People Like Me: Analyzing Universal Themes of the Holocaust Through a Culture-Specific Lens

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PEOPLE LIKE ME: ANALYZING UNIVERSAL THEMES OF THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH A CULTURE-SPECIFIC LENS

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PEOPLE LIKE ME: ANALYZING UNIVERSAL THEMES OF THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH A CULTURE-SPECIFIC LENS

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Director of Thesis

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Sustained academic and popular interest in the Holocaust depends largely on the ability of educators to communicate its universality. At Holocaust memorials around the world, educators make strategic rhetorical choices in pursuit of this imperative. However, as communicators present narratives, documentation, and visual rhetoric at memorials, they filter each message through a unique cultural lens. This unavoidable human tendency raises questions concerning the degree to which culture shapes Holocaust narratives. Given that Holocaust memorials may offer pivot insights into modern and future genocides, cultural influences on Holocaust rhetoric seem worthy of renewed evaluation.

Burke’s dramatistic pentad provides a valuable tool with which a scholar can evaluate the rhetoric at Holocaust memorials. The pentad preserves unique facets of the communication acts, enabling a rhetor to identify differences between the memorials, while providing a universally applicable framework through which to view the memorials. This pentadic analysis reveals that Holocaust memorials address many of the same universal questions. The answers to these questions, however, depend on the culture surrounding the memorial. Such a finding seems to indicate that a global event such as the Holocaust will stimulate the same questions in citizens across a variety of
cultures, but that citizens will reach different conclusions about the event based on the influences of their culture.
Chapter I

Introduction

Despite the fact that communication studies rest squarely on the axiom that all human thought filters through a cultural lens (Hall, 1976; Wood, 2000), the Holocaust seems to provide a unique example of a tragedy so overwhelming that it transcends culture. Every year, millions of diverse visitors tour a global set of Holocaust museums and memorials, exploring “the blackest chapter in human history” (Mazer, 2005) to isolate universal lessons from its aftermath. Even though Hall composed a seminal defense of cultural relativism, the Holocaust comes unequivocally close to proving that every communication theory has an exception.

Scores of communicators, historians, and political theorists have argued that the Holocaust serves as the worst human disaster because of its magnitude and severity (Arad, 1987; Cargas, 1999; Hilberg, 1985; Max, 2006; Roth, 2000). Its magnitude remains unthinkable; Holocaust victims numbered in the tens of millions and included Jews, gypsies, Jehovah’s witnesses, homosexuals, and political opponents of the Nazi regime (Arad, 1987; Hilberg, 1985; Max, 2006). Pitts attempted to put the death toll in conceivable terms:

Roughly 3000 people died in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and it is remembered as one of the most traumatic days in American history. Eleven million people dead is a September 11 attack every single day for 10 years. It is New York City dead. And Washington D.C., dead. And Atlanta dead. And Dallas dead. And Pittsburg dead. And Miami dead.
Additionally, historians note the unparalleled severity of Holocaust victims’ torture and dehumanization. At Belzec, Nazis used sticks to push sand down the throat of a young prisoner; at Lodz, they threw babies from hospital windows (Pitts, 2005). For most prisoners, though, the time of captivity ended with suffocation in the gas chambers. Former Nazi guard Kurt Gerstein, an eyewitness to the crimes, described this gruesome end:

...Like pillars of salt, the dead were still erect, not having any space to fall, or to lean. Even in death, families could still be seen holding hands. It is hard to separate them as the chambers are emptied to make way for the next load; corpses were tossed out, blue, wet with sweat and urine, the legs covered with faeces and menstrual blood...

(Gerstein, 1945, p. 109).

As the unprecedented number and nature of casualties demonstrates, the Holocaust communicated the idea that all people share a common destiny - mortality. At its most visceral level, the Holocaust demonstrated human sameness. From a communication perspective, acknowledging the common humanity of Holocaust victims and ourselves does not make cultural differences irrelevant. Rather, it underscores the need to compensate for cultural differences when communicating about universal themes.

The gravity of the Holocaust also stems in part from the hatred it exposed in the hearts of seemingly peaceful, normal people. As Cargas (1999) noted, ordinary people voted for Hitler, obeyed pogroms, made decisions to shelter or report Jews, and guarded the concentration camps; millions of other ordinary people died as a result. The
complicity of some nations and the complacency of others during the Holocaust demonstrate the universal corruptibility of every culture. This startling revelation of what Bergen (1998) called “the banality of evil” continues to horrify modern audiences (Lazarus, 2005). Perhaps Bowden (2006) articulated this sentiment best when he said, “The Holocaust disturbs us so deeply because it demonstrates that … just as there is evil in the heart of every man, there is evil at the heart of even the most 'civilized' human society. It is a humbling recognition” (n.p).

As the above discussion suggests, the Holocaust stands as a unique historical event and a turning point for all humanity – not just the Jewish nation (Roth, 2000). For this reason, as Botwinick explained, “The Holocaust is more than a Jewish tragedy. It is a human disaster of unprecedented proportion in the modern world” (2001, p. 1). The magnitude and severity of the Holocaust raise foundational questions concerning the nature of life and humanity. For this reason, a communicator might suspect that the Holocaust, more than any other event on record, might resonate with audiences from a multiplicity of cultures.

*Holocaust Studies: A Surge in Popularity*

Even as time begins to reclaim survivors, witnesses, and even artifacts, Holocaust studies grow in popularity (Hilberg, 1985; McGreal, 2005). The evidence of this surge in the public conscience appears in a variety of places; to begin, universities and elementary schools have simultaneously developed programs in Holocaust studies (Botwinick, 2001). Elsewhere, organizations such as the March of the Living and the March of Remembrance and Hope have coalesced to organize pilgrimages to the camps (Johnston, 2007; Lazarus, 2005). In the virtual realm, organizations such as Yad Vashem
and the Holocaust Survivors’ Network have developed a number of websites concerning the Holocaust, enabling new audiences to learn about the Shoah (Heller, 2007; Salama-Scheer, 2007). Just as importantly, Holocaust memorials educate visitors around the world, from Berlin to Los Angeles to Jerusalem.

Legion phenomena contribute to this paradoxical spike in public interest. Initially, political theorists note that the Holocaust irrevocably changed global geopolitics. Yad Vashem chairman Avner Shalev explained, “This unique event, the Holocaust, this unprecedented genocide, is the formative experience on which the modern western world was established” (McGreal, 2005, p. 221). As an increasing number of global conflicts erupt, especially in the Middle East, experts and laypeople alike turn to Holocaust studies for foundational knowledge concerning the roots of regional tension.

Moreover, Holocaust studies have grown in importance as modern military and technological advancements streamline the process of mass murder. Communicators often purport to discuss the Holocaust in hopes of preventing future genocides, suggesting that understanding the quintessential human tragedy may provide insight on dealing with events of a similar nature (Bay, 2006; Botwinick, 2001). Interestingly, some scholars discourage comparisons of the Holocaust to modern genocides, suggesting that the Holocaust should remain an incomparable event (Aaronovitch, 2000). While the appropriateness of Holocaust analogies raises questions beyond the scope of this analysis, one should note this debate may in itself fuel a surge in Holocaust scholarship.

Compounding the revival of interest in the Holocaust, sociopolitical changes in the Eastern European bloc have opened a floodgate for Holocaust studies. Before 1989,
communist control over many Holocaust sites prevented adequate study and tourism of such iconic places as Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Majdanek. With the fall of the iron curtain in places like Poland and Hungary, historians found Holocaust sites, artifacts, and archives much more accessible (Gutman & Berenbaum, 1994).

The Importance of Studying Holocaust Narratives

Just as Holocaust scholarship has increased in popularity, it has also increased in importance. First, historians and survivors often implore new generations to study the Holocaust because physical evidence of the Holocaust deteriorates more and more each year. Despite the passionate efforts of historians to preserve Holocaust artifacts, museums can not retain original artifacts infinitely. For this reason, new generations of people who were not alive during the Holocaust have a limited window of time to see the evidence of the Holocaust firsthand.

Additionally, a new wave of Holocaust denial has emerged in recent years despite the concurrent rise in Holocaust studies. At the forefront of this trend, Iranian president Mahmoud Amadenjad commissioned an international group to investigate the reality of the Holocaust, calling the entire event a hoax (Holocaust comments, 2005; Salama-Scheer, 2007). Similarly, French lecturer Robert Faurisson has published claims that the concentration camps were fabricated, and that the crematoria were used only for incinerating corpses – to prevent disease in the region (Stalinsky, 2006). In a world where some Holocaust deniers have “rock star status” (Stalinsky, 2006, n.p.), eyewitnesses must refute Holocaust denial to preserve the integrity of history. Effective memorials may equip them for such a task.
A communicative perspective on Holocaust memorials

A rhetorical exploration of Holocaust communication provides a pedagogically sound alternative to historical evaluation of the Holocaust by acknowledging the importance of Holocaust narratives to public memory. Given that many artifacts from the Holocaust were concealed or destroyed by the Nazis, survivors may present a uniquely accurate perspective on the true happenings during the Shoah.

Moreover, Holocaust memorials serve as prime communication acts for rhetorical study; first, Holocaust memorials often provide an expansive collection of Holocaust narratives, including diaries, letters, artifacts, archives, architecture, etc. Given the large number and diversity of Holocaust victims, the collection of Holocaust rhetoric is sufficiently broad to allow a communicator to study different facets of communication within the body of literature at a memorial. The ability to study the war from several nuanced communication perspectives proves irresistibly tempting for the rhetorician.

Additionally, memorials may contribute to the communication field by offering a framework to evaluate the way ordinary citizens coped with the Holocaust. When a shocked global community moved to reconstruct its damaged moral compass after World War II, memorials served as a way to deal with the harsh reality of the genocide. For example, the slogan presented at Treblinka gave words to the sentiments that many Europeans shared: “never again.” This communication act, preserved in stone at the Treblinka memorial, expresses a commitment “never again” to forget the Holocaust and its victims and “never again” to permit a crime against humanity (Botwinick, 2001). Articulating these dual objectives may have enabled people to find some semblance of meaning or purpose Holocaust.
The dual purpose nature of Holocaust memorials

As the two-fold interpretation of the message at Treblinka may suggest, Holocaust memorials often uphold at least two goals; remembering the victims and rejecting modern instances of genocide (Youra & Koring, 2006). To accomplish the first goal, Holocaust memorials use a variety of channels, including visual, verbal, paralinguistic, and tactile to preserve the memories of victims. These media can transmit the stories of Holocaust victims, witnesses, and survivors to future generations, enabling their memory to continue in perpetuity (Botwinick, 2001). To accomplish the second goal, memorials can help people identify events similar to those which precipitated the Holocaust (Schabas, 2001). Simply put, Holocaust narratives and artifacts can describe genocide exhaustively, but they may help visitors identify modern examples of similar events. In this way, visual cues to dehumanization may alert people to genocide when they see it and encourage them to fight against it.

Reducing the objective of every Holocaust museum to the two above might seem inexcusably simplistic, but these two goals appear regularly in a wide range of Holocaust discourses. In fact, memorials in several different countries including Poland and Israel seem to communicate both of these messages fairly universally. Appreciating the significance of common messages at memorials across cultures requires new analysis of Holocaust sites from an intercultural communication perspective.

Rather than analyzing memorials in a vacuum, scholars should evaluate memorials in context of their cultures. Such an examination would acknowledge the pervasive influence of culture while searching for common themes between memorials. It might also address a number of popular ideas involving the efficacy of Holocaust
memorials. For example, it seems reasonable that presenting seemingly universal themes at Holocaust memorials might simply increase the appeal of the memorial. After all, when a witness to Holocaust sites begins to see Holocaust victims as people like him or herself, then he or she can begin to contemplate the gravity of the Holocaust. A culture-based analysis could test this theory.

Moreover, understanding the manifestations of culture in memorials may lead to changes in the way memorials are developed or constructed. As Hall (1976) explained, only people who recognize their cultural frameworks can truly transcend such structures. Understanding some of the dominant ways in which culture pervades even historical narratives might allow developers to overcome the cultural frameworks which had limited them previously, either by incorporating dimensions of their host culture to make the Holocaust more salient with members of that culture, or by eliminating the presence of a particular culture to make the memorials more open to interpretation from a variety of perspectives. Either way, understanding cultural influences might enable the communicators who develop memorials to engage more viewers, thus accomplishing the purposes they set out to achieve.

Purpose of this study

This study will examine the influence of culture on presentations of Holocaust narratives and artifacts in Poland and Israel. Specifically, I will analyze Holocaust narratives from two different cultures, noting differences between the two memorials and hypothesizing about the origin of such differences. Holocaust memorials provide a unique instance of a global event analyzed by myriad cultures; for this reason, dissimilarities in interpretation probably stem from cultural characteristics rather than
actual differences in the event. This exploration, therefore, attempts to resolve the paradox between the view of culture as pervasive and the view of the Holocaust as universally meaningful.

I will begin with a review of previous communication research on the Holocaust, which commences in chapter two. Chapter three will discuss my use of Burke’s dramatistic pentad as a framework for analysis of the Polish camps and the Israeli memorial. In chapter four, I will conduct an analysis of each memorial using Burke’s (1969) dramatistic pentad. Finally, in chapter five I will examine the differences among memorials in terms of the rhetorical strategy employed. The differences among memorials, as articulated in chapter five, will then serve as a springboard for discussing the manifestation of cultural in each memorial, the appropriateness of such appearances, and implications for historians and developers of memorials. Chapter five will also evaluate implications of this study for Burke’s pentad and offer suggestions for future communication research.
Chapter II

Literature Review

Adequately understanding rhetoric at Holocaust memorials requires an exploration of intercultural communication. Such a pursuit, while vital to Holocaust scholars, may prove daunting given the breadth and complexity of the field. As Tucker lamented in 1973, scholars have long defined and examined culture, but “no general theory of culture yet exists” (p. 174). While some communication scholars might dispute this claim, I argue that it remains largely true; as a result, culture, especially as it relates to communication, requires multiple ways of knowing and a willingness to examine communication acts from a variety of angles. To this end, the following chapter will examine several, perhaps even divergent, views of intercultural communication during the Holocaust, at Holocaust memorials, and in relevant cultures. Audiences must understand that such a review provides a workable yet necessarily incomplete analysis of the field.

The Role of Rhetoric in the Holocaust

Communication scholars can easily justify a rhetorical analysis of the Holocaust given the prominence of narratives and messages from both victims and villains during the Final Solution. In Raul Hilberg’s famous anthology, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, he wrote of the Final Solution as a series of messages: “The missionaries of Christianity had *said* in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed had *proclaimed*: You have no right to live among us. The Nazis at last *decreed*: You have no right to live” (1985, p. 8, emphasis added). Similarly,
Hilberg devoted large portions of his work to Nazi communication in the form of pogroms, decrees, and even media propaganda. Hilberg’s attention to communication demonstrates the importance of political rhetoric, specifically by German Nazis, in creating the momentum to launch the Holocaust.

Similarly, Murray (1998) argued that successful rhetorical campaigns launched by the Nazi party fueled German anti-Semitism and encouraged ordinary citizens to participate in the genocide. Acknowledging other views which suggested that Nazis strong-armed German citizens into helping with the genocide, Murray argued that “what is left out in this account is the possibility that persuasion played a significant role in bringing ‘ordinary Germans’ into adherence with Nazi policies” (p. 52). As Murray’s argument suggests, rhetoric propelled the Holocaust from a mere idea to a global cataclysm.

With their foundations in the Holocaust, which derived from message-driven spread of Nazi ideology, Holocaust memorials understandably tend to evaluate and explain the Holocaust from a communicative perspective. For example, theSimon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, California, uses as its common theme “the role of symbols of hate in myriad form” (Prosise, 2003, p. 355). Elsewhere in the museum, a flashing display informs visitors that “Intolerance... hatred... racism... demagoguery... genocide... all begin with words” (Prosise, 2003, p. 356). Museums may also employ rhetorical strategies to present the Holocaust, as Hasian explained, “form and function worked together in the fabrication of a master narrative [in the United States Holocaust Museum Memorial]” (2004, p. 75). Clearly, rhetoric serves a prominent role in both the Holocaust and its remembrance.
Cultural influences on Memorials

While the Holocaust provides a unique example of an historical event propelled by communication, suggesting that Holocaust memorials must include a discussion of communication, theorists have long proposed that culture necessarily influences artifacts such as monuments and memorials (Cameron and Frazer, 1994; Hall, 1962; Hall, 1976, Youra & Koring, 2006). More specifically, scholars propose that as memorials strive to commemorate victims and educate visitors, they also communicate deeply-held concepts concerning national identity and collective memory (Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2006). Culture may even surface with more vigilance than usual in Holocaust narratives due to their intense subject matter. As Cameron and Frazer explained, “biological phenomena (the emotions, pain, the cycle of birth, maturation, and death) are always overlaid with cultural discourse” (1994, p. 249). For these reasons, memorials of the Holocaust, which represent a singular event with many universal themes and undertones, should vary greatly depending on their location.

However, some reviews of Holocaust memorials suggest that the messages promulgated at the sites seem more alike than different; as the previous chapter noted, Holocaust memorials often share a common goal; “to honor the dead, to warn the living” (Youra & Koring, 2006, p. 26). Despite this apparent contradiction, only a limited amount of scholarship examines Holocaust memorials from a cultural perspective. Some of these studies seem to support the acculturation of Holocaust narratives by the dominant culture (Hasian, 2004), while others object to situations in which a nation memorializes the Holocaust from its own, unique cultural perspective (McGreal, 2005).
Scholars especially criticize American perspectives on the Holocaust, which they contend are limited by America’s late involvement in World War II (Botwinick, 2001).

In response to this criticism, Hall (1976) would probably argue that a culture cannot help but preserve history through its own cultural framework. In this vein, Hasian (2004) examined the United States Holocaust Memorial museum in Washington D.C. and concluded that the United States memorial did adopt a westernized approach, but that this culturally-based presentation could lead visitors to an understanding of the Holocaust (Hasian, 2004). He suggested that communicators could justify a deliberate assimilation of Holocaust narratives into a dominant culture if it furthered the audience’s identification with Holocaust victims. In fact, Hasian’s view seems popular among several reviewers of Holocaust rhetoric (Johnston, 2007; Pitts, 2005).

Based on Hall and Hasian’s previous analyses, one might propose that an examination of cultural influences on memorials should not examine whether a culture presents information about the event differently (because such differences are inevitable), but rather how these differences appear in communication. Perhaps more importantly, it would examine Holocaust memorials to determine whether the purposes are as universal as they seem or they remain subject to Hall and Hasian’s propositions.

As the above discussion indicates, communication scholars have examined the Holocaust from a variety of angles. Some focus primarily on education, the construction of memorials, and the formation of collective memories concerning the Holocaust (see Hasian, 2003; Hasian, 2004; Hasian, 2005; Prosise, 2003). Others examine more sinister subjects including Holocaust trivialization and Holocaust denial (see Bischoping &
A new examination of Holocaust rhetoric requires a brief treatment of each of these fields of inquiry.

**Evaluation of memory in Holocaust rhetoric**

The formulation and preservation of memories of the Holocaust provides scholars with ample room for debate and criticism. Speaking generally on the idea of memory, some question the validity of memory as the author of history (Braun, 1994; Zerubavel, 1994). These scholars contend that human memory bends under the influence of social, emotional, and political pressures; as a result, memories may add, omit, or alter details of any historical event. Consequently, eyewitnesses and survivors, often the only remaining source of information about a secretive event like the Holocaust, may not accurately represent the true nature of an event, despite their good intentions to do so.

After a surge in emphasis on survivor interviewing and archival, Hasian (2005) argued that scholars should examine Holocaust narratives for accuracy. While Hasian acknowledged that dramatized Holocaust narratives could serve as a springboard for productive discussions of prejudice, he argued that scholars should fight to preserve accurate depictions of the Holocaust. Hasian wrote that that false representations of Holocaust memory “work as an affront to...Holocaust witnesses” (2005, p. 256). While Hasian acknowledged the claims of some survivors that testing every narrative for its truth might cast doubt on genuine narratives, he argued “there are times when postmodernism has reached its limit, and this is one of those times” (p. 253).

Another concern in Holocaust memory scholarship stems from the inclusion of certain Holocaust memories at the expense of others (Hasian, 2004). As historians reconstruct the Holocaust, they often eliminate some of the complexities of the situation.
Other times, problematic truths are conveniently omitted from public discourses, such as the United States’ refusal to admit Jewish refugees during the Holocaust (Hasian, 2003). Certainly, a fair representation of history requires careful attention to the accuracy of Holocaust narratives.

Finally, as Prosise explained: “Memories are socially binding phenomena and thus the question of the ownership of the memory of the Holocaust is a common concern” (2003, p. 363). Some argue that Israeli popular culture seems to suggest that only Israeli Jews should access the Holocaust (McGreal, 2005). Others indicate the importance for all global citizens to form personal memories concerning the Holocaust, especially by making personal pilgrimages to Holocaust sites (Pitts, 2005). Complicating this situation, while scholars once recognized only first-generation Holocaust survivors, scholars now turn to child survivors and second generation survivors (children of survivors) for their narratives about the Holocaust, hoping to preserve collective memory (Hasian, 2005).

Taking into account the understandably different perspectives of members of different cultures and co-cultures, a communicator might note that resolving the question of the ownership of Holocaust memories may, in fact, depend on the cultural leanings of the person who answers it.

*Rhetoric and Holocaust education*

Rhetoricians have persuasively argued that language provides one of the best means to prevent another Holocaust. As Roth (2000) noted, Holocaust narratives can educate new generations about the Holocaust even when they can not see the physical evidence firsthand. Moreover, in the world where Holocaust “is shallow, incomplete, and imperfect” (Smith, 1995, p. 272), language offers the sole means to combat historical
forgetfulness. Unfortunately, Holocaust narratives become increasingly removed from the situation as eyewitnesses of the Holocaust begin to disappear. For this reason, communication about the Holocaust increases in importance -- and complexity -- as time passes (Hasian, 2005).

Furthermore, language may play a pivotal role in developing sensitivity to cultural differences (Prosise, 2003, p. 361). In an increasingly diverse world, tolerance of people unlike oneself could be the key to preventing violence. Not surprisingly, scholars have argued that language can serve as a form of resistance against modern genocides (Roth, 2000). Failing to speak against injustice, however, may fuel discrimination; as Prosise explained, “the violence perpetuated by the few can only continue due to the inaction of the many” (2003, p. 361).

Finally, messages at Holocaust memorials may construct a cautionary tale for modern audiences by reminding them of their own vulnerability to errant or discriminatory communication. Prosise explained this idea well, saying that “the memory of the Holocaust is relevant for many people and the significance of the event ought to extend as a universal warning of the dangers of prejudice and scapegoating, the power of ideas, feelings, and words that enable genocide to occur” (2003, p. 363). By pointing to the link between rhetoric and discrimination, Holocaust historians affirm the power of communication.

*The Rhetoric of Holocaust Memorials*

As Holocaust memorials have proliferated around the world, communication scholars have turned their analytic eye to the content and form of these memorials. Some have studied the contemporary, interactive portrayals of the Holocaust, which encourage
audiences to form their own memories of the event (Prosise, 2003). Scholars are split about the appropriateness of such constructions. While some argue that the uniquely Jewish nature of the events should be preserved (Roth, 2000), most acknowledge that audience identification with the Holocaust can cultivate sensitivity and moral responsibility in museum-goers (Hasian, 2004; Prosise, 2003).

Additionally, Hasian (2004) noted that memorials such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. necessarily emphasize certain narratives and interpretations of the Holocaust at the expense of others. In the case of the USHMM, curators emphasized American narratives and omitted more of the European perspectives (Hasian, 2004). This raises questions about the ethical right of a group or culture to interpret the Holocaust – or any historical event – in a creative way, even if such a strategy aims to cultivate identification with the Holocaust.

Holocaust Trivialization and Denial

Some evaluations of Holocaust messages have focused on the way that communicators will strategically employ comparisons to the Holocaust to bolster the importance of other situations such as modern genocides in Rwanda and Sudan, rape, and nuclear war (Bischoping & Kalmin, 1999, p. 493). Bischoping and Kalmin debunked the idea that most of these comparisons were motivated by personal gain, as scholars previously suspected. They also found that few Americans believed the Holocaust to be a unique event – instead, many Americans, especially women and minorities, were receptive to comparisons of other events to the Holocaust.

Interestingly, Bischoping and Kalmin offered the following qualifier to their findings: “to study comparisons as we do does not mean that we necessarily endorse
them...Further, we do not wish to understate the harm that can be done by banalizing ‘Holocaust’ and ‘genocide’” (1999, p. 505). Such a caveat is necessary because of the sensitivity to many scholars to genocide trivialization. Many rhetoricians believe as Aaronovitch (2000) does, that “the trouble with Americans...is that they consume the world’s history as they consume the world’s oil; with noisy carelessness...most egregious is the group who want [sic] us to accept that there is nothing unique about the Holocaust” (n.p). Given the popularity of perspectives such as this, a communicator who studies the Holocaust must tread lightly.

Scholars also frequently address the issue of Holocaust denial (Dintenfass, 2000). Interestingly, Zerubavel (1994) indicates that Israeli Jews were among the first Holocaust deniers. Surrounded by a culture that valued “freedom and the readiness to fight for it to the bitter end” (p. 77), Israeli Jews could not reconcile the idea that other Jews could accept their own destruction in Europe. The Israeli national government made its first inroads against this cultural belief with the opening of Yad Vashem in 1953, followed by the declaration of a national day of commemoration for the Holocaust in 1959, and the memory of Israeli Holocaust deniers has since seemed to disappear. As Zerubavel remarked, such a shift in culture indicates the elastic nature of public memory.

Today’s version of Holocaust denial seems less rooted in Israeli national pride and disbelief; this begs the question of the source of modern Holocaust denial. Smith addressed this problem by arguing that “few are dedicated, committed deniers. Most of the questioning of the Holocaust reflects ignorance rather than anti-Semitic commitment” (1995, p. 279). Smith further argued that previous estimates of Holocaust denial were
tremendously inflated, and that "the Holocaust denial controversy is an excellent example of correcting and learning from one’s mistakes" (1995, p. 284).

Even if a relatively low number of Holocaust deniers remain, a large amount of communication scholarship examines the motives and justifications of Holocaust denial. Such emphasis is understandable, because Holocaust denial undercuts the very premise of knowable history. As Dintenfass explained, Holocaust denial may put "the very nature of truth in jeopardy" (2000, p. 3). Viewed in this context, protecting the public memory of the Holocaust seems like an absolute necessity.

Moreover, Holocaust denial may tremendously harm survivors, who have forged identities as witnesses and survivors (Hasian, 2005). International bodies such as the United Nations have passed several resolutions condemning Holocaust denial (Olson, 2007). The willingness of most members of the international community to guard the rhetoric of disbelievers seems to support the understanding of Holocaust denial as the ultimate disrespect to its victims and survivors.

Holocaust denial may also indicate dangerous trends in foreign policy. Perhaps the most famous Holocaust denier, Iranian president Mahmoud Amadinejad, called the Holocaust "a myth" and the nation of Israel "a stain of disgrace" (MacLeod, 2006, p. 16). In what seemed like the same breath, he argued that Israel should be destroyed (Erlanger, 2006). While some might find it tempting to dismiss Amadinejad’s comments as the nationalistic ravings of an authoritarian ruler, this rhetoric troubles international watchdogs; as the leader of a nation, Amadinejad’s words may indicate a predisposition for Iranian aggression in the future. For this reason, scholars and policy experts will be keeping a careful watch on the growing epidemic of Holocaust denial.
Culture: A Gap in Holocaust Research

Despite a wide body of literature concerning the Holocaust, authors have only begun to examine the influence of culture on Holocaust rhetoric. While Hasian (2004) comes the closest to answering this question by examining the influence of American culture on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, other memorials in other countries remain unexamined by the rhetorical lens. More specifically, Holocaust memorials in Poland and Israel both express unique perspectives on the Holocaust. While the Holocaust affected both nations so profoundly that it may seem to dominate their cultures, I argue that both Poland and Israel maintain their own idiosyncrasies that distinguish them from Holocaust culture. For this reason, I propose an examination of the differences between the Polish and Israel Holocaust Museum Memorials. Using Burke’s pentad as a framework for analysis, I hope to isolate some of the differences between each site and determine ways these unique views influence their presentations of Holocaust rhetoric.

Such an analysis seems warranted for a variety of reasons involving culture, collective memory, and tragedy. First, the Holocaust offers a unique situation for rhetorical analysis because it transcends traditional cultural boundaries. In fact, some authors seem to argue that the Holocaust comprises a culture of its own (McGreal, 2005). I reject this view of the Holocaust in favor of a perspective more similar to Edward T. Hall’s. Hall (1976) argued that culture pervades every aspect of the human existence. It logically follows that the unique cultures of Poland and Israel would influence representations of the Holocaust. Testing this view would offer new information
concerning the reach of culture by either affirming Hall’s all-inclusive definition of culture or delineating the bounds of culture in global situations.

Additionally, Hasian (2004) argued that studying the manifestations of culture in representations of the Holocaust could enable rhetoricians to construct memorials that engaged specific groups of people. This strategic construction of memorials could encourage viewer identification with the Holocaust and therefore raise their level of concern. Testing the memorials in Poland and Israel could verify or refute this theory, which may prove helpful in developing subsequent memorials.

Finally, understanding the nexus between culture and memorials could offer additional insight into the formation of a collective memory. As Prosise (2003) noted, memorials serve to construct and reinforce cultural memories. Understanding the unique process by which a culture constructs its shared memory could afford scholars a greater degree of control over the memories encoded by a culture and a greater ability to detect historical truths from pieces of popular folklore. Given that many of our religious and social institutions originated from word-of-mouth narratives, this ability has potentially far-reaching consequences.

Research Questions:

This study will address the gap in research concerning the nexus between Holocaust discourses and culture. In a world where the Holocaust seems like a universal tragedy and culture seems like a pervasive agent, the relationship between culture and Holocaust rhetoric must be tested. To this end, Kenneth Burke’s dramatistic pentad (1969) will serve as the rhetorical device for this study. The pentad requires a scholar to identify different aspects of the communication event including act, agent, agency, scene,
and purpose. A different application of Burke’s pentad among Holocaust memorials provides evidence for the influence of culture over Holocaust rhetoric.

To test the relationship between Holocaust rhetoric and culture, this examination seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Does the Holocaust memorial at Auschwitz emphasize a particular aspect of the Holocaust – agent, agency, act, scene or purpose?
2. Does the Holocaust memorial at Treblinka emphasize a particular aspect of the Holocaust – agent, agency, act, scene or purpose?
3. Does the Holocaust memorial at Majdanek emphasize a particular aspect of the Holocaust – agent, agency, act, scene or purpose?
4. Does the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem emphasize a particular aspect of the Holocaust – agent, agency, act, scene or purpose?
5. In what way do Polish memorials differ from Yad Vashem in their presentation of the Holocaust?
6. What can communicators learn about the nature of human interaction from a discussion of Holocaust memorials?
7. What can rhetoricians learn about Burke’s dramatistic pentad from a discussion of Holocaust memorials?

Documenting specific ways in which culture influences Holocaust memorials in Poland and Israel may enable communicators to understand more fully past uses of Holocaust rhetoric, enabling them to educate and warn visitors. Such an accomplishment might begin to achieve the goals articulated by the words at Treblinka: *never again.*
An examination of Holocaust artifacts requires a broad and flexible rhetorical method, and Burke’s pentad seems especially appropriate fit for the task. Several unique attributes of the pentad, including its emphasis on identification, preservation of complexity, and ability to compensate for personal biases, indicate the viability of the pentad in this situation. Initially, Burke argued that rhetoric cultivated identification in the audience (Benoit, 1983; Crusius, 1986; Keith, 1979). In other words, successful rhetoric changes the way that a viewer perceives him or herself in relation to the communicator or message (Burke, 1969). Such a perspective seems like an intuitive choice for rhetoricians who analyze Holocaust memorials because memorials attempt to cultivate audience identification with the Holocaust and its victims (Hasian, 2004). More importantly, Holocaust memorials often transform not only a visitor’s view of the Holocaust, but his or her own self-image. As Hasian explained, “…acts of pilgrimage [to Holocaust memorial sites] are important because these journeys can potentially alter our present and future identities” (p. 70). Burke’s discussion of identification might also prove helpful in understanding this phenomenon.

Perhaps more important, Burke’s pentad provides scholars with the opportunity to examine Holocaust artifacts without reducing their complex meanings. Burke (1969) argued that human communication and activity necessarily reflected a complicated, multi-faceted process and insisted that a proper analysis of communication would leave the complexity of a situation intact. The ability to examine complex messages proves
especially important in examinations of the Holocaust because of the myriad complexities and ambiguities of the event (Hasian, 2004). In fact, scholars have noted the tendency of scholars to over-simplify the Holocaust (Murray, 1998). The pentad may circumvent this common trap.

Finally, the pentad seems like a valuable way to avoid the paralyzing emotional toll of scholarly immersion in the Holocaust. In the pentad, Burke (1969) created a way for communicators to move beyond their own limited beliefs and approach an artifact objectively. In emotionally charged situations, this ability to circumvent human biases provides the best possible analysis. Given that Dintenfass called the Holocaust “the most morally charged of all past events” (2000, p. 1), a Holocaust scholar should consider adopting a rhetorical paradigm like Burke’s, which can transcend emotion to obtain the most accurate and helpful results.

For the above reasons, Kenneth Burke’s dramatistic pentad provides the most helpful framework for analyzing Holocaust memorials. A thorough application of the pentad, however, requires a brief survey of relevant literature.

The Development of Burke’s Pentad

In *A Grammar of Motives* (1969), Burke developed the dramatistic pentad as an alternative to existing methods of evaluating communication. A sociologist and communicator supremely concerned with the human side of activity, Burke wanted to find a way to improve previous models which neglected the influence of motive and personal choices in message construction. Consequently, Burke designed a model which included five facets of every situation: act, agent, scene, agency, and purpose. Burke argued that an analysis of the situation, paying careful attention to these five dimensions,
would enlighten scholars about a rhetorician’s motive. In a method somewhat similar to a reporter’s interrogation, inquisitive communicators could move beyond superficial examination to study events more thoroughly than previous models allowed (Keith, 1979).

Burke (1969) further noted that communicators tend to emphasize one or two aspects of the pentad depending on their personal tastes and perspective. Identifying a communicator’s emphasis on a certain aspect of the pentad would enable critics to understand the communicator’s motives and cultural biases (Birdsell, 1987; Burke, 1969; Kelley, 1987). Highlighting and interpreting this emphasis hinges on Burke’s pentadic terms as defined in *A Grammar of Motives* (Burke, 1969). Other scholars have subsequently explored and upheld these definitions and their corresponding values (Appel, 1987; Birdsell, 1987; Crable & Makay, 1972; Hamlin & Nichols, 1973; Kelley, 1987; McComiskey, 1995; Smudde, 2004; Hübler, 2005).

**Pentadic terms**

According to Burke (1969), scene dominates many other terms in the pentad. The term *scene* refers to the overall surrounding of a communication act, especially in relation to the physical environment but potentially in relation to the metaphysical climate. In other words, scene may describe the tangible surroundings of an act, or the reception of the surrounding society to the message, similar to the plot in a theatrical drama (Burke, 1969, p. 231). Emphasis on scene, according to Burke, suggested a corresponding value of materialism in the communicator. A focus on scene may also decrease an agent’s personal responsibility in a drama or detract attention from other aspects of the pentad (Birdsell, 1987).
According to Burke (1969), the pentadic term *agent* refers to the person who performed the act under investigation. In a staged drama, “character would correspond to agent” (Burke, 1969, p. 231). Only a human can fulfill the role of an agent in a drama insomuch as only humans had the free will and reasoning ability sufficient to control their decisions (Keith, 1979). Burke indicated that focusing on human behavior via emphasis on the agent made an agent-centered theoretical approach particularly common in psychological approaches. He also argued that emphasis on the agent suggests idealism on behalf of the rhetor (Burke, 1969).

The scene and the agent, according to Burke, both exert tremendous force over the act, or the communication event. According to Burke, “in the act there is a creative or generative feature” (1969, p. 249, emphasis his). This reminds rhetoricians that communication acts often mark a change in previous meaning or an expansion of previous knowledge. Burke further notes that previous communication models, including Aristotle’s cannon, focused primarily on the communication act. While Burke’s model requires an investigation of the act, it also forces analysts to move beyond it. Emphasis on the act generally indicates realism under Burke’s model. While Burke might disagree that one could ever grasp reality fully, a discussion of the act my represent an effort in that direction.

The *agency* of a communicator describes the means by which he or she transmits the message (Burke, 1969). Burke associates agency with *instrumentalism* (1969, p. 275), noting that this term in the pentad describes the means or instruments by which a communicator relays a message. Emphasis on agency often corresponds with the communicator’s value of pragmatism (Burke, 1969; Crable & Makay, 1972; Hübler,
Agency usually functions in an almost subordinate role to other terms in the pentad; that is, the agent could manipulate agency, the purpose would influence agency, and so on (Hübler, 2005). However, Hübler noted that the reversal of agency and other terms has appeared with increasing frequency as the subject of horror films and futuristic dramas. Especially in a technological society, people emphasize agency with passionate resolve (Hübler, 2005).

As the complementary end to the means addressed in agency, purpose addresses the reason for which a communicator constructs a message (Burke, 1969). Emphasis on purpose indicates mysticism in the communicator. Burke expands his discussion of purpose and the human quest for perfection in subsequent works, arguing that humans’ use of symbols impels them toward the ideal; in this sense, the mysticism of most humans directs them toward a singular end -- perfection (Appel, Drama, 1987). More generally speaking, a speaker’s purposes may reflect a number of specific goals, all of which are reflected by other terms in the pentad.

Additionally, Burke also found that analyzing the parts in relation to one another provided useful information to students of communication. As Burke noted in A Grammar of Motives, “…the areas covered by our five terms overlap one another. And because of this overlap, it is possible for a thinker to make his way continuously from any one of them to any of the others” (1969, p. 127). Pairs of terms, known as ratios, proved to be especially helpful in that each term influenced others (Crusius, 1986; Keith, 1979). However, Burke’s terms interact with each other in such complex and potentially subtle ways that even an analysis of pairs may neglect the interaction of triplets, or even larger combinations (Birdsell, 1987). For example, some scholars have examined each term in
relation to the others, exploring all ten possible combinations to demonstrate that Burke’s
tenets share an inextricable relationship (Crable & Makay, 1972).

Moreover, some terms coincide more frequently than others in rhetorical
situations (Birdsell, 1987; Burke, 1969). In particular, Burke (1969) attended to the
scene-agent ratio to shed light on rhetorical situation. The scene-agent ratio describes the
relationship “between person and place (p. 7). While one might intuit that scene
influences an agent, Burke notes that an agent may also change or augment a scene.
Similarly, Burke argued that the scene would necessarily affect the tools with which a
communicator could relay a message, consequently manipulating the agency.
Reciprocally, the presence of a certain agency would help modify the scene in terms of
physical apparatuses (such as cameras) or less obvious qualities (such as noise).

*Burke’s changes to previous communication models*

Burke’s development of the dramatistic pentad marks one of the most important
rhetorical developments since Aristotle (Benoit, 1983; Crusius, 1986). By focusing on
human motives rather than speaking style, Burke fundamentally altered the definition of
rhetoric from Aristotle and other previous rhetoricians (Benoit, 1983; Crusius, 1986;
Keith, 1979). To reflect this broader definition of rhetoric, Burke adopted *identification*
as his key term (Crusius, 1986). Several scholars since Burke have validated the use of
the dramatistic pentad to discern the motive of a communicator (Hübner, 2005; Kelley,
1987).

Burke also demonstrated that opinions could be as sound as proven, scientific fact
(Keith, 1979). Whereas previous models had employed an almost scientific approach to
analysis, Burke relied heavily on interpretation from the analyst (Birdsell, 1987). Burke
believed that tension yielded insight, and consequently designed a model that fueled and rewarded tension (Crusius, 1986). For this reason, the pentad thrives on ambiguity. Rhetoricians explore such ambiguity with their analysis and interpret it freely, thus exercising a substantial amount of control over the interpretation of a communication event. As Birdsell (1987) noted, the pentad “celebrates the critic’s active contribution to meaning” (p. 277).

While the pentad originally seemed exhaustive, Burke later added attitude to the pentad (Benoit, 1983). This additional term reflected the way in which a communicator acted, not the means (which had been addressed with agency). Despite Burke’s addendum, many scholars continue to employ the original pentad in their analyses (see Fox, 2002; Hübner, 2005; McComiskey, 1995; Smudde, 2004).

**Purpose of the Pentad**

While the dramatistic pentad marked a watershed in communication theory, scholars still debate about Burke’s original goal with the pentad and the most beneficial use for the pentad today. The most expansive view of Burke’s model holds that the pentad enables “the practice, analysis, and evaluation of rhetoric” (Crable & Makay, 1972). Burke himself seemed to agree with this broad approach, arguing that a communicator could manipulate different aspects of the pentad to achieve a desired rhetorical end (1969). Reciprocally, analysts could use the pentad to discern motives. For this reason, Burke apparently advocated the dual use of his model for analysis and persuasion.

Similarly, Hamlin and Nichols argued that the pentad “seems potentially useful also for constructing messages” (1973, p. 97). They conducted experiments to determine
which root term aroused the most interest in audiences, with the goal of providing speakers with a suggestion for creating more interesting speeches. Of course, the particular techniques employed by communicators may not appear immediately, and for this reason, the degree to which the pentad guides message construction may remain somewhat ambiguous. However, Hamlin and Nichol’s argument suggests that communicators at Holocaust museums and memorials could tailor their rhetoric to ensure that as many visitors as possible grasp the concepts laid out in the memorial. Given the potential for a pentadic analysis of Holocaust rhetoric to yield results which would increase education and commemoration, such an effort seems intuitive.

Other scholars argue that the pentad serves a narrower purpose. For example, Crusius (1986) argued that the pentad “is not a contribution to rhetorical invention, toward finding something to say to realize one’s purpose. Rather, Burke dealt with it explicitly as a contribution to dialectic, a way to question assertions about motive” (p. 23). According to Crusius, Burke’s pentad most aptly examines past speech acts; Aristotle’s cannon proves more helpful in instructing speakers in persuasion. Along these lines, Smudde called the pentad “a sensemaking activity,” (2004, p. 428), which suggests an emphasis on interpretation rather than message creation. In this rhetorical analysis, emphasis on interpretation seems imperative. A mechanism which explores interpretation necessarily addresses culture, because culture forms the parameters for a person’s interpretation of nearly everything he or she sees (Hall, 1976). Moreover, the Holocaust remains a tragedy so enormous that people who encounter it, including consumers of Holocaust discourses, must find a way to make sense of it. Interpretation,
therefore, serves as a key component to processing Holocaust rhetoric, making Burke’s pentad an ideal fit for this research endeavor.

Still others contend that Burke’s model affirms the importance of anecdotes and serves to bolster its own credibility (Crable, 2000). According to Crable, Burke seemed to argue for the prominence of his own rhetorical device as the superior framework for rhetorical analysis. The model, then, would exist primarily to justify itself and its findings. Crable does not view this as a weakness of the model, though; instead, he argues that justification of prior knowledge serves a useful, and perhaps profoundly honest, end.

**Unique attributes of the pentad**

Burke’s pentad departed from other models by acknowledging the ubiquity of a communicator’s personal biases (Crable, 2000). Burke argued that every choice a speaker makes stems in part from his or her past experiences and tastes, his or her *predispositions* (Burke, 1969). As Fox (2002) explains, these inherent conceptions about the world may prevent communicators from accurately perceiving the people, objects, and events around them; “terministic screens, in short, direct our attention toward a particular representation of reality and away from another” (Fox, 2002, p. 366).

Dramatism presents rhetoricians with a way to evaluate their own biases and predispositions when they analyze communication acts (Crable, 2000). In this way, Burke’s pentad offers an incredibly self-aware means to describe and interpret a communication act; avoiding the hazard of other models by reminding the critic to constantly evaluate his or her use of language (Crusius, 1986).
In this case, identifying my personal biases seems especially important. I traveled to Holocaust sites in Poland and Israel under the auspices of a Jewish organization. Mindful of this, I understand that my perspective on the Holocaust exhibits a definite cultural and political slant. As Burke noted, every communicator has biases. It seems more rational to identify these attributes rather than ignore them, which seems like the only alternative. For this reason, Burke’s pentad seems like an advantageous method.

Scholars have pointed out a similar strength of Burke’s device; its ability to deconstruct language. Crable (2000) pointed out that accepting the subjective nature of truth implies that communicators can not truly learn anything, only affirm what they already believed to be true. Language summons a creative, constructive force, and the pentad recognizes that characteristic of language (Hübler, 2005). According to Crable (2000), Burke believed that not all rhetorical tools functioned equally well; instead, some tools were caught up in the morass of language, whereas the pentad overcame the bounds of language by identifying them and viewing them from different perspectives. In such a way, the pentad can broaden a communicator’s perspective systematically, ensuring a more rounded interpretation of a communication act (McComiskey, 1995). When examining an event like the Holocaust, which was rhetorically-driven from its onset, a communicator should strongly consider a model which acknowledges the importance of language.

Prior to Burke’s development of the pentad, other scholarly tools tended to reduce communication in order to study it; most other methods, in fact, focused on a single aspect of the pentad, largely neglecting all other aspects (Crusius, 1986). Different philosophies have traditionally focused on different aspects of the drama; for example,
Fisher’s motive view examined purpose, Bitzer examined scene, and the elocutionary movement examined agency (Crable & Makay, 1972). Despite their differences, though, each previous school of thought failed in Burke’s eyes because it addressed only part of the story.

The pentad, however, forces communicators to examine an event from a multitude of angles, facilitating a well-rounded perspective on the event (Keith, 1979). The pentad uniquely escapes the problematically narrow focus of other models by forcing rhetoricians to utilize a series of perspectives (Crable, 2000). For this reason, the pentad is able to “overcome the limitations of any single critical vocabulary” (Crusius, 1986, p. 27).

Similarly, older models tended to simplify communication to the point that its nuances were lost. Burke disapproved of such an approach, preferring to complicate the simple rather than the reverse. Burke explained in A Grammar of Motives that “we should feel justified in never taking at its face value any motivational reduction to a ‘simple.’ As soon as we encounter, verbally or thematically, a motivational simplicity, we must assume as a matter of course that it contains a diversity” (Burke, 1969, p. 101). In fact, some believe that the complexity and ambiguity of Burke’s model is directly related to its success (Birdsell, 1987). For this reason, a communicator should preserve the ambiguity of the model.

Dramatism also enables communicators to avoid the trap of postmodernism, which can detect flaws in thinking but often does so at the expense of action (Fox, 2002). Dramatism functions best when a scholar uses it to interpret an entire rhetorical situation, as opposed to a single text or speech act (Birdsell, 1987; Fox, 2002). To implement
dramatism to its fullest capacity, a scholar should allow the aspects of various dramas to appear, rather than forcing dramas into preconceived schemas (Crable, 2000).

Interestingly, the pentad's flexibility may expose motives or implications which require outside verification (Birdsell, 1987). For example, Crable praised the pentad as remarkably self-aware, but also argued that pentadic analyses might benefit from a discussion of the representative anecdote – another Burkeian form of proof (2000).

Similarly, Hamlin and Nichols (1973) tested the feasibility of quantitative measurements in pentadic analyses, arguing that statistics might provide another form of proof. While the pentad serves as a complete research tool (see Appel, 1987; Birdsell, 1987; and Kelley, 1987), communicators may choose to verify their pentadic analysis with other tests or forms of inquiry.

*Expansion of dramatism and the pentad*

In response to a call for the combination of Burke’s terms of order and pentad, Appel (1987) argued that scholars could combine Burke’s theories for an even fuller analysis of rhetorical situations. Consequently, Appel examined the implementation of several purposes by Reverend Dr. Wallace E. Fisher, and discovered that the minister implemented nearly all of these purposes in strategies regularly in his messages from the pulpit. Appel reasoned that this demonstrated the flexibility and utility of Burke’s theory.

Birdsell (1987) was among the first to note that the root term of a communication event could change during the event. Citing President Reagan’s speech on Lebanon and Grenada, Birdsell demonstrated that Reagan began his address emphasizing the scene and later discussed the agent at length. Realizing the potential shift in emphasis during a single speech act affirmed the ambiguity and flexibility of the pentad.
Smudde (2004) wrote that Burke’s pentad provided a critical bridge between academia, as expressed by communication theories, and application. He examined the pentad from the perspective of a public relations professional, and concluded that a pentadic analysis of corporate events could help public relations professionals to communicate to the public more effectively. Smudde also noted that pentadic analysis could achieve ethical or unethical objectives, depending on the communicator.

Current uses of the dramatistic pentad apply the model to a wide range of different fields. Fox (2002) used a pentadic analysis to examine the negotiations between technical writers and engineers. She discovered that, although the groups experienced profound and disruptive differences, they were able to better understand their roles in the negotiations and the roles of others when they considered the negotiations from a broad perspective.

McComiskey (1995) noted that the multi-perspectival approach of dramatism enabled problem solvers to consider a wider range of views than before. He argued that employees tend to focus on a single aspect of the problem and neglect the others, when the interplay between different aspects of a problem might actually fuel the conflict. McComiskey argued for a Burkeian perspective to problem-solving approaches in the workplace.

Hübler (2005) noted that technological worldviews tend to alter the pentad insomuch as they focus on agency, thereby inverting the agent-agency ratio. Whereas Burke (1969) recognized agency as a tool of the agent, and therefore suggested that the agent was more important that the agency, Hübler suggested that technology is becoming more important than the people who use it; in other words, the agency is becoming more
important than the agent. Hübler was distressed by such a development in society, especially because it tended to eliminate purpose entirely. With the advent of technology, people are beginning to forget their objectives and invent technology simply for the sake of invention. Hübler cautions that such a short-sighted approach may actually cause more harm than good, and encourages communicators and innovators alike to carry out their life’s work with an end goal in mind.

Hübner also noted that the inversion of agency and agent has fueled several futuristic thriller films, including Bladerunner, Terminator, and the Matrix. Clearly, a change in the relative importance of agency to agent troubles modern citizens and scholars, who are not yet comfortable with the idea that they could someday be replaced by a machine.

*Justifying a pentadic analysis of Holocaust memorials*

As previously noted, this analysis seeks to conduct a pentadic review of Holocaust Memorial Museums in Poland and Israel. While scholars have previously applied Burke’s model to political speeches, including Birdsell’s (1987) review of Reagan’s speech and Ling’s seminal work concerning Ted Kennedy’s Chappaquiddick address, the pentad is not generally applied to Holocaust artifacts or memorials. In fact, scholars rarely employ the pentad to study abstract concepts or visual rhetoric. I argue that such an application is long overdue. First, the journey of a viewer through a Holocaust museum corresponds closely to a drama; viewers assume a certain role during their exploration of the museum. In fact, some museums even issue visitors a defined persona when they enter the museum – the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum casts visitors as a “witness or prisoner” (Hasian, 2004, p. 72), and the Simon Wiesenthal
Museum of Tolerance gives visitors passports bearing the name and photograph of an actual Holocaust victim (Prosise, 2003). The obvious parallel to casting characters in a drama lends credence to the use of Burke’s pentad in an analysis of these museums.

Second, and perhaps more important, Burke’s (1969) pentad and Hall’s (1976) expansive view of culture reflect two of the most widely renowned perspectives in communication theory. The relationship between these two schools of thought should be explored. Moreover, while dramatism and intercultural theory may not appear related at first glance, both Burke and Hall recognized the inter-connectedness of communication and human activity in general. Reconciling these two consequential and oddly similar theories may yield additional insight into the field of communication and some of its most basic foundations.

Four former concentration camps, now converted to museums and memorials, provide the artifacts for analysis in Poland. First, I examined the Auschwitz-I and Auschwitz-II Birkenau. After a pentadic examination of these two camps, I turned my attention to the memorial at Treblinka, an extermination camp, before studying Majdanek. Concerning Israel, my analysis revolved around the Yad-Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

While it may seem strange to evaluate four sites in Poland and one in Israel, this approach reflects the countless number of Holocaust memorials in Poland, from former camps near Lublin to old ghetto walls in Warsaw to commemorative benches in Krakow, as compared to other nations, including Israel. Moreover, analyzing four sites in Poland provides an internal check on the consistency of messages emerging from a single country. An analysis of Yad Vashem serves a different purpose in that it provides a point
of comparison for Holocaust sites from different cultures. Considering these objectives, this method seems like an intuitive way to examine the relationship between culture and Holocaust memorial sites.

A pentadic analysis of Holocaust memorials began with an application of each tenet of the model to Auschwitz I and II, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Yad Vashem. More specifically, I conducted a preliminary analysis of each camp to discern the act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose of the models. Then I studied each tenet of the model to determine which aspect of the pentad stands out at each memorial. As Burke (1969) noted, emphasis on a certain aspect of the pentad suggests a certain, corresponding motive. In keeping with Burke's model, the first part of my analysis involved discovering this motive for each of the sites.

Burke (1969) also noted that tenets of the pentad necessarily overlapped, and argued that scholars should examine aspects of the pentad in relation to each other. These ratios, he suggested, might yield helpful insight concerning the rhetorical strategies of the agent. I examined pentadic ratios using Crable & Makay’s (1972) approach, which involves studying each aspect of the pentad in relation to the others. Such an approach provided a more thorough examination of Holocaust memorials than limiting the analysis to only a few ratios and also ensured that I would observe unforeseen interactions between pentadic tenets.

Finally, I compared the pentadic analysis of each artifact to the analyses of the other artifacts, looking for one of three results. First, if every memorial seemed to emphasize the same tenet of the pentad, one might reasonably conclude that the unique attributes of the Holocaust supercede culture in the development of Holocaust memorials.
For example, if both Polish and Israeli memorials emphasized agency, then Holocaust memorials would seem to require an emphasis on agency, regardless of the influence of the culture around them.

However, the analyses I conducted might not have produced the same results. In fact, each monument might have emphasized a different aspect of the pentad. If this were the case, it would have suggested that each memorial commemorates events differently, or that culture influences a memorial only indirectly, and that other factors such as local influences, fiscal concerns, or temporal concerns, supercede both culture and the Holocaust.

Finally, it might have become clear that Polish memorials tend to emphasize one aspect of the pentad, while the Israeli memorial emphasizes another aspect of the pentad. Such a finding would have suggested that culture plays a highly influential role in the development of Holocaust memorials. It would have echoed Hasian’s (2004) findings by indicating that the Polish memorials described the Holocaust from a uniquely Polish perspective, and that the Israeli memorial described the Holocaust from a uniquely Israeli perspective.

If culture influences Holocaust memorials, scholars would need to revisit current Holocaust narratives. While such narratives could increase Holocaust education, they could also reflect a limited historical perspective, despite historians’ efforts to articulate an objective view. At that point, scholars might examine ways to mitigate the influence of culture on history, or compensate for the limitations of a single perspective on culture. Solutions to a limited perspective on the Holocaust might include traveling to a variety of
memorials in a number of different countries to understand the event most fully, or studying the narratives of survivors from different cultures.
Chapter IV

Analysis

Holocaust memorials take a number of forms in countries around the world including Poland and Israel, and understanding these varied memorials requires acknowledging superficial differences while simultaneously exploring the underlying themes of each memorial. Kenneth Burke’s dramatism provides a helpful mechanism by which a communicator can accomplish such a task. Burke argued that dramatism can enable a communicator to examine profound, or even simple themes without diminishing the complexity of the artifact. This ability enables a communicator to study both culture-specific aspects and universal themes of Holocaust memorials.

To use the dramatistic pentad as a rhetorical tool, a communicator must first conceptualize the communication acts as dramas and evaluate the different parts of the act as one would evaluate parts of a play. This interpretation of Holocaust memorials seems justified because authors so frequently document the importance of engaging visitors, of making history come alive (Bennett, 2005; Dean, 2005; Heller, 2007; Peretz, 2005; Rothwell, 2005; Stutz, 2005). Just as playwrights and actors attempt to breathe life into characters, so do curators try to enliven one of the darkest chapters in human history in hopes of reaching museum audiences.

To understand the cultural and universal themes of Holocaust memorials in Poland and Israel, this chapter explores four sites from a dramatistic perspective. Just as any worthy actor begins his or her dramatic interpretation with background research about the character, this dramatic analysis begins with a discussion of the history and development of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Yad Vashem. This background
information fuels an analysis of the speech act presented in each memorial. Initial implications emerge from this endeavor; global implications are presented in the following chapter.

_Nazi Camps: An Overview_

Holocaust memorials commemorate a brutal tragedy which did not occur overnight, as prominent historians remind us (Bergen, 1998; Cargas, 1999; Hilberg, 1985). Before the enactment of the Final Solution, the Nazi party divided humanity into binary categories; a master race and a sub-human race (Arad, 1987; Hilberg, 1985). Initially content to persecute this underclass, Hitler eventually decided to separate them from his Aryan brethren as often as possible. As a result, two hundred thousand social pariahs including communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, and political opponents died in highly secretive internment camps before the commencement of World War II (Arad, 1987; Max, 2006).

As their power grew, Nazis turned their destructive focus to the burgeoning population of European Jews, whom they perceived as economic threats and social instigators (Arad, 1987; Cargas, 1999; Hilberg, 1985). Beginning in 1933 Nazis enacted a number of pogroms stripping German Jews of their rights, including restrictions on the names Jewish parents could give their babies, laws prohibiting Jewish children from attending public schools, and the infamous order for Jews to wear a yellow star of David (Hilberg, 1985). When the pogroms failed to satiate Hitler’s thirst for racial supremacy, he developed roving death squads to deal with the “Jewish problem” once and for all by massacring Jews in their own communities (Arad, 1987; Hilberg, 1985). After death
squads proved slower and costlier than Hitler had hoped, he turned to extermination camps to expedite the process (Arad, 1987; Hilberg, 1985; Max, 2006).

Drawing on lessons learned from pre-existing internment camps, Hitler developed new concentration camps for German Jews in the 1940s (Hilberg, 1985). The first predominantly Jewish camp, Chelmno, opened in 1941 and inspired similar camps at Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor (Dawidowicz, 1976). Some Nazi camps served distinct purposes such as providing labor, facilitating internment, or enabling execution (Arad, 1987; Max, 2006). Other camps such as Auschwitz could carry out a number of different functions, which allowed the Reich to streamline their process of exploiting prisoner labor and executing the exhausted workers without arranging for transportation to another camp (Dawidowicz, 1976). Regardless of their size or role, each camp fulfilled a calculated objective of the Final Solution.

Camps ran simply but efficiently. German soldiers maintained the camps, assisted by Jewish prisoners to whom they promised better food or survival in return for their service (Max, 2006). Although Jewish camp staff lived in slightly better conditions than their peers, most did not survive the war (Piper, 1994). Other Jews, known as “court Jews,” survived the initial selection because of their expertise in a vital field such as medicine, metalworking, or tailoring. These artisans usually worked a few weeks or months before they faced execution and replacement by a new crop of skilled prisoners (Arad, 1987, p. 27). Regardless of whether they held a position in the camp, all Jews faced harsher treatment than other prisoners (Weczler, A. & Vrba, R, 1944).

Faced with horribly cruel and disparate treatment, some Jewish prisoners fought back against their captors (Arad, 1987; Cashman, 2006; Hilberg, 1985). Prisoner
resistance grew into full-fledged riots at places like Auschwitz, Sobibor, and Treblinka, where Nazis brutally suppressed the uprisings (Hilberg, 1985). Other Jewish prisoners tried to comply with Nazi demands, hopeful that their obedience would enable their survival (Hilberg, 2005; McGreal, 2005). Still others remained submissive for moral or religious reasons (Lazarus, 2005). Regardless of their resistance or passivity, few Jewish prisoners survived the camps (Arad, 1987; Gutman, 1994; Hilberg, 1985). In fact, two out of three European Jews had died by the conclusion of World War II (Max, 2006).

The brutal Nazi killing machine operated relatively unfettered until the mid 1940s, when allied forces began to make headway into Nazi territory. As Soviet forces began to push into German territory, Nazi soldiers rushed to speed up the killing process and deport the remaining Jews (Hilberg, 1985). Soldiers did their best to destroy incriminating material at the vacant camps, paying special attention to documents and photographs (Piper, 1994). Despite these efforts, some structures and papers survived the offensive when allied forces reached the camps more quickly than planned, giving Nazis too little time to destroy the evidence (Lazarus, 2005).

After the war, the Soviet Union controlled Poland and all of the former camps within its borders (Arad, 1987). Soviet leaders turned some camps into memorials even before the war ended; others became farmland for unsuspecting families (Hilberg, 1985). As Holocaust education began to grow in prominence, and especially after the fall of the iron curtain began to simplify travel to Poland, the newly independent Polish government seemed to take a renewed interest in its former concentration camp sites. The following section explores three of these former camps from a pentadic perspective, examining ways in which the Polish government articulates its message about the Holocaust.
The Auschwitz Memorial

To many, Auschwitz serves as the archetypal concentration camp. As survivor Yisrael Gutman explained, “The name Auschwitz has become virtually synonymous with the unrestrained tyranny, the power of terror, and the systematic murder of millions of human beings during German Nazi rule” (Gutman, 1994, p. 5). The largest Nazi camp, Auschwitz held one-third of Hitler’s prisoners by 1943 (Piper, 1994). During its brief course of operation, at least four million victims died at Auschwitz (Huerta & Shiffman-Huerta, 1996). Only about 6,000 survivors remained in the camp until their liberation by advancing allied forces (Gutman, 1994).

Before it began receiving Jewish transports, Auschwitz served as an internment camp for Poles. Nazi leaders decided to expand the camp after German entrepreneurs earmarked the site based on its close proximity to railroads and mines (Berenbaum, 1994). After constructing their large labor camp, Nazis named the site Auschwitz after a nearby Polish town, Oswiecim (Gutman, 1994). The camp continued to expand after its initial opening, and eventually consisted of the main camp, a second camp at Birkenau, a third work camp at Buna, and several dozen satellite camps (Gutman, 1994).

Almost immediately after Auschwitz opened its doors, German engineers began experimenting with gas chambers (Max, 2006). As the crematoria gained in capacity and popularity, Nazis began to convert Auschwitz from a labor camp to a death camp. Eyewitnesses estimated that at the camp’s pinnacle, as many as 6000 Jewish prisoners died in Birkenau’s crematoria daily (Weczler, A. & Vrba, R, 1944). Of these victims, “no trace remained: no name, no record, no precise information” (Gutman, 1994, p.7).
Prisoners who successfully averted the initial dispatch to the gas chambers faced an inexpressibly hard journey ahead. SS men separated the survivors into groups of men and women and then sent them to the gender-separated barracks of the camp. In short order, the captives would assume the slave labor duties that kept the Nazi war effort alive (Gutman, 1994). Most Jewish workers died quickly of malnourishment or one of several "epidemics of lice, typhus, dysentery, and common phlegmon" (Gutman, 1994, p. 27).

As Survivor Yisrael Gutman reflected:

...It is all but impossible to portray the living conditions faced daily by prisoners of the Auschwitz camps. Every day in the life of a prisoner was filled with terror, continuing without respite for months on end. The prisoner's day was also hollow, empty, and mirthless, lacking any novelty and enveloped in everlasting gloom...

(Gutman, 1994, p. 19).

Adding to the hopelessness at Auschwitz, prisoners quickly discovered that escape from the camp seemed "practically impossible" given two levels of fencing surrounded the property, one electric (Weczler, A. & Vrba, R, 1944, p. 112). Beyond the fences, guards monitored the camp from a series of watchtowers, ready to shoot prisoners who ventured too close to the edge of camp. As Weczler and Vrba (1944) explained, prisoners whom SS men caught alive were returned to camp and publicly hanged as a warning to others. The bodies of dead escapees were likewise returned to camp and prominently displayed at the gate, serving as a visual deterrent to others (Weczler. A. & Vrba. R, 1944).
Auschwitz was the last camp in operation, continuing to run until 1944 (Hilberg, 1985). When at last Nazi forces realized the camp’s impending closure, they forced prisoners on a death march to Germany (Gutman, 1994). Wiesel recounts this scene in his autobiographical novel, *Night*: “…an endless road. Letting oneself be pushed by the mob; letting oneself be dragged along by a blind destiny. When the SS became tired, they were changed. But no one changed us. Our limbs numb with cold despite the running, our throats parched, famished, breathless, we went… (1960 p. 93)

After driving away all able-bodied prisoners Nazis bombed the crematoria and vacated Auschwitz (Hilberg, 1985). Allied troops entered the camp a few days later, scarcely able recognize the six thousand living skeletons who remained (Gutman, 1994). After the war, the Soviet Union acquired the property as part of its war spoils. Despite the overall reluctance of Soviet leaders to discuss the Holocaust (Mizroch, 2007), officials left its remaining structures intact, including the watchtower and a handful of barracks. The Polish government now maintains the site.

*Act.* For the purposes of this analysis, the Auschwitz museum and memorial consists of the main camp (see Appendix, pictures A, B, and C) and the second camp, Birkenau (see Appendix, pictures D and E). Rhetorical messages disseminate from both camps in the form of the artifacts and commentary about them, the visitor’s center, and tours. The Auschwitz sites also house a number of makeshift memorials at sites including the killing wall and the cell of Saint Maximilian Kolbe. Besides displays and artifacts, Auschwitz-II Birkenau also maintains areas suitable for communal worship and/or reflection.
Agent. The Polish government controls the museum and memorial at Auschwitz, but the government does not necessarily broadcast this fact. This quiet control might emanate from the fact that the Soviet Union, not Poland, initially preserved the site and constructed some of the museum structures. Communist Soviet Leaders prohibited documentation of the Holocaust (Mizroch, 2007), and the dearth of information about memorials may find its origin here.

Perhaps most important, the relatively low-key control of Holocaust sites by the Polish government may also result from a national desire to focus on the meaning of the museum, rather than its inner workings. As Burke might have noted, subjugating the agent of a communication message necessarily increases the emphasis on other pentadic elements. In this case, limiting discussion about the agents of the message draws attention to the educational and commemorative goals of the Auschwitz museum and memorial.

Agency. The Auschwitz Memorial uses a number of media forms to express its message about World War II, most of them concrete and simplistic. As with most museums, Auschwitz includes plaques at many of the exhibits which explain the history behind a particular artifact in Polish, English, and Hebrew. Tour guides may punctuate these written messages with verbal commentary about the camp and its history. In turn, tour guides can direct visitors to pamphlets and other written educational materials for further reading, many of which can be purchased at the gate to the memorial. All of these forms of message construction demonstrate the importance of written and verbal communication at Auschwitz.
Auschwitz also employs a number of photographs to portray the horrors of the camp. Some of the photos originated in Nazi documentation and now line the hallways of the barracks at Auschwitz. Other photos come from the guards themselves and take a more journalistic approach to the tragedy, chronicling the movement of Jews from their homes, to ghettos, to train stations, and finally to camps. Finally, historians recovered some of the photos at Auschwitz from victims’ luggage and clothing. Many of these photos provide the last remaining traces of nameless victims in Auschwitz.

While photographs communicate the human side of the Holocaust drama, artifacts displayed within the camp may provide a more visible and moving indication of the cruel experiments and torturous punishments inflicted upon prisoners. Rooms full of shoes and hair serve as grim memorials to millions of victims. Glass cases of human braids impel the viewer to consider the women and girls lost in the Holocaust. Additional glass cases full of shaving implements conjure images of distinguished fathers and nervous teenaged boys. Many visitors, some of whom have studied the Holocaust for years through photographs and written texts, find themselves overcome with emotion at the sight of human braids and household items. Visitors to the camp commonly observe other visitors of all ages and walks of life weeping at the artifacts before them. As their emotional response indicates, the simple imagery of historical artifacts can communicate a strong, even overwhelming message to visitors with far more impact than written communication.

Perhaps the most powerful form of rhetoric at Auschwitz involves the physical construction of the camp. Both Auschwitz-I and Birkenau include original buildings including the watchtowers, the barracks (see Appendix, picture B), the bathhouses, and
the storage magazines. The first gas chamber still stands at the main camp, and the ruins of the gas chambers remain at Birkenau (see Appendix, pictures D and E). Signs at both chambers instruct visitors to remain silent in the area of the gas chambers out of respect for the millions of dead. These chambers, the crude buildings, the stark fences, and the piles of rubble point to the harsh living conditions that prisoners endured. They speak volumes to Auschwitz visitors, educating in a way that photographs and textbooks fall short.

Finally, Auschwitz implements a unique form of agency that many other Holocaust memorials and museums neglect; not only does it disseminate messages, it also facilitates message construction by visitors. A large outdoor amphitheater at Birkenau provides a place where visitors can converge and conduct memorial services for victims or vow to remember the horrors of the camp. When I visited Birkenau, I participated in an inter-faith memorial service for Holocaust victims at the amphitheater. This communication act, one in which I was involved, encouraged me to identify with Holocaust victims and consider my role in the cosmic drama before me. As my experience suggests, inviting visitors to construct their own narratives encourages a new kind of understanding of the Holocaust.

While agency makes the message at Auschwitz effective, one should note that narratives from the camp exercise agency very subtly to ensure that emphasis remains on other aspects of the pentad, specifically purpose and scene. Rather than impress visitors with technologically advanced or aesthetically pleasing displays, this memorial uses traditional forms of communication which seem likely to slip below a viewer’s
consciousness. Agency draws more attention than agent, but less attention than other pentadic elements.

Scene. Ironically, a summer visitor to the Auschwitz memorial immediately encounters the natural beauty of the camp. Whereas the prisoners saw grassless and often snow-covered fields, visitors (especially summertime visitors) see lush green grass and a variety of wildlife (see Appendix, picture A). Likewise, while prisoners lived in grotesquely filthy conditions, visitors walk into well-maintained barracks and exhibits (see Appendix, picture B). Pitts commented on the strange dynamic between the former and current states of the camp: “There is something jarring about birds singing in the trees that overlook these places, something incongruous about melodies of God in workshops of the devil” (2005, n.p).

As Pitt’s interpretation suggests, certain aspects of the scene at Auschwitz changed substantially during its transition from a labor camp to a museum. However, some traces of the camp continue to influence profoundly the scene of this speech act, including the Nazi headquarters building, which once served as the brain for all of Auschwitz operations, now functions as a visitors’ center at Auschwitz-I (see Appendix, picture A). Beyond the administration building, visitors pass under a wrought iron sign which reads “work shall make you free.” At Birkenau, the iconic divided railroad still runs through the camp. At both camps, barracks provide a backdrop to the exhibits, photographs, and signs.

The juxtaposition of strangely beautiful surroundings and labor-camp leftovers contribute to the unique scene at Auschwitz, but also fuel the purpose of the memorial. In the same way that Poland rebuilt itself since World War II, the land at Auschwitz has
begun to heal and to bloom again. Rebirth such as this serves an important role in every life cycle, but it seems uniquely commendable here and may even help visitors grapple with their emotion by providing hope. In this way, scene may affirm the transcendental purpose of the memorial by providing visitors with a way to see beauty in the face of tremendous suffering.

Scene plays a vital role in the communication act at Auschwitz for a few reasons. Initially, emphasis seems to rest on the scene in part because of the conscious diversion from other pentadic elements, such as the agent and agency. However, closer analysis reveals that the scene, more than any other element of the message, draws visitors to Auschwitz so that they may understand its purpose. In fact, several cities around the world host Holocaust memorials including Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Jerusalem. Despite this, Auschwitz remains the most important site for Holocaust pilgrims. The memorial takes on a new significance because of its location on the site of the largest Nazi camp. For this reason, curators strongly emphasize scene, though to a slightly lesser degree than they emphasize purpose.

Purpose. At Auschwitz, the first four pentadic elements converge to emphasize the final element: purpose. The obscure agent, the various media forms, and the location all point to a purpose of tremendous importance. In this case, the purpose seems to center on the careful preservation of information about the Holocaust; the excruciating detail of the exhibits tactfully but truthfully recounts the plight of Holocaust victims. Similarly, visitors to Auschwitz can access sensitive material including photographs of naked bodies, medical reports, and excerpts from personal diaries. Without drawing clear
conclusions about the nature of genocide or anti-Semitism, the memorial seeks to establish the details of what really happened at the camp.

Auschwitz serves a secondary objective in that it commemorates the victims of the Holocaust. Photographs and names of victims provide an intuitive example of commemoration at the museum, but other examples augment this purpose. Certain legislated displays of reverence, including the signs requesting silence at the bombed out gas chambers, demonstrate the importance of remembrance at Auschwitz. Additionally, informal tributes at specific sites within the camps, including flowers at the killing wall and lit candles at Saint Maximillian’s cell, illustrate that curators still seek to pay homage to the victims and expect visitors to do the same.

Finally, the Auschwitz memorial appears to pay a debt that the Polish people feel that they owe to Holocaust victims. Several Polish people with whom I talked, four of whom were traveling with me, mentioned that the Holocaust was a very dark time in Polish history and that the Polish government will always maintain the camp out of an obligation. They indicated that Polish children tour the camps in school as part of their national history. While the agent in the speech act at Auschwitz does not claim to vindicate completely him/herself of participation in the Holocaust, visitors may note an underlying sense of sorrow and responsibility from the Polish guides or visitors and conclude that this moral drive influences the purpose of the memorial.

From a Pentadic perspective, it seems important to note that purpose stands out in the communicative act at Auschwitz. Every other pentadic element seems to fuel purpose while taking a subordinate role to it. For example, the concrete and simplistic forms of media at the memorial educate and commemorate rather than impress. Similarly, the
victims receive top rhetorical priority at the camp, rather than the agents who remain somewhat unclear. The scene remains important to the success of the monument in that it attracts visitors and enables the presentation of original Holocaust artifacts. Despite this, the multifaceted purpose of documenting, commemorating, and debt-paying via message construction at Auschwitz remains at the forefront of this communication act.

The Treblinka Memorial

While Auschwitz may have earned an enduring reputation, Treblinka was one of the most feared concentration camps during World War II. The covert development of Treblinka began in 1942, when Nazi leadership obtained a secluded plot of land in northeastern Poland for use as its next concentration camp. Under the shield of heavy forests, Nazis meticulously constructed a camp at which they could carry out the final solution away from the watchful eye of outsiders (Arad, 1987). As the location might suggest, guards executed some of the war’s most heinous and secretive acts at Treblinka.

The tragedy at Treblinka began even before prisoners reached the camp; incoming prisoners perished in droves en route to the camp from dehydration, starvation, and torture. In fact, by the time the final transports moved into Treblinka, more people died in the railcars than in the gas chambers (Arad, 1987, p. 88). Prisoners who survived the transports faced a grueling selection; many went immediately to the gas chambers which lay just beyond the train tracks (Hilberg, 1985). The few prisoners who remained filled jobs in a nearby rock quarry, where they labored there under the harsh eye of Nazi guards and brutal foreman. When these slave laborers ran out of strength, Nazis would execute them and replace them (Arad, 1987).
As the ranks at Treblinka began to swell under the weight of ghetto expatriates, guards began to escort prisoners directly from the railcars to the gas chambers. To encourage the movement of Jews, Nazis disguised the chambers as shower rooms. The disguise was at once elaborate and ironic, as Hilberg described: “The front wall of the Treblinka gas house, underneath the gable, was decorated with a Star of David. At the entrance hung a heavy, dark curtain taken from a synagogue and still bearing the Hebrew words ‘This is the gate through which the righteous pass’…” (1985, p. 231).

For a few weeks, Nazis succeeded in concealing Treblinka as a transit camp (Arad, 1987). As the death toll climbed, however, and bodies became too numerous to conceal, incoming Jews began to realize what they had feared; that their Nazi captors would kill them rather than disinfect them. As this knowledge sank in, Jews began to resist their escorts into the gas chamber. Nazi guards had to resort to brutal force where once coercion had sufficed. This more violent approach to crowd control worked terribly well, however, in that “to avoid the blows, the victims ran as fast as they could to the gas chambers, the stronger pushing aside the weak” (Arad, 1987, p. 86). In the midst of this chaos, the SS commissioned an orchestra to drown out the screams of dying victims (Arad, 1987).

During its single year of operation, Treblinka received entire Jewish communities, including the Warsaw ghetto (Dawidowicz, 1976; Marks, 2005). By the time Treblinka closed its doors in March 1943, 763,000 Jews had died there (Arad, 1987). Before Allied troops reached the camp, Nazis had already burned most of the human remains and plowed the ashes into the soil. All that remained of the hundreds of thousands of victims were “veritable mountains of clothing and underwear, about 35–40 meters high”
Soviet officials inherited the land and converted Treblinka into a farm, which they passed to a Ukrainian family (Hilberg, 1985). When at last the Warsaw regional government regained the land for building a memorial, nothing remained of the former camp.

**Act.** The Treblinka Memorial consists of a wooded park atop the former Treblinka concentration camp. The memorial does not include original architecture or artifacts from the Holocaust, nor does it include a visitor’s center. A small amount of information about the camp stands posted at the entrance, but this information does not fully develop the history of the camp or of the Holocaust. As this austere reception suggests, Treblinka does not offer myriad exhibits or information to visitors. Instead, modern-day entrants into the camp follow a symbolic limestone railroad (see Appendix, picture H) to the symbolic limestone gas chamber (see Appendix, picture G), beyond which lay a sea of stones commemorating villages lost in the Holocaust (see Appendix, picture F).

**Agent.** While still under the control of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Regional Council selected Polish architect Adam Haupt and Polish Sculptor Franciszek Duszenko to design and construct a memorial at Treblinka (see Appendix, pictures F-H). The two men completed the project between 1959 and 1963, but little else is known about the development phase of the project (Young, 1993). The Polish government now staffs the Treblinka memorial as a national site.

As with Auschwitz, the Polish government deemphasizes its role as the agent at Treblinka. Although the government operates the camp, it offers only limited information about its role and/or the development of the camp; this information may have
been lost during the Soviet tenure in Poland, or perhaps communicators considered it unimportant. Regardless, a pentadic perspective on the memorial clearly yields that communicators de-emphasize the agent at Treblinka. This focus intrinsically highlights other aspects of the memorial, including the scene and purpose.

*Agency.* Unlike other Holocaust memorials in Poland, Treblinka did not retain any original architecture from the war. Similarly, the artifacts of the war, including shoes, hair, and clothing, have all been removed from the camp. A communication analyst quickly realizes that the primary means of communication at Auschwitz, the artifacts and structures, are conspicuously absent from Treblinka.

The overall lack of Holocaust artifacts at Treblinka suggests that this memorial seems to privilege personal interpretation of the Holocaust. At this memorial, a viewer does not have access to materials which explain the Holocaust, and therefore must create his or her own meaning to the events without the interpretations or information of others. The silence of the camp, its solitude, and the absence of distracting media forms indicate that introspection rather than external communication may provide a moving and enduring form of message construction.

Despite this, Treblinka shares an important characteristic with Auschwitz in that it relies heavily on visual rhetoric to stimulate personal reflection. The entire communication act at Treblinka revolves around a visual symbol; namely, the behemoth limestone memorial which stands in the approximate location of the original gas chamber (see Appendix, picture G). The cold, gray stone of the symbolic chamber seems to reflect heartlessness of the perpetrators. Moreover, the monument looms above every other feature in camp, including the limestone railway and even the visitors (see Appendix,
picture H). This nonverbal signal demonstrates the overarching goal of exterminating prisoners at Treblinka.

The stones in Treblinka, immediately past the symbolic chamber, communicate an equally strong message concerning the purpose and atmosphere of the camp (see Appendix, picture F). This long collection of rocks winds through a field, past the viewer’s line of vision. Many of the larger stones bear the name of a city destroyed by the Holocaust, such as Warsaw. The smaller stones each represent a village, but may not bear an inscription. Visitors wander through the stones and may choose to place other stones atop the monuments (placing a stone on top of a grave is a Jewish sign of respect). The strategic placement of stones in an endless row and the diversity reflected in each stone demonstrate the magnitude of the Holocaust. Additionally, the sheer number of stones gives a striking visual reminder of the countless communities destroyed by genocide.

The nonobjective nature of the memorial at Treblinka may reflect the ambiguity surrounding the agent of this communicative act. However, it also helps magnify the scene of the camp by existing in harmony with pristine natural surroundings. Additionally, Treblinka seems to serve a slightly different purpose than other memorials; namely, the commemoration of victims more than the education of visitors. In fact, visitors who knew little about the Holocaust may not understand the significance of Treblinka after visiting the camp. Only after conducting outside research will a visitor understand the history of Treblinka.
Scene. If Birkenau exuded a natural beauty, Treblinka eclipsed it by far. Miles away from the nearest town, caretakers manage the former camp under “a canopy of green” (Lazarus, 2005, p. 33). What few structures stand in camp are carved from organic substances into organic shapes, and thus seem to fit into this pristine landscape. Underneath the well-fed grass, the soil still mixes with human ash from the crematoria, yielding grayish dirt that seeps upward in muddy puddles when it rains. A visitor’s realization that he or she is unavoidably walking on human ash proves tremendously unsettling to many.

Visitors to the camp follow a grassy path alongside limestone slabs symbolizing railroad ties (see Appendix, picture H). The limestone railroad leads to a clearing which contains a large, rough-edged limestone monument which crudely resembles a gas chamber (see Appendix, picture G). Beyond the symbolic gas chamber, rows of stones form a long, winding path through a clearing in the forest (see Appendix, picture F). Often, survivors from one of the villages (or relatives of the deceased) will leave candles or other mementoes at the stones. These makeshift memorials at the memorial augment the scene at the memorial, contributing to the reflective and reverent atmosphere at the site.

Notably, Treblinka seemed barren of visitors. In fact, only our group was present as we toured the site. The low attendance at Treblinka may stem from its lesser reputation than that of Auschwitz, which has appeared in countless narratives and novels concerning the Holocaust. Treblinka also includes fewer exhibits, artifacts, and historical structures than other camps, and instead relies on audiences to interpret relatively nonobjective memorials. This, or increased reliance on audiences for personal
interpretation, may decrease the interest level among visitors and result in a lower audience count for the camp.

The lower attendance modifies the scene at Treblinka in that visitors seem isolated from the outside world and other visitors to the camp. Perhaps the architect of the camp intended to foster a pervasive sense of abandonment, hoping that loneliness that would help visitors imagine the lonely plight of victims during the war. This sense of solitude may also make visitors more reflective generally, and consequently more receptive to personal insights or observations. For example, some visitors have remarked that they heard voices telling them to remember the Holocaust as they walked through the camp (Johnston, 2007). Equally likely, the isolation comes from other pentadic elements, such as agency and agent, which limit the diversions a viewer encounters and thus force the viewer to encounter cold stones somewhat in isolation.

**Purpose.** A pentadic analysis reveals that rhetors emphasized purpose at Treblinka more than any other aspect of the rhetorical act at Treblinka. Purpose receives the most explicit treatment at the camp; for example, the words “never forget,” are carved into a stone near the symbolic gas chamber (see Appendix, picture G), and this writing serves as one of the only instances of written communication in the entire camp. Additionally, the rhetors translated “never again” into a number of different languages. This illustrates two notable ideas: first, that a diverse group of visitors should understand the lessons of Treblinka, and second, that themes expressed by the Holocaust are universal in nature. The call to action should affect all people equally, regardless of culture, because issues of life, death, and respect affect all people equally.
At Treblinka, agents emphasize purpose and, to a lesser degree, scene by subverting agent and agency. Again, purpose takes priority in that it is explicitly spoken (unlike other pentadic elements) and in that it subsumes other aspects of the rhetoric, such as scene and agency. Scene remains secondarily important in that Treblinka attracts visitors in large part because of its history as former concentration camp. The act and scene are both emphasized by other pentadic elements, which are strategically employed to guarantee that a viewer of the sites almost fails to notice them.

Like the other camps, the idea of purpose seems to encapsulate a number of nuanced objectives at Treblinka. Generally speaking, these purposes appeared largely the same as they did in Auschwitz; Treblinka serves to document the Holocaust and commemorate visitors, as the presence of information about the Holocaust and the tribute to victims seems to verify. Treblinka made fewer overtures to try to pay a debt that the Polish people owe to Holocaust victims, but it ostensibly could fulfill this objective, too.

However, Treblinka emphasizes a slightly different aspect of purpose; commemoration takes precedence, while documentation achieves secondary importance. The reliance on limestone monuments demonstrates the significance of remembering victims, while the absence of Holocaust artifacts deemphasizes the evidentiary aspect of the memorial. As Burke would suggest, the curators at Auschwitz and Treblinka seem to share a common motive in that they focus on the same aspect of the pentad. In this case, however, similar motives generate slightly different objectives.

The Majdanek Memorial

Unlike Treblinka, which Nazis deliberately constructed under the cover of a forest, Majdanek stood in plain sight of nearby Lublin (Lazarus, 2005). To minimize
preemptively its transparence to the nearby village, Nazis labeled Majdanek as a forced labor camp (Dawidowicz, 1976). Camp workers failed to uphold the charade, though, preferring instead to keep the crematoria running at capacity. In fact, one eyewitness remarked that “we could see the chimney burning, and we could smell the burning flesh” (Frydman, in Marks, 2005, p. 47).

As SS men emptied ghettos across Europe, Majdanek received increasing numbers of prisoner transports. While some of these prisoners filled slave-labor roles, many were ushered immediately into the gas chambers. Despite its swift execution process, Majdanek could not absorb enough prisoners to continue running smoothly; during especially busy times prisoners would wait in the fields for hours, even days, for their execution (Marks, 2005). This cruel waiting game, coupled with the harsh Polish climate, did not facilitate survival; not surprisingly Majdanek had the highest proportional death rate of all German camps (Piper, 1994, p. 39).

While the prisoner population at Majdanek consisted of both Jewish prisoners and non-Jewish prisoners, Jewish prisoners constituted a majority of the camp and drew most of the guards’ wrath (Arad, 1987). Despite their disparate treatment, a number of Jews survived in the camp until October 1943, when Nazi masterminds ordered the execution of all Jewish prisoners from camp. Over the next few weeks, 300 Jewish prisoners dug a series of mass graves for themselves and the other eighteen thousand Jewish prisoners. On November 3, 1943, Nazis shot all Jewish prisoners and buried them in the mass graves, accompanied by dance music blaring from loudspeakers to cover the noise of the dying victims (Arad, 1987).
This last violent action marked the beginning of the end for the Majdanek camp, which the Soviet army liberated in 1944 (Arad, 1987). Unlike Auschwitz and Treblinka, which Nazis destroyed before their capture, Majdanek fell into allied hands so quickly that the SS could not destroy the damning evidence at the camp (Karny, 1994). This unique instance of preservation resulted in the salvation of Majdanek as one of the most intact concentration camps in Europe, completely preserved (Arad, 1987; Lazarus, 2005). Inheriting control over the site, the townspeople from nearby Lublin collected the human ash and formed a memorial at Majdanek before the war even ended (Young, 1993). Joseph Stalin himself erected a monument to the victims near the camp entrance, which still stands.

_Actor._ The Majdanek museum and memorial consists of a visitor’s center; many original structures from the concentration camp including the gas chambers, crematoria, and barracks; and several monuments to Holocaust victims. These monuments, including Stalin’s formidable structure and the dome-shaped mausoleum (see Appendix, picture I), have come to represent the camp. Majdanek employed a small number of staff members, including an employee at the visitors center and tour guides if requested. While not as developed as Auschwitz, Majdanek fills a unique spot in Holocaust history in that it remains largely unchanged since the conclusion of its operation.

_Agent._ Probably the first Holocaust memorial, Majdanek became a national site before World War II ended. In 1969, Holocaust survivor Wiktor Tolkin designed both the mausoleum for the ash and Stalin’s commissioned monument, which he called _Monument to Struggle and Martyrdom_ (Young, 1993). Other than Tolkin’s monuments, the site remained largely untouched during the Soviet era, ensuring its preservation.
The Polish Government now maintains Majdanek, just as it maintains the other former camps. As with the other camps, the management of Majdanek remains somewhat obfuscated to visitors. While Polish citizens seem to understand that all camps in their country fall under the control of the government, no sign or guide explicitly articulates this fact to visitors. In this rhetorical situation, the lack of focus on the agent contributes to the importance of other pentadic elements.

_Agency._ Majdanek features a variety of message formats that communicate to visitors. The visitors' center houses reading material in a number of languages, and ground keepers and historians will answer visitors' questions if language constraints permit. The visitors' center at Majdanek also features an auditorium, in which visitors can listen to lectures or learn about the camp prior to their tour. One of the structures on the Majdanek property houses a rotating exhibit, which changes seasonally. A handful of barracks contain photographic histories and testimonies, which visitors can tour, read, and view. Each of these conventional message formats improves visitors' understanding of the site.

Majdanek also includes two highly visible physical monuments at the entrance and the exit to the camp. The first monument, Tolkin's behemoth limestone sculpture, presents a nonobjective representation of the Holocaust. This figure, commissioned by Joseph Stalin at the close of the war, reflects a strong communist influence on the regrowth of Poland after the cessation of the conflict. The huge sculpture was made from a piece of rock originally dedicated for a statue honoring the Third Reich. Ironically, Stalin used this rock to pay tribute to the victims of the war and, in effect, the failure of the Third Reich.
The second monument, Tolkin’s covered urn filled with several tons of human ash, stands at the very end of the camp (see Appendix, picture I). Upon the liberation of Majdanek, allied soldiers discovered the ash pile in the camp mixed with other organic materials. Nazi soldiers had planned to use the human ash as fertilizer for the camp manager’s pristine rose garden. After the liberation of the camp, government officials captured the ash in the mammoth urn at the edge of camp. After touring the camp, visitors are left with one last image from the camp; the giant urn. This, obviously, leaves a profound impression on everyone who walks through the gates of Majdanek.

Perhaps most important, Madjanek enables visitors to see many of the historic structures that were in place during the Holocaust. The gas chamber at Majdanek, an especially emotional site for visitors, still houses the faux shower heads and unused canisters of Zyklon-B. The walls of the chamber still bear fingernail marks from desperate victims, attempting to claw their way to survival. Visitors can peer into the closets which still contain unused tins of poison and through the keyhole guards used to monitor the killing process. The harsh reality of these artifacts speaks volumes to the viewer.

Visitors encounter another historic and overwhelming structure in the form of a magazine filled with millions of pairs of shoes. One pilgrim to Majdanek recalls his reaction to the shoes:

You start walking between rows of footwear that are taller than you are, passing by sandals and slippers and work shoes, black leather dusted gray by age and time...There is no light beyond that from the sun which enters through the door in front...Soon you cannot see. But you can feel. The weight of shoes piled high all
around you. The accusation of their emptiness. A chill rises through you. You keep walking. It is like walking into death...”

(Pitts, 2005, sect. 2, para. 18)

As this narrative demonstrates, agency takes an important role at Majdanek. The information, monuments, and especially artifacts both horrify and educate the viewer. Additionally, the success of the camp stems in part from its completeness as a Holocaust memorial. The terrible presentation of the barracks, crematoria, and especially gas chambers leaves the viewer with an image he or she must confront. In a variety of formats, agency fuels purpose in a unique way at Majdanek and thus contributes greatly to the efficacy of the memorial.

Scene. Majdanek does not exude the same natural beauty as Treblinka, despite its location on a grassy hill overlooking Lublin. Foliage seems conspicuously absent from Majdanek; even during the war; few things grew on the site except Nazi rose gardens. Instead, the camp stands as a sort of blight in the otherwise very normal plain. The buildings, though in good repair from meticulous preservation efforts, are painted a dull brown and composed very crudely of rough wood. Cold, rough stone forms the monuments at both the entrance and exit. Wildlife seems to flee from Majdanek more than other camps, perhaps due to the lack of vegetation. Overall, hopelessness and scarcity dominate the scene.

Compounding this unhappy atmosphere, Majdanek resembled Treblinka in that fewer visitors attend its monuments. Several factors might contribute to this. Initially, the low survival rate of prisoners may limit survivor and/or eyewitness interest in the camp. Additionally, Majdanek was smaller in size and less extensive than the Auschwitz
memorial. Finally, the distance of Majdanek from major cities, including Warsaw and Krakow, may prevent visitors from traveling to the camp.

Regardless of the reason for its relatively low popularity, the low numbers of visitors seem to magnify a sense of solitude that dominates the scene. A person may travel with a group, but signs encourage visitors to remain quiet in certain places, a rule which limits social interaction. Moreover, cramped rooms in many of the structures including the gas chamber and the crematoria require visitors to travel in small groups or alone. Unlike Auschwitz, which includes communication outlets in the amphitheater to foster social support as a way to cope, the composition of Majdanek seems to encourage visitors to tour the camp in relatively lonely, silent reflection. This mandated introspection contributes to a reflective purpose at Majdanek.

Purpose. As with the other monuments, museum architects uphold purpose as the most important tenet of the memorial. All other tenets point to purpose, signifying its purpose. As noted above, the scene at Majdanek augments this purpose by encouraging visitors to take a lonely journey of introspection and message creation. Similarly, agency exists in a slightly more visible way at this memorial in the form of two large memorials, but even these structures receives less emphasis than either purpose or scene. The agent and the act itself fill only tangential roles in the drama at Majdanek.

At first glance, the careful preservation of Majdanek would seem to suggest that it primarily exists to document the Holocaust. The unusual structural and historical integrity of the memorial and the original structures, coupled with the changing exhibits and reading material that is available at the visitor’s center, affirms this supposition. In
this vein, scholars often acknowledge the significance of Majdanek to Holocaust verification (Arad, 1987; Karny, 1994; Lazarus, 2005).

However, Majdanek also seems to emphasize the commemoration of Holocaust victims via its large and captivating stone memorials. The presence of the memorials at both the entrance and exit to the camp, coupled with the way that the artifacts in camp are largely untouched and available for personal introspection, suggests that Majdanek remains open and preserved, in part, out of respect for the victims of the camp. This careful attention to both documentation and commemoration demonstrates that Majdanek serves a less clearly divided objective than the previous two camps. Instead, this rhetorical artifact seems to balance the two goals of education and commemoration better than both Auschwitz and Treblinka. The relatively small and strategic design of the memorial may enable this balance.

*The Yad Vashem museum and memorial*

While Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Majdanek remain important Holocaust memorials due to the fact that they exist on the actual physical sites of concentration camps, Yad Vashem remains an equally important Holocaust authority on its own merit, and may even overshadow the camps in rhetorical power. Aspiring to be the world’s preeminent Holocaust memorial and museum (McGreal, 2005), Yad Vashem stands in Jerusalem as an indication of the unbreakable link between Israel and the Holocaust. “Nearly every” dignitary plans a trip to Yad Vashem during a visit to Israel (Cashman, 2006, p.13), as do many Holy Land pilgrims. In fact, the site ranks second in national prominence, preceded only by the Wailing Wall (Bennett, 2005).
Mindful of common origin of both the nation and the museum, Israel long cared for and improved Yad Vashem. Even before surviving Jews had coalesced into the Israeli state, the National Council of the Jews of Palestine began planning a Holocaust memorial in Israel (Peretz, 2005). The Israeli Knesset formally commissioned the museum soon after Israel achieved statehood in 1948, and the first building opened its doors in 1953 (Dean, 2005; Yad Vashem, 2007). They chose as a name for this new museum, Yad Vashem, which literally translates into “a memorial and a name” (Peretz, 2005; Yad Vashem, 2007). The memorial and a name reflect the words of the prophet Isaiah, who said “and to will I give within my house and within my walls a memorial and...an everlasting name” (Peretz, 2005).

The original Yad Vashem Holocaust museum utilized a pre-existing, mediocre building on Israel’s Mount Herzl (Rothwell, 2005). This first museum served an instructive role, primarily featuring mainly photographs with little or no artistic innovation (Peretz, 2005). Despite its sterile, didactic nature, the original museum drew large crowds annually. Curators soon noted that the existing structure could barely hold the millions of visitors who came each year (Dean, 2005; Stutz, 2005).

A larger problem with the original structure involved the fact that the museum focused primarily on impersonal documentation and tended to disregard the personal stories of Holocaust survivors (Peretz, 2005). Part of this emphasis resulted from the culture of Israel during the first decades of its existence: survivors did not discuss the Holocaust, and children did not ask (Lazarus, 2005, McGreal, 2005). However, as Holocaust survivors began to die, prominent Israeli historians took an increased interest
in preserving their stories. Many intuited that humanity would soon irretrievably forfeit survivor's stories unless careful documentation occurred promptly.

Additionally, the loss of survivors meant that new generations of people would no longer have access to Holocaust survivors (Dean, 2005). As Yad Vashem chief curator Avner Shalev explained, “We needed to rearrange ourselves for a world without [Holocaust] survivors, to build a connection to a younger generation who will no longer be able to meet face to face with survivors” (in Bennett, 2005, p. 34). For this reason, museum curators wanted to develop a new way of engaging visitors and making their experience memorable. To this end, they needed a new approach to the commemoration of the Holocaust.

For the task, board members commissioned Moshe Safdie in 1993 to redesign Israel’s Holocaust museum at Yad Vashem (Rothwell, 2005). Wishing to preserve the pristine landscape surrounding the planned site, Safdie chose to tunnel into the mountain to give the structure enough exhibit space (Dean, 2005). An “utterly minimal” building of concrete and steel (Dean, 2005, p. 112), the newer Yad Vashem features natural skylights and bare walls which house legions of Holocaust memorabilia, including broken toys, drawings, diary entries, letters, passports, and clothing. After obtaining a special exception from the city to use concrete for the design (buildings in Jerusalem are required to use Jerusalem stone on the exterior), architects rigged custom-cast steel scaffolding and vast concrete fixtures poured on-site to create a unique exterior for Yad Vashem (Bennett, 2005).

After several years of construction, development, and design, the $56 million, newly expanded Yad Vashem opened to the public on March 15, 2005 (the Associated
UN secretary-general Kofi Anan and dignitaries from 40 countries attended the ceremony (Bennett, 2005). Since that time, Yad Vashem has expanded to include additional components, including a welcome center and a memorial garden filled with trees in honor of the righteous among nations. Yad Vahsem also includes educational and research initiatives, including several initiatives to obtain survivors’ names and numerous websites in different languages (Heller, 2007; Yad Vashem, 2007).

Today, more than two million visitors tour Yad Vashem every year (Bennett, 2005; Rothwell, 2005; Stutz, 2005). While this figure includes a number of international visitors, it also encompasses every Israeli soldier and high school student, whom Israeli law requires to attend the museum (Bennett, 2005). Parts of the old building still remain, but visitors now encounter several other buildings including the highly emotional children’s memorial, which employs a single candle and mirrors to demonstrate the magnitude of the Holocaust, and an expansive art gallery, which showcases works that document the horrors of the Shoah and its aftermath. Despite the wealth of beautiful and moving buildings, however, the Yad Vashem complex centers around Safdie’s concrete and steel exhibit hall, home to the Wall of names and most of the artifacts on Yad Vashem’s campus. This structure comprises the bulk of the subsequent analysis.

Act. The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, Israel features a number of exhibits which zigzag through the long exhibition hall. Along the winding path, visitors encounter different aspects of the Holocaust in chronological order. Firmly believing in the importance of a complete story, Architect Moshe Safdie strategically designed the passage through the museum with a series of ropes and zigzag corridors, so
that each visitor must follow the prescribed path through each exhibit (McGreal, 2005; Rothwell, 2005).

While less obvious, the subtle touches to the museum are equally as impressive as the more overt design features. The pathway into the museum slopes upward at four degrees, which should slow entrants gait into the museum (Bennett, 2005). The floor slopes downward as visitors descend into the museum (paralleling the dark descent of humanity during the Holocaust), then turn upward as visitors prepare to walk out of the museum, representing freedom and hope (Bennett, 2005; McGreal, 2005). Similarly, the walls narrow at the lowest point in the museum, symbolizing the entrapment of Jews during the war (McGreal, 2005). Just as remarkably, architects concealed mechanical components of the museum (most notably, the sprinkler system) to avoid associations with gas chambers (Bennett, 2005). Every aspect of the design seems point to the overarching purpose(s) of the museum, whether by demonstrating a concept or minimizing a distraction.

The exhibits themselves focus on a broad range of topics, from the inner workings of the Third Reich to the righteous among nations who helped a number of Jews escape. As an overarching theme, however, the museum chose to focus on personal stories rather than stark historical data. Museum designers explained that felt compelled to highlight personal stories of the Holocaust, enabling visitors to make a personal connection with actual victims (Bennett, 2005; Rothwell, 2005), and this approach guides the message construction at Yad Vashem.
Agent. The Israeli government built Yad Vashem and now maintains it as a national site. Unlike the Polish government, which appears to shy away from recognition as an agent in its memorials, the Israeli government seems very proud of its role in the development of Yad Vashem (Yad Vashem, 2007). This difference in claims of ownership at different memorials could stem from divergent roles of Israel and Poland during World War II; Poland served as the location of numerous concentration camps, while Israel provided shelter for Jewish refuges. The difference might also reflect cultural differences in extraversion or introversion.

Despite the increased inclination of the Israeli government to take credit for its memorial, as demonstrated by a larger number of placards and signs linking the museum to the government, one should note that Yad Vashem still emphasizes other aspects of the pentad, including purpose, over agent. While agent is more significant and apparent at Yad Vashem than at Auschwitz, Treblinka, or Majdanek, it only comes into play when it augments the purpose of proving the resilience of the Jewish nation.

Agency. Yad Vashem implements some of the most diverse and advanced technology of any Holocaust memorial/museum, which is evident from the time visitors enter the museum. Visitors walk in the main entrance to find a moving video of Holocaust victims, which continually pans left. In other words, real video images of waving, smiling, beckoning victims move across the screen. Then, the images of ghettoization file across the screen, followed by images of internment and extermination. The video tells the entire story of the Holocaust nonverbally in the course of only a few minutes, and it gives the visitor an overview of the Holocaust before he or she even enters the museum.
Yad Vashem also uses a variety of technical media to spread its message beyond the walls of the museum. One of the newest ways involves a Yad Vashem website in Farsi, which museum staff designed to teach non-native speakers about the horrors of the Holocaust (Salama-Scheer, 2007). This new website has received countless comments of support from Iranians, who suggest that their President is wrong to deny the Holocaust and that he should tour the museum for himself. Yad Vashem also maintains websites in Hebrew, English, and Russian, and plans to launch an Arabic website (Heller, 2007).

Yad Vashem also houses several pieces of Holocaust memorabilia, including railcars and original cobblestones from the Warsaw ghetto. Other memorabilia, including dolls of Jewish children, passports, brushes, and shoes, fills the exhibit hall and provides a tangible reminder of the human nature of the tragedy. Interestingly, Yad Vashem Holocaust also offers one of the most comprehensive displays of Nazi memorabilia. Actual footage of Hitler’s speeches and parades, newspapers of the third Reich, vintage flags and arm bands, even charts depicting the organizational structure of the organization, fill an entire room of the museum. Yad Vashem even displays reproductions of some of Hitler’s artwork and the children’s story book published by the Nazi party, in which the antagonist is a cartooned Jewish man.

Yad Vashem uses several different buildings to house its messages, some of which feature only nonobjective works of art and rhetoric. The children’s memorial, for example, features hundreds of burning candles behind mirrored glass, which generate thousands of points of shimmering light in an otherwise dark exhibit hall. As a visitor walks though this exhibit, he or she hears the names and ages of young Holocaust victims read in Hebrew, English, and Yiddish. While not expressly communicating on the
tragedy of the Holocaust, this artistic remembrance of victims is especially poignant for visitors to Yad Vashem.

The composition of the museum itself also comprises a nonverbal form of rhetoric. The visitor enters the museum by walking into Mount Herzl and proceeding through several underground passages. After traveling through the museum on the path prescribed by curators, the visitor finally reaches an observation deck at the end of the building which overlooks the old city of Jerusalem (see Appendix, picture J). In this way, the final image for visitors is a breath-taking view of the most famous city in the Jewish nation. The journey of a visitor through an underground tunnel, a figurative representation of the grave, to a scenic balcony, a metaphoric representation of heaven, parallels the journey of the Jews from virtual annihilation in the Shoah to victory in the form of the Jewish state.

Scene. The Yad Vashem memorial provides a stark contrast with the Polish memorials in that curators implemented “cool, symbolic architecture” to engage visitors (Rothwell, 2005, p. 16). The Polish memorials and many other memorials around the world utilize dark, gloomy architecture; the memorial in Berlin, for example, has been called “dark and stuffy to the point of being repressive” (Panyaarvudh, 2005, para. 3). In contrast, the composition at Yad Vashem seems comparatively light and inviting. This different approach to construction sends an important message to museum visitors: despite the ugliness of the Holocaust, beauty still remains.

Against the tasteful and modern backdrop of the museum, Yad Vashem hosts a very diverse crowd of visitors. Whereas many of the Holocaust museums in Poland were dominated by a predominately Judeo-Christian European crowd, the Yad Vashem
museum welcomed visitors from a number of different ethnicities and religions; some Jewish, some Christian, some Muslim, some Middle Eastern, some European. The museum attempts to accommodate this diverse crowd by including information and guided audio tours in a number of languages. Additionally, Yad Vashem attempts to incorporate a number of perspectives into its exhibits by discussing the reaction to the final solution in Australia and Madagascar, including correspondence from people in American and Britain, and referencing other targets of Hitler's wrath, including gypsies and communists. In turn, museum guides attempt to modify their tour based on the background of their group (Cashman, 2006).

Just as memorials in Poland emphasize the scene of the act, Yad Vashem also emphasizes the scene over several other pentadic elements (excluding purpose). However, communicators at Yad Vashem highlight the scene of their speech act for a different reason; in this rhetorical situation, the scene (Israel) deserves attention because it demonstrates the ability of the Jews to overcome adversity and succeed as an independent nation. Adding to this, Jerusalem seems like an especially significant site within Israel for Yad Vashem in that the city itself represents the historic struggle of the Jewish people throughout history. For both reasons, the scene makes a critical contribution to the final pentadic element, purpose.

**Purpose.** As with other Holocaust memorials, Yad Vashem seems to focus primarily on purpose. The careful design of the museum, which facilitated emphasis on education rather than agency, signifies this trend, as does the proud but relatively subdued claims of ownership by the Israeli government. As in Poland, scene constitutes
an important factor in message construction, but only to the degree it augments scene.

Once again, the message at this Holocaust memorial remains goal-driven.

Examining the goals which drive the message at Yad Vashem may provide a slightly larger challenge for the rhetorical analyst. Perhaps Rothwell (2005) best described the three-fold purpose of Yad Vashem by calling it, “at once educational institution, research centre (sic) and emblem of Jewish endurance” (p.16). As with older Holocaust memorials, Yad Vashem intends to commemorate victims as unique and valuable individuals. Not surprisingly, museum curators designed exhibits to “focus on individual victims picked out from the crowd” (Rothwell, 2005, p. 16), enabling visitors to see people rather than masses. As Yad Vashem chairman and curator Avner Shalev explained, “The big story is the Holocaust, but the most important part is…the personal stories. It’s looking into the eyes of individuals. There weren’t six million victims, there were six million individual murders” (in McGreal, 2005, p. 21).

Even as it commemorates Holocaust victims, Yad Vashem also educates visitors about the workings of the Holocaust and the dangers of hate. Yad Vashem carefully details the events of the Holocaust from a Historical perspective, preserving a wide array of memorabilia and artifacts. Yad Vashem also offers guided tours, literature, and a plethora of exhibits, which hints at the education nature of the memorial. Another integral function of Yad Vashem involves careful record-keeping of Holocaust victims. A multi-floor archive, situated near the end of the museum, offers records of all known victims, their families, their communities, and their place of death. In this way, Yad Vashem aspires to create a strong link with history and support for descendants of Holocaust victims.
Perhaps more important, Yad Vashem memorial existed to counter Nazi efforts to erase Jews from memory (Shefa, 2005). In stark contrast to other Holocaust museums, such as the one in Washington DC and those previously discussed in Poland, Yad Vashem tries to focus on individual victims, faces in the crowd, rather than the aggregate data. This approach results in a more personal and poetic take on the Shoah. As Dean explains: “If the Washington museum serves as the Holocaust’s Thucydides, its historian, then the new Yad Vashem is its Homer, its poet and storyteller, enlivening the defining moments of a culture through the trials of individuals” (2005, p. 112).

Clearly, Yad Vashem addresses a complex set of objectives. However, Yad Vashem’s primary objective may distinguish it from other Holocaust memorials, especially those in Poland: Yad Vashem expresses the triumph of the Jewish people over adversity. Architect Moshe Safdie affirms this unique purpose when defending his project with the following words: “the museum’s fundamental statement is that we emerge into light, that we’ve prevailed, and that Jerusalem and Israel are out there” (Dean, 2005, p. 112). Safdie’s vision grows apparent as visitors near the end of the museum. A visitor’s final impression at the museum involves a scenic view of Jerusalem from a breathtaking balcony. All of this non-verbal rhetoric seems to suggest that the Jewish people persevered through the Holocaust and rebuilt their country as strong as ever. This ultimate purpose, demonstrating the resilience of the Jewish nation to the rest of the world, becomes highly apparent when visitors step onto the scenic balcony overlooking Jerusalem, rebuilt by Holocaust survivors (see Appendix, picture J).

This final objective at Yad Vashem results in a unique offshoot; it may help justify the continued existence of the state of Israel. Museum goers point out a “Zionist
dimension to the exhibit at Yad Vashem,” (Peretz, 2005, p. 9), referencing the unspoken defense of Israel which seems to exist in the material. In a world when critics of Israel seem increasingly vociferous and numerous, Yad Vashem may serve to remind opponents of the tragedy which resulted in the creation of Israel (McGreal, 2005; Rothwell, 2005). For this reason, Yad Vashem not only ensures the continued emphasis on Jewish history, but may also preserve the future of the world’s only Jewish state.

As rhetor’s emphasis on purpose at Yad Vashem demonstrates, Holocaust memorials in Israel and Poland share a similar dramatistic approach to message construction. Each focuses on purpose and deemphasizes other pentadic elements. Despite this, the exact purposes of the memorials seem to indicate slight differences among Holocaust memorials. The nature of these differences, and the reasons for their existence, will constitute the last area of analysis.
Chapter V

Conclusions

Analyzing Holocaust memorials in Poland and Israel reveals that each memorial seems to emphasize purpose more than other aspects of the pentad. According to Burke (1969), this common focus on purpose suggests a corresponding motive, idealism. Such a finding answers the first four research questions posed in the introduction, questions which inquired about the focus of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Yad Vashem.

However, an individual analysis of each Holocaust site indicates that while each rhetorical act centered on purpose, specific purposes differed along cultural lines. Polish camps seemed primarily concerned with preserving information and artifacts concerning the Holocaust; this suggests an underlying purpose of historical preservation. In contrast, Israeli memorials emphasized the triumph of the Jewish culture after the Holocaust, and in doing so tacitly advocated the continued existence of the Jewish state. Here again, the communication acts at different memorials seemed highly similar at first glance, but actually exhibited distinguishing characteristics depending on the culture from which they came.

Differences in purposes at Holocaust memorials may stem from a number of factors related to culture. Initially, the Polish memorials may appear relatively cold and detached because the Polish culture seems to view the Holocaust as a time of overwhelming despair. This sentiment seems reasonable; after all, citizens have witnessed a massive exodus of Polish Jews from genocide and exile -- the city of Krakow itself went from 60,000 Jews before the war to 200 in 2005 (Pitts, 2005). Moreover,
Poles lost control of their country during the war to Hitler, then lost control again after the war to the Soviet Union before finally regaining independence in 1989 (Gutman & Berenbaum, 1994). Shalev mentioned that the Holocaust served as a turning point for the entire world (in McGreal, 2005); in the case of Poland, the turning point marked a transition from a period of relative autonomy to an era of foreign control and oppression.

Israel, however, may be able to find meaning in the drama of the Holocaust. First, the entire country seems well aware that the same horrific tragedy remembered at Yad Vashem resulted in the development of the Jewish state. Moreover, the Holocaust may be viewed as a sort of test for the Jewish people, one which they ultimately passed. In fact, the pride of the Israeli national government in Yad Vashem and the conspicuously uplifting design of the main building seem to portray Yad Vashem as a symbol of triumph over adversity, perhaps even more than a memorial to genocide. For all of the above reasons, the distinctly more optimistic approach to Holocaust scholarship at Yad Vashem undoubtedly results from the vastly different histories of Poland and Israel.

Different approaches to universal themes

In addressing the fifth research question posed in the introduction, which inquired how Polish memorials differed from Israeli memorials, it seems clear that Polish memorials vary from Israeli memorials in slight but noticeable ways involving every aspect of the pentad. First, although memorials in both Poland and Israel emphasized the agent of the speech act to a lesser degree than other pentadic elements, Polish communicators were less forthcoming about their role in the memorial. The Israeli government, on the other hand, openly acknowledged its ties to the museum. Likewise,
memorials in both countries employed a number of visual, verbal, and written rhetoric to communicate messages about the Holocaust, but Yad Vashem employed a wider array of strategies including computer mediated communication and strategic architectural design. Along these lines, scene played an important role in all memorials, but it contributed to different purposes in Poland than in Israel. Purpose, of course, differed between cultures; Poland seemed more detached and obligatory, while Israel seemed more optimistic. As all of these differences may suggest, culture may not affect the most primitive themes of a memorial, but it will certainly influence the presentation of those themes.

Additionally, differences in the presentation of rhetoric at Polish and Israeli memorials verifies what historians already knew; that Israel constructed its museum more deliberately, allowing communicators to make strategic choices about pentadic elements to ensure optimal audience understanding and identification. Poland did not have this luxury due to the suddenness of Germany’s invasion and the later Cold War restraints. This difference between the two cultures reinforces that Poland unwittingly served as the site for many aspects of the Holocaust while Israel voluntarily engaged the Holocaust at Yad Vashem, a distinction which changes the way each culture presents Holocaust rhetoric. Such a realization indicates that a country’s history and culture will inevitably influence its presentation of messages concerning history, including events as widely studied as the Holocaust.

Implications for intercultural communication

Understanding both the similarities of Holocaust memorials (all seem to emphasize purpose) and their differences (each addressed purpose in unique ways which reflected their culture), a scholar can resolve the question; does the Holocaust provide an
example of a tragedy so great that it transcends culture? The answer to this question depends on a person’s interpretation of transcendence. From a purely dramatistic perspective, cultural forces exert a noticeable amount of power over the construction of messages at Holocaust memorials. While the emphasis on purpose remains relatively constant across cultures, most other aspects of the rhetorical act seem to depend on culture. From this perspective, it seems reasonable to conclude that not even the Holocaust escapes the influence of culture.

However, common purposes between memorials suggest that certain themes of the Holocaust may appeal to a diverse crowd of visitors. Memorials from Poland to Israel promulgate messages about the inherent value of human life and the need for accurate information about history; regardless of the presentation of the rhetoric at the memorials, most visitors seem to understand the message that the agents construct. To the extent that a multicultural group of visitors can understand and identify with these themes, Holocaust memorials may escape some culturally-imposed limits of understanding.

Perhaps more important, audience identification with Holocaust memorials may galvanize new generations of people to fight against human rights abuses and Holocaust denial. Even if the presentation of Holocaust rhetoric seemed strange to international visitors, the messages of the memorials remain sufficiently strong to communicate successfully the purpose of the memorial. Considering this implication, even though the Holocaust does not appear to provide an exception to Hall’s (1976) axiom of intercultural communication, it does give an opportunity for people from every culture to identify with a single event, an accomplishment worthy of notice.
This ability of Holocaust memorials to affect people from a variety of cultures despite variations in message construction addresses fundamental questions about relationships between people and their surroundings. In this way, Holocaust memorials hint at one of Kluckholm and Strodtbeck’s (1961) universal questions that every culture must face. In this case, memorials in both Poland and Israel address the question concerning a human’s relationship to nature. Naturally, the countries answer the question differently; Polish memorials suggest that a person is basically a captive of nature and that other people or circumstances can destroy the life of anyone, while Israeli memorials indicate that a person can transcend the hate and bigotry of other people and thrive in the face of insurmountable odds. These different answers reflect differences in culture. The same question at memorials in both countries, however, demonstrates the universal prodding of the Holocaust memorials, which strongly encourage visitors to reconsider the relationship between a person and nature.

*Implications for the dramatistic pentad*

An analysis of Holocaust memorials in Poland and Israel also sheds new light on Kenneth Burke’s (1969) popular dramatistic pentad. Burke’s pentad helped to determine the motives of memorials in Poland and Israel by providing the rhetorician with a concrete set of options from which to choose. In an increasingly complex world, this predictability may pare an otherwise daunting task down to size. The pentad also enables a rhetorical scholar to observe both the commonalities between different models and the idiosyncrasies of each communication act, which reinforces the flexibility of Burke’s model.
However, obtaining information about the motives of communicators provides only the first step in constructing engaging messages at Holocaust memorials. To address more fully this objective, communicators should conduct additional research concerning the receiver part of the feedback loop. In fact, analyzing agent motives and audience perceptions in tandem may provide tremendously helpful data. However, Burke did not design the pentad to test the reception of audiences, so another rhetorical tool should be implemented to test audience reactions to Holocaust rhetoric.

Additionally, the results of this investigation may also suggest that a communicator should expand Burke’s model to include a tenet about the culture surrounding the agent, not the scene of the communication act, but the scene of the agent’s previous development. Such an addition makes sense because Hall’s (1976) work demonstrated that culture and history affect every communication act. Additionally, given that Burke’s model tries to focus on motivation, an explanation of the actor’s culture might prove especially beneficial in understanding the influences which could motivate him or her.

Strengths and limitations of this study

This study marks one of the first instances in which a communicator used Burke’s pentad to examine abstract, visual rhetoric. Such an effort expands the utility of Burke’s model and provides researchers with a way to study alternative forms of rhetoric. In certain situations including Holocaust memorials, this study may demonstrate a means by which communicators can evaluate messages which words do not adequately express. Artifacts, monuments, photographs, and other visual displays communicate
understanding just as effectively as written communication (depending on the situation, of course), and therefore deserve a pentadic analysis.

Additionally, this study may serve as a testament to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. After seeing the memorials at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Yad Vashem, I understand that I have a moral obligation to verbalize what I observed. As a communicator, I could best express my experience through a rhetorical criticism. However, it remains true that this project should be recognized as a person action to combat bigotry and violence, and to remember the twenty million victims I encountered this past summer.

At this point, it seems appropriate to acknowledge my personal biases toward the Holocaust. After viewing the sites with a Jewish organization, saying kaddish for the dead, even enjoying a Shabbat dinner with a Jewish family in Israel, I recognize that I identify with Jewish Holocaust victims more than others would. My personal leanings on this subject may present a limitation to this research. However, as Burke would argue and I would agree, acknowledging such biases allows the reader to evaluate them and judge their effect on the message. I encourage the reader to take this approach when considering my arguments.

Suggestions for future research

This exploration of Holocaust rhetoric suggests several additional paths for research. I focused on a qualitative assessment of culture, which enabled me to use a broad lens for analysis. Not surprisingly, this broad lens yielded broad results. A quantitative approach might help to isolate the factors in a culture which makes it present rhetoric in a certain way. For example, the role of Poland in the Holocaust might
contribute to its presentation of Holocaust narratives, or it may be the lingering effects of communism that leads Polish memorials to communicate in a prescribed way. A quantitative approach could test these theories more appropriately than a pentadic analysis.

Additionally, Burke designed the pentad to examine the motives of the agent. However, Holocaust memorials exist in large part to affect viewers. For this reason, future analyses of Holocaust research should examine the reaction of audiences at Holocaust memorials to the rhetoric presented there. While this particular study may move communicators closer to understanding Holocaust memorials, a thorough analysis of audience reactions to Holocaust rhetoric would enable communicators to design future memorials with specific goals in mind.

Finally, this study evaluated two cultures which were directly impacted by the Holocaust. While enabled me to focus on some of the most well-known Holocaust sites, it may not reflect the nature of memorials among all cultures. For this reason, future research should test the influence of culture on Holocaust memorials in countries less directly affected by the Shoah.

**Conclusion**

Rhetoric at Holocaust memorials can direct audiences toward universal questions, but their answers to these questions ultimately hinges on their cultural framework. Using Burke’s pentad to highlight the differences between Holocaust memorials in Poland and Israel, especially in terms of purpose, a communicator can more easily identify the influence of specific cultures over Holocaust rhetoric.
Analyzing Holocaust artifacts, rhetoric, and motives may illuminate our understanding, but only to a certain point. As Bialystok explained:

Anyone who has visited the museum at Auschwitz or Majdanek realizes, upon reflection, that they have not "experienced" the camps; they have visited the museums there, they have been brought to the gates of hell, but they have not entered hell, even when entering into the bowls of the gas chambers and barracks, because they were free to leave. If anything, visitors understand that they cannot understand – they can only learn.

(1996, p. 127)

However, as eyewitnesses to the Holocaust disappear, this limited understanding may be the only way to remember victims and educate new generations to prevent future genocides. For this reason, communicators must recognize that culture necessarily influences rhetoric at Holocaust memorials; such a realization may empower rhetoricians to pursue deeper levels of audience identification with humanity’s darkest hour.
References


Holocaust. Public Opinion Quarterly. 63, 485-507


Appendix
Picture A: The Officer’s Quarters at Auschwitz
Picture B: The barracks at Auschwitz
Picture C: The Gate to the Gas Chambers at Auschwitz
Picture D: The demolished gas chamber at Auschwitz
Picture E: Another demolished gas chamber at Auschwitz
Picture F: The row of stones at Treblinka, some inscribed with the name of a city
Picture G: The symbolic limestone gas chamber at Treblinka, with the rock bearing the words “Never Again”
Picture H: The railroad at Treblinka
Picture I: The Mausoleum at Majdanek
Picture J: Not the exact view from Yad Vashem, but close. This is a photo of the old city of Jerusalem taken from a vantage point on Mount Zion. Yad Vashem did not allow photography inside its buildings.