Jewish & Universal:
Organizational Identity in Los Angeles Jewish Museums and Exhibitions

By

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Abstract

Since the latter half of the 20th century, Jewish museums have become less focused on object display and more focused on community building and experiential programming. As a result, Jewish museums and Jewish-themed exhibitions in Los Angeles deserve more concentrated research so we can better understand their relevance, Jewishness, and organizational practices relative to the city's broader Jewish community. In addition to a literature review, I interviewed 17 current and former professionals and lay leaders from the Council of American Jewish Museums, four Jewish museums, and two Jewish-themed exhibitions held in non-Jewish museums.

From this research, I found that Jewish museums and exhibitions play an important role not fulfilled by other Jewish organizations in Los Angeles: telling parts of the Jewish story to the general public, as well as to Jewish audiences. I also found a significant tension in Jewish identity in regard to what is particular and what is universal and how each balances the "Jewish" and "museum" in their operations. While there exists overlap in how Jewish museums define their Jewishness in terms of their institutions' founding, values, mission, leadership, and funding sources, there is no one Jewish or museum-related thread that unifies them. In that way, Jewish museums join in the struggle and ambiguity around what it means to be a Jewish institution. However, as a result of this struggle, Jewish museums are at risk of becoming disconnected from other Jewish organizations and from each other. My recommendation is for the Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM) to more frequently and strategically convene these Jewish museums and their leaders in Los Angeles to encourage them to better embrace what makes them particularly Jewish without losing sight of the benefits universalism grants them.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

I got lost on my way to the Noah's Ark exhibition at the Skirball, and a guide from the adjacent Bill Graham exhibition helped direct me, and even cracked a joke in the process. I arrived at the exhibition's entry at the same time as a young Asian family: mom, dad, toddler, and grandma. Guides started the exhibition with a story, framing its context, and establishing rules, which included "touch everything." As I admired an animal in that same room made entirely out of recycled materials (which was true of many of the animals featured in the exhibition), the toddler mistook me for a family member, and gestured to me that she wanted to be picked up. After her mother laughed and apologized, we all continued through the exhibition. The visitors in the exhibition that summer Wednesday were very diverse. Activity within the exhibition was nothing short of commotion as adults and children engaged in the experience together, with staff members dispersed throughout. There was no educational signage: captions, descriptions, etc. It was a learning free for all. It was loud. I overheard one child tell his mom, "I have to go potty," and another mom saying, "I'm so proud of you, big boy" after he made it down from the second floor of the Ark. The third room of the exhibition is designated for arts and crafts projects, and more quiet ground play, which encouraged visitors that day to "build a better world." It smelled like hand sanitizer. On my way out of the Skirball that day, I saw a young girl and her dad, who was holding her art project, and she said, "this is the best day of my life."

The Skirball is arguably the most recognizable and identifiable "Jewish" museum in Los Angeles, and yet the story of Noah's ark is relevant to families of other religions, and may even be so to families who do not practice religion at all (mostly because the exhibit does not mention God or any of the biblical characters). What happens then, if anything, to the Skirball's Jewish identity when its content and its audiences are not exclusively Jewish? Is Jewish content and audience required to be considered a Jewish institution? What is? What is not? In my exploration of Jewish museums and Jewish museum exhibitions I discovered that Jewish museums are a locus of tension for Jewish identity. Throughout graduate school at HUC, I have been encouraged to ask Jewish nonprofit organizations "Where is the J?" (J stands for Jewish), because it is no longer so easy to explain or assume where it is and why. For some organizations, Jewishness is rooted in their founders and history, their values, and their overall organizational purpose. For others, such as synagogues and JCCs, their Jewishness is found not only within the aforementioned list, but also might be found in their content, target audiences (disregarding those non-Jews who might use JCCs fitness facilities exclusively), and lay and professional leadership. Being a Jewish organization now can mean many different things; there are no concrete answers. Jewish museums are no exception, and they add to the complexity of the discussion.

Previous research and writing in the field reflects the variety of ways to discuss what makes any organization Jewish (or not), indicating that no singular typology exists in the Jewish community here in Los Angeles, or anywhere. In regard to serving non-Jews, Rabbi David Ellenson asserts that an organization, such as Jewish social service agencies, can be identified as Jewish if they serve non-Jews, because serving the larger community is in fact Jewish behavior, which he justifies using Jewish text (Ellenson, 2006). Steven Donshik similarly suggests, though not asserts, that defining the Jewishness of an organization begins with its mission and vision,

and then with the particulars of its board meetings, which both provide the foundations for how an organization operates (Donshik, 2011). The JCC movement provides a helpful example. Their "Vision and Statement of Principles for the 21st Century" identifies JCCs as Jewish institutions (the word is in their name), and "Jewish" is found within the description of mission, vision, and program content. This vision also "appropriately" adds "the broader community" among those they serve, which is in line with their organizational goal to build, support, and welcome community. So where do Jewish museums fit into this discussion? This is a question I attempt to answer in this thesis.

