collective memory as a selective process in which a community's shared interpretation of the past forms the foundation for its collective identity.³⁴ It accurately identifies how collective memory is a selective process that is highly influenced by the contemporary needs of a community. The selectivity of memory was echoed by Michael Rowlands who wrote, "These histories can become distorted and permeated (often deliberately) with the inaccuracies and myths during the selection process."³⁵ Halbwachs' work on collective memory has served as a solid base upon which further reinterpretations of the concept have been built and have led to the development of a sophisticated field of study. Alon Confino wrote, "...memory as a study of collective mentality provides a comprehensive view of culture and society."³⁶ One such interpretation is that provided by Slawomir Kapralski who identified two main components rooted in the practices of remembrance and commemoration that produce collective memory, *mneme*, and *anamnesis*. *Mneme* is formed by individual acts of remembrance that are comprised of the collective reminiscence of the past that is preserved and shared.³⁷ *Anamnesis* is formed by the conscious decision to include conditioned recollections of past events in our core memories that produce commemorative practices.³⁸ The combination of *mneme* and *anamnesis* produces social (collective) memory, relying on the two core factors of individual remembrances and cultural frames. It is through individual remembrances that a community's collective memory is formed, as its members recall specific past events that are shared and explored more thoroughly with one another.³⁹ Cultural frames provide social institutions within a community the ability to decide

³³ Sara McDowell, "Heritage, Memory, and Identity," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 40.

³⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).
<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/O/bo3619875.html>

³⁵ Michael Rowlands, "Remembering to Forget: Sublimation as Sacrifice in War Memorials," in A. Forty and S. Küchler, *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 129-145, quoted in Sarah McDowell, "Heritage Memory, and Identity," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 43.

³⁶ Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History," *The American Historical Review* 102, no 5 (December 1997): 1389.

³⁷ Slawomir Kapralski, "Jews and the Holocaust in Poland's Memoryscapes: An Inquiry into Transcultural Amnesia," in *The Twentieth Century in European Memory*, ed. Tea Sindbæk Anderson & Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, (BRILL, 2017), 171.

³⁸ Kapralski, "Jews and the Holocaust," 171.

³⁹ Kapralski, "Jews and the Holocaust," 171.

whether to include or exclude different versions of social memory, those diverse versions rooted in individual remembrances. The memories that become part of the collective memory are decided upon by the institutions and cultural frameworks that control the discussion around them, how they will be used, and whether it is commemorated or not by the community.⁴⁰ Barbara Szacka, a prominent Polish sociologist wrote extensively on the concept of collective memory within the context of Polish history and heritage. In Poland, Szacka identified that collective memory („*pamięci zbiorowej*”) is also not a unitary concept, rather it exists alongside other conceptualizations expanded upon by scholars from around the world, such as “public memory” („*pamięć publiczną*”) and “cultural memory” („*pamięć kulturową*”).⁴¹ Public memory has been defined by Matthew Houdek and Kendall R. Phillips as recollections of the past that are shared between members of a community. These past recollections are often imperfect and are molded by what individuals remember, how the memory is constructed, and what is forgotten.⁴² Cultural memory has been defined by Jan Assman as being, “formed by symbolic heritage embodied in texts, rites, monuments, celebrations, and objects that serve as mnemonic riggers to initiate meanings.”⁴³ Public and cultural memory are relevant to briefly mention within this research as they accentuate memory’s connection to identity and heritage whilst magnifying the dilemma that connects all variations of memory together. Though there are different names attributed to these concepts, Szacka argues that each shares the same dilemma of merging the past and present together which results in the creation of a unified narrative for the Polish national community. Szacka argued that collective memory constructs a narrative of the past that is based on a perception that draws upon generational information that is memorized and shared from a diverse range of sources by individuals.⁴⁴ The dynamic essence of memory is a core component of Szacka’s conceptualization, emphasizing how it is molded to fit the beliefs and objectives of a particular cultural community. This collective memory emerges when individual

⁴⁰ Kapralski, “Jews and the Holocaust,” 171.

⁴¹ Barbara Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć mit* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Scholar, 2006), quoted in Grażyna Gliwka, “Collective memory - its functions and mechanisms of communication in the context of the research by Barbara Szacka and Andrzej Szpociński” (Social Dissertation, 2019).

⁴² Matthew Houdek and Kendall R. Phillips, “Public Memory,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, January 25, 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-181>.

⁴³ Richard Meckien, “Cultural memory: the link between past, present, and future,” *Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo*, June 3, 2017, <http://www.iea.usp.br/en/news/cultural-memory-the-link-between-past-present-and-future>.

⁴⁴ Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć mit*.

members of a cultural community share a unified narrative of the past that has been socially produced and promoted.⁴⁵ This narrative often consists of both real and mythical events that are core cultural cornerstones. In further support of memory's dynamic nature, Szacka argues that it bears witness to a variety of diverse actions, such as obfuscation, manipulation, embellishing, and dramatization. Just as Kapralski distinguished the factors of *mneme* and *anamnesis* that led to the creation of collective memory, Szacka identified three elements: individual memory, community memory derived from individuals' shared experiences [social memory], and the official transmitted perception of the past enshrined in commemorative practices [national/political memory].⁴⁶ The key takeaway from Szacka distinguishing these three elements is the inherent multifaceted qualities of collective memory. These elements may be used as a way to determine if an event is included in the collective memory of a society. In the case of the Warsaw Uprising, the event has been immortalized in the collective memory of Polish society as it is rooted in both individual and wider public memory. Individual memory of the events in 1944 has been passed down from one generation to the next, forming a base upon which the Polish state has institutionalized the memories through museums and monuments. Szacka's perspective of collective memory is further supported by fellow Polish sociologist, Piotr Kwiatkowski. Kwiatkowski argues in favor of emphasizing the difference between history and memory whilst encouraging a broader definition that may encompass divergent conceptualizations rooted in opposing theoretical frameworks as the area of collective memory study lacks an academically institutionalized structure.⁴⁷ Kwiatkowski argued that there are at least two different areas of social discourse where collective memory functions at the level of public discussions and those at the vernacular level. Collective memory at the level of public discussions consists of narratives or perspectives of the past that include input from citizens, academics, leaders, and so on being widely shared.⁴⁸ At the vernacular level, these perspectives of the past are shared by normal people who are influenced by their immediate surroundings.⁴⁹ The vernacular, or community member level, is important as it further reinforces the notion of

⁴⁵ Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć mit.*

⁴⁶ Szacka *Czas przeszły, pamięć mit.*

⁴⁷ Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji* (Warsaw: Scholar, 2008).

⁴⁸ Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski and Piotr H. Kosicki, "Guest Editor's Introduction: Collective Memory and Social Transition in Poland," *International Journal of Sociology* 36, no. 4, (Winter 2006/2007): 6, Taylor & Francis.

⁴⁹ Kwiatkowski & Kosicki, "Guest Editor's Introduction."

how collective memory is not a prescribed, single entity but rather constructed and molded by the perceptions of individuals from a community. Kwiatkowski's research reinforces Szacka's argument that collective memory is not a unitary concept with one influencing group or factor, but rather is multi-layered with a plethora of actors and processes involved. Non-direct social memory is often an important aspect at the core of a community's collective memory, especially memories of violence.

Violence and traumatic events from the 20th-century plague the collective memories of Polish Jews and non-Jewish Poles alike, so how does this impact the contemporary identity and heritages of both groups? Marianne Hirsch sought to answer this question in her book, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. In this book, Hirsch argued that severe trauma inflicted upon a group is passed down from one generation to the next, known as the theory of postmemory. Hirsch specifically defined postmemory as, "The relationship that the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behavior among which they grew up."⁵⁰ The argument that Hirsch makes is rooted in the idea that when a group experiences highly catastrophic, devastating events, that trauma is carried down through the generations and becomes a core characteristic of the community as a whole through non-direct social memory. Though postmemory is often contextualized in relation to Holocaust studies research, it is applicable to the research at hand as both the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Warsaw Uprising were highly traumatic events that had a significant impact on each of the communities. An important element of postmemory is that the events have preceded the contemporary era, though still permeate society's memories and heritage.⁵¹ These are events of the past with such a profound effect on the present that it plays a significant role in shaping contemporary narratives. The recalling of such events is not only used for political gain or national narrative weaving, but on an individual level as people seek to connect to their ancestors. Postmemory structures decontextualized memories as constituting parts of a community's collective memory. The current citizens of Poland do not directly remember the memory of the Warsaw Rising, rather it is mediated by the media and public discourse. With no direct access to the past, it calls to question how individuals choose what to remember and how

⁵⁰ Marianne Hirsch, "Postmemory," PostMemory.net, accessed on April 20, 2022, <https://postmemory.net>

⁵¹ Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no 1 (New York: Columbia University).

the meaning of this memory is transmitted through heritage. The acts of remembrance and commemoration act as rituals for descendants of those who lived during or took part in either of the uprisings to pay homage to their ancestors, reclaim their memory, reinforce their identity, strengthen their narrative of heritage, and construct a narrative as a generation of postmemory.

It is vital to make it abundantly clear at this point that the concept of memory in this research is not constructed as a tangible object, although there are such concepts as “sites of memory”, but rather a process that is continuously undergoing changes. Barbie Zelizer characterizes memory as a continuously changing process where the past is brought into the present, assuming different functions and roles depending on the period.⁵² The inherent fluidity of memory is a characterization that has been identified by other scholars after Zelizer. The malleability of memory is reiterated by Karen E. Till who proposes that it is a process constantly in fluctuation, negotiated not just by national groups, but also by institutions of heritage, community organizations, media, academics, and the government.⁵³ Till accurately identifies how multiple actors contribute to the creation of collective memory. As in the case of Poland, collective memory is molded by a variety of actors that are significantly influenced by the needs of the contemporary society or politics. Paul A. Shackel argued that the needs of a community’s contemporary society and politics serve as the basis for which public memory is constructed.⁵⁴ Public memory does not diverge significantly from the concept of collective memory, rather it serves as a further sub-conceptualization. Scholars often determine the boundaries and uses of public memory within a socio-political lens. Mike Allen conceptualizes public memory as a summary of the chosen parts of history that a community chooses to remember, providing accessibility to those memories within socio-political and cultural frameworks.⁵⁵ Interpretation is a key factor in the development of collective memory as individuals and officials of a community enact their own perceptions of past events that fit the narrative woven. Allen

⁵² Barbie Zelizer, “Reading the past against the grain: the shape of memory studies,” *Critical Studies Mass Communications* 12 (June 1995), quoted in Jeffrey Olick & Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From “Collective Memory” to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, (1998).

⁵³ Karen E. Till, “Staging the Past: Landscape Designs, Cultural Identity and Erinnerungspolitik at Berlin’s Neue Wache,” *Ecumene* 6, no. 3 (1999): 254, quoted in Sara McDowell, “Heritage Memory, and Identity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

⁵⁴ Paul A. Shackel, *Memory in Black and White* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), quoted in Sara McDowell, “Heritage Memory, and Identity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

⁵⁵ Roger C. Aden, “Public Memory,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, ed. By Mike Allen (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2017).

identifies selection and interpretation as two central processes to public memory, highlighting the idea of it as a fluid, communicative process. Memory as a communicative process is not only forged by collective remembering but also insinuates the existence of collective forgetting. Collective memory is produced by individuals sharing accounts of the past and passing them down. Communicating acts of remembrance is a highly selective process, often resulting in the loss of narratives that diverge or are not perceived to be relevant. William Hirst and Alin Coman wrote extensively on the concept of collective forgetting as a core aspect in the creation of collective memory, particularly on how the selectivity of memory produces it. A consequence of the selectivity of narratives being remembered or excluded is the phenomenon of collective forgetting.⁵⁶ One does not exist without the other, certain events are collectively remembered whilst others are collectively forgotten or changed in order to weave collective memory. It is at the individual level that collective remembering and forgetting first emerges. As certain events and narratives are selected over another at the dyadic level, this will have a noticeable impact on shaping the conversation of memory at the greater community level.⁵⁷ As this process of collective remembering and collective forgetting happens at both the dyadic and community levels, it has a greater impact on the formation and use of memory within public and official discourses.

Richard Cox defined public memory as the construction and utilization of the past by individual citizens as well as the government.⁵⁸ This approach places greater emphasis on the role and use of memory within a public context, such as in archives and museums. Cox views the terms ‘collective memory’ and ‘public memory’ as interchangeable, but specifically uses public memory throughout his research when discussing the impact it has on public displays of commemoration and remembrance. These displays of public memory often produce monuments, memorials, and museums. Cox’s own thesis is based upon John Bodnar’s research into public memory. Bodnar argues, “Public memory emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions.”⁵⁹ It is at this intersection that public memory emerges as a

⁵⁶ William Hirst & Alin Coman, “Building a collective memory: the case for collective forgetting,” *Current Opinion in Psychology* 23 (October 2018).

⁵⁷ Hirst & Coman, “Building a collective memory.”

⁵⁸ Richard J. Cox, “The Concept of Public Memory and Its Impact on Archival Public Programming,” *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 122-135.

⁵⁹ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13.

society must grapple with the core issues of its structure, past, present, and how it functions. Bodnar identified three discourses on public memory, communal, regional, and national; the most relevant is that of communal forums. Communal forums encompass the commemorations and ethnic-based celebrations of a particular community.⁶⁰ When examining public or collective memory within contemporary Poland, it is impossible to remove the ethnic element as it is intrinsically woven into its construction. Bodnar's identification of the role of communal forums brings forth the idea of a nationally constructed narrative of memory. The concepts of collective and public memory have been discussed in length, but there is one final important lens that must be discussed: national memory. The concept of 'national memory' focuses on the role that a state or government has in the creation of what is deemed an 'official' narrative of memory. Briefly touching upon national memory is important to illustrate how politics influences memory, imparting the creation of a nationally prescribed version of events. When discussing national memory, the conversation focuses on the role of the state in its formation. Rudy Koshar defined it as "in conjunction with official memory in that emanates from the state and its institutions, often representing the hegemonic needs and values of the general public."⁶¹ This conceptualization focuses on the construction and manipulation of memory by state officials to serve a particular focus. Sara McDowell expanded upon Koshar's thesis, focusing on the role of the nation-state as the gatekeeper of public commemoration in charge of the creation, maintenance, and funding of monuments and programs.⁶² For the case of Poland, it is important to acknowledge the role of national memory as contemporary Polish politics increasingly influences and molds memory for specific political objectives. The heightened role of the nation-state in determining the collective memory means that it carries the primary power to influence the narrative woven by picking and choosing the memories included. Symbols, places, and memories must meet commonly agreed-upon criteria in order to be included in the national narrative that influences both the processes of construction of national identity and heritage.

⁶⁰ Cox, "The Concept of Public Memory."

⁶¹ Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), quoted in Sara McDowell, "Heritage Memory, and Identity," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 40-41.

⁶² McDowell, "Heritage, Memory, and Identity," 40.

