

Repository of Memories or Catalyst of Illumination?
Attitudes and Expectations Towards the Jewish Museum Berlin
Among Generations and Classes

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Between 1998 and 2000, the Jewish Museum Berlin contracted me to conduct a series of museum visitor studies as part of a front-end evaluation for the new exhibitions of the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB).² In several different ways, the museum has been planned since 1971, although it was not a smooth development from that year to 1989, when the architectural proposal of a then young and unknown architect, Daniel Libeskind, has been accepted by a Berlin state jury. The spectacular (but still empty) building was accomplished in 1998, and it took another 3 years to design and realize the exhibition. Between 1998 and 2001, before the grand exhibition opening in September, the Libeskind building was already open to the public and the JMB provided guided tours on a regular basis. More than 300,000 visitors were counted at these building tours.³ The museum's permanent exhibition focuses on the 2000-year history of Jews in Germany, and how it was and continues to be intertwined with German history. After the opening, the Jewish Museum Berlin quickly became the second-most visited museum in Berlin (after the Pergamon Museum), with 1.4 million visitors between September 2001 and September 2003 (647,000 visitors in 2002).

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² I am very grateful to Dr. Zahava D. Doering, Office of Policy and Analysis at the Smithsonian Institution, and Tom L. Freudenheim, the former Deputy Director of the JMB, who both initiated this research and followed it closely to this conclusion.

³ More information about the history of the building and the museum are available under www.jmberlin.de.

Visitor studies were conducted *before* the opening (in several stages between 1998 and 2000). This article focuses on one of these pre-opening studies, to increase the knowledge about potential future visitors, especially about their individual experience with Jewish sites, general and specific expectations towards a new Jewish museum in Berlin, and general thoughts about German-Jewish relations. This specific study was designed to understand the individual cognitive, emotional and experiential background of potential future visitors because biography determines museum experience. The knowledge about this background has then been shared with the planners and designers of the exhibitions *before* they made conclusive and permanent decisions about the size and scope of the exhibitions to help them, implementing results of this study in the creation of the exhibition. This is precisely the purpose of a front-end evaluation (cf. Shettel 1992).

There are several reasons why this is of any concern.

- First, there is the methodological and theoretical dimension. This study applies the hypothesis of the “biographical baggage”, as it is known in visitor studies (Doering et al., 1999), also known in art sociology as “habitus” (Bourdieu 1984) or “horizon of expectations” (Griswold 2004), as a foundation for future museum planning. Past experiences and present expectations are highly influential in steering the museum experience.
- Second, as a new symbol, the JMB is a famous and internationally renowned icon, one of only a few museums in Germany that have such a strong symbolic function. The museum is a symbol for the political program (sponsored by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany that finances the museum in total) to represent an enlightened view of contemporary German attitudes about German Jews in Germany. It does not only look on the continuing progress of deliberating and processing the knowledge of the Holocaust atrocities today, but it also interprets the Holocaust and 2000 years of Jewish life in Germany from the specific angle of recent Jewish life in Germany.
- Third, there is a strong and unabated awareness in the German public of special Jewish-German relationships. This includes a continuous analysis and public

presentation of the Nazi history⁴ but also of the times before and after this period. The survey of a selected sample of Germans in Berlin gives insights about how these people (most of them culturally interested in and in favor of the future JMB) think about German and Jews not in an abstract and historical but in a tangible and contemporary way.

- Fourth, the results of these surveys were instrumental for giving advice to the exhibition planner as defined by front-end evaluation (Screven 1993).⁵



Figure 1: The Jewish Museum Berlin with its signature architecture by Daniel Libeskind (© Jewish Museum Berlin)

1. Methodology of the survey

⁴ The museum is a part of a building boom in Berlin that includes the Holocaust Monument near the Brandenburg Gate and the “Topography of Terror” at the site of the former Gestapo headquarters, all determined for educating, illuminating and keeping aware the public about the past atrocities.

⁵ At the official presentation of our results in front of almost all JMB employees, the project director, Mr. Ken Gorbey, insisted that our findings about the potential target audience had to be implemented at all further planning steps (see also Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin 2003, p. 23).

Personal interviews were conducted in January 2000 at several cultural locations in Berlin. Three of these locations were chosen because their visitors (as sample universe) reflect a high probability of being also the future visitors of the JMB:

- The “Altes Museum”, the first public classical museum building in the world, exhibits mostly pre-modern art.
- The “Hamburger Bahnhof Museum” is a contemporary art museum in an old train station; it opened in 1993.
- The empty Libeskind building has been also added to the list due to the wish of the JMB management since the visitors coming for the architectural spectacle were supposedly also potential visitors for the future exhibitions in this building.
- Whereas the constituencies of the three museums were assumed to be relatively similar (due to the highbrow cultural reputation of all three sites) the surveyed audience of the “Reichstag”, the parliament building of the Federal Republic of Germany, has been chosen as a comparative “benchmark”. It was assumed that visitors to this special site are more representative for the whole, i.e., less culturally inclined German population (and for the total group of German and foreign tourists visiting the capital)⁶, and, therefore, not necessarily the future constituency of the JMB.⁷

The interviews, restricted to German speakers, included an open-ended segment that was tape-recorded, in addition to standard survey questions (sample size = 384).