Functionally, unlike other Jewish organizations, Jewish museums and Jewish-themed exhibitions put Judaism on display, and I will explain how over time that function will change to become more expansive and inclusive. Historically, "showing" Judaism meant displaying artifacts in a quiet and passive environment where visitors held their hands behind their backs in fear of touching or breaking anything. Over the last 20 years, according to a professional at the Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM), there has been a strong shift of emphasis from stuff towards peoplehood and community. This shift has expanded the possibilities of what Jewish museums can be and what they can do, and the large, diverse Jewish community of Los Angeles has taken advantage of that as professionals, visitors, and donors.

In the first section of my thesis I explore the question of "What is a Jewish museum?" in terms of function, means of evaluation and impact, and target audience. What do these institutions offer? Who are they attracting? What impact do they see their museum or exhibition having on their visitors, and how (if at all) is that impact measured? In this section I also look at two Jewish-themed museum exhibitions at the Autry and the Fowler, and explore Jewish content's role within these institutions relative to their larger, more secular characteristics.

The second section of my thesis focuses primarily on Jewish identity and continues the discussion of how these museums define their Jewishness institutionally, how they identify Jewishly within Los Angeles Jewish life, how museum professionals identify themselves both personally and professionally, and how Jewish museums are relative to other organizations. Jewish identity has become a large and complex pool of choices in Los Angeles that individuals can pick from to establish their own, personal, ideal Jewish life. Jewish museums face similar choices in how they identify and how the Jewish community identifies them.

The third section highlights fundraising within Jewish museums and exhibitions in Los Angeles. What are their fundraising sources? What are their fundraising practices? Who are their donors? Why do donors give to Jewish museums? Are Jewish museums low-value investments relative to other Jewish causes in Los Angeles? What impact do identity tensions have on a museum's ability to fundraise?

Throughout my thesis there a number of intersections between what is particular and what is universal. Jewish museums are "universal," applicable to all audiences, as educational experiences, an extension of learning in a classroom and cultural in their content and activities. Yet in other ways Jewish museums are "particular" and offer Jewish experiences and content without the structure and high costs of synagogues. Universal institutions (in this case secular museums) incorporate particular (in this case Jewish) content into their exhibitions and wish to attract more particular audiences. Jewish museums incorporate more universal content and wish to attract more universal audiences, whether successfully or unsuccessfully. There is overlap of Jewish, American, and human values within the messaging of Jewish and secular museums. Each section of my thesis explores an aspect of this relationship.

Methodology

To research my topic, I studied previous literature, conducted interviews, and reviewed museums' Form 990s, annual reports, and exhibit catalogs. My goal for studying literature first was to develop a foundational understanding of museum history, Jewish museum history, the Jewish museum's development in Los Angeles specifically, and how these particular institutions both market a Jewish identity (or not) and fundraise. I read about the history and development of museums in the United States in terms of how they defined themselves, what content they housed and displayed, and what purpose and function they served. I then studied the history of Jewish display vis-à-vis international exhibitions, which helped influence the eventual establishment and flourishing of Jewish museums in the United States. Within my research on Jewish museums, I remained consistent with my research of all museums in focusing on definition, content, and purpose. It was important for my literature review to focus on how Jewish museums defined their Jewishness. Therefore, I read a number of articles that offered suggestions for how Jewish communal organizations and professionals currently define it, and also how they should. In order to evaluate the role of Jewish museums in Los Angeles, I studied articles that explained the larger Jewish community's unique features, including demography and geography. Lastly, I reviewed literature about museum fundraising because I wanted to know more about general practices in the museum field and how those compared to Jewish museums specifically in Los Angeles.

Before I began the interview process, I identified which organizations I wanted to incorporate into my research based on the topics I outlined in my literature review. First, I identified four Jewish museums in Los Angeles inspired by my preliminary readings and personal perception: The Skirball Cultural Center, the Museum of Tolerance (Simon Wiesenthal

Center), the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, and the Zimmer Children's Museum. Next, I identified two non-Jewish museums that either currently or previously held Jewish exhibitions: The Fowler Museum at UCLA, which housed the Light & Shadows exhibition about Iranian Jews, and The Autry Museum, which housed the "Jews in the LA Mosaic" exhibit. I also identified two Jewish organizations that feature Jewish displays of their own: Wilshire Boulevard Temple with their exhibition on the synagogue's and Los Angeles' Jewish history, and Cedars Sinai hospital with their exhibition on the hospital's history (and how that connects to Los Angeles' Jewish history). Additionally, I identified two organizations that either have connection to or affiliation with Jewish museums: the Builders of Jewish Education, Los Angeles, and the Council of American Jewish Museums. In order to learn more about museum fundraising from a funder's perspective, I spoke with the Y&S Nazarian Family Foundation, an Iranian-Jewish family foundation in Los Angeles.