1.3 Formation of Identity

Identity, as memory and heritage, is a socially constructed phenomenon that provides both individuals and society with a sense of connection, sameness, and sense of self. Identity is constructed by a set of characteristics, beliefs, values, memories, and aspirations. Perhaps the most well-known conceptualization of identity emerged from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Though the main topic of his research explores nationalism, Anderson argues that the nation is socially constructed by individuals who identify as part of a community.⁶³ This imagined community essentially is a socially constructed identity made by individuals. Identification with this imagined community is heavily rooted in a shared perception of a collective memory. Though museums are the focus in the context of this study, it is important to acknowledge that there are multiple places where collective memory is negotiated and on display. Museums play a unique role in the development and sustenance of collective identity by recovering and regenerating the past. Fiona McLean acknowledged this in her research, arguing, "Museums can play a significant role in forging national identity."⁶⁴ McLean drew upon Anderson's work as she argued that museums act as a space where individuals of a nation present themselves as part of an imagined community by drawing from the past. Museums act as a space where identity is negotiated, as individuals and communities are constantly communicating and evolving. Often museums act as a tool to reinforce the boundaries of a particular community's identity, but more recently it has become a place for individuals to reflect on their own relation to identity and memory. Collective human memory and identity are intrinsically linked to one another, both drawing upon the existence of the other. Many academic researchers of sociology emphasize the importance of acknowledging memory in order to understand identity.

Jan Assmann's research focused on this theory, emphasizing the role of collective memory in what he deemed, "the concretion of identity." Assmann defines this phenomenon, "Cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity. The objective manifestations of cultural memory are defined through a kind of identificatory determination in a positive ("We are this") or in a negative ("That's our

⁶³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983).

⁶⁴ Fiona McLean, "Museums and the Representation of Identity," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 285.

opposite”) sense.”⁶⁵ Identity is bound together by a community’s shared association or separation from a set of memories and values. Assmann’s conceptualization reinforces the idea that a group’s identity is reliant on the establishment of collective memory as well touching on the notion of in-group vs. out-group. The narrative of in-group vs. out-group categorizations is a core component of identity formation, in the case of Poland, it is perceived as non-Jewish Poles (in-group) vs. Jews (out-group). The in-group will be bound together by a shared set of experiences and perceptions. If the events that happen to one group do not happen to the other, it is perceived as not being detrimental to the collective identity. Slawomir Kapralski identified this in the case of Poland, by looking at how non-Jewish Poles did not feel that the fate of the Jews during the Second World War had an impact on their own identity.⁶⁶ The identity of non-Jewish Poles is perceived to have different characteristics than that of the Jews, creating a separation between the in-group and out-group. Kapralski examined how the different collective memories and experiences of the different groups led to distinct identities, arguing that collective identity is based upon shared criteria. The impact of the idea of in-group and out-group will be explored in greater depth later in the research.

John Tosh’s research echoes the aforementioned works by arguing that a community’s collective identity is woven from shared interpretations of the past that have connected the group to one another. Tosh claimed that the focus of past events in molding a group’s self-image is concentrated around significant symbolic moments and major climacterics.⁶⁷ Tosh’s argument is important because reinforces the connection between collective memory and the formation of collective identity. Identity can often be described as a sense of “sameness” that is sustained over time by a combination of past events and future aspirations for a group. Paul Connerton’s thesis touched on this idea as he wrote about a group’s active remembering of the past and the selectiveness of the events are based upon “an assumed identity.”⁶⁸ Connerton’s argument diverged slightly from Tosh and Assmann, focusing rather on how collective memory is shaped and defined by the group’s perceived notions of identity. Barbara Szacka also focused on this as

⁶⁵ Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 130.

⁶⁶ Kapralski, “Jews and the Holocaust,” 177.

⁶⁷ John Tosh, *In Pursuit of History* (London: Longman Press, 1991), quoted in Sara McDowell, “Heritage, Memory, and Identity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 41.

⁶⁸ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3, quoted in Sara McDowell, “Heritage, Memory, and Identity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 44.

she recognized that collective memory acts as a function of identity. Szacka argued that a group's identity is developed from a collective awareness of its past and its role in creating "a strong feeling of who and what we have been."⁶⁹ Szacka's argument simultaneously reinforced arguments made by Assmann, Tosh, and Connerton whilst also expanding upon it by contributing to the conversation of how collective memory ultimately functions to form the basis of national identity and provide legitimacy. David Lowenthal's research, which came first, contains similar arguments to that of Szacka, but simply uses slightly different terminology by referring to collective memory as a set of beliefs. Lowenthal argued, "These collective beliefs play a fundamental role in securing a sense of togetherness and cultural solidarity which is vital in the formation and legitimization of any national identity."⁷⁰ These 'beliefs' are derived from the perception of the past that members of a group have identified with and connected themselves to. Jacek Nowak blended elements from Lowenthal and Szacka's research by stating, "...memory is the basis of the identity of individuals and societies."⁷¹ This statement is interesting when situated in the context of the previous arguments made by researchers. With this, Nowak is essentially arguing that without memory, identity would not exist as it has nothing to draw upon. For the most part, Nowak's thesis is relevant, but it, unfortunately, leaves out other key processes that serve to form a group's identity, particularly heritage. It does incorporate how identity is not solely at the level of the individual, but also its importance within the society as a whole. The third final piece in the conceptual mosaic of this research that is woven together with memory and identity is heritage.

1.4 Role of Heritage

Heritage as a concept is still undergoing a plethora of debates and conversations by academics in a bid to fully understand it and come to some sort of mutual agreement on its boundaries. As a relatively new field of study, the conceptualization of heritage is still very much in the process. This allows for greater flexibility and an opportunity to contribute new ideas and theories to the conversation surrounding heritage. Heritage has been defined by Gregory John

⁶⁹ Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć mit*, 19.

⁷⁰ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 44, quoted in Sara McDowell, "Heritage, Memory, and Identity," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 41.

⁷¹ Jacek Nowak, *Spoleczne reguly pamietania. Antropologia pamieci zbiorowej* (Kraków: NOMOS, 2011), quoted in Grażyna Gliwka, "Collective memory - its functions and mechanisms of communication in the context of the research by Barbara Szacka and Andrzej Szpociński" (Social Dissertation, 2019), 19.

Ashworth and Brian Graham as, “Widely accepted as the selective use of the past for contemporary purposes.”⁷² Ashworth and Graham’s conceptualization of heritage has often been commonly accepted as the starting point upon which further research may be conducted. Heritage, just as memory and identity, is a highly selective, man-made process that is manipulated in order to curate the narrative that will be spun by a particular community. As Lowenthal wrote, “Far from being fatally predetermined or God-given, heritage is in large measure our own marvelously malleable creation.”⁷³ Just as collective memory and identity, heritage is a socially constructed concept that is subjugated to manipulation for the contemporary needs of a community. Heritage has a narrative-driven nature, which Kastytis Rudokas and Silvija Čižaitė-Rudokiene observed as “...how myth manifests itself in the temporal layers of discourse through collective decision-making process within cultures and in places.”⁷⁴ Rudokas and Čižaitė-Rudokiene identified a mythical element as one of the most important phenomena of the heritage process. Mythical narratives are built using a linear story, more prone to manipulation, and highly selective in how the story is told and what is included. This type of mythical narrative creation in heritage is used to support the contemporary objectives of a group.

One of the most principal elements of heritage to note is that it is a phenomenon of the present with roots in the past. Sara McDowell acknowledged this selectivity and contemporary nature by defining it as, “an aggregation of myths, values, and inheritances determined and defined by the needs of societies in the present.”⁷⁵ McDowell, Ashworth, and Graham all make a valuable point about the importance of the contemporary context when analyzing heritage; though its roots are in the past, its purpose is to serve the community’s main goals and aspirations for the present and future. Heritage has largely been hand-selected to fit the needs of the contemporary narratives being woven. Memories, values, and beliefs are selected by man to construct the portrayal of heritage. David C. Harvey argued that heritage is a value-laden concept that is subjective and filtered with reference to the present. Heritage is largely a present-centered

⁷² Gregory John Ashworth and Brian Graham, “Senses of place, senses of time and heritage,” in *A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage*, ed. Sheila Watson (Leicester: Leicester Readers in Museum Studies, 2005), 7.

⁷³ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 226, quoted in David C. Harvey, “The History of Heritage,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 21.

⁷⁴ Kastytis Rudokas and Silvija Čižaitė-Rudokiene, “Narrative-Based Nature of Heritage: Between Myth and Discourses: Case of Šiluva Place-Making in Progress,” *Land* 11, 47 (2022): 1.

⁷⁵ McDowell, “Heritage, Memory, and Identity,” 37.

process that is incredibly malleable and subjected to constant power struggles. These power struggles and narratives of heritage often take place at tangible sites of memory.

Heritage is not only constructed from abstract concepts, but tangible manifestations that emerge from museums, monuments, and memorials. Museums provide a space in which visitors are given the opportunity to interact with and interpret heritage. From visual displays and audio to lighting and layout, museums are designed for individuals to journey through their own personal interpretations and experiences in an attempt to understand the heritage presented. These tangible representations of heritage are used by contemporary societies to weave a specific narrative, most often done by those in power of a dominant group, often making it a theoretical space of struggles for power. Those who control the narrative, control the heritage, memory, and identity.

Heritage draws upon notions of identity and collective memory, but a clear distinction exists. Dacia Viejo-Rose identified the boundary between memory and heritage, writing, “Memory is tied to experience whether lived in the first person or learned from another, while heritage is tied to values and a process of meaning-making that identifies the signifiers of those values in sites, tangible or otherwise.”⁷⁶ These sites are injected with meaning, becoming ‘sacred’ and part of the fabric of a community’s heritage where theoretical power struggles to control the narratives play out. McDowell argued that this power struggle of heritage largely occurs at sites of memory, including museums, monuments, and symbolic spaces, writing that they are, “static and permanent reminders of the past concretized in the present, often constructed by national governments to represent hegemonic values that cultivate notions of national identity and frame ideas and histories of the nation.”⁷⁷ McDowell’s thesis argues that heritage is the culmination of aspects of identity, memories, and places that are injected with meaning. This idea of the importance of ‘place’ to heritage is echoed by Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto. Kuusisto wrote, “‘Places’ constitute significant sites that have been invested with meaning.”⁷⁸ When talking about ‘places’, these are locations that are assigned meaning and symbolic value to a community. This meaning and value given to a place manifest into a tangible characterization of heritage for

⁷⁶ Dacia Viejo-Rose, “Cultural heritage and memory: untangling the ties that bind,” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 4, no. 2 (2015), <https://cultureandhistory.revistas.csic.es/index.php/cultureandhistory/article/view/83/275>.

⁷⁷ McDowell, “Heritage, Memory, and Identity,” 37.

⁷⁸ Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto, “Politics of place and resistance: the case of Northern Ireland,” *Nordia Geographical* 28, no. 2 (1999): 15.

a community, a location where it may be dissected and interpreted. Where the Warsaw Ghetto once stood, the POLIN Museum and the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes were constructed as a tangible reminder of the decimated Jewish community of Warsaw. The Warsaw Uprising Museum in the Wola district, the Warsaw Uprising Monument in Krasieński Square, and the Little Insurgent Monument in Stare Miasto all represent an attachment of meaning to places of heritage for Poles. McDowell wrote it best by describing it as a means to, “preserve and sanctify the site (the past) for the future.”⁷⁹ These sites of heritage are given a meaning that is woven into the narrative spun by the dominant group, putting forth an official account of the past that stands as a testament to the present and future. As heritage is so malleable and subject to change, there is an inherently dissonant element to it.

If heritage is a relatively new area of study, even less more is unknown and under-researched regarding dissonant heritage. Dissonant heritage is often constructed from the parts of the collective past that people want to forget, with some wanting to consciously exclude memory from heritage. Dissonant heritage remains one of the core components of this research, laying the foundation for the analysis of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Warsaw Uprising. Heritage inherently breeds dissonance, there is never just one uniform narrative that is applicable and relevant to every community or society. Laurajane Smith identified this when she argued, “...a hegemonic ‘authorized heritage discourse’ acts to validate popular constructions of heritage and undermines alternative ideas about heritage.”⁸⁰ Smith’s thesis shed light on how dissonant narratives of heritage emerge as the dominant group seeks to diminish those that go against the ‘authorized’ one. It is especially heritages that involve significant human suffering and violence where dissonance is rampant. Rana P.B. Singh focused on the importance of acknowledging this aspect. Singh claims, “Although all heritages are contestable, the interpretation and representation of human suffering and past injustices can create significant dissonance or disagreement.”⁸¹ When analyzing the impact of the Second World War on the heritage of contemporary Poland, the inherent dissonance derived from such insurmountable human suffering remains a focal point that is necessary to acknowledge. This lends itself to the

⁷⁹ McDowell, “Heritage, Memory, and Identity,” 38.

⁸⁰ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 11, quoted in David C. Harvey, “The History of Heritage,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 19.

⁸¹ Rana P.B. Singh, “The Contestation of Heritage: The enduring importance of Religion,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 127.

emergence of ‘competing histories or heritages’ from different groups. The collision between the dissonant heritages and narratives most often occurs at sites of heritage as it attempts to grapple with complicated histories. Heritage is inherently dissonant, but one area where it is most prominent is in the memorialization of historic violence.

A narrative of heritage that is laden with remembrances and commemorations of violence often bears witness to a plethora of dissonant narratives and is subjugated to political manipulation. It is important to set the conceptual basis for analyzing heritage in the context of violence when researching the bloody uprisings in Warsaw in 1943 and 1944. There are always multiple narratives borne from events that resulted in mass suffering as there is more than one side to a story. Gregory James Ashworth sought to acknowledge this complex process of heritage when he wrote, “Management policy and practice in heritage often revolve around attempts to manage or mitigate the dissonances caused by memorialization of the violence in the past.”⁸² Management policy is not simply implemented to mitigate the dissonance that arises in narratives of heritage, but in overseeing all management of heritages of violence. Ashworth’s work focused on how the use of the heritage of violence acts as both a concretion of national identity, a tool for legitimization, and an emotional unifier. Ashworth argued, “The heritage of violence is likely to be a particularly effective instrument for achieving such goals of social cohesion, place identification or political legitimation because of its memorability and the powerful emotions it evokes.”⁸³ Violence that is memorialized through heritage is one of the strongest methods to support a society’s contemporary objectives. Ashworth’s work is incredibly relevant to this research as it explores the way in which the commemoration and remembrance of violence is at the forefront of collective memory, integrated into national identity, and serves as the base for the construction of the narrative of heritage.

1.5 Summary

In this literature review, the concepts of collective memory, identity, and heritage were thoroughly explored with a conceptual basis formed by pre-existing research. When analyzing collective memory in relation to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, a focus will be on the contemporary era on a societal or national level. Identity will also have a similar national context as we analyze its construction of it by taking into consideration

⁸² Gregory John Ashworth, “The Memorialization of Violence and Tragedy: Human Trauma as Heritage,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 234.

⁸³ Ashworth, “The Memorialization of Violence,” 238.

what is included in the collective memory. Identity is forged when members of a community identify themselves by a shared set of values or are unified around the remembrance and commemoration of events concretized within the collective memory. In the case of Polish identity, this research will examine how the Warsaw Rising is positioned as deeply rooted in contemporary Polish heritage and collective memory, whilst exploring how the narratives constructed in the museums regarding the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising emphasize its absence and illustrates the inherent dissonance of Polish heritage. Collective (social) memory and heritage constitute part of the absence and forgetting, not only the presence and remembering. The conceptual boundaries of heritage in relation to this research will focus primarily on examining the mythical narratives used as the building blocks, the memorialization of violence, and how the narratives constructed illustrate its inherent dissonance. The next chapter will detail the methodology used in order to conduct this research.