Through these interviews, the attitudes of Germans (their “biographical baggage”) likely to visit the museum towards Jews and Jewish history and about their expectations towards the JMB were explored. What images of Jews would visitors bring to the JMB? What personal experiences with the German-Jewish history, if any, do these potential visitors have? What do interviewees remember of past visits to Jewish museums or Jewish historical sites? What are their general thoughts about Germans and Jews? What would they like to see in the JMB?

⁶ This has been confirmed in an earlier study conducted for the JMB by the author.

⁷ This assumes that the JMB management might not be interested in this broader social group. That, however, is not the case.

By computer-assisted qualitative contents analysis (program package “Atlas.ti”) we documented and analyzed these open-ended questions. Through categorization we were then able to quantify (code) these answers. They were then directly imported into a quantitative data file (SPSS) that also consists of socio-economic and demographic statistical information about the respondents. Both, the transformed qualitative information and the statistical data, were then analyzed using the statistical processing features of SPSS.

The tape-recorded questions about previous experiences, expectations and general thoughts about Jews in Germany were transcribed and imported into Atlas.ti (version 4.2), a software program for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual data. The qualitative part of the interviews lasted between 10 to 15 minutes. A total of 3,317 quotations (text segments such as paragraphs or sentences) have been coded.

Within Atlas.ti these codes were classified in a hierarchical system of super- and sub-codes, superseded by three main code classes related to three main open-ended question categories (experiences, expectations, thoughts). These code classes consist of several code families (general or personal experiences with Jewish culture, the Holocaust, Jewish friends, expectations towards the JMB related to history or culture, thoughts about the contemporary life of Jews in Germany etc.). These code families, again, consist of several sub-code components (e.g., thoughts about the politics of the Jewish community in Germany, anti-Semitism, or the significance of Jewish culture in contemporary Germany). There are about 20 code families, each composed of three to nine sub-code components. Each sub-code can provide several quotations to illustrate its contents. Using “Grounded Theory” this qualitative analysis resulted in 20 concept-networks (corresponding to the 20 code families).

Atlas.ti provides the possibility for exporting qualitative codes into the statistical analysis program SPSS. Since the qualitative codes are multiple-response answers the resulting 68 variables had to be reduced into eight multiple response sets. The

qualitative answers of the interviews are represented by 36 to 198 value codes for each variable. This high number of values has been further reduced to a maximum of nine values in newly grouped variables for the statistical analysis. This was necessary for the preceding analysis due to the limited sample size of $n = 384$. The survey data were then merged with the already existing SPSS file on the quantitative data about the interviewee. As a result, the interviewees' qualitative experiences, expectations, and thoughts about Jews in Germany can be related to the socio-economic and demographic traits of the respondents.

2. Descriptive Results

The results from the qualitative interviews have been classified into three main code classes: First, past *experiences* of visits to Jewish museums and sites, i.e., the memoirs of potential JMB visitors, second, present *expectations* about the future JMB and, third, *general thoughts* regarding the past, present and future of German-Jewish relations. The last main code class, general thoughts, have been subdivided into answers that relate to abstract social and political topics, and those that express individual emotional and personal feelings. "Abstract", "objective" answers are those, which refer to attitudes towards religion, culture, history and the functions of the JMB. "Personal", "subjective" answers refer to negative feelings such as guilt, suffering or responsibility, as well as to positive feelings: friendship, curiosity and positive expectations for the future.

2.1 Main experiences of past visits

The initial question asked in the interview was "*What thoughts did you have when you visited a Jewish museum or a Jewish historical site?*" 40% of all responses about experiences of past visits to Jewish museums and historical sites can be categorized under "negative feelings," 19% specifically mention Holocaust-related issues as basis of past experiences. 21% remember topics related to Jewish culture and religion. 10%

remember personal and emotional issues, whereas 6% linked positive feelings with these past visits. 4% do not recall any memories of their past visit(s).⁸

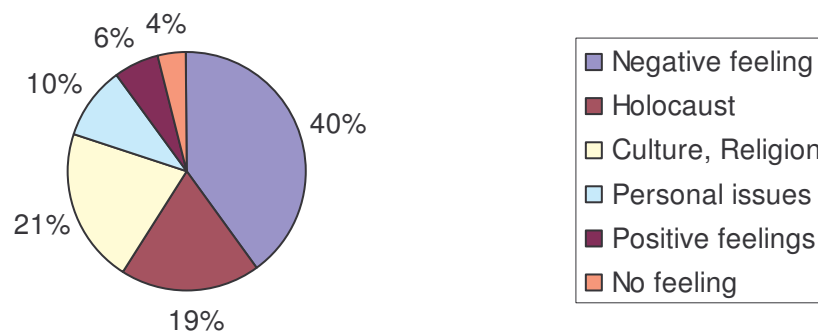


Figure 2: Answers to question “What thoughts did you have when you visited a Jewish museum or a Jewish historical site?”