I interviewed 17 individuals in 16 interviews. My interview sample included nine current or former museum (or museum related) Executive Directors, Presidents, or CEOs; one museum Executive Vice President and Deputy Director; three Marketing, Communications, and Community Engagement professionals; two Jewish education professionals; one museum exhibition curator; and one family foundation president. Twelve interviewees were female, five were male, and all of them identify as Jewish. I gave each of my interviewees the opportunity to be named in my thesis, and most accepted, though some

wished to remain anonymous.

My goal in conducting interviews was to help complement my literature review and enhance my overall understanding of this topic as it exists today. First, defining an organization as "Jewish" is a subjective process based significantly on one's own understanding, beliefs, and

practices. Therefore, I wanted to know from interviews how, and to what extent, these individuals justified defining themselves and their respective museum or exhibitions as Jewish, or not. Second, the literature did not speak about these museums relative to the Los Angeles Jewish community. Through interviews, I not only wanted to explore similarities and differences between these museums and exhibitions, but also what relationship they have, if at all, to their location in Los Angeles. Do any tell the LA Jewish story? Do all of them? Third, literature about museum fundraising is limited, and I wanted to know more about the fundraising practices of these specific museums and exhibitions, where their funding comes from, and to what extent their Jewish identity influences their fundraising, in addition to other factors such as mission, audience, and content.

My goal in reviewing supplemental information such as Form 990s, annual reports, and marketing materials was to support the qualitative data from interviews with quantitative data. Together, I hoped these methods would lead to a clear and balanced exploration of this topic.

Background

Museums: Definition, Content, and Purpose

In the United States prior to the mid-20th century, museums were mostly defined by their collections and the objects on display to the public (Gurian, 2006). Over time, this definition expanded in a number of ways. First, in 1978, what was then called the American Association of Museums developed an accreditation committee that established its own set of museum definitions that included botanical gardens, zoos, aquariums, and non-collections based spaces such as planetariums and science and technology centers (Gurian, 2006). Nonprofit galleries and

cultural centers were also included since, like museums, they "displayed, cared for, and preserved collections they did not own" (Gurian, 2006, 36).

Second, storytelling and objects' context became just as critical (if not more so) as the objects themselves. A good story, argues Museum consultant and advisor Elaine Gurian (2006), even replaces the need for historical artifacts all together. Beit Hatfutsot (previously the Museum of the Diaspora, now the Museum of the Jewish People) in Israel tells the 5,000-year story of Jewish migration without a single artifact because of the infeasibility of collecting all of the proper artifacts to tell the story completely. Instead, the museum uses movies, photos, recordings, and a series of formulated tableaux that recreate the environments, documents, and images of the story (Gurian, 2006).

A third reason museum definitions expanded is based on the increased importance of ethnicity. Immigration to the United States throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries led to the growth of hyphenated population groups, and their desire to honor and preserve the stories of both their respective native homelands and American experiences. By 1997, the American Association of Museums defined museums as those institutions that "present regularly scheduled programs and exhibitions that use and interpret objects for the public according to accepted standards; have a formal and appropriate program of documentation, care, and use of collections and/or tangible objects" (Gurian, 2006, 46). Museums were no longer defined exclusively by objects, but also by programs and experiences that benefited an institution's ability to tell its story and shape its overall visitor experience. "The foundational definition of museums will, in the long run . . . arise not from objects but from 'place' and 'storytelling in tangible, sensory form,' where citizenry can congregate in a spirit of cross-generational inclusivity and inquiry

into the memory of our past, a forum for our present, and aspirations for our future" (Gurian, 2006, 45).

Based on the evolution of how museums could be defined, Elaine Gurian suggests a list of five types: the object-centered museum, which focuses on the specific material the museum owns or borrows and displays; the narrative museum, which focuses on telling a story, with or without the use of objects; the client-centered museum, which prioritizes the visitor over content, such as a children's museum; the community-centered museum, which also prioritizes audience, but the larger community as opposed to the individual visitor; and national (government) museums. Gurian also defines four general audiences: families, school groups, "community," (including low income visitors), and people of influence (including political figures, foundations, and corporate sponsors). Gurian argues that the growth of museums into these categories could increase the potential to attract different visitors within the general public who either rarely or never visit museums (Gurian, 2006, 54).