2. Methodology

This chapter will cover the research strategy, information collection methods, information analysis approach, limitations of work, and the reliance and worth of this research. This chapter will address how the research has been collected, what methods were used to gather the information, how the information will be analyzed, and what possible limitations may exist. After this chapter, the reader will have a better understanding of the methodology behind the research and an understanding of how the research questions will be answered in the following chapter.

2.1 Research Strategy

The research strategy to be used is a disciplined, interpretive single-country case study that examines contemporary Poland (2000-present). Case study research is the best fitting method to reach the objectives set forth as it provides the ability to analyze in greater depth the characteristics of heritage and its dissonance within contemporary Poland, whilst contributing to the burgeoning conversation as a whole regarding heritage, memory, and identity in contemporary Europe. Though a comparative aspect is present in the analysis of multiple museums, it is a single-country case study as it focuses specifically on the emergence of dissonant heritage within museums in Poland. Laran Chetty has defined case studies as, "...an exploration and investigation of contemporary-real life phenomena through detailed contextual analysis of events or conditions and their relationships."⁸⁴ A case study is best employed in research with a concept-driven framework, as this research is with its focus on heritage, collective memory, and identity. This conceptual-based framework that forms the foundation of case studies was defined by Yosef Jabareen as, "a plane, of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena."⁸⁵ A core component of case study research is its analysis and observation of data at the micro or group level. There have been a variety of categorizations created to characterize types of case studies better. The two most applicable to this research are Robert K. Yin's category of explanatory case studies and

⁸⁴ Laran Chetty, "Innovative Interpretive Qualitative Case Study Research Method Aligned with Systems Theory for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Research: A review of the methodology," *AJPARS* 5, no. 1 (June 2013).

⁸⁵ Yosef Jabareen, "Building a conceptual framework: Philosophy, definitions, and procedure. *International Journal of Qualitative Research* (December 2009): 50.

Jo and Steve McDonough's category of interpretive case studies. Robert K. Yin views research questions that seek to answer "how" a phenomenon occurs as explanatory, resulting in the use of case studies and histories to conduct analysis.⁸⁶ The goal of explanatory case studies is to analyze the findings both at an external and internal level. The second relevant categorization is that of interpretive case studies. Jo and Steve McDonough defined an interpretive case study as, "...the researcher aims to interpret the data by developing conceptual categories, supporting or challenging the assumptions made regarding them."⁸⁷ These categories often overlap, with elements of each blending together when conducting case study-based research.

Using an interpretive, explanatory case study-based research strategy grants the opportunity to understand how the selection of events in a nation's heritage determines the parameters for historical events and groups to be considered a member of the dominant narrative and identity group. The use of a case study will allow me to find out new information about the relationship between Polish and Jewish heritage, specifically at the level at which they are connected and/or separated. Focusing specifically on Warsaw helps to hone the research on a unique phenomenon as two significant uprisings took place in the capital city within a year of each other. This contributes to the wider study and discussion of both memory and heritage within Poland. I will use the case of Poland to examine two different uprisings, the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and the museum narratives that are constructed which illustrate the inherent dissonance of contemporary Polish heritage. Using an interpretive, explanatory case study will allow me to undertake a more thorough, extensive examination of the phenomenon of dissonant heritage in contemporary Poland and its influence on collective memory and identity formation.

2.2 Information Collection Methods

Museums provide a physical space in which visitors are given the opportunity to interact with and interpret the heritage that is represented through both discursive elements [the story that is constructed] and tangible objects [artifacts]. This makes visits to the museums a crucial aspect in collecting and analyzing information. Museums are a vessel for collective memory, identity,

⁸⁶ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research Designs and Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Volume 5).

⁸⁷ Jo McDonough and Steve McDonough, *Research Methods for English Language Teachers* (London: Arnold, 1997), quoted in Laran Chetty, "Innovative Interpretive Qualitative Case Study Research Method Aligned with Systems Theory for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Research: A review of the methodology," *AJPARS* 5, no. 1 (June 2013).

and heritage formation of a group. The role of museums is to provide structure to the past, thus having a significant role in the structuring of memory and identity.⁸⁸ National museums are especially important in the creation of a structured national narrative of the collective memory, constituting a vital component in national identity formation. It is in museums where narratives and stories of heritage are woven to be put on display and interpreted by visitors. The two main museums that will be used are the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Warsaw Rising Museum, both located in Warsaw. The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews was selected as it was symbolically constructed on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto and is a unique first in its expansive coverage of the history of the historically prominent Jewish minority in Poland. For this research, POLIN was chosen as the representative museum of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as there is no separate museum dedicated to the event. The Warsaw Rising Museum was selected as it is dedicated solely to the 1944 Rising. To provide a deeper context for how and in what way heritage is constructed in contemporary Polish museums, two other museums are included to provide a lesser supporting role in this research. The *Pelno ich Nigdzie* Temporary Exhibit at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków and the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk. The temporary exhibit at the Galicia Jewish Museum focused on the absence of Jews in contemporary Polish spaces, detailing how it has led to an absence of Jews in contemporary memory and identity. The Museum of the Second World War further supports the concept of heritagization of violence and narratives of heroism that are woven by contemporary Polish museums. Including these two museums to support the deeper analysis of the POLIN and Warsaw Uprising museums will help to provide greater context for the wider discourse on the topics discussed of heritage, identity, and memory in modern Poland. The museum exhibits will be analyzed from artifacts, dedicated monuments, auditory visuals, and literary and historical cannons used. The narratives woven to commemorate and remember these uprisings within the context of a museum contributes a great deal to the analysis conducted in this research.

I visited the POLIN Museum and Warsaw Uprising Museum twice, in September 2021 and in March 2022. Whilst at the museums, I spent between two to three hours walking through, taking photos, writing notes, identifying the prevalence of the concepts, and immersing myself

⁸⁸ Mateja Kos, "The Importance of National Museums in Preserving Collective Memory," *Ars & Huamnitatis* 13, no. 1 (August 2019): 234-237.

completely in the exhibits. In the POLIN Museum, the majority of time was spent in the section relevant to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. When writing notes, I used a notebook and focused on what was included and displayed, the tone emitted, and how a visitor was meant to interpret the exhibit. Materials from the museums, such as pamphlets, books, and interactive leaflets, specifically the calendar days from the Warsaw Uprising Museum, are also included in the analysis section of this research. Bearing in mind the mission statements of the two museums provide contextual background for what both hope to achieve within their exhibits and the story that is being told. The mission statements for the POLIN Museum and the Warsaw Rising Museum may be found in Appendix A.

For the supporting museums, I visited the *Pelno ich Nigdzie* exhibit in Kraków in September 2021 and the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk in April 2022. At the temporary exhibit, I focused on the graphics used and on the narrative that textual information provided on the panels. Similar to the visits to the other museums, a focus was placed on noting what was included and excluded, the tone emitted, and the prevalence of the three concepts. At the Second World Museum, the focus was slightly different as the most relevant was the broader section of ‘Terror’. This exhibit was analyzed in relation to the notion of the heritagization of violence and the emergence of narratives of victimization in contemporary Polish memory and identity. Below is a table that summaries the museum data collection methods used:

Main Museums	Information	Materials Used for Collection
POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews (<i>Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich POLIN w Warszawie</i>)	Founded: 2005 Located: Mordechaja Anielewicza 6, 00-157 Warszawa, Poland	Exhibits: first-hand accounts, artifacts, infographics, pamphlets, and audio visuals.
Warsaw Uprising Museum (<i>Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego</i>)	Founded: 1983 Located: Grzybowska 79, 00-844 Warszawa, Poland	Exhibits: first-hand accounts, artifacts, infographics, museum book, audio visuals, pamphlets, and videos.

Supporting Museums	Information	Materials Used for Collection
“They Fill No Space” Outdoor Exhibition (<i>Pelno Ich Nigdzie</i>)	Produced: 2017 Located: Moving exhibit; Visited the presentation in Kraków	Exhibit panels: written text and graphics

Museum of the Second World War (<i>Muzeum II Wojny Światowej</i>)	Founded: 2017 Located: pl. W. Bartoszewskiego 1, 80-862 Gdańsk, Poland	Exhibits: Text, audio visuals, artifacts, and infographics
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2.3 Information Analysis Approach

The first step to analyzing the data and information collected was achieved in the literature review provided in the second chapter. The goal of the literature review was to establish the parameters of the most relevant conceptual frameworks for collective memory, identity, and heritage. The conceptual frameworks used in this research were constructed by analyzing, blending, and building upon the previous research of a plethora of academics. This process of outlining how collective memory, identity, and heritage is defined and intertwined was to build a conceptually based lens to analyze the museums and a method of answering the research questions. The qualitative sociological method used in this research is a blend of content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Utilizing content analysis allows for the provision of a wider context for the analysis conducted within this research as it includes text, images, and videos. A more relevant discipline of content analysis is that of relational analysis. The relational content analysis focuses on how words and phrases relate to certain broader concepts as well as the semantic connection between them.⁸⁹ Kathleen Carley expanded upon this as she identified concepts as ‘ideational kernels’. Carley defined ideational kernels as, “symbols which acquire meaning through their connection to other symbols.”⁹⁰ This notion of conceptual connection of meaning is linked to the semantic field that propagates the relevancy of symbols within networks of meaning. David Kaufer and Kathleen Carley defined symbols within the semantic field as, “...the building blocks of structures considered fundamentally cognitive and social in nature – histories, experiences, beliefs, interests.”⁹¹ The main function of symbols is communication. In the context of museums, symbols are used to help communities define themselves and communicate who they are or are not. The museums included in this research are spaces where Poles communicate what they are through fragments, groups, and different parts of their

⁸⁹ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (SAGE Publications, 2018), 411

⁹⁰ Kathleen Carley, “An Approach For Relating Social Structure to Cognitive Structure,” *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 12(2): 137-89.

⁹¹ Kathleen M. Carley and David S. Kaufer, “Semantic Connectivity: An Approach for Analyzing Symbols in Semantic Networks,” *Communication Theory* (August 1993): 183.

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1993.tb00070.x?saml_referrer

collective identity. This space uses tangible objects such as artifacts and visuals as well as semantics to weave a specific story or narrative that evokes the collective memory, identity, and heritage of the community. By remaining cognizant of the importance of symbols and the methodological background of relational content analysis, a central objective in analyzing the museum exhibits is to understand what interpretation is being communicated. Understanding and analyzing the methods of communication through concepts and symbols, whether implicit or explicit, in this research can be further supported by integrating critical discourse analysis into the methodology.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is often defined as the recognition of language as a social practice by placing it within a social context, focusing on what or how something is being said, by whom, and where or what capacity it is communicated.⁹² Norman Fairclough, often credited as the pioneer of the method, identified two separate disciplines, the power behind discourse and power in discourse.⁹³ The most relevant to this research is that of power behind discourse, which analyzes the sociological and ideological motivations behind who is asserting power through the selectivity of narratives and why they do so. James Paul Gee incorporated this notion of a power dynamic in his definition of critical discourse analysis as, “the analysis of how language is situated in cultural and contextual power dynamics.”⁹⁴ When using critical discourse analysis, it is important to bear in mind how language is situated in the context of the wider society and how social factors such as ethnicity or culture are represented and constructed within the discourse. Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith, and Gary Campbell wrote extensively on the relevance and applicability of critical discourse analysis to heritage studies. The researchers wrote, “CDA provides the way forward for understanding the implications of discourse in terms of how heritage is both understood (interpretation) and managed (in practice such as commemoration, remembrance, and forgetting).”⁹⁵ In the context of this research, that means analyzing the discourse provided within the museums on Polish identity and heritage whilst bearing in mind how or if Polish Jews are represented within the discourse, as well as the degree of remembering and forgetting. Fairclough created the three-dimensional model to guide

⁹² Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2010).

⁹³ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

⁹⁴ James Paul Gee, “Discourse Analysis: What Makes It Critical?” (Research Paper, University of Wisconsin-Madison).

⁹⁵ Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith, and Gary Campbell, “The Utility of Discourse Analysis to Heritage Studies: The Burra Charter and Social Inclusion,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006): 342.

research using critical discourse analysis which relies on description, interpretation, and explanation.⁹⁶ Description relies on examining the text, interpretation consists of the production of the text and how one is meant to interpret it, and explanation situates it within the wider context of the society. This approach will be utilized in analyzing the texts exhibited within the museums whilst bearing in mind the mission statements of the museums included in the research. Combining the methodologies of relational content and critical discourse analysis will focus this research on the elements of storytelling/narratives constructed within the museums (implicit and explicit), how the concepts (collective memory, identity, and heritage) are connected, and their dynamics, and the discourse within the Polish museums (heterogeneous or homogenous). This will be done by describing, interpreting, and explaining the images, discourse, and artifacts portrayed within the museums that relate to the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1944 Warsaw Rising. Once that is completed, this structure will provide a framework from which the analysis and synthesis may take place on the prevalence of dissonant heritage within contemporary Polish museums as well as its connection to and discourse on collective memory and identity.

The observations and findings from the visits to the POLIN Museum and Warsaw Rising Museum will be described in-depth and duly interpreted in the next chapter through relational content analysis and discourse analysis. It is important to first describe what is included in the exhibitions as it is at the crux of how constructed museum narratives illustrate the inherent dissonance of heritage within a context of collective memory and identity formation in contemporary Poland. This will be conducted by analyzing and synthesizing information on the panel, what is included in the exhibits, how they are built, and emotional evocation measures, such as wartime footage, personal testimonies, and the degree of violence portrayed. Additionally, excerpts from first-hand accounts will be included to support the analysis of the museum's portrayals of both the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Warsaw Uprising. First-hand accounts will be included from Jan Karski (*Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World*), Miron Białoszewski (*Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*), and Marek Edelman (*The Ghetto Rights*) alongside research from prominent historians such as Dan Kurzman (*The Bravest Battle: The 28 Days of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*) and Elżbieta Janicka.

⁹⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

2.4 Limitations of Work

There are a few limitations of the research that must be addressed. Firstly, the absence of a museum dedicated solely to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising does create a slight imbalance in the analysis. Relying on a relatively small section of POLIN to analyze and interpret the Ghetto Uprising is not equally comparable to the Warsaw Uprising as there is a museum dedicated solely to the event. Even though there is this limitation, the research will not be impacted as the analysis chapter will make up for the discrepancy. Another potential issue in the reliability of sources from museums may arise as political bias permeates major installations. Ensuring that political bias is mitigated and properly acknowledged is vital in providing a clear analysis of both museums and thus in answering the main research questions. The final limitation to overcome is the language factor. With only an intermediate level of Polish, some aspects may be lost in translation. To overcome this hurdle, translation services were used to supplement personal language ability when reading literature whilst guides at both the POLIN Museum and Warsaw Uprising Museum provided additional commentary on the exhibits.

2.5 Reliance and Worth of Research

Dedicated memorials, archives, first-hand accounts, and museums provide valid and reliable sources of which to analyze the uprisings and their contribution to the perception of dissonant heritage. The use of primary sources will help support the material gathered from the visits to the museums and mitigate the prevalence of political bias. Bearing in mind the potential manipulation of narratives regarding heritage, collective memory, and identity will allow for better flexibility and awareness when analyzing materials from POLIN and the Warsaw Uprising Museum.