“Negative feelings” is a very frequent, although not very distinct category. 40 percent of the respondents answered in this unspecific way. It includes diverse feelings ranging from depression and uneasiness, more passively accepted feelings like sadness and powerlessness, the self-imposed duty to be emotionally moved, all the way to distinctly formulated shock and fury. Thoughts about the Holocaust are focused on concrete memorials, concentration camps, guilt, shame, loss and bewilderment. In the following, to illustrate subcategories of typical responses to questions we asked, we will quote (in translation from German) some characteristic answers in the textboxes.

⁸ There are two main reasons for this forgetfulness: either these visitors blame themselves for the lack of memory (the visit occurred too long ago, he or she was too young), or they blame the exhibition design (too many different objects, the exhibitions were not accessible).

Textbox 1: General negative feelings about Jewish museums or historical sites

General negative feelings:

- *Depression*: “It depressed me, all of it. You can really only say that it is depressing, although I’ve read a lot about it beforehand. Everything was confirmed at the site. It distressed and disturbed me, even after I left the site.”
- *Sadness*: “When you visit a Jewish museum you automatically are filled with sadness. You cannot avoid that because of our common history, especially here in Berlin, but also at places such as Yad Vashem. When you leave from these places your tears are streaming.”

Further subcomponents, i.e., specific negative feelings that are summarized under the header "negative feelings", are fury, concernment, anti-German resentments, powerlessness, mourning, and shock. Negative feelings range from a diffuse depression to a precisely defined (regarding time and space) grief or fury.

When asked about their thoughts during a visit to a Jewish museum or a Jewish historical site, almost every fifth person, 19 percent, replied specifically with a reference to the Holocaust.

Textbox 2: Thoughts about the Holocaust when visiting a Jewish museums or historical site

Holocaust:

- *Concrete memorial*: “The historical site was so much more significant for me than reading about the history of the KZs, it disquieted me. This was a completely different confrontation. In a museum you just think it is interesting and you come there to learn.”
- *Domination of the Holocaust topic over other issues*: “If you consider the topic of Jewish culture you are indeed, immediately, thinking about the Holocaust, about this madness that has been committed.”

Subcomponents of this answer are the concreteness of the event, the dominance of this topic that overshadows everything else, the difference between a concentration camp

memorial and a museum, and the personal imprint a visit to a concentration camp memorial left. Again, two typical quotations follow.

21 percent of the respondents answered with reference to the Jewish culture and religion. The subcategory of these answers is not negatively predetermined.

Textbox 3: Thoughts about Jewish culture and religion when visiting a Jewish museums or historical site

Jewish culture & religion:

- *Longevity and significance of Jewish culture*: “It was impressive to see how a small minority with hard work and cultural fervor maintained its identity through time.”
- *Jewish music*: “I lived in the GDR, and there was not much official acknowledgement of Jewish culture. But I lived close to the synagogue in the Riekestrasse. There was always music, celebrations of Shabbat, the songs sung by Rochomo Nachama. We also listened to Klezmer and other Jewish songs interpreted by now very famous singers.”

Subcomponents of this answer are longevity and significance of Jewish culture, Jewish music, culture as a result of long-term persecution, culture as counterpoint to a history of persecution, the connections between Christianity and Jewry, and the exoticism.

16 percent expressed personal and positive feelings as prevailing when thinking of a visit. Positive thoughts can be illustrated as kindness, raising to the normative occasion, warmth, satisfaction, relieve, contemplation, curiosity and surprise.

Textbox 4: Personal positive thoughts and feelings when visiting a Jewish museums or historical site

General positive feeling:

- *Kindness*: “I sensed that everybody went out of their way, with a somewhat exaggerated courtliness, to be nice to each other, because these meetings among Germans and Jews are still not something normal. But the meeting there was a celebration; everybody enjoyed it very much.
- *Fulfilling a norm*: “On the one hand, I was extremely impressed, emotionally fascinated, and on the other hand I had a feeling, a thought of ‘Good that you finally come here!’

2.2 Remembering specific exhibition objects and arrangements

When asked about specific exhibits from a past visit of a Jewish museum or historical site, the respondents mostly recall issues of form and not contents. 33% of all responses list the use of visual and/or audio media (e.g., photos, films, multi-media presentations and displays that reinforce their emotionally powerful contents).