Greater opportunities in how museums define themselves also expanded opportunities for what types of experiences museums could offer. In her book *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes the expansion of museum functions as a result of a shift from collections to visitor experiences, which she labels the "market-driven approach" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 137). However, this is not to devalue or discredit object-centered museums and their ability to provide visitors with meaningful experiences. Rather, this is simply an addition to museums' functions and capabilities, which include providing opportunity for people to become "immersed" in different worlds, acting as tourist destinations for those visiting from out of town, being "surrogates" for travel for those local to the community, and rebuilding and recreating history, spaces, places, and moments in

time (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 132-135). More specifically, she answers the question, "What is today's museum?":

> A vault, in the tradition of the royal treasure room, the *Schatzkammer*
> A cathedral of culture, where citizens enact civic rituals at shrines to art and civilization
> A school dedicated to the creation of informed citizenry, which serves organized school groups as well as adults embarked on a course of lifelong learning
> A laboratory for creating new knowledge
> A cultural center for the keeping and transmission of patrimony
> A forum for public debate, where controversial topics can be subjected to informed discussion
> A tribunal on the bombing of Hiroshima, Freud's theories, or Holocaust denial
> A theater, a memory palace, a stage for the enactment of other times and places, a space of transport, fantasy, dreams
> A party, where great achievements and historical moments can be celebrated
> An advocate for preservation, conservation, repatriation, sovereignty, tolerance
> A place to mourn
> An artifact to be displayed in its own right, along with its history, operations, understandings, and practices
> An attraction in a tourist economy, complete with cafes, shops, films, performances, and exhibitions (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 138-139).

The explanations of both Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Gurian suggest that there are more opportunities today for museums to reimagine and expand their content to help fulfill their overall missions in ways much different from the traditional object-driven model.

Jewish Display and Representation at International Exhibitions

Throughout the end of the 19th and early 20th century, the Jewish Diaspora expanded and immigration to the US and other countries around the world increased. This shift of Jewish presence around the world influenced how Judaism would be displayed and what it would represent in cultural settings. From 1850-1940, Jews were involved in multiple international exhibitions, but their involvement was inconsistent. Originally, the presentation of Judaism at international exhibitions featured religious content. The Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1878

featured Isaac Strauss' collection of Jewish ritual objects, displayed as art with a "biblical aura" and where "Judaism, rather than Jews, became the main subject" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 83).

At the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, the Jewish display was a white marble statue titled *Religious Liberty*. The artist, Moses Jacob Ezekiel, believed his identity as an artist was independent of his identity as a Jew. The statue had no direct mention of the Jewish people, but grouped themselves with other religions that also came to the United States, and who were promised religious freedom. The display was inspired by the new Reform movement, which highlights ethics and values in addition to religion (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). The Exhibition of the Jews of Many Lands at the Jewish Settlement House in Cincinnati took place in 1913. The exhibition featured 27 "booths" each representing a Jewish community around the world. Each featured living "demonstrations" of clothing by members of the communities, as well as a display of objects they either brought with them to the United States, or which American tourists brought back from traveling. This display, as opposed to others in the United States, focused more on where Jews came from around the world, as opposed to their experience exclusively in America (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 111). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett believes this exhibition reflects a "tour de force in the way that it integrated diverse aspects of a living Jewish community, deployed so many kinds of display, affirmed the Diaspora, and represented Jews in terms of the heterogeneity of Jewish culture rather than the unity and antiquity of normative Judaism" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 117).

With the start of another World War imminent, and increased Jewish persecution throughout Europe, the New York World's Fair in 1939 featured the "Jewish Palestine Pavilion," which was a view into what a modern Jewish state in Palestine would look like if formally

established. Meyer Weisgal directly influenced the design and noted the significance of this national exhibition as the only one not sponsored by a government (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, 123).

Jewish Museums: Definition, Content, and Purpose

Jewish object collection began in history with those that featured the name of God, which cannot be thrown out or destroyed. Instead, they were placed in ancient store rooms known as a *genizah* (Grossman, 2003). Over time, ancient Jewish artifacts (scripture, documents, ceremonial objects) were discovered and collected all over the world. By the early 20th century, housed Judaica collections eventually became Jewish museums, with the Hebrew Union College collection in Cincinnati being the first in the United States in 1913 (Rothstein, 2016). The proliferation of Jewish museums in the 19th century internationally followed that of secular museums, and most began with wealthy private collectors (Grossman, 2003). In her book *Jewish Museums of the World*, Grace Cohen Grossman emphasizes how the desire to preserve local Jewish history increasingly in the United States in the 20th century was a crucial element that led to the growth of Jewish museums around the world because of increased assimilation, increased interest in ethnicity and heritage, and the flourishing of non-Jewish museums occurring simultaneously (Grossman, 2003). Preserving this local history could manifest not just in the establishment of museums, but also in the preservation of local synagogue and historic sites (Grossman, 2003).

Following World War II, there was a growth in Jewish museums in Europe where people could learn about European Jewish history. Simultaneously, different communities began actively preserving their Jewish sites (Grossman, 2003). As a result, Jewish culture heritage

became unique to each location. In her article, "Museums as Cultural Dialogue," Ilana Harlow highlights the important role of the Diaspora and encourages different local Jewish communities to take ownership over their identities and experiences, where "members of the community should serve as docents" (Harlow, 2001, 14).