This research aims to contribute to the wider debate surrounding dissonant heritage in society and how we as communities of people establish specific narratives to construct a dominant group's national identity that is molded by heritage and memory. The selection of specific narratives ultimately determines the necessary criteria for an individual to be selected. More specifically, it is meant to examine how museum narratives woven around the remembrance of the uprisings have simultaneously produced and reproduced dissonant heritage in contemporary Poland. Specifically, I will look at the contemporary portrayals of the Warsaw Ghetto '43 and Warsaw '44 Uprisings in a comparative aspect to understand how Jews have

been historically situated within, or excluded from, the narrative of Polish heritage and national identity. The interpretation produced by this research of dissonant heritage within museum spaces will strengthen the general historical context and the public discourse of these events as a whole. The analysis will provide a greater examination of the symbolic strategies that are used to tell the story of the past within the context of its use needed in the present. This research will act as a bridge to the historical past that is used to construct the heritage of contemporary Poland, remarking on the connection it holds to contemporary politics, collective memory, and notions of national identity.

3. Case Study Findings and Analysis

This chapter will consist of three main sections: description, analysis, and synthesis. The description will focus on the structures themselves and the relevant exhibitions at the two museums at the heart of the research, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Warsaw Rising Museum, as well as the supporting museums, the Museum of the Second World War and *Pełno Ich Nigdzie* Exhibit. The results from the findings will be described in detail and critically analyzed. Finally, the synthesis will be the product of comparing the analysis conducted in this research to the aspects of the conceptual frameworks explored in the literature review.

3.1 Description of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

3.1.1 Structure and Layout of the POLIN Museum

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews was erected at the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto, a reminder of the atrocities committed nearly eighty years ago and a testament to the survival of the Jews. *Polin* is derived from the Hebrew word, meaning “rest here” and is symbolic of the arrival of Jews to Poland over a thousand years ago.⁹⁷ POLIN was opened in April 2013, providing a comprehensive history of the Jewish community in Poland. Adjacent to the entrance of the museum stands The Monument to the Ghetto Heroes (*Pomnik Bohaterów Getta*) dedicated to those who fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. Constructed in 1948 by Nathan Rapoport, the monument displays six people gathered around the Commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Mordecai Anielewicz on the western front. The monument displays the figures marked with wounds from battle as Anielewicz is presented as an extraordinary hero of mythical proportions.⁹⁸ On the western front is the inscription, “The Jewish Nation – to its fighters and martyrs,” dedicated in Polish⁹⁹, Yiddish¹⁰⁰, and Hebrew¹⁰¹. The location of the monument marks the spot of the first reported clashes between the Jews of Warsaw’s ghetto and Nazi forces. The existence of a monument dedicated to the Ghetto Uprising establishes the

⁹⁷ “A 1000-Year History of Polish Jews: A Short Guide to the Core Exhibition,” POLIN Museum, accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.polin.pl/en/system/files/attachments/miniguide_en_0.pdf.

⁹⁸ Liz Elsby, “Rapoport’s Memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – a personal interpretation,” *Yad Vashem*, accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/warsaw-memorial-personal-interpretation.html#footnote1_jmf8xu0.

⁹⁹ Polish inscription: *NARÓD ŻYDOWSKI – SWYM BOJOWNIKOM I MĘCZENNİKOM.*

¹⁰⁰ Yiddish inscription: דאס יידישע פאל - זיינע קימפער און מארטירער

¹⁰¹ Hebrew inscription: עם ישראל - ללוחמין ולקדושים

notion of the event's prevalence and memory at the core of Polish Jewish history.

Acknowledging the monument's location and dedication is important, as it stands as one of the few tangible commemorations of the Ghetto Uprising in Warsaw. A commemoration that is notably absent in the exhibition visitors experience at POLIN.

The Core Exhibition begins with the history of the rumored first arrival of Jews to the lands that make up current-day Poland in the 10th century. At this point, visitors are introduced to an immersive experience that brings to life the vibrant history of Poland's Jews. The museum has seven main sections that make up the Core Exhibition, starting from 960 and traced to the present day. The relevant section to this research is that of the Holocaust (1939-1945), but it is important to briefly touch on the preceding sections. The five preceding sections are titled: First Encounters, Paradisus Iudaeorum, The Jewish Town, Encounters with Modernity, and On the Jewish Street.¹⁰² These five sections go into great detail about the religious, political, economic, and social history of the Jews in Poland. An emphasis is placed on portraying the contributions Jews made as Poland would become home to Europe's largest pre-war Jewish population at roughly 3.3 million. The exhibition is immersive, with larger graphics and pictures as well as interactive boards scattered around that encourage visitors to engage with the history. All aspects of history and culture are explored, from politics to the use of Yiddish as a native language. Audio recordings are utilized in each section to further add to the immersive experience. Including the layout of the museum provides readers with the necessary context to analyze the most relevant section pertinent to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Information on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is nested within the section on the Holocaust in G7. When visitors walk into the Holocaust section, they are met with the booming sounds of air raids to mirror times of war. It is obvious that the Ghetto Uprising was included in this section as it falls within the sectioned timeline, but as those six years bore witness to countless horrific atrocities committed against the Jews, information on the Ghetto Uprising is limited. The section on the Holocaust focuses only on the experience of the Jews: the establishment of pogroms, boundaries of the 600 ghettos in Poland, what life was like during the war, the mass deportation of 1942, and providing maps of concentration and death camps.¹⁰³ The exhibits

¹⁰² POLIN Museum, "A Short Guide."

¹⁰³ POLIN Museum, "A Short Guide."

display the atrocities committed by occupying Nazi forces against the Jews, showcasing the varied responses of the Polish nation and actions the Jews took.

3.1.2 Description of Exhibits on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 1943

This subsection will briefly go further in-depth in describing the materials included in POLIN that are specifically related to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. As previously mentioned, the Ghetto Uprising is not given its own section but rather integrated into the larger one of the Holocaust. There are separate displays showcasing maps and first-hand accounts from those living in the Warsaw ghetto. The story of the Warsaw ghetto and its subsequent uprising is told through mainly primary sources, such as excerpts from official documents, eyewitness accounts, and leaders within the ghetto. The mediums used are primarily visual as the concrete walls are covered with testimonies of those who lived in the ghetto and their photographs, to establish a human connection between the past victims and present-day visitors. The walls had fragments of sentences taken from personal diaries, resistance pamphlets, and correspondence between individuals. Through these quotes, the visitor is provided the history of the Warsaw ghetto and its uprising through those who lived it, as seen below in Figures 1 and 2. The dark gray walls, poorly lit rooms, and concrete slabs characterized the Holocaust section of the museum.

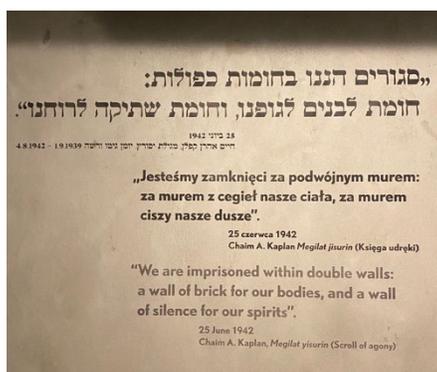


Figure 1: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken: 27/2/22.

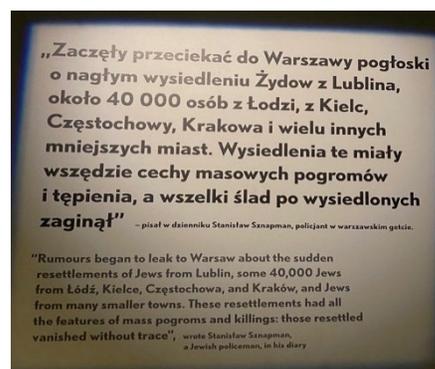


Figure 2: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews; Warsaw, Poland. The photo was taken on 27/2/22.

As previously mentioned, information specifically on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was integrated within and not clearly marked. As you walk through the exhibit, fragments of information, as well as a few artifacts, are scattered about to string the story together. One such fragment of the written historical narrative can be seen below in Figure 3 and several artifacts recovered after the uprising are displayed in Figure 4. Information on the Warsaw Ghetto

Uprising is incredibly limited when compared to the wide breadth of topics covered within the POLIN museum.



Figure 3: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken: 9/9/21.



Figure 4: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews; Warsaw, Poland. The photo was taken on 9/9/21.

3.2 Description of the Warsaw Rising Museum

3.2.1 Structure and Layout of the Warsaw Rising Museum

Located in the historic Wola district, the Warsaw Rising Museum (*Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego*) was originally initiated in 1983 but did not officially open until 2004 as construction was stalled for numerous years. After roughly two decades since it had been founded, the Warsaw Rising Museum opened its doors to visitors on the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Not only does the museum provide a comprehensive history focused solely on the uprising, but it also acts as a historical preservation and research institution. The museum provides a broad overview of the events of the Rising, with a timeline starting on July 27 and lasting to October 5, as well as preserving and sharing the stories of the individuals who took part in it. The museum is a multi-complex structure, including Freedom Park, the main museum structure, a memorial wall, and an observation tower. Located in an old warehouse, there are two parts to the permanent exhibition. The first part portrays the historical background of the Rising, starting from the brutal occupation by Nazi German and Soviet forces in 1939. Walking through the exhibit, visitors follow the timeline of events leading to the Rising using pictures, audio recordings, and short films.¹⁰⁴ The first part of the exhibition portrays life in wartime Warsaw, the rise of the Polish Underground Resistance, and the decision to launch the Rising, all with the innate feeling of terror that permeated everyday life in occupied Poland. Also

¹⁰⁴ "Exhibition," *Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego*, last modified October 30, 2019, <https://www.1944.pl/en/article/exhibition,4994.html>.

located in the first part is an alcove dedicated to the “Little Insurgents,” the young children that participated in the Rising. The second part of the exhibit contains a replica of the Liberator B-24J bomber as it tells the story of the attempted Allied airdrops during the Rising. In addition, this section contains perspectives from the German side, the inclusion of recorded eye-witness testimonies, and an exhibit titled, *Odbicie – Jestem jak ty zapewne*, which encourages visitors to take photos on a screen that compares them to self-photographs of those who participated. The museum follows a chronological order that immerses the visitor into the history of the Rising through a plethora of mediums.

3.2.2 Description of the Exhibits

Visitors to the Warsaw Rising Museum are provided with an in-depth, comprehensive history of one of Poland’s most formative historical events. The Warsaw Rising Museum is a member of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, a multi-national project that encourages cooperation between government institutions and NGOs on the research, documentation, education, and spreading of awareness about the crimes committed in the 20th century by Europe’s totalitarian regimes.¹⁰⁵ The museum has over 800 items in its exhibitions, ranging from personal photographs of participants to artillery guns used in the fighting.¹⁰⁶ With such an intense, complicated event, the museum provides visitors with the ability to follow chronologically throughout the museum interactively by placing calendar days for them to pick up as they move through the exhibits (pictured below in Figure 5). Additionally, provided are information sheets that contain the historical background displayed on boards of each section in the first part of the permanent exhibit (see Figure 6 below). The museum is heavily grayscale, with only the vibrancy of the white and red colors of the Polish flag accenting the exhibit walls (see Figures 7 and 8 below). The Warsaw Rising Museum is filled with recovered artifacts and reconstructed displays to fully immerse the visitor, not only giving them the political context for the uprising but the weaponry used as well. With such an impressive collection located in an old factor, the Warsaw Rising Museum seeks to create the feeling of living history. From the gift shop, a 231-paged guidebook is available for sale that provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the museum, quick facts on how unique the museum is, an in-depth explanation of all the exhibits, and the commemoration around the uprising. Providing a full description of every

¹⁰⁵ “About the Platform,” Platform of European Memory and Conscience, last modified November 17, 2019, <https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/about-the-platfor/about-the-platform/>.

¹⁰⁶ Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, “Exhibition.”

artifact, picture, and section related to the Warsaw Uprising would take up the entire chapter, so for the sake of not becoming too descriptive, we will move to the analysis of the findings.

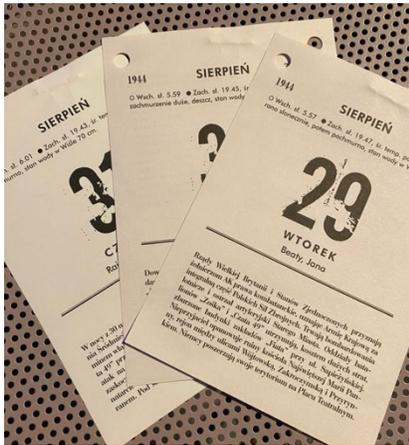


Figure 5: Calendar days from the Warsaw Rising Museum; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken: 01/5/22.

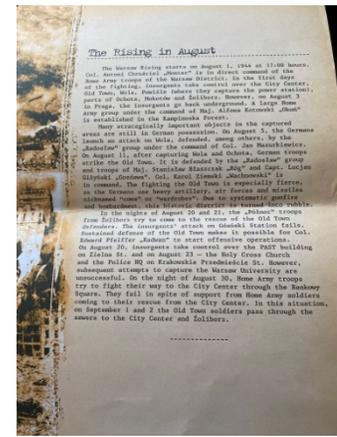
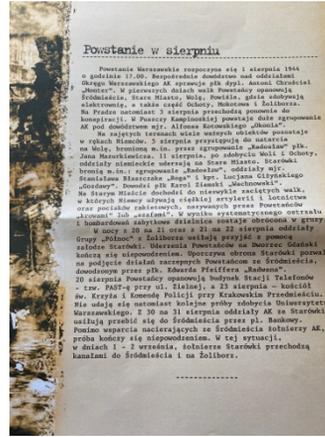


Figure 6: Information sheets from the Warsaw Rising Museum; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken: 01/5/22.



Figure 7: Polish flags from the Warsaw Rising Museum; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken: 26/2/22.



Figure 8: Insignias of insurgents from Warsaw Rising Museum; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken: 26/2/22.

3.3 Brief Observations from Additional Museums

In this section, brief observations from both the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk and the Galicia temporary exhibit, *Pelno Ich Nigdzie* will be provided. These observations and descriptions will provide readers with a condensed explanation of how the museum and exhibit are set up to provide background context for the analysis to come.

3.3.1 Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk

The Second World War Museum located in Gdańsk covers the comprehensive history of all theaters of the war. It examines the rise of Nazi German Fascism, Soviet Communism, Japanese Imperialism, and Italian Fascism. With all aspects of the war being touched upon, this museum seeks to paint a broad understanding of how the conflict played out throughout the

world. The museum seeks to tell the story of the Second World War not just from the perspective of Poland, but within the European context and experience. This has led the museum to face pressure from the ruling Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) as they believe it does not focus enough on the Polish suffering during the war that resulted from aggressive Nazi and Soviet campaigns.¹⁰⁷ The political pressure that the museum continues to face is important to mention as it provides context for the contemporary political climate around these vessels of memory and heritage making, and how memory has increasingly become politicized within contemporary narrative construction.

There is one section, in particular, that is relevant to this research, the section called TERROR. With letters larger than life beckoning the visitor into the exhibit, the section on Terror explores the atrocities committed during the war, focusing on perpetrators regardless of their nationality. This component of the museum focuses more on the systematic terror that became the norm from 1939, telling the history through the experience of civilians and the politics behind it. The Second World War Museum does not specialize in exhibits on the uprisings in 1943 or 1944, but it's important to include it as it provides a greater context of how narratives of heritage and memory are constructed through the memorialization and heritagization of violence as described by Ashworth. The Museum of the Second World War constructs a narrative about the totality and horrors of war, that human suffering is not to be glorified, yet exemplifies how violent histories are often key events in a community's collective memory, especially in the case of a Poland caught between two evils. This museum offers a broader insight into how collective memories of violence are situated as a central aspect of contemporary collective memory and heritage within Poland, despite its highly inherent dissonance and diversity of narratives that are often suppressed.

3.3.2 Galicia Jewish Museum – *Pełno Ich Nigdzie* Exhibition

The Galicia Jewish Museum located in Kraków offers visitors the opportunity to learn about the once-flourishing Jewish community of Polish Galicia through photo exhibits. The museum is in the Kazimierz district, which was the former Jewish Quarter before the Second World War. This museum is included in a supporting role as it temporarily housed the moving exhibit, "*Pełno ich nigdzie*" ("They fill no space."), created in collaboration between the POLIN

¹⁰⁷ Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, "Poland's New World War II Museum Just Opened, But Maybe Not For Long," *NPR*, April 4, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/04/04/521654034/polands-new-world-war-ii-museum-just-opened-but-maybe-not-for-long>.

Museum (Warsaw, Poland) and the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (Oslo, Norway).¹⁰⁸ The name of the moving exhibit is symbolic of the heated debates that surround the topic of Polish-Jewish relations in contemporary Poland, though less than 10,000 Jews currently live in the country.¹⁰⁹ The exhibit seeks to revive the memory of Polish Jews within contemporary public spaces, by using murals to chronicle their history and contributions to Polish society. Boards include information on the Yiddish language, historic anti-Semitism in Polish society, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and relations between the Poles and Jews. This exhibition is important to include as further supporting context for this research as it directly acknowledges the dissonance in heritage and collective memory when it comes to Jews in contemporary Poland. This exhibit directly brings to attention the tangible and discursive absence of Jews in contemporary Polish spaces. The exhibit identifies historic anti-Semitism and the perception of ‘separateness’ as a core reason why this absence and carefully constructed remembrance exists. With the exclusion of narratives that deviate from the national, ethnic Polish constructed one, the inherent dissonance of Polish heritage is magnified by the absence of Jews.

3.4 Analysis of Findings

This section will cover the analysis of findings from the POLIN Museum and Warsaw Rising Museum, as well as the additional supporting Second World Museum and Galicia Museum exhibit. In this part, I will provide an in-depth analysis of how collective memory, identity, and narratives of heritage are woven within these museums. In addition to describing what these findings tell us, I will contribute my own interpretation.

3.4.1 Analysis of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

The POLIN Museum’s primary objective is to provide a comprehensive, in-depth exploration of the history and contribution of Jews in Poland. The constructed narrative is that Jews have not simply *lived* in Poland but are *part* of Poland, intrinsically connected to the wider national heritage. This narrative is reinforced by the symbolism of their use of the Hebrew word *polin*¹¹⁰ which forges the notion of an inseparable connection of Jews to Poland, that their centuries-long presence is part of the natural fabric of the nation. The contributions and vibrancy

¹⁰⁸ “They Fill No Space. Reviving the Memory of Polish Jews in Public Spaces” outdoor exhibition,” POLIN Museum, accessed May 28, 2022, <https://polin.pl/en/wystawa-pelno-ich-nigdzie>.

¹⁰⁹ “Poland,” World Jewish Congress, accessed June 1, 2022, <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/about/communities/PL>.

¹¹⁰ Hebrew translation: “Here you will dwell”, “rest here”, or potentially “Poland”

of Jews in Polish society throughout the centuries is the elevated narrative, rather than the popularized one in many contemporary museum spaces that magnify primarily the narratives of suffering. Through this selectivity, the POLIN Museum is making a statement about what it is and isn't; it is a museum about the diverse history of Jews in Poland, but it is not a museum about the Holocaust. Relative to the prior sections, the Holocaust room is considerably smaller by offering a condensed history that is narrated through intangible mediums by those who lived it. The lack of tangible artifacts is representative of the decimation of the Jewish community in Poland, with little to no physical testimonies of the community, memory and heritage construction rely largely on the written word. Rather than physical artifacts, the quotes of those who bore witness to the ghettoization of Warsaw's Jews and the Holocaust plaster the walls and are voiced over in Yiddish on loudspeakers. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, a curator at POLIN, justified this means of storytelling, "In a word, this is a story told in many voices, not one voice and not just the voice of the historian. The approach is authoritative, in the sense that it can be trusted, without being authoritarian."¹¹¹ Supporters of this method argue that it allows for the narrative to be told by members of the community themselves and encourages visitors to the museum to make their own interpretations. POLIN curators and directors have identified this approach as their "theater of history". POLIN's "theater of history" is defined as an "approach that works with the principle of narrative space, a way of organizing the story in space so that the entire ensemble carries the story."¹¹² It inherently fosters personal interpretation and interaction with the history in a more informal atmosphere that relies on the entirety of the history, not just specific snapshots. The museum is attempting to build a Polish narrative that includes Jews through a selection of events and details that they perceive are best. This selectivity of topics included in the exhibits ultimately translates to the selectivity of memory. As vessels of memory and heritage making, museums hold considerable power in shaping the narratives. POLIN has derived its authority in weaving these narratives as the only museum dedicated to the history of Polish Jews. Critics of POLIN have argued that far too many prominent topics have been excluded, such as historic anti-Semitism and the debate on assimilation. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that the selectivity of subjects was a necessity as trying to cover every topic would be

¹¹¹ Barbara Gimblett, "Inside the Museum: Curating between hope and despair: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews," *East European Jewish Affairs* 45, no. 2 (November 2015): 219.

¹¹² Gimblett, "Inside the Museum," 230.

detrimental, a belief that was used to support the museum's creation of a hierarchy and strategy for the curation of exhibits that fit the historical project.¹¹³ So, what does such selectivity in POLIN produce?

The absence of a dedicated, more comprehensive section on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is felt profoundly and rather symbolic of the memory's absence within contemporary Polish heritage. With no museum dedicated solely to the uprising in 1943 and faded commemorative practices, the POLIN Museum, in theory, should fill in those gaps but fails to do so. The most significant memorialization of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising comes from the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes. The presence of such a monument would imply the centrality of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to not just the museum itself, but wider narratives of memory and heritage in Poland. Integrated into the historical section of the Holocaust, the story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is interwoven into those of discrimination at the beginning of the war, ghettoization, and deportation. The curators at POLIN merged these topics in one section to give due acknowledgment to the events without making them the core focus of the entire exhibition. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett touched on this as she expressed the perpetual struggle of balancing a curated exhibit between one of hope and one of despair.¹¹⁴ By fully integrating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising within the story of the Holocaust, much of the context is lost and the impact of such an event is lessened. In the absence of a substantial section on the 1943 Ghetto Uprising, the perception of a story faded to the backdrop emerges. The first-hand accounts adorning the walls provide a discourse of the bravery of those who participated, but these quotes often felt out of context. With no panels detailing a more in-depth history of the 1943 Ghetto Uprising, one feels disconnected from the quotes on the wall. The museum does not forge a connection between the visitor and the narrative. Largely missing from the exhibit was the sense of continuity, the connection of Polish generations between the past and the present. The absence of this connection contributes to illustrating the inherent dissonance within Polish heritage as the exhibit does not foster ethnic Polish identification with the memory or heritage of the Ghetto Uprising.

¹¹³ Gimblett, *"Inside the Museum,"* 232

¹¹⁴ Gimblett, *"Inside the Museum,"* 233.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is considered one of the most formative events in Jewish memory and is identified as a core component of contemporary identity and heritage for Jews.¹¹⁵ Narratives from the Holocaust traditionally depict Jews as compliant with their death sentence, but the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising provides a heroic narrative to offset this persistent perception.¹¹⁶ Jewish resistance during the Ghetto Uprising represented the defense and renewal of the Jewish identity and community in the face of an enemy bent on annihilating them, a narrative that is constructed in opposition to that of ethnic Poles. The 1943 uprising was the largest revolt among Jews and the first significant urban uprising against Nazi German occupation during the Second World War.¹¹⁷ The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is portrayed as an event in the defense of all Jews, of choosing to not be killed without a fight. As Marek Edelman wrote, “The majority of us favored an uprising. After all, humanity agreed that dying with arms was more beautiful than without. All it was about was that we not just let them slaughter us when our turn came. It was only a choice as to the manner of dying.”¹¹⁸ Edelman’s testimonies, alongside those of Mordechai Anielewicz and Emanuel Ringelblum, were the most prominent and prolific included within the exhibit. In the selection of these narratives, prominent Jewish military and community leaders are clearly elevated in the exhibit.

The size of the exhibit in POLIN leads one to believe that it was not an event of monumental significance, especially one not integrated into the wider Polish heritage. More public space around the outside of the museum and inner exhibit walls are dedicated to the Polish Righteous Among Nations¹¹⁹ and *Żegota*¹²⁰, than to the reality of the dismal Polish-Jewish relations and the ŻOB’s launching of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.¹²¹ Elevating the narratives of ethnic Poles who aided the Jews rather than the average Jews themselves who participated in the

¹¹⁵ Boaz Cohen, “Holocaust Heroics: Ghetto Fighters and Partisans in Israeli Society and Historiography,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 198.

¹¹⁶ Rachel L. Einwohner, “Opportunity, Honor, and Action in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943,” *American Journal of Sociology* 109, no. 3 (November 2003): 650-651.

¹¹⁷ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.”

¹¹⁸ Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, trans. Joanna Stasinska and Lawrence Weschler (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1983).

¹¹⁹ The Israeli Yad Vashem recognizes 6,500 Polish Righteous Among the Nations.

¹²⁰ *Żegota*: Polish Council to Aid Jews (1942-1945).

¹²¹ Elżbieta Janicka, “The Square of Polish Innocence: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and its symbolic topography,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 45, no. 2 (2015): 210.

Ghetto Uprising created a perception that the museal commemoration is more performative rather than genuine. In this contradiction, the emergence of dissonant narratives is apparent.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the first of its kind, a major act of resistance by Jews who identified themselves as part of the Polish nation despite the cultivation of ‘otherness’ and lack of help by the Polish Home Army. The POLIN Museum portrays the Polish Home Army as benevolent supporters of Warsaw’s Jews, emphasizing the work of *Żegota* (see Figure 10) and arguing that the Home Army could not aid the Jews as they were poorly armed. But in reality, that does not provide an entirely accurate portrayal of events. The ŻOB sought Polish Home Army assistance in providing detailed maps of the city’s sewer systems and providing hiding places for Jews outside of the ghetto, they did not ask for military support in the uprising.¹²² From this request, the Jewish ŻOB did not receive a reply from the Polish Home Army. This narrative goes against the one portrayed by the POLIN Museum and the wider Polish nation, that non-Jewish Poles did everything possible to help the Jews during the Second World War. This is not to take away from the fact many Poles risked their lives to save or help Jews, but the conscious exclusion of details augments the inherent dissonance that exists in the narratives of both the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the wider Polish-Jewish relations in contemporary Poland. On an info-panel detailing the first and final day of the Ghetto Uprising, the museum writes that it was “a protest against the world’s indifference,” pointedly shifting the culpability onto the international community without addressing or inferring any accountability of the Polish state or Home Army (see Figure 9). Suppressing the story of the tensions between the ŻOB and Polish Home Army within the museum further reinforces the notion of inherent dissonance in contemporary narratives of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Polish heritage and memory. POLIN’s explanation for the absence of a more extensive, more developed exhibit on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is that it emphasizes the narrative of despair so often placed on Polish Jewish history in post-Holocaust museums. Rather than being a museum of despair, POLIN sought to focus on the vibrancy and life of the Polish Jews. Though doomed to fail, the uprising was not one seeped in only tragedy but hope and the courage to take a stand against such evil. Missing from the museum narrative is the overt sentiment of heroism displayed during the Ghetto Uprising, a sentiment that is at the heart of the construction of the narrative around the Warsaw Rising.

¹²² Janicka, “The Square of Polish Innocence,” 211.

Within the exhibit, POLIN focused more on the aftermath of the 1943 uprising that led to the remainder of Warsaw's Jews either being deported to death camps or executed immediately. This narrative reinforces the historic 'otherness' of Polish Jews within the larger national narrative rather than integrating it as an act of resistance and heroism on a scale similar to that of the Warsaw Rising. Focusing on this aspect instead of the organization of Jewish resistance and the sheer bravery of the uprising's participants feeds into the narrative of victimization that has been bequeathed to Jews within Polish museums. There are not enough pieces of the story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising provided in the exhibit, meaning an unstructured narrative is presented where interpretation is lost, where the significance of the event in Polish heritage is not conveyed. The beginning and the end of the Ghetto Uprising are detailed, but the rest of the narrative is told in fractured pieces through first-hand accounts that lack structure. The absence of many stories of those who fought in the Ghetto uprising led to the loss of a more personal, emotional connection between the visitors and the history. In turn, that loss means the connection between the past and the present that is necessitated in the construction of collective memory and heritage narratives in museums is absent. The lack of a fully dedicated exhibit on the ghetto uprising in POLIN means that emotional complexity is lost, and controversy over the history remains unacknowledged as the divergent narratives are faded out. Just as these differing narratives are faded from those constructed and portrayed in the POLIN Museum, they remain largely absent from the larger Polish collective memory and heritage narratives.

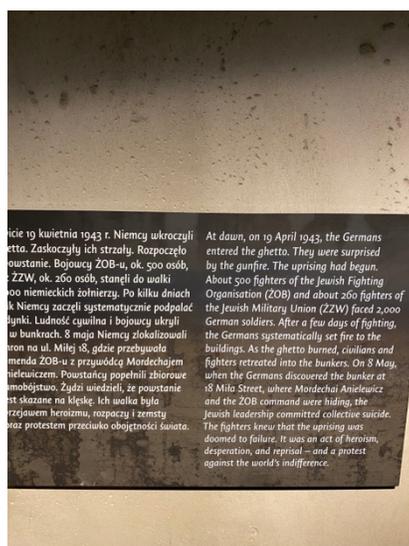


Figure 9: Info-Panel, POLIN Museum; Warsaw, Poland, Photo taken: 27/2/21.



Figure 10: Dedication to Żegota, POLIN Museum; Warsaw, Poland, Photo taken: 9/9/21.

3.4.2 Analysis of Warsaw Rising Museum

“Freedom brings us together.”¹²³ This was the motto for the 73rd anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising in 2017. As August 1st, 2022, marks the 78th anniversary of the 1944 uprising, the sentiment of the motto still rings true today for the Polish people and the mission of the Warsaw Rising Museum. The Warsaw Rising Museum has situated itself at the forefront of collective memory preservation and the creation of national narratives of heritage. Not only is it a museum full of interactive materials and artifacts that tell the story of the 1944 Rising, but it is also a research institution that oversees the public remembrance and commemoration of the event. The museum encourages all ages to learn about, interact with, and reflect on the history of the Rising. The Little Insurgents room is used as an educational facility whilst paying tribute to the smallest of partisans, symbolizing the ageless desire for freedom by all Poles (see figure 11). The museum is entirely dedicated to the 1944 Warsaw Uprising that bore witness to the largest act of resistance in wartime Europe by the Polish Home Army against occupying Nazi forces, and the subsequent complete destruction of Poland’s capital city. It also covers the crimes simultaneously being committed by the Soviets and their refusal to aid the Polish Home Army in their attempts to liberate themselves. At the front of the exhibit sits telephone booths that encourage visitors to listen to the recorded stories of surviving partisans, meant to symbolize the resilience of Poles in remembering the Uprising despite previous decades of Stalinist Communism that had banned its memorialization. In the museum, the history is told through a narrative lens of Polish heroism and sacrifice after years of suffering. Visitors are meant to interpret the message of the exhibit in a larger context of the fight between ‘good versus evil’.¹²⁴ The exhibit tells the story of a Poland historically caught between two aggressors. Not only is the suffering under the Nazi German occupation portrayed, but crimes committed by the Soviets as well (see Figure 12). Running parallel to the narrative of Polish heroism is that of victimization. The exhibit instills this by emphasizing the incredible suffering that had befallen Poland during the German occupation whilst simultaneously detailing the background of how the Rising came to be. Sections include topics on the outbreak of war and the subsequent occupation that ushered in an era of terror, focusing on how the Germans sought to destroy Polish identity through

¹²³ Katarzyna Kienhuis, “Warsaw Rising’s 73rd anniversary: “Freedom brings us together,” *International Council of Museums*, October 2, 2017, <https://icom.museum/en/news/freedom-brings-us-together/>.

¹²⁴ Lia Dostlieva, “Why details matter: what the Warsaw Uprising Museum tells and how,” *Medium*, January 9, 2020, <https://medium.com/@liadostlieva/why-details-matters-what-the-warsaw-uprising-museum-tells-and-how-d88e395d665b>.

oppressive policies and murder.¹²⁵ The white and red colors of the Polish flag adorn many of the walls within the museum, reminding visitors of how the Rising is an intrinsic part of the Polish identity. One method of forging an emotional connection between visitors and the past is through evoking personal identification by including a plethora of individual stories that are told in conjunction with the wider historical background that is provided.¹²⁶ Museums are crucial actors in the construction of heritage within Poland, one aspect that is central and common to the process of heritage construction is continuity. As Tuuli Lähdesmäki and Luissa Passerini observed, “The link between durable, tangible heritage and the idea of continuity of people across generations is widespread, implicit and often explicating in the Western world, especially in Europe.”¹²⁷ It’s important to bear in mind how a museum attempts to establish that sense of continuity, typically it’s through a collective set of values and identity markers. The Warsaw Rising museum establishes a sense of continuity, of connection between the past and present generations of Poles, by reinforcing the value of heroism and notions of patriotism for the homeland. Heroism is portrayed as a Polish national value, used to unify the community through a constructed identity that is emboldened by the heroic and sacrificial narrative contrived by the Warsaw Rising museum.¹²⁸ As Marta reinforced, the Warsaw Rising has been portrayed as, “a core of contemporary Polish identity, built up on mythical icons of the Polish past epitomized by such themes as “Polish heroism and patriotism”.”¹²⁹

The museum highlighted the stories of those who fought and the perceived collective support of *all* Poles during the Rising to the forefront whilst building upon the constructed discourse of Polish heroism in the face of an insurmountable, authoritarian enemy. As Monika Żychlińska and Erica Fontana observed in their analysis of the museum, “The Warsaw Rising, already prominent in Polish historical consciousness as a fight for freedom associated with a democratic organization, provided an excellent example of an event that could be framed as a

¹²⁵ Grzegorz Jasiński and Paweł Ukielski, *Warsaw Rising Museum Guidebook* (Warsaw: Warsaw Rising Museum, 2020), 64.

¹²⁶ Monika Żychlińska and Erica Fontana, “Museum Games and Emotional Truths: Creating Polish National Identity at the Warsaw Rising Museum,” *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures* (May 2015). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0888325414566198>.

¹²⁷ Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Luisa Passerini, Sigrid Kaasik-Krogerus et al., “Introduction: Europe, Heritage and Memory – Dissonant Encounters and Explorations,” in *Dissonant Heritages and Memories in Contemporary Europe* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 6.

¹²⁸ Łucja Piekarska-Duraj, *The Invisible Hand of Europe* (Bern: Peter Lang GmbH, 2020) 168-169.

¹²⁹ Marta Kurkowska-Budzan, “The Warsaw Rising Museum: Polish Identity and Memory of World War II,” *Martor, Revista de Anthropologie a Muzeului Taranului Roman* 11 (2006): 136.

universal fight for freedom in the face of threats from occupying powers.”¹³⁰ This sense of continuity is personified in the central steel monument that reaches all levels of the museum. The steel monument is engraved with the dates of the Rising and is marked by bullet holes, inside the monument is the sound of a beating heart that represents not only the fighting heart of Warsaw but the whole of Poland. This monument is a core exhibit, encouraging visitors to put their ears to the steel and experience the symbolism that the Rising holds in the heart of Polish society whilst paying tribute to those who fought. An extensive section on the Polish Underground State provides visitors the ability to learn about the largest resistance group in Europe. As the organizers and participants of the Rising, the Polish Home Army is memorialized as heroes within the museum. The sense of continuity between the past and present further emerges in this realm as active duty Polish servicemembers regularly visit the museum to learn about the past in order to understand the future. It appears that the visit to the Warsaw Rising Museum is integrated into their training, by showing the historic sacrifice of those before them and what it means to be Polish - fighting against oppressive, totalitarian regimes in the name of freedom and honor. This is important to note as it reinforces the notion of a connection between those alive and their ancestors, the heroes. The Warsaw Rising museum displays an accumulation of glory and sacrifice that is meant to represent the entirety of the Polish nation, forging a stronger contemporary Polish community as a result. So, how does the Rising Museum consolidate the story of 1944?

The Warsaw Uprising in 1944 is consolidated into single stories that create a coherent narrative. This narrative portrays a nation of defenders, seeking to liberate Poland and uphold notions of freedom and democracy. This is achieved by showing the progress of the fighting from August to October, the involvement of religious life, and the role that citizens played in supporting the Polish Home Army’s efforts. The museum does address the shortcomings of the Rising, namely the controversy of whether it should have happened in the first place and the high human cost.¹³¹ But even this section is provided with the caveat that regardless of the outcome, it was a necessary battle for the soul of the Polish nation. The museum emphasizes how the Polish nation was viscerally targeted by the Nazi regime, and that losing meant the total destruction of Poland. As Jan Karski wrote in *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World*, “when a Polish

¹³⁰ Żychlińska and Fontana, “Museal Games.”

¹³¹ Jasiński and Ukielski, *Warsaw Rising Museum*, 188.

soldier was beaten on the battlefield, the specter of total annihilation swooped down upon the entire nation: its neighbors would pillage and divide up its land and try to destroy its language and culture.”¹³² The loss of territory was not only at stake but the complete annihilation of the Polish nation and identity was on the line. Regardless of the odds, the Warsaw Rising in 1944 was representative of the Polish people’s fight to save and protect their community. This sentiment is a prominent characteristic of the Warsaw Rising Museum, that the undertaking of the uprising by soldiers and civilians is far more significant than the outcome.¹³³ Visiting the museum impresses upon individuals the feeling that even though the Rising failed to oust the Nazis and establish independent Polish control over Warsaw, the attempt in and of itself was heroic. This sentiment is the driving force behind the museum’s redefinition of victory. The message of the museum is that victory is not defined by the success of the Rising, but rather by the heroic efforts of Poles, both civilian and soldier, in rising against Nazi Germany and attempting to reestablish sovereign control over their beloved city. The museum’s reinterpreted definition of victory mirrors the contemporary perception and hyperfocus on the heroism displayed in the fight for freedom leads to rigidity in the narrative. Walking through the exhibit, that message is clearly portrayed from the infographic panels to the personal testimonies included. This results in an absence of potentially divergent interpretations or narratives being entertained in the conversation. Defeatist or controversial aspects of the Warsaw Rising are omitted in the museum that chooses instead to concentrate on the heroic and martyrological perception of the Polish past.¹³⁴ This authority is derived from the idea that the museum is accountable for telling the truth, a perceived ‘truth’ that is used in the basis of establishing collective memory, forming national identity, and weaving the mythical narratives of heritage.

¹³² Karski, *Story of a Secret State*.

¹³³ Eric Nesbitt, Josh Seale, and Regan Bortz, “The Warsaw Uprising: Museums, Monuments, and Cultural Memory in Warsaw Today,” *Museum Studies Abroad*, March 10, 2020, <https://museumstudiesabroad.org/cultural-memory-warsaw-uprising/>.

¹³⁴ Eugeniusz Cezary Król, “Perzeptionen des Aufstands in Polen,” in *Der Warschauer Aufstand 1944*, ed by Hans Jürgen Bömelburg and Michael Thomae (Paderborn: BRILL, 2011: 185, quoted in Liljana Radonić, “‘Our’ vs ‘Inherited’ Museums. PiS and Fidesz as Mnemonic Warriors,” *Südosteuropa Journal of Politics and Society* 68, no. 1 (May 2020): 55.



Figure 11: Replica of Little Insurgents Monument at Warsaw Rising Museum; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken 9/9/21.



Figure 12: Section on 'Operation Tempest' at Warsaw Rising Museum; Warsaw, Poland. Photo taken: 26/2/22.

3.4.3 Analysis of Second World War Museum and Galicia Museum Temporary Exhibit

Though not the primary museums driving this research forward, it is important to briefly analyze the relevant exhibits at the Second World War Museum and the Galicia Museum Temporary Exhibit. Identity formation and heritage-making processes are incredibly present in these museums as vessels of collective memory. Including the museums that provide an additional layer of context and analysis to how museums produce and reproduce dissonant heritage in contemporary Poland.

The Second World War Museum in Gdańsk provides a comprehensive overview of the war, weaving the Polish narrative alongside that of the rest of Europe. The location of the museum is symbolic in and of itself, located near the spot where the Second World War started on September 1, 1939. When visiting the museum, it is clear that the curators sought to tell a story of the war within the context of the collective. Paweł Machcewicz, the former director of the museum, wanted to ensure that the museum was one about the military but rather focused on the ideologies that drove it forward and the human suffering that resulted throughout Poland and the rest of Europe. Machcewicz argued for this, saying, “We cannot explain Polish history without paying attention to other nations. We are not an isolated island.”¹³⁵ This approach of multi-linear storytelling especially is prevalent in the section on Terror. Rather than just hyper-focusing on the Polish experience, although the narrative of the country stuck between two aggressors is still communicated, the museum tells it alongside the suffering of the rest of Europe. This strategy attempts to make the history of the war an international one, rather than only a national one. The sheer scale of the letters used sets the tone for the exhibit, fear and

¹³⁵ Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, “Poland’s New World War II Museum.”

suffering so profound that it overshadowed everything. The message is clear that it was not terror wrought by individuals but systematic terror as plans to exterminate large swaths of people were implemented, namely Europe's Jews. The museum encourages visitors to spend considerable time here and absorb the materials in order to form their own interpretation of events. Portraying the suffering of one group is not prioritized over another, terror felt by all communities was acknowledged. This section is relevant as it situates the memorialization of violence at the heart of collective memory and heritage construction within Central Europe. Terror is used in these stories to reinforce the notion of victimization for countless people throughout Europe.

The temporary outdoor exhibit, "They Fill No Space", at Galicia Museum in Kraków covers topics that are incredibly relevant to this research. The exhibition focuses on reviving the Jewish presence and memory in contemporary Polish spaces, both physically through murals and in conversation. This exhibition seeks to tell the history of the Jews and encourage conversations on the presence of Jews in contemporary spaces of memory through visually aesthetic mediums. Like the museums mentioned previously, this exhibit included sections on the history of Jews, their contributions to Poland, and even a section on the Polish Righteous Among Nations. The exhibit provides a panel about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, providing the history of the event and conveying the heroism displayed by Warsaw's Jews to lead an uprising against the Nazis despite its doomed fate. The mural attributed to this panel is adorned with yellow daffodils, the flower used in the annual commemoration ceremonies of the ghetto uprising. Another panel details the diversity that once existed in pre-war Poland, emphasizing how it was a country of many cultures that lived together. The panel's mural depicts the various ethnic minorities that used to make up 30% of the country's population, now they only constitute 3%, a significant portion of that being Polish Jews that numbered 3 million with the rest of the population loss a result from the shift of borders in the post-war era.¹³⁶ The message in this mural is poignant as it shows Polish Catholics standing beside Jews holding banners written in Yiddish. The message the artist is portraying depicts the historic connection of Jews to Poland and the need to overcome ethnic and religious differences to heal the wounds of the past. Confronting difficult topics is situated as a central part of this exhibit as panels on persistent anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and tense Polish-Jews relations were included. The panel exhibit on Polish-Jewish relations is important to touch upon. Debates around the treatment of Jews during the Second

¹³⁶ POLIN Museum, "They Fill No Spaces."

World War and in the post-war era remain heated, even to this day. Many wounds of the past have not been healed, requiring that the current generation have these difficult conversations on memory and critically examine the criteria that have been established around Polish national identity. This exhibit argues for the importance of keeping these conversations alive as the attitude towards Jews remains complicated in the present day. Visitors are encouraged to interact and reflect on the state of contemporary Jewish presence in the collective memory, national identity, and narratives of heritage in contemporary Poland.

3.5 Synthesis of Findings

In this section, the analysis of the findings will be compared to the conceptual frameworks detailed earlier in the literature review. The focus will be on examining how the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 are portrayed by the museums that in turn construct and influence collective memory, national identity, and heritage in contemporary Poland. Providing an answer to the central and supporting research questions is the ultimate goal of this section. In conducting this research and analysis, the notion that memory, identity, and heritage are interconnected and act as building blocks for one another is further reinforced. There are themes that have emerged throughout this research that acts as points of intersectionality between the three main concepts where the analysis can be synthesized.

3.5.1 Mythical Narratives

Collective memory is characterized as a highly selective, malleable phenomenon that is interpreted and molded by the dominant group to fit the needs of contemporary society. Memories are often altered and distorted during the selection process, leading to a degree of unreliability and myth-making in the process.¹³⁷ Building a mythical narrative is a phenomenon that occurs in both the creation of collective memory and the heritage process. It relies upon the formation of a linear story that situates mythical narratives within the chronological historical past.¹³⁸ Mythical narratives are more prone to manipulation, reducing the memory of events to what is perceived to be the facts. The manifestation of this situation is visible within the museums analyzed in this research. For instance, the Warsaw Rising Museum has been established as a tangible representation of Polish memory, identity, and heritage. Poland

¹³⁷ Rowlands, "Remembering to Forget," 43.

¹³⁸ Caleb Simmons, "History, Heritage, and Myth," *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 22, no. 3 (2018): 216-237, https://brill.com/view/journals/wo/22/3/article-p216_2.xml.

continues to grapple with a complicated history, which requires the navigation of the past and the selection of narratives to serve as the foundation for contemporary Polish memory and identity. Marta Kurkowska-Budzan identified the importance of museums in Polish memory and heritage mythologization, "...[museums] play a crucial social role in shaping and maintaining uncritical, mythologized, and nationalistic history of the Poles."¹³⁹ The Warsaw Rising Museum provides an opportunity to cement the values and attributions that are deemed most desirable, such as personifying the Polish nation as one full of heroes and brave defenders of the most sacred values of freedom and honor. For society to form an identity, it needs foundational myths constructed from memory and reproduced in the process of heritage. For contemporary Poland, this founding myth manifested through what Ljiljana Radonić described as a "patriotic heroic narrative" that was immortalized in the Warsaw Rising Museum.¹⁴⁰ This narrative serves as the contextual backdrop for understanding how the story of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising is told throughout the museum. The Warsaw Rising Museum creates a space where national identity is constructed, where the foundational myths are established and memories are injected with meaning through the process of interpretation and heritage making, this is then presented to visitors.¹⁴¹ An emphasis is placed on portraying the horrific oppression that Poles faced from not just Nazi occupation, but Soviet as well. Through an in-depth portrayal of the oppression that Poles endured during the war, the museum establishes the basis for emphasizing the unique patriotism that emerged through the undertaking of the Rising. The story of the Rising is told in chronological order through artifacts and personal testimonies that serve to humanize the exhibits. The museum tells how the Polish Home Army faced an impenetrable enemy in the hopes of re-establishing freedom and democracy in Poland, despite the doomed reality. Though the Polish Home Army remains one of the permanent fixtures in the narrative of the museum, a significant focus is placed on the civilian experience as well. This narrative is woven to not only create the myth of a nation of collective heroes but of collective sacrifice as well.

This mythical narrative of collective sacrifice is woven into the fabric of contemporary Polish collective memory, identity, and heritage. The sacrifice on part of the Polish people is

¹³⁹ Marta Kurkowska-Budzan, "The Warsaw Rising Museum: Polish Identity and Memory of World War II," *Revue d'Anthropologie du Musée du Paysain Roman* 11 (2006): 140, quoted in Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska, *World War II Historical Reenactment in Poland: The Practice of Authenticity* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2021).

¹⁴⁰ Ljiljana Radonić, "'Our' vs. 'Inherited' Museums. PiS and Fidesz as Mnemonic Warriors," *Südosteuropa* 68, no. 1 (2020): 44-78. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/soeu-2020-0003/html?lang=en>.

¹⁴¹ Piekarska-Duraj, *The Invisible Hand*, 168-169.

perceived to be their role as the defenders of the world from both Naziism and the Soviets despite the suffering inflicted on the county. In the Warsaw Rising Museum that sentiment is vividly translated to the viewers through graphic pictures of the bodies of civilians executed by the Nazis and the faces of those killed in the Katyń Massacre by the Soviets. A perception that is echoed by Jan Ołdakowski who observed that “Stories of miraculous survival stand beside those of incomprehensible loss and demonic atrocities committed by both Nazi and Soviet forces.”¹⁴² Artifacts and graphics within the Warsaw Rising Museum are chosen to testify as evidence to the past as the contemporary narrates it. The museum dedicates a significant portion to displaying the horrific aftermath of the Rising as German forces razed the city to the ground. Miron Białoszewski wrote in *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*, “Two hundred thousand people lie under the rubble. Together with Warsaw.”¹⁴³ The items tell a story of a people who have suffered immensely, but despite it, they rose from the ashes and were spurred by heroic patriotism to fight back against authoritarianism.

Memory and heritage are not clear-cut processes that fit neatly into single, coherent narratives. They are diverse processes that are complicated and multi-faceted. When the narrative is woven from a single perception, it brings it closer to mythical rather than critical. Narratives of memory and heritage are constructed with real and imaginary events that serve as core cultural cornerstones upon which the foundation of national identity is built.¹⁴⁴ The Warsaw Rising Museum facilitates and sustains the mythical narratives constructed in contemporary Poland, detailing a country of collective heroes that have historically born a collective sacrifice. If patriotism, heroism, and sacrifice are traits of the Polish nation that are embedded in the collective memory and heritage, one must ask why is the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 absent in that narrative?

3.5.2 The Imagined Community

The imagined community is constructed from a shared interpretation of the past and its use in the contemporary [heritage]. National myths are often at the foundation of an imagined community through narratives that define the boundaries of the group, as in what it is and what

¹⁴² John Radzilowski, “Remembrance and Recovery: The Museum of the Warsaw Rising and the Memory of World War II in Post-Communist Poland,” *The Public Historian* 31, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 150.

¹⁴³ Original Polish: “Dwieście tysięcy ludzi leży pod gruzami. Razem z Warszawą.”

¹⁴⁴ Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć mit*.

it's not, and the socialization of its members by nurturing a sense of community.¹⁴⁵ This imagined community is formed by a dominant group for the creation of a nation and its identity. It is the dominant group within a society that wields power over controlling what is included in the collective memory and thus national identity that influences narratives of heritage. In contemporary Polish society, the dominant group is ethnic, non-Jewish Poles. Through the establishment of museums, the Polish nation is culturally constructed as an imagined community. The Warsaw Rising Museum acts as a vessel for the formation of Poland as an imagined community. It establishes a collective memory and a set of attributes that act as a unifying force for members of the Polish community. Identification with the Polish imagined community is rooted in the shared perception of the collective memory, a memory that is reproduced within the Warsaw Rising Museum.

The inherent attribution of 'otherness' to Jews in Poland is made clear in the absence of a museum dedicated to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Social memory and heritage do not only constitute remembrance and the notion of presence but also constitute absence and forgetting. This absence and forgetting are not simply illustrated in the lack of a tangible museum dedicated solely to the Ghetto Uprising or sparse exhibitions, but also in the discourse. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was noticeably absent in the discourse at the Warsaw Rising Museum, relegated to a small wall and downplayed as a minor preceding event tied to the horrors of German occupation. Geneviève Zubrzycki observed this discursive absence further, "Absence can also be discursive, shaped by omission, silence, and taboo. The objective absence of Jews and the discursive silence around it had a serious effect on Polish memory."¹⁴⁶ The decimation of the Polish Jewish community meant that the process of remembering and commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was left to ethnic Poles which over time meant that Jewish absence became a social fact of contemporary Polish society. The absence of Jews in the collective memory and heritage of Poland reflects the absence of their identification with the imagined community. One such notable aspect of separation in commemoration is how the museums mark the anniversaries of the uprisings. The POLIN Museum commemorates the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with yellow

¹⁴⁵ Geneviève Zubrzycki, "The Politics of Jewish Absence in Contemporary Poland," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 2 (April 2017): 253.

¹⁴⁶ Zubrzycki, "The Politics of Jewish Absence," 251.

daffodils¹⁴⁷ handed out to people on the streets. Whereas the Warsaw Rising Museum sponsors a city-wide event that brings together thousands upon thousands of people and Polish government officials, with the Polish flag and its red and white colors symbolically covering the city for the anniversary of the 1944 Rising. The Polish flag, a representative symbol of the Polish national identity, is noticeably absent from the museal commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, exemplifying the separation of Jews from the Polish national community and heritage. It is made clear in the tension that permeates conversations on further attempts to commemorate and remember Poland's Jews, symbolic of the friction in Polish-Jewish relations. One cannot conduct research on this topic without acknowledging the tenseness surrounding Polish-Jewish relations, both in the past and in the present. Often conversations of the past result in heated debates that result in no consensus being reached. At the root of the issue is the simultaneous absence and presence of Jews in Poland's imagined community and memoryscape. The attempts to revive Jewish presence into contemporary Polish memory, heritage, and identity materialized through museum efforts, such as POLIN, Galicia, and *Pelno Ich Nigdzie* exhibit, but this revival is often done in contrast to Polish identity rather than integrated. Zubrzycki observed and elaborated on the issue of this, "The Jewish turn in Poland remains primarily a Polish problem, and it may be a problem for Jews insofar as they are constructed in these endeavors only as the Other through which national self is constructed."¹⁴⁸ Though efforts have been made to revive Jewish presence into contemporary Polish spaces, the tension around confronting the complicated past and construction of 'Otherness' in identity and heritage means that Jews continue to largely remain absent.

3.5.3 The Political Malleability

A common characteristic that emerges in both collective memory and heritage is the malleability that lends it to being politically influenced. These political influences are injected based on the perceived contemporary needs of society. The perceived needs of society change with the pendulum of national politics. In contemporary Poland, the Law and Justice Party (PiS) has situated memory politics at the core of their cultural agenda as they seek to rewrite narratives to fit the prescribed version of events that builds heritage. The Warsaw Rising Museum is

¹⁴⁷ The tradition of yellow daffodils to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising harkens back to the story of a former Ghetto Uprising leader, Marek Edelman, receiving yellow daffodils anonymously as a thank you for his bravery.

¹⁴⁸ Zubrzycki, "The Politics of Jewish Absence," 276.

characterized as the ‘flagship’ museum for PiS’s politics of memory and heritage construction that has been at the heart of many of its cultural policies.¹⁴⁹ As Michał Łuczewski observed, “PiS politicians decided to utilize the potential that lay in the story of the Warsaw Rising to construct a moralistic narrative presenting Poles as ready to sacrifice their lives in the name of higher ideals.”¹⁵⁰ The process of heritage and memory construction within contemporary Poland is politicized, as it is everywhere else, which means that spaces, where those processes occur, are inevitably impacted.

Spaces that are often held responsible for reflecting those changes are museums. Museums are political institutions, subjugated to political pressure and the whims of the ruling ideology. Their narratives are manipulated by those in power to fit the needs of the dominant group and the contemporary society, as they have the unique ability to construct memory, identity, and heritage. The museums explored in this research are not spared from the political influence, power struggles, and identity objectives. The Second World War Museum in Gdańsk is the most fitting example to explore how politics have influenced the narratives woven in contemporary Polish museums. As mentioned in the analysis section above, the museum in Gdańsk has faced considerable political backlash from the ruling Law and Justice Party over what they perceive to be a false narrative. Since its opening in 2017, the museum has undergone a series of changes as the Polish government has ramped up its campaign targeting it. In the museum, a section on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 is included to provide visitors with the narrative of one of the most formative events in Jewish history and heroic acts of revolt against the Nazis. The exhibit was small, yet it portrayed the importance of the event well. The inclusion of a section on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising alludes to its place as a significant event during the Second World War and makes a broader statement on the necessity of including it in the collective memory. What is most interesting about the exhibit on the Ghetto Uprising is not its existence, but rather the reprisal it received from the government. Members of the Law and Justice Party have claimed that the museum magnifying the association of the Holocaust and the Ghetto Uprising with Poland is detrimental to Polish identity as it undermines their heritage. Instead, the Polish government wanted to see a more extensive section on the 1944 Warsaw

¹⁴⁹ Radonić, “‘Our’ vs. ‘Inherited’.”

¹⁵⁰ Michał Łuczewski, *Kapitał moralny. Polityki historyczne w późnej nowoczesności* (Kraków: Ósrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2017), quoted in Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska, *World War II Historical Reenactment in Poland: The Practice of Authenticity* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2021).

Uprising as it is perceived to have taken a greater toll. The Second World War Museum does include a section on the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, but it's more modest as there is a separate museum dedicated entirely to the uprising. The political outcry is symbolic of a greater issue surrounding Poland's history and the absence of a critical evaluation of the past. The sentiment communicated reinforces the impression that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is not included in the Polish narratives of collective memory or heritage as Jews are not viewed as members of the Polish nation [the imagined community]. The narratives constructed in the museums on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising are missing the same attribution of Polish national values such as heroism and valor, it is woven as a separate memory attributed to another community. Polish Jews are rather perceived as a separate imagined community, distinctly different and not considered to be part of the in-group as their discourse is constructed in contrast to that of the Polish national self.

The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews has been hailed as a one-of-a-kind museum, the first of its nature to be established in Central and Eastern Europe. The uniqueness of the museum is clear when visiting, the breadth of history covered is immense and it actively encourages the reintegration of Jews back into contemporary Polish memory and narratives of heritage. At the end of the museum is a wall displaying anti-Semitic remarks, driving home that it remains an issue in Poland today. Some of the comments included were spoken by members of the Polish government, sparking a political backlash against the museum that mainly targeted the Director.¹⁵¹ The impact of the recent Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, colloquially known as the Polish Holocaust Law, is evident in the museum as it penalizes the association or mere mention of Polish collaboration with the Nazis. This has meant that the museum must take greater caution in the framing of potential narratives that diverge from the one that is nationally prescribed. It is with this context that a better reflection on the absence of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the museum is understood. Though heroic a narrative, it is an uprising associated with a historically 'other' group that was ruthlessly crushed by the Nazis as the Jewish resistance received no aid from the Polish Home Army.¹⁵² It is abundantly clear that political pressure is increasingly applied on institutions that seek to foster dialogue on

¹⁵¹ Masha Gessen, "Poland's Ruling Party Puts an Extraordinary Museum of Polish-Jewish History into Limbo," *The New Yorker*, September 23, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/polands-ruling-party-puts-an-extraordinary-museum-of-polish-jewish-history-into-limbo>.

¹⁵² Janicka, "The Square of Polish Innocence," 211.

contemporary Polish-Jewish relations and urge for a more critical evaluation of the past, rather than one that simply follows the prescribed narratives.

3.5.4 The Significance of Place

One of the most striking characteristics of both the POLIN Museum and the Warsaw Rising Museum was the significance injected in places perceived to be central to the process of memory and heritage construction. These ‘places’ serve as important tangible centers of cultural heritage as they weave and sustain the narratives. It is at these ‘places’ or ‘sites’ of heritage where individuals may go to learn, interpret, and dissect the narratives that are portrayed.

The POLIN Museum is one of the best examples to discuss how the meaning given to places helps to create a community’s heritage. The museum itself is built upon the area of Warsaw where the former ghetto once stood. The place inherently represents a space for reflection regarding the fate of Warsaw’s Jews. Even before stepping foot into the museum, Rapport’s Monument to the Ghetto Heroes stands as a testament to the bravery and sacrifice made by those in 1943. This perception of the space around the POLIN Museum, Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, and the demarcation of the former Warsaw Ghetto is a representation of the simultaneous absence and presence of Jews in contemporary Poland. In the park surrounding the POLIN Museum are multiple plaques and memorials that pay tribute to Poles that helped Jews during the Second World War. In a place meant to memorialize and commemorate Polish Jews and the Ghetto Uprising, there was a surprisingly large amount of representation given to Poles as if to commemorate the Jewish narrative just enough whilst firmly reinforcing the dominant Polish narrative. Elzbieta Janicka, whose arguments align with the observations mentioned in this paper, wrote about this extensively:

These centers carry the potential of an alternative narrative of Polish-Jewish relations. The majority of Poles today perceive this potential as a threat. Emphasizing the dominant majority’s version of the events in this place is in fact a symbolic pre-emptive action. It is meant to silence the unwanted voice or suppress even the mere possibility that it might emerge. The accompanying memorials resemble a kind of symbolic block or scattered notification.¹⁵³

The point Janicka makes here is that the significance attached to the place of the former Warsaw Ghetto should be to magnify the presence of Jews in Polish society, yet it has become a space of

¹⁵³ Janicka, “The Square of Polish Innocence,” 211.

oppressing and manipulating narratives that diverge from the dominant one. When visiting the POLIN Museum, the place where the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began, the topography is symbolic of the larger issue around the dominant Polish efforts to control the space. In controlling the space, one controls the heritage. As Jews remain largely absent from the memory and heritage construction processes that are taking place at the POLIN Museum and adjacent memorial park, the narrative produced is inherently dissonant. The POLIN Museum symbolically stands on the site of the former ghetto where the uprising in 1943 began, yet it is largely absent from the museum's narrative with its undersized place in the exhibit. In this case, the significance of the 'place' where the POLIN Museum is situated is acknowledged but feels as though it is diminished.

The placement of the Warsaw Rising Museum was chosen for its significance as well. Located in the Wola district where more than 40,000 Poles were killed in the first week after the start of the Rising in August of 1944, the museum stands as a testament to the resilience and bravery of the Polish people despite the failed outcome. Though the Rising failed and Warsaw was razed by the Nazi forces, the museum symbolizes the resilience of the Polish nation to survive totalitarianism and rebuild. The Warsaw Rising Museum is largely considered the 'flagship' museum of the ruling Law and Justice Party, used as a permanent reminder of the past that materializes in the present. As Sara McDowell argued, it represents the dominant values of Polish society whilst fostering the perceptions of what Polish identity and heritage are built upon. It is clear when visiting the museum that it is used as a vessel of Polish memory and heritage, with the Monument embedded with a beating heart being the most symbolic in showing how deeply rooted the Warsaw Rising is in society. When visiting the place, visitors are meant to feel as though they are learning about and experiencing the most formative event in contemporary Polish history. From the flag-adorned walls of the Warsaw Rising Museum to the streets named after the Polish Home Army, the entire district of Wola is marked by its significance to Polish heritage, identity, and memory.

3.5.5 The Emergence of Dissonance

The concept of dissonance within narratives of memory and heritage in contemporary Polish society is not a new phenomenon. But by visiting, interpreting, and analyzing the ways in which national museums memorialize and commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and the Warsaw Rising in 1944, it is clear to see the emergence and pre-existence of dissonance

in the contemporary heritage. In the existence of a museum dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising and the absence of one dedicated to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the inherent dissonance of heritage is apparent as the narratives diverge and the discourse is manipulated. Heritage is a process of communication and interpretation, when a community injects meaning into memories, narratives, tangible artifacts, spaces, etc. Dissonance emerges as mythical narratives are woven by the dominant group to create a single, coherent portrayal of the past. Dissonance emerges in the construction of an imagined community through one national museum whilst blatantly excluding another. The aforementioned topics above all lead to the production and reproduction of dissonance within museums when it comes to both uprisings and the wider history of Polish-Jewish relations. The wider topic of the Warsaw Ghetto in contemporary Polish memory and heritage is inherently dissonant. Narratives that are woven in both the POLIN Museum and the Warsaw Rising Museum portray Poles as heroic allies of the Jews, many risking everything to save them. But the reality is quite different from the constructed narrative. As Dan Kurzman wrote in his book, *The Bravest Battle: The 28 Days of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*:

The ghetto tested not only the Jewish soul but the Polish heart. A relatively small number of Poles risked their lives to save the Jews, and some, indeed, died in the effort. Another small group of Poles betrayed the Jews and even killed them. The great mass of Poles, traditionally anti-Semitic, were indifferent and watched the extermination of the Jews with greater curiosity than sympathy.¹⁵⁴

Kurzman argues that the ethnic Polish indifference to the fate of the Jews is largely representative of the greater divide that existed between the two communities, a reality that is faded out in the contemporary narratives constructed in the museums. The historic anti-Semitism in Polish society is largely overlooked or minimized in the museum narratives. Acknowledging the reality that the Poles viewed the creation of, revolt within, and subsequent destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto as not part of their collective ‘responsibility’ poses a threat to the narratives that have been woven today regarding the past. In not covering the complexity of the past, the narrative produced for heritage in commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 is inherently dissonant. The suffering of the Jews in Warsaw’s ghetto did not ignite a mass movement from the Poles to relieve that suffering, rather it created an arena for the contemporary

¹⁵⁴ Dan Kurzman, *The Bravest Battle: The 28 Days of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 18.

sentiment of ‘competitive suffering’ in Polish society. The story of the Warsaw Ghetto and the uprising led by Jewish partisans is told, but the narrative is heavily controlled to prevent greater exploration of the reality of how Poles treated and perceived the Jews. As Rana P.B. Singh and G.J. Ashworth observed, heritages rooted in trauma and suffering are inherently dissonant as they produce a plethora of differing narratives. There are competing heritages that emerge, one rooted in the Polish collective memory and one rooted in the Jewish collective memory. Both uprisings were events of mass trauma and the culmination of the suffering of entire communities of people. The Warsaw Rising Museum focuses on the Polish suffering and sacrifice, serving as a place of significance that will commemorate and remember that sacrifice for generations to come. The Law and Justice Party’s regime of memory politics magnifies the Warsaw Rising of 1944 in Polish heritage and memory because the use of memorialized violence is one of the strongest *modus operandi* in supporting their contemporary identity objectives. Even with this context in mind, it is clear that the suffering and sacrifice of the Jews during the Ghetto Uprising is not considered by Poles to be part of the greater collective sacrifice, thus translating to its absence from narratives of heritage and identity. When violence is memorialized and given a primary role in the construction of heritage, management policies are used in order to mitigate the inevitable emergence of dissonance. Museums try to balance the narratives and mitigate the divergence, but it is not as simple as that as those attempts lead to the conscious altering of heritage in contemporary Poland. One such aspect of the story of the Warsaw Rising that is altered involves the inclusion of Polish Jews.

The POLIN Museum included a small section on Jews that survived the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 and then went on to fight in the Warsaw Rising of 1944. The museum portrayed it as an incredible acceptance and portrayal of comradery on the part of the Poles for the Jewish partisans. The section notably glossed over the reality of Polish-Jewish relations and often outright rejection. As Dan Kurzman wrote in his book, “Home Army leaders either rejected them [able-body Jews seeking to fight in the Warsaw revolt on August 1, 1944] or assigned them the most dangerous missions, on which some were shot in the back if they were not killed first by the enemy.”¹⁵⁵ Kurzman brings to attention the reality that Jews were often outright rejected from Polish society despite the immense persecution they faced by the occupying Nazi forces and their desire to liberate Poland. The root of the issue stems from the notion that Jews are not

¹⁵⁵ Kurzman, *The Bravest Battle*, 342-343

considered members of the Polish imagined community, and that their heritage and collective memory are perceived to be distinctly different.

The silence in the museum speaks volumes. Both the POLIN Museum and the Warsaw Rising Museum have elements of remembering and forgetting. The POLIN Museum remembers the historic existence and contribution of the Jewish community to Poland yet forgets the depth of tension that permeated Polish-Jewish relations and its impact on the systematic annihilation of the group. In the Warsaw Rising Museum, the collective sacrifice and bravery of the Polish nation are remembered yet the equally courageous actions by Jews during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 are forgotten. This phenomenon that emerges within museum narratives is representative of the issue of collective forgetting in memory. As Hirst and Coman argued, collective forgetting is an inevitable consequence of the selectivity of collective memory.¹⁵⁶ With the inherent aspect of collective forgetting being present in collective memory, it further reinforces the inherent dissonance of heritage that emerges in the contemporary museums. Often the political influence in places that curate the narratives of heritage results in the conscious decision by the Polish nation [the dominant group] to collectively forget so that the narratives fit better to the set contemporary objectives.

Museums within contemporary Poland are increasingly constructing commemorative narratives that illustrate the inherent dissonance of the heritage. It is visible in the simultaneous absence and presence of Jews within the collective memory and heritage of contemporary Poland. The campaigns to rewrite history and push out a single, coherent narrative have created a need to further analyze how the divergent narratives beget dissonance in museums, the spaces that traditionally have served as the curators of a nation's collective memory, identity, and heritage.

¹⁵⁶ Hirst & Coman, "Building a collective memory."

Conclusion

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 1944 are two of the most prominent displays of heroism and bravery during the Second World War. Both the uprisings were doomed to fail, yet the resilience displayed by the Jews and Poles against the occupying Nazi German forces has continued to inspire the generations that have followed. Despite this, museums in contemporary Poland have failed to holistically cover the uprisings, leading to the emergence of dissonance as the narratives diverge. In an attempt to understand this phenomenon, the central question driving this research forward is as follows:

How do the museum narratives constructed to commemorate the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the 1944 Warsaw Uprising illustrate the inherent dissonance of contemporary Polish heritage?

To answer this question, I chose a case study approach and focused primarily on the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Warsaw Rising Museum. These museums were selected as the representatives for telling the stories of the Uprisings as they are the two most contextually relevant. Many hours were spent visiting the museums, analyzing, and interpreting the exhibits in order to construct an answer to this question. I relied heavily upon the frameworks of the three most relevant concepts: collective memory, identity, and heritage. In conducting this research, it was important to recognize how closely intertwined the three concepts are together, drawing upon each conceptual framework to build the other. It is important to acknowledge how heritage and memory are not simply about remembrance and commemoration, but also about forgetting and absence. Collective memory, heritage, and identity are malleable, human-created concepts that rely on attaching meaning to an event or place that gives it significance to a community and the subsequent importance of interpretation when interacting with those constructed narratives. This paper focused a considerable amount on the role of collective memory in heritage and how commemorative narratives that are constructed within museums are inherently dissonant. It's vital to point out that heritage cannot be limited to simply commemoration and memory. It is not only a symbolic representation of the past, but a process of remembering, forgetting, and commemorating through interpretation and injected meaning. Heritage and unity around a collective memory are used to bind a community together and provide a set of values or histories to identify themselves. Establishing the conceptual framework allowed for an enhanced understanding and analysis of the complexities

of this topic and how heritage is constructed within contemporary Poland. Applying the theory of postmemory provides readers with an acknowledgment of how trauma from the Second World War continues to influence the generations that come after as the suffering and events of the uprisings become firmly situated within their identity and memory as it is passed down.

Seeking to provide an analysis and answer to the research question, I analyzed and interpreted the exhibitions relevant to the 1943 and 1944 uprisings through the conceptual framework that has been previously established. I sought to identify and attempt to understand how these narratives constructed within the selected museums illustrate the inherent dissonant heritage. The emergence of dissonant heritage within the contemporary Polish museums included in this research is illustrated through both the tangible and discursive absence of those Polish Jewish narratives that deviate from the dominant in favor of elevating those connected to the collective memory and heritage of the ‘imagined community’ of the Polish nation. Inherent dissonance of Polish heritage is prevalent in the continued absence of Jews in public spaces and the sentiment of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising belonging to the ‘out group’ or its inherent ‘otherness’ that explains its exclusion from the national heritage narratives and collective memory.

This research sought to provide an answer to this question, but I acknowledge that much more work needs to be done and understanding how dissonant heritage is increasingly becoming a hallmark in contemporary Polish museums and how the influence of current politics impacts those processes. As the concept of dissonant heritage is relatively new, this case study provides the perfect opportunity for an even more in-depth analysis of how Jews and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising continue to remain largely absent within narratives of contemporary Polish memory and heritage, and thus largely excluded from the Polish national identity.

Reflections on a Potential Area of Future Research

An important area that may serve as a base to further research on this topic would be the changing landscape of memory politics in contemporary Poland. Though memory and heritage are built upon the past, they are used to serve the needs of contemporary objectives that are in constant fluctuation. The changing of existing exhibitions and increased political pressure by the ruling Law and Justice Party through newly implemented guidelines seek to police what is included in collective memory and how it is portrayed in the heritage of the Polish nation

through museum narratives. A museum experiencing this growing tension is the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk. The museum's exhibit sends a clear message about the destructiveness and terror of war for all, a message that has been criticized and fallen prey to political pressure by the ruling Law and Justice party. Changes to the museum began shortly after its opening in 2017 as the Polish government forced the removal of Director Machcewicz of a purported "lack of patriotism".¹⁵⁷ Polish government representatives were upset over the visibility given to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and Holocaust, wanting greater focus on the Warsaw Rising and the fate of the Poles. Piotr Gliński, Deputy Prime Minister, wants the museum to rewrite the narratives with greater emphasis on the actions undertaken by Poles, saying "Our [Polish] obligation is to maintain a conversation about our sacrifice, a conversation with world public opinion. The world knows about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising on April 19, 1943, but it doesn't recognize the Warsaw Rising that took a much bigger toll."¹⁵⁸ Gliński's comments reflect the attempts of those in power to apply political pressure to rewrite narratives that mold to their goals. Since 2017, changes have been made to the exhibits and messaging of the museum though many elements of the original messaging remain. Despite the politicization and pressure from the government, the Second World War Museum provided a space that encourages the sharing of divergent narratives to be interpreted and discussed. The absence of museum spaces that encourage narratives of memory deviating from the dominant one will continue to sustain the inherent dissonance within Polish heritage and sends a clear message of the boundaries established around the Polish national identity and ultimately who is included or excluded from that community.

¹⁵⁷ Julia Szyndzielorz, "Dispute over 'patriotism' delays opening of Gdańsk's new war museum," *The Guardian*, January 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/jan/28/gdansk-second-world-war-museum-delay-patriotism-poland>.

¹⁵⁸ Rachel Donadio, "A Museum Becomes a Battlefield Over Poland's History," *The New York Times*, November 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/arts/design/museum-of-the-second-world-war-in-poland-debate.html>.

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Appendix A

Museum Mission Statements

Note: The mission statements are taken directly from the POLIN Museum website and the Warsaw Rising guidebook. Proper citations are provided in the footnotes.

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

The mission statement of the POLIN Museum is as stated: “The POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews stands in what was once the heart of Jewish Warsaw, an area which the Germans turned into a ghetto during World War II. Its modern building faces the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, thus creating a unique space for remembrance and reflection. The Monument pays tribute to the struggle and suffering of Polish Jews, while the POLIN Museum recalls their history, showing also that the Holocaust – contrary to the criminal intentions of its organizers – did not mark the end of Jewish life and culture in Poland.

Our goal is to raise historical awareness and highlight the relevance of the past for understanding the present and shaping the future. We believe that exposure to the rich and dramatic history of Polish Jews helps develop empathy and respect for people of different religions and cultures. We want as vast a swath of the public as possible to discover a deeper, unadulterated picture of Polish-Jewish relations.

These goals are especially important today as we witness a surge of antisemitism, reaching levels not seen in Poland since March '68. We are confronted with the rise of xenophobia, ethnonationalism, the brutalization of public debate, and the normalization of hate speech, especially on social media. Antisemitic and racist organizations remain marginal, but their influence is growing, above all amongst the youth.

Fully aware of the dramatic history of Polish Jews, we feel a moral obligation to promote responsible citizenship and foster open communities that respect all members, cherish diversity, and welcome minorities.”¹⁵⁹

Warsaw Rising Museum

“The main message of the Warsaw Rising Museum remains the same: for ten years the residents of Warsaw have been coming here to pay homage to those who fought and died for an independent Poland its capital city.

Ten years ago, one of the greatest challenges for us was to cross the boundaries of remembrance. The memory of the 63 days of fighting in the capital rarely crossed the administrative boundaries of the city of Warsaw. Even in the capital, it was cherished mainly within families and small communities. In the past couple of years, however, subsequent anniversaries of the Warsaw Rising have assumed a national dimension. This brings great joy to us, the organizers, and to Insurgents, the heroes, and guests of honor. An even greater challenge was to broaden the collective awareness of what happened in the summer of 1944 in Warsaw.

¹⁵⁹ “Mission and Vision,” POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, accessed on July 24, 2022, <https://www.polin.pl/en/o-muzeum/mission-and-vision>.

We decided to achieve that by engaging our visitors in modern, multidimensional, cultural, and educational activities. Apart from museum lessons and historical lectures, we have organized many concerts, theatrical performances, discussions, location-based games as well as film, literary, and sports events.

Our efforts have stimulated interest in the Warsaw Rising. Insurgents with their love of freedom and readiness for the greatest sacrifices have become important role models for generations of young Poles. The 70th Anniversary of the Warsaw Rising became a turning point and we hope that from now on the Rising will be celebrated out of a desire to cherish its memory in our communities.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Grzegorz Jasiński and Paweł Ukielski, *Warsaw Rising Museum Guidebook*, Warsaw: Warsaw Rising Museum, 2020.