Textbox 5: Media remembered from a past visit to a Jewish museums or historical site

Use of pictures:

- *Individual faces:* This first room, when you enter this museum, they had slides with faces of survivors from all over the world, and you could listen to voices that told you something from their lives and their pasts
- *Family photos:* “There was a room that was just filled with photos, Sunday trip pictures, family pictures with the customary style from the 1920s or 1930s, that was very, very impressive.”

Especially photos depicting families, individual faces, children's' paintings, but also multimedia installations, sculptures, and short movies were remembered.

31% of all responses to the question about past exhibit objects are related to interior and exterior design issues. Especially important is the architecture of the Libeskind building among past visitors of the empty building – a large number of visitors repeated their visit of the empty building. Almost all respondents interviewed at the Berlin museums who had visited the Libeskind building (80% of all respondents) commented that its architecture was the most memorable feature; the architecture was hailed as impressive and masterful.

Textbox 6: Libeskind architecture remembered from the past visit to the museum

Libeskind architecture:

- *Trepidation*: "I did not like it that you enter through this endearing old house which has been completely carved out in the inside, and replaced by this brutal concrete stairways down to the basement. Then, there is the garden, you loose your orientation in that labyrinth, and it makes you dizzy. And this high tower; there were some people in there who knocked at the walls, rhythmically, it was really horrible, it reminded me of concentration camp and prison, brutal, cold, inhuman."
- *Current form versus future function*: "How far does this architecture correspond with my image of a Jewish museum? I have to say, I developed plenty of polarities in my own opinion. On the one hand, the architecture is fascinating; on the other hand, it is too arty; there are too many allusions, too many literary insinuations. The building itself is metaphoric, and that is, with respect to the future exhibition, somewhat distracting. Why not leave it as it is, without exhibition? I think that is sufficient."

Statements about the Libeskind architecture dealt with the physicality, i.e., the trepidation, and the general conflict between form and function. Only rarely were criticisms of the architecture raised. But despite all praise there are frequently critical comments regarding the building's function as *museum*. This conflict between building form and function even goes as far as the suggestion that the museum building remain empty. Some respondents mention the "affectedness" of the building, meaning that the architect has exaggerated its symbolism. According to this view, Libeskind has clearly associated the architecture of the buildings with the subject of the Holocaust. These many answers illustrate how – in the minds of the respondents – the museum becomes a "Holocaust Museum" through its architecture. About one quarter (24%) did not remember any specific exhibits or displays.

2.3 Expectations towards the future JMB

Regarding expectations towards the form and functions of the new JMB, most answers (35% of all responses) dealt with expectations to experience Jewish culture and religion at this new place. Respondents also expected to learn more about Jewish history in general, not limited to the Holocaust (30%).⁹ This is followed by expectations to see more about the Nazi period and the Holocaust (18%). 10% of all responses wish to experience a spectacular interior design that matches the famous architecture. 7% have no expectations but would like to visit the museum nonetheless.

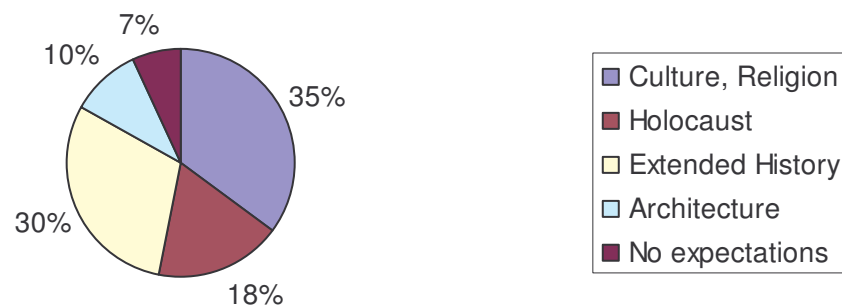


Figure 3: Answers to question “What are your expectations about visiting a Jewish museum here in Berlin? What should this museum show?”

35 percent of the respondents expect exhibitions about Jewish culture and religion, closely followed by 30 percent who expect exhibitions about the extended history of 2000 years of Jewish life in Germany. A relatively smaller proportion, 18 percent expect exhibitions about the Holocaust and the Nazi time. In view of the public discussion of this museum (as a "Holocaust" museum) during the construction and the phase when empty but accessible this last number is remarkably low.

The high interest in Jewish culture and religion is based on curiosity, a need to know more about this subject that has been neglected for so long. Respondents also asked for

⁹ When additional specific interest about Jewish culture is expressed, it is accompanied by the demand that culture, religion and history be fundamentally conjoined.

explanations about relationships between Christianity and Jewry, as well as historical and geographical cross-references between the cultures.

Textbox 7: Culture and religion as an expectation towards a Jewish Museum in Berlin

Culture:

- *Links:* "The museum should look into the future and should try to present the links between the cultures. It should put less attention on the past of our fathers."
- *Curiosity:* "I would really like to know more about the Jewish culture, since I am so ignorant about it."
- *Inquiry:* "I would like to learn more about how the Jewish culture is related to our culture."
- *Source of religion:* "The belief of the Jews, where they got the belief."
- *General basics:* "Well, I am interested in a few general basic data on the Jewish belief, Jewish rituals, some general information."

Almost 10 percent anticipate seeing exhibits about Jewish religion in the museum; however, only five percent regard this as their personal wish.

Many interviewees consider history beyond the Holocaust and the Nazi time as an important expectation. This is based on the idea of 2000 years of history not to be limited to 12 years, and the wish to experience the complete range of events.

Textbox 8: Extended history as an expectation towards a Jewish Museum in Berlin

Extended History:

- *Togetherness:* "The museum should present the whole horizon of German-Jewish togetherness, although we cannot use the word symbiosis. This period includes all the years from the Jewish emancipation on, even before, the Jewish history in the middle ages and earlier."
- *Important topic:* "Jewry is a basic historical issue for mankind. I regard the history of Jewry as a very important topic. We have to work on it, one has to be literate about it."
- *Inclusion:* "The history has to include everything, as it started, then the first exclusions, then the end."

Nonetheless, the Holocaust remains an important topic to be expected in the museum, and this is closely related to the anticipation of the continuous impact the Holocaust-related Libeskind architecture will have on the visitor. For instance, the anticipation of this architecture is associated with "impressive horribleness" and "event architecture".

Textbox 9: Architecture as an expectation towards a Jewish Museum in Berlin

- *Impressive horribleness*: "I really think of the Libeskind building as impressive and also horrible. The first time I climbed down [respondent cries.]... the slope [pause]... of course this immediately evoked the old reminder of the ramp in Auschwitz and Birkenau. And the singular void called forth everything, again, in freshness."
- *Fear*: "Of all things, this Holocaust tower. I thought.... I really became afraid when the door shut into the lock..."
- *Image*: "I would say, I think..., this architecture happens to be a successful translation of what Jewry means here in Berlin."

Indirectly, through the architecture, but also directly through the location of the museum in the former Nazi capital, the expectations revolve around the Holocaust. About 18 percent of the respondents expect to be confronted with the Holocaust in the museum. The genocide of the Jews has to be connected to the location, and they also expect that the museum will create a repository for future generations.

Textbox 10: The Holocaust as an expected topic at a Jewish Museum in Berlin

- *Holocaust*: "Well, Berlin is the city where the Wannsee conference happened, and the Holocaust has been organized from here. This will be pushed in the forefront of a Jewish museum, although there is a broader Jewish history and Jewish life."
- *Sustaining knowledge*: "I am responsible to maintain the discourse about this topic and to hand over the knowledge to my children. This is even more important because the last witnesses who could talk about it will not live for much longer. It is my task to inform myself and to teach my children."

2.4 Issues of Jews in Germany today

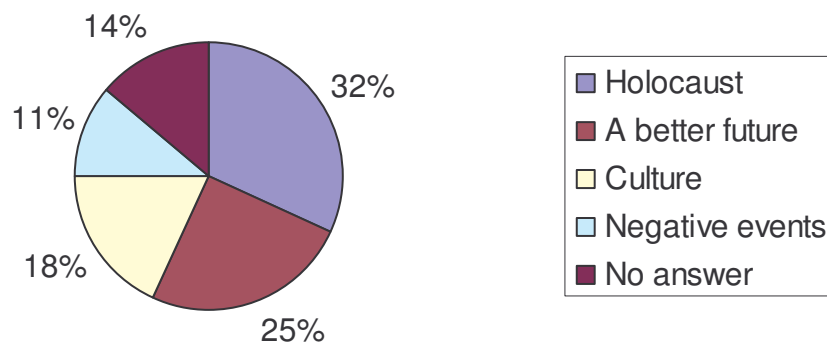
In response to the final question (“what do you primarily think of, when people talk about Jews in Germany?”), most answers (32%) refer directly to the Nazi period and the Holocaust, even if prompted to talk about contemporary issues. Responses about the Holocaust and the Nazi period can be characterized by

- (1) cognitive and intellectual answers (e.g. the necessity of examining the cause of the Holocaust and their presentation);
- (2) subjective and affective answers, in which empathy and a desire for normality are emphasized;
- (3) contrary and rejecting answers, in which the dominant presence of this subject is criticized, and where respondents express “over-saturation” and caution that history should not be reduced to a single theme.

Furthermore,

- (1) one quarter (25%) of all responses are expressions of hope and positive thoughts about a better present and future, based mostly upon perceptions of a lively developing culture over the past few years, particularly in Berlin.
- (2) 18% of all responses to this question concerning “Jews in Germany today” can be categorized under “culture”. The past contributions of Jews to German culture are emphasized here, and the cultural loss in the 20th century is lamented.
- (3) 11% of all responses are answers that mention current examples of negative interactions between Jews and non-Jews in Germany, such as cemetery desecration, persisting or renewed anti-Semitism, and the tedious process of reparations to former slave laborers.

Figure 4: Answers to question “what do you primarily think of, when people talk about Jews in Germany?”



One third of the answers deal directly with the Holocaust and the atrocities of the Nazi time, although many respondents express being uncomfortable to be confronted with this topic (again?). A certain saturation (?) might be the reason for this type of answer.

Textbox 10: The Holocaust as the primary topic when talking about Jews in Germany

Holocaust:

- “The first thought would be about the past during the Nazi time. But I think it is a pity that we have such a reduced understanding of Jews in Germany. Conceptualizing this museum, I would like to see something else, too.”
- “Mainly the Holocaust. However, it would be really nice if we could try to normalize the relations between Germans and Jews, not only reduce it to black and white, to victims and perpetrators.”

The second important response category to the question about current dominant issues of German-Jewish relations deals with contemporary Jewish culture, Jewish life and even Jewish politics in Germany, or especially in the growing Jewish community in Berlin.

Textbox 11: Current Jewish culture and politics as the primary topic when talking about Jews in Germany

Contemporary Jews in Germany:

- *Normalization:* “The struggle that occurs now within the Jewish community in Berlin and Germany about the discussion about who will be the next chairperson. There is a clear diversification in political factions, the old and the young, the ones that live in Germany for long and the ones that just came into this country. The multiplicity of Jewish life now in Germany. That is an interesting development and an important process of normalization.”
- *Present Jewish Culture in Berlin:* “I think of the Jewish culture today, especially here in Mitte [downtown Berlin]. There is a whole new culture that grows there, and that is super cool, that there are urban areas where you can meet these groups.”
- *Immigration to Germany:* “Right now, and that is a very pleasant fact, there are many Jews who move again to Germany, and therefore I could imagine a revitalization of Jewish religion and Jewry in Germany. That would then immensely contribute to the cultural life, especially here in Berlin.”

Textbox 12: Critique of current anti-Semitism and (latent) anti-Semitism among interviewed persons

Antisemitism (critique):

- “[The former chairperson of the Jewish communities in Germany] Bubis was very disillusioned about the integration of Jews in Germany at the end of his life. There is this unfortunate tension, are you a Jew or are you a German? The trenches are deep, and honestly, you cannot connect the two cultures.”
- “I think of these people here in Germany who enduringly hate Jews. That isn’t only a minority, I would estimate that about one third have a latent repulsing attitude against Jews.”

Antisemitism:

- “Everybody talks about the restitution of the Jewish workers but nobody speaks about what the Germans had to go through, during the war or as refugees. No buck would be spent for them. But the Jews get excited and get it, right?”
- “The relationship to the Jews can only find a natural base, if the Jews will convince themselves that they are not different from everybody else. How come that the Jews everywhere have been pushed into isolation? ... The Jews are not capable to free themselves... they should bear the consequences if they want to be the ‘chosen people’...”

The critique of a still existent Anti-Semitism in Germany has been lamented several times during interviews. However, in a few cases one could also detect anti-Semitic attitudes, although latently and expressed “between the lines”. This latency seems only apparent among the well-educated respondents over the age of 65.

3. Explanatory results

This article will end with a bivariate statistical analysis, inquiring the impact of quantified personal characteristics such as age, gender, education, and the impact of a composite variable, the four different sites of interviews on the quantified responses towards experiences, expectations and general thoughts.

3.1 The age or generational factor

The “biographical baggage” mentioned before is certainly closely linked to age. Respondents of the older generations (older than 65 or 70) had sometimes a direct and personal experience with the atrocities of the Nazi time; but the interviewed younger generation (younger than 20 or 25) that grew up in an educational system that emphasizes this time under the motto of “never again” had much to say about this topic. Age has a significant impact on issues remembered from past visits of Jewish sites.

However, it might be surprising to see in which direction this relation goes. There is an almost linear *positive* correlation between age and positive memories: The older the respondent the higher is the proportion of positive experiences (analysis of variance: $F = 2.249$, sig. = .049). 24% of the respondents older than 60, but only 9% of the respondents younger than 20, remember a positive experience. On the other hand, 55% of the younger respondents (under 20) mention a negative experience but only 42% of respondents older than 60.

The generational aspect is important, when asked about personal experiences. No respondent younger than 20 (and 8% of the respondents between 20 and 30) remember

a *personal* experience (during a past visit) but 23% of the respondents older than 60 ($F = 3.420$, $\text{sig.} = .005$).

Table 1: Age by negative and positive memories (percentages)

Age groups	negative memories	positive memories
Below 20	.55	.09
20 - 29	.39	.07
30 - 39	.36	.13
40 - 49	.35	.19
50 - 59	.42	.21
60 and higher	.42	.24
Total	.39	.17

Following the generational divide, age impacts the general thoughts about Germans and Jews today. The Holocaust is not a main contemporary issue for the older and oldest but for the younger and youngest. 73% of the respondents younger than 20 list this as a contemporary issue but only 31% of the respondents older than 60 ($F = 2.039$, $\text{sig.} = .072$). On the other hand, for 38% of the respondents between 50 and 60, but only for 18% of the respondents between 20 and 30, Jewish culture and religion are issues to be considered when discussing German-Jewish relations today ($F = 2.341$, $\text{sig.} = .041$). Since the Holocaust is very much on the mind of the younger it is not unexpected that especially this generation expresses more pessimistic opinions about issues of Jews in Germany today than the older generation. Only 9% of the youngest age group expresses optimism about the contemporary life of Jews in Germany, compared to 37% of the oldest age group ($F = 2.262$, $\text{sig.} = .048$).

Table 2: Age by contemporary issues of Jews in Germany (percentages)

Age groups	Holocaust	culture and religion	optimism	pessimism
below 20	.73	.27	.09	.27
20 - 29	.49	.18	.41	.25
30 - 39	.45	.17	.32	.15
40 - 49	.42	.26	.30	.11
50 - 59	.44	.38	.42	.28
60 and higher	.31	.21	.37	.14
Total	.43	.24	.35	.19

3.2 The gender factor

Being a man or a woman has an impact on the expectations for the future JMB and on the significance of the Holocaust as a contemporary issue. The female respondents have significantly more expectations towards the JMB than the male respondents; there is a higher proportion among men that have no expectations (27%) than among women (14%) ($F = 9.216$, $\text{sig.} = .003$) Furthermore, more women think of the Holocaust as a contemporary issue influencing the relations between Germans and Jews today (47%) than men (38%) ($F = .3.184$, $\text{sig.} = .075$).

Table 3: Gender by no expectation towards JMB and by Holocaust as contemporary issue (percentages)

gender	expectation: none	Holocaust as contemporary issue
woman	.14	.47
man	.27	.38
Total	.21	.43

3.3 The education factor

It is known, that education is one of the most powerful variables for explaining why people visit or intend to visit museums. How does this socio-economic indicator relate to memories about past visits to Jewish sites, expectations for the future JMB, and general thoughts about the relationship between Germans and Jews?

The higher the education, the higher is the proportion of respondents remembering issues of culture and religion from the last visits to Jewish museums and historical sites. Whereas only 7% of people with a German basic school degree remember cultural or religious issues from their visits, 24% of the Germans with a college degree do that ($F = 3.560$, $\text{sig.} = .014$). Furthermore, respondents with a college degree remember issues of design and architecture more often (12% of this group) than respondents with a German basic school degree (0%) or a middle school degree (4%) ($F = 2.700$, $\text{sig.} = .075$). The presentation of and confrontation with the Holocaust in the future JMB is another subject influenced by education; however, in a different direction than assumed: The expectation to see exhibitions about the Holocaust *decreases* with increased educational

attainment. Whereas 63% of respondents with the lowest educational degree expect the Holocaust as a main issue for the JMB, only 43% of respondents with a college degree expect this being at the forefront of the future exhibitions ($F = 2.395$, $\text{sig.} = .068$). This might be due to the *general* public perception of the JMB as a “Holocaust museum” – people with a higher educational attainment are more knowledgeable about plans for the JMB’s future to cover 2000 years of history, and not solely the Holocaust.

Table 4: Education by memories about culture, by design issues, by expectation of the JMB as Holocaust museum, and by pessimism about contemporary German-Jewish relations (percentages)

Educational attainment	culture and religion	design and architecture	Holocaust	pessimism
Basic school	.07	.00	.63	.25
Middle school	.38	.04	.60	.16
High school	.17	.12	.41	.29
College	.24	.12	.43	.14
Total	.20	.11	.45	.19

One statement on contemporary German-Jewish relationships is also influenced by education; Respondents with a lower educational degree are generally more pessimistic about Germans and Jews today than respondents with higher education¹⁰ (respondents with basic school degree: 25% are pessimistic, respondents with college degree: 14% are pessimistic) ($F = 3.817$, $\text{sig.} = .010$).¹¹

3.3 The site of the interview

There is one factor that combines several known and unknown characteristics of the respondents. It is the *site of the interview*. This composite measure has a wide explanatory value for many attitudes. As I mentioned in the introductory methodological part, we decided to interview at four different sites in Berlin hoping that we get information from different constituencies that represent different social groups.

¹⁰ Once again, it should be mentioned that this is a purely bivariate analysis. Generally known cross-influences of the independent variables such as, e.g., age and educational attainment or, later, site of interview and educational attainment are, therefore, ignored.

These were the contemporary art museum “Hamburger Bahnhof”, the fine art museum “Altes Museum”, the still empty JMB-Libeskind building, and the especially tourists-attracting cupola of the Reichstag-Building, the German parliament.

The site of the interview significantly affected the answers. For all attitudes the respondents on the Reichstag site maintained distinctly different opinions. Whereas 32% of the group of visitors interviewed in the “Hamburger Bahnhof” contemporary art museum remembered issues of culture and religion from their last visit to a Jewish museum or historical site, only 19% of the interviewed Reichstag visitors could do the same ($F = 2.643$, $\text{sig.} = .073$).

Only 36% of the Reichstag sample but 52% of the visitors of the empty Libeskind building expect to see *non*-Holocaust-related history in the future JMB ($F = 3.070$, $\text{sig.} = .028$). This is consistent with the prior finding that a less educated class expects this museum to be a “Holocaust” museum whereas the more educated crowd knows different by being better informed about the plans for the JMB. The same is true for culture as major issue of the *contemporary* German-Jewish relationship. 26% of the modern art museum visitorship of the “Hamburger Bahnhof” but only 16% of the interviewed visitors of the “Reichstag” mention culture and religion as important contemporary issues ($F = 3.581$, $\text{sig.} = .014$).

Table 6: Site of interview by memories about culture and religious issues, by expectation of the JMB as non-Holocaust museum, and by culture and religion as main issues of contemporary German-Jewish relations (percentages)

Site of Interview	Memories: culture and religion	expectation: non-Holocaust history	main issue today: Jewish culture and religion
Reichstag	.19	.36	.16
Altes Museum	.23	.53	.35
Hamburger Bahnhof	.32	.54	.26
Jewish Museum	N/A	.58	.19
Total	.25	.52	.24

¹¹ Concomitant to this finding, 35% of the college degree group and 41% of the high school degree group gave optimistic statements but only 25% of the basic school group.

4. Conclusions

Summarizing the results of the quantitative analysis of this qualitative study, opinions about German-Jewish relations are still dominated by the paramount background of the Holocaust, although an increased awareness of and inquiry in Jewish culture and religion is also on the mind of many surveyed people. It is one of the JMB objectives to create JMB as a symbol and a meeting place for the revitalized, not for the musealized Jewish life, and it is the museum's program to not reduce 2000 years of history to the events of the Nazi persecution. Nonetheless, these 12 years maintain a central role.

The negative feelings related to the Holocaust are dominant when asking people about *any* past visits to Jewish museums and sites. Most of the memories are related to that topic, although experiencing Jewish culture and religion takes a clear number two. Expressed expectations towards the future JMB are mostly related to issues of Jewish culture and religion, and not primarily to issues of the Holocaust. Thoughts about the contemporary life of Jews in Germany are also mostly related to the Holocaust, then to issues of Jewish culture and religion. Looking at these explanatory results it becomes clear that the two main topics, the Holocaust, and Jewish culture and religion, are anti-poles, with all other, less important, topics in between.

Age is one of the most determining factors for expressing past experiences, future expectations, and recent topics for public discussion. Older people put across a more positive memory of visits to Jewish sites than younger people. Among younger people the Holocaust dominates the thoughts about current relations between Jews and Germans; this is not the case for older people who, in that respect, are more frequently thinking of Jewish culture and religion, and who are more optimistic when thinking about the current German-Jewish relationship.

Education is the second most important factor explaining experiences, expectations and thoughts about the current situation. Higher educational attainment correlates with more past experiences related to Jewish culture and religion, not to the Holocaust. The

concentration and limitation of German-Jewish life towards the Holocaust is typical for the less-educated people; they also have the false expectation of the JMB as a “Holocaust museum”. Parallel to this line is the finding that the less educated are also more pessimistic about the relations between Germans and Jews today.

The *interview site* at the “Reichstag”, chosen as a site with a distinct different visitorship, fulfilled its “benchmark” objective. Respondents at the other three (museum) sites were mostly more educated; the Reichstag tourist crowd was more representative for the German population. Reinforcing the results listed above, the respondents at the museum interview-sites expect to see more *non*-Holocaust exhibitions at the JMB than the respondents at the Reichstag.

This leads to the general question of *who* (or *how representative* for all of German society) the visitorship of the JMB will be or can be. The potential visitorship of today (typically the older and well educated bourgeoisie) does not primarily and overwhelmingly remember, expect and reflect issues of the Holocaust when thinking of Jewish museums and sites (including the new JMB); they prefer issues of Jewish culture and religion (and general history, not limited to the Nazi time). The latter is also the general mission of the JMB. On the other hand, it is an outspoken objective of the JMB to broaden the visitorship, including as many younger and less-educated (less bourgeois) “average” Germans as possible. This potential clientele, however, has still the image of Jewish sites (including the JMB) as Holocaust memorial sites, and it seems difficult to alleviate this strong image, also for political reasons, because it must be a part of the JMB agenda.

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