The first Jewish collection in the United States was established in 1887 at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, as part of the Comparative Religions Department (Grossman, 2003), and the first two important Jewish museums were the museum at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, established in 1913, and the Jewish Museum in New York, established in 1940 at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The flourishing of museums in the United States occurred largely after World War II with the rise of suburbanization, the middle class, and the cultural activities associated with both (Seldin, 1991). Additionally, their importance rose as a result of increased interest in ethnic based museums and Jewish interest in their own story and where they came from. Ruth Seldin describes a "Jewish cultural flowering," in the 1970s and 80s, which partly connects to the establishment of Israel (particularly following the Six Day War) and increased interest in the Holocaust. It also connects to the increased interest in the arts and the creation of new Jewish art for synagogues and other purposes in line with DIY Judaism (Seldin, 1991, 76). By 1977, the National Foundation of Jewish Culture established the Council of American Jewish Museums with the goals of facilitating communication between institutions through meetings and publications, maintaining a code of professional and organizational standards, and advocating for Jewish museums as critical elements of Jewish culture (Seldin, 1991).

Seldin defines a Jewish museum as "an institution devoted to the collection, preservation, and presentation of art and objects associated with Jewish heritage," but expands that to explain

how they are strategic combinations of a historical museum, an art museum, and an ethnography museum (Seldin, 1991, 77). Like non-Jewish museums, Jewish museums vary in size, nature of the collections, exhibition space, financial resources, and professional staff (Seldin, 1991). In terms of what they displayed, some museums are more general and some more specific (Seldin, 1991).

In terms of what Jewish museums do, Seldin suggests that, "[a]ll Jewish museums are alike. . .in their basic function of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the material culture of the Jewish people" (Seldin, 1991, 71). The objects collected, preserved, and exhibited in these museums at first were ritual objects, antiquities, and biblical art. The Jewish Museum in New York and the museum at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati emphasized, "…collection, cataloging, and scholarly research, and their collections consisted largely of synagogue and ceremonial art" (Seldin, 1991, 79). The focus, at first, was on strict, traditional, Jewish education, and the opportunity for institutions to teach Judaism visually.

A Jewish museum's basic purposes, according to Seldin, is to attract distant Jews to their own heritage, educate non-Jews about Judaism, inspire the committed, and preserve the past (Seldin, 1991). Over time, Jewish museums stuck to these general purposes but altered how they fulfilled them: they started to feature historical and modern objects and (like non-Jewish museums) add experiences, workshops, and concerts (Seldin, 1991). We see this shift reflected in Jewish museums' professional staff. Historically, in collections-based Jewish displays, a professional set of Jewish art historians, curators, and educators staffed Jewish museums; the nature of their daily work was more in line with other museum professionals. However, this does not mean they failed to recognize their impact on the Jewish community. "The people associated with Jewish museums (lay as well as professional) do not see themselves as parochial, but as

serving the broader Jewish community, making a contribution to the cultural life of the community as a whole and, at the same time, serving a public-relations function for Jews and Judaism" (Seldin, 1991, 87). As Jewish museums started to embrace experiential education and community engagement within their daily operations in the latter half of the 20th century, their work began to overlap more with other types of Jewish communal institutions, which, for some professionals, more strongly tied them to the label of Jewish communal professionals. I will address this issue more later in my research.

Jewish museums have a unique role within the Jewish community of being a space that is not only attractive to all types of Jews, but non-Jews as well, and together they can experience Jewish culture (Seldin, 1991). In his article, "New Vistas on Jewish History and Culture," Avi Decter agrees that Jewish museums are "equal opportunity" spaces with increased interest and access for non-Jews and intergroup relations (Decter, 2001, 2). Additionally, Seldin says that Jewish museums are "places where people can satisfy their curiosity about Jewishness without having to make any kind of organizational or ideological or even psychological commitment" (Seldin, 1991, 77).

According to Decter, Jewish museums not only attract wider audiences than most Jewish organizations and institutions, but they also have the most freedom to experiment and try new things (Decter, 2001). While he does not mention Jewish museums specifically, Daniel Schifrin, in his "The Bright River of Jewish Culture," adds that the unique role of Jewish culture within the community are the experiences that move people, as opposed to simply educate them. He identifies this gap between a "Jewish community structure obsessed with affiliation and metrics" and those individuals within the community who are "curious about a complex artistic experience" (Schifrin, 2005, 3).

The challenge Seldin cites for the future of Jewish museums is ensuring each has a clearly articulated purpose and sticking to it; many become convoluted with content in an attempt to attract larger and more diverse audiences (Seldin, 1991). Another reason a clearly articulated purpose is critical is that there is so much within the context of Judaism for Jewish museums to focus on, such as religion, art, ancient Israel, modern Israel, the Holocaust, American Jewish life, etc., that Jewish museums need to decide at their beginning to what extent their purpose is either narrow or broad.

Interview Findings:

What is a Jewish Museum?

Mission

Functionally, each Jewish and non-Jewish museum that was part of my study has a different mission and goals. According to interviews with administrators, the Skirball aims to deepen the appreciation of Jewish heritage and American democratic ideals, the Zimmer's goal is to teach children and youth of all ages about their capacity and responsibility to make the world a better place, the LA Museum of the Holocaust has a two-fold mission to commemorate and to educate through the lens of survivors in Los Angeles, and the Museum of Tolerance, as the educational wing of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, teaches visitors and other community members about the Holocaust, the consequences of intolerance, and discrimination in our world today in order for them to become more tolerant and stand up to injustice. The mission of the Autry is to tell the diverse stories of the American West and connect people to those stories, and the mission of the Fowler is to enhance the understanding of and appreciation for world arts and cultures. Of these missions, only the Skirball uses the word "Jewish." This relates to the criticism

offered by Edward Rothstein (2016) that Jewish particularism is lost when placed in universal contexts. I explain more about why I somewhat disagree with Rothstein later in this thesis.

Audience

My literature review suggests that Jewish museums do attract audiences beyond just Jews, and the results of my interviews proved congruent with this trend. While attracting and engaging Jews to their own culture, heritage, and identity is valuable for Jewish museums in Los Angeles, attracting and educating wider populations seems equally important. By contrast, non-Jewish museums that house Jewish-themed exhibitions hoped, and succeeded, to attract and engage more particular Jewish audiences into their more broadly defined institutions. Through varied exhibitions and programs, all of these museums hope to expand their visitor base and engage more people in order to fulfill their museums' respective missions.

All four Jewish museums I explored identify their target audiences very broadly and include Jews and non-Jews. According to an education professional at the Skirball, their target audience is the general public, which includes (but is not limited to) families of all backgrounds and ethnicities and Jews of all levels of observance. Older Jews who frequently visit the museum and live nearby comprise a large percentage of their museum members. The Zimmer's target audience is children and families, also of all ethnic, religious, and financial backgrounds. Liebe Geft, Museum of Tolerance Director, understands Museum of Tolerance visitors as a microcosm of Los Angeles: "The target audience is extremely broad and very diverse . . . it reflects the dynamics of the region and of the visitor, and the international visitorship to the city." At the LA Museum of the Holocaust, Executive Director Samara Hutman contributes their wide target

audience to free admission. As a "pure public institution," Hutman said, "anybody from anywhere any day can walk in, park, and learn for free."

By contrast, the Fowler and the Autry, non-Jewish museums that have housed Jewish-themed exhibitions, had the opportunity to attract Jewish audiences that may or may not have already been visitors of their museums. Marla Berns, Museum Director of the Fowler, lists their target audiences as the UCLA campus community, those in the general public who are interested in ethnic or world arts, and those who find particular interest in a specific exhibition. This was true of the Light & Shadows exhibition about Iranian Jews, which targeted the Iranian Jewish community, the broader Jewish community, the broader Iranian community (in that order), and the larger museum-going general public. Stacey Abarbanel, Marketing Director for the Light & Shadows exhibition, emphasized the priority to first engage the Iranian Jewish community before the broader Iranian community, and not just because of the exhibition's content. Geographically, she explained, more Iranian Jews live in Los Angeles (and even Westwood, specifically), while most of the non-Jewish Iranians live in Orange County.

According to Karen Wilson, curator of the Jews in the LA Mosaic exhibition at the Autry, the target audience was Jews in Los Angeles. Based on a very well attended exhibition about Jewish life in the West from 2002, the Autry was interested in bringing more Jewish content to the museum. While the Jews in the LA Mosaic exhibition attracted Jews from Los Angeles, Wilson said the exhibition also attracted general Autry audiences, which are diverse and include many school groups, those who have interest in Hollywood and Gene Autry, and those who "wind up at the zoo and notice there's a museum there because it's right across the street."

Among those instances where exhibitions are unique to a non-museum institution, such as Wilshire Boulevard Temple and Cedars Sinai, their exhibit audiences reflect their institutional audiences (congregants and hospital visitors, respectively). Even though their particular exhibitions tell stories that are important to the larger Jewish story of Los Angeles, and tours can be arranged for both, they are not widely advertised to the general public.

Impact and Evaluation

All of the museums, both Jewish and non-Jewish, involved in my research conduct some form of analysis (either qualitative, quantitative, or both) about their impact on their audiences. However, similar to other Jewish organizations, impact for Jewish museums and exhibitions is difficult to substantiate and measure. People do not visit Jewish museums with the same frequency as they would with other institutions such as Jewish day schools and summer camps. Jewish museums' participant base (separate from their membership) is undefined. Gathering data is more difficult because Jewish museum audiences may not represent a determined group of "regulars" on a list, and may not be committed enough to the institution to even fill out a survey in the first place.

Based on their temporary exhibitions alone, the Autry and the Fowler could rely on previous knowledge to anticipate, and therefore implement, successful exhibitions. Light & Shadows is a travelling exhibition that started at Beit Hatfutsot in Tel Aviv, then moved to Los Angeles, and is now in New York City. The exhibition's success in Tel Aviv validated its opening at subsequent locations. Abarbanel said that the Fowler was well positioned to display the Light & Shadows exhibition because they already had a museum audience interested in

learning about different ethnicities, but they were also well equipped to attract the specific ethnic communities represented in the exhibitions, in this case Iranian Jews.

Similarly, Wilson knew there was an audience eager to return to the Autry for more Jewish-themed content, and through speaking engagements and advertising in the Jewish community from Santa Barbara to Orange County, she was proved correct. As part of the exhibition, Wilson included a series of gallery talks meant to incorporate personal stories into the larger display. She scheduled these talks to occur inside the exhibition, in a space accommodating 20 people. They were eventually moved to the Autry's theater because no fewer than 50 people attended each one of these presentations. "That's one indication of how people wanted this information, wanted this experience, and wanted to share this experience, too" Wilson said. She also noted that there were more tours scheduled than anticipated, volunteer docents had to work more hours, and studies of attendance showed visitors spending more than average amounts of time in the exhibition.

In regard to evaluating impact within museums as a whole, as opposed to particular exhibitions, staff have different (though many overlapping) ways of measurement. Stacy Lieberman, Executive Vice President and Deputy Director of the Autry, said the museum uses evaluation tools such as small focus groups, post-visit surveys, one-on-one surveys with visitors, and analysis of social media sites such as Yelp and Trip Advisor. At the Fowler, Berns added to the list an evaluation of blog posts about the museum, media attention they attracted, and comment books located within exhibitions. Hutman from the LA Museum of the Holocaust emphasized the personal relationships she and her staff develop with teachers of field trip groups and other visitors to gather and evaluate feedback, which they do at staff meetings. Staff,

including Hutman, also make time to spend on the floor to observe and evaluate the visitor experience. “We know when people aren’t happy,” she said.

The Museum of Tolerance and the Zimmer Children’s Museum both benefit from formal research (whether internally or externally conducted), in addition to the more informal and anecdotal methods of collecting data and evaluating impact. Liebe Geft from the Museum of Tolerance explains research conducted by an independent education evaluation professional who received a grant to look at the museum’s impact on San Diego students who visited the museum. The grantor, she explained, wanted evidence that students walked away knowing more about the Holocaust, and that this education led to a shift in attitudes and behavior specifically about bullying. As a result of pre and post tests, and intermediate and long-term interviews, the research found statistically significant evidence of increased Holocaust knowledge and measurable change in attitude. Also in regard to evaluating long-term impact, the Museum of Tolerance uses metrics from feedback, for example, a student that actively confronts bullying on their football team as a result of the museum visit, or classrooms that take tangible steps to stop bullying. In addition to visitor feedback, the Zimmer’s impact and success is validated by external research about early childhood development and education, particularly in the context of children’s museums.

Why Jewish Exhibitions in Non-Jewish Museums?

If the Fowler and the Autry do not identify as Jewish institutions, why then did they include two Jewish-themed exhibitions as part of their museums’ temporary exhibition content? The answer returns to this issue of particularism and universalism. As more broadly defined museums, both maintain increased opportunity for museum content. “If you can tell a good story,

we're interested in just about any subject," said Stacy Lieberman, Executive Vice President and Deputy Director of the Autry.

Lieberman found a number of benefits of housing the Jews in the LA Mosaic exhibition at the Autry. Its mission, as noted above, is to tell the stories of the American West, and Jewish stories are part of that narrative. Further, the Autry's exhibition in 2002 about Jews in the American West was one of their most successful exhibits, and as a result there was excitement about bringing relevant Jewish content back to the museum. Lieberman, who identifies as Jewish, was aware of Jewish advertising channels, and was well-suited to market the exhibition throughout Jewish organizations, synagogues, and publications such as the Jewish Journal. The exhibition itself, not housed in a Jewish museum, also allowed the Autry to explore and ask broader questions about how a city is built and how laws, for instance, influenced population movement.

As a museum that focuses on art and culture of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas, the Fowler showing an exhibition about Iranian Jews also aligns well with their mission and content; the Middle East is part of the museum's purview. Los Angeles also houses one of the largest Iranian Jewish populations in the world, and this community helped facilitate successful outreach. Marla Berns, Executive Director of the Fowler, said she was drawn to the idea of the Light & Shadows exhibition because it discussed a history that people were generally unaware of. While the exhibition at the Fowler allows larger museum audiences to find themselves in the story of immigration and ethnic struggle, the exhibition is also a symbol of pride for the Iranian Jewish community and an opportunity for them to relate to the story that involves multiple generations. Similar to the Jews in the LA Mosaic exhibition, Light & Shadows was going to successfully engage the Iranian Jewish population regardless of the

exhibition's location. The Fowler, however, is located at UCLA, and Westwood is where many Iranian Jews live; the exhibition met them where they are, which increased the exhibition's accessibility to museum visitors, donors, and advertising contacts.

The challenge that staff from both museums expressed in interviews is maintaining that engagement with Jewish audiences (and any particular audience) after temporary exhibitions close. Jewish content can bring Jewish visitors to these museums, but what keeps them coming back? Lieberman acknowledged the challenge and admitted the Autry still has potential to grow in this regard. However, she felt confident that, "a certain percentage will [return] depending on their interests." An additional challenge with exhibiting Jewish content in a non-Jewish space is tailoring understanding to the museum audience. Berns explains how for Light & Shadows, an exhibition that started in Israel, museum staff had to translate Hebrew to English, explain certain concepts within the exhibition more thoroughly, and offer additional programs. "In Israel there are a lot of expectations of what people already know . . . for our audience people do not know what Purim is. They don't know some of the things somebody would take for granted if you were a Jewish museum with a Jewish audience." Berns said.

Jewish Identity

Where is the Jewish? What is the Jewish?

According to literature, the Jewishness of Jewish museums originally came from their collections and displays. Historically, in object-centered institutions, content was primarily Judaica with objects easily identifiable within Jewish religion, history, and culture. As experience, peoplehood, and community became more prominent and necessary for Jewish museums (and arguably non-Jewish museums as well), Jewishness is no longer as

distinguishable as it once was, and therefore the definition is now more broadly articulated. What complicates that articulation according to Edward Rothstein, however, is the reality that, "…nothing is really essential to Jewish American identity other than simply declaring it" (Rothstein, 2016). Jewish museums have always been (and still are) Jewish identity institutions, but Jewish museums in Los Angeles today are finding different ways to justify that recognition, for better or for worse. To Rothstein, Jewish museums focus more on the latter half of the Jewish-American hyphen, and instead of highlighting their particular identity, they celebrate it more relative to the assimilation they achieve in the United States. "Many Jewish American museums are more preoccupied with the freedom of Jews to become American than with the freedom of Jews to remain fully Jewish" (Rothstein, 2016).

In my interviews with their leadership, the Skirball, the LA Museum of the Holocaust, the Museum of Tolerance, and the Zimmer all find Jewishness in their origin, values, and presentation of content "through a Jewish lens," said Phil Liff Grieff, Associate Director of the Builders of Jewish Education Los Angeles. The Skirball Cultural Center opened and developed due to the vision and leadership of Uri Herscher, who felt the space should be nothing short of welcoming and where "people should thank America and give back to it" (Freudenheim, 2013). Nancy Berman, former Director of the Skirball who ran the museum at Hebrew Union College, said there was an "emphasis shift to focusing on the permanent collection not only in terms of the general heritage and history of the Jewish people, but then to focus on the coming to America and making an example of immigration and the Jewish experience." Still today, the Skirball is "wedded to Jewish ideals, but it constructs those ideals in a way that embraces the entire community," said Robert Kirschner, current Museum Director of the Skirball Cultural Center.

The LA Museum of the Holocaust was founded in 1961 by a small group of Holocaust survivors in an English as a second language class at Hollywood High, who then opened their first "museum" at the Jewish Federation in Los Angeles. According to Samara Hutman, Executive Director of the LA Museum of the Holocaust, a number of Holocaust museums throughout the country began with small collections and small offices located within local Federations, and many of them did not sustain over time. The LA Museum of the Holocaust is the oldest of this type of Federation-based Holocaust museum, and it not only still exists but has expanded over time. Eventually, the collection found a larger and more permanent space, and the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust opened in 2010 in Pan Pacific Park. Samara Hutman, Executive Director of the LA Museum of the Holocaust "absolutely" considers it a Jewish museum "because it holds within it a story of the Jewish people, one of the greatest tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people" she said. However, she does not consider it exclusively a Jewish museum because according to her "the Holocaust is a human story, it's a global story, it's a story that belongs to mortality and for humanity to puzzle over and struggle with forever." That sentiment can be found in the museum, within the exhibitions, for example, that display information about other genocides around the world. From a values perspective, Hutman cites remembrance, action, and welcoming; those are not particularly Jewish values.

The Zimmer Children's museum began as My Jewish Discovery Place in the Westside JCC and relocated to the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles building in 1999. There, they not only became an independent 501(c)3, but also changed their name to the Zimmer as the result of a grant and redefined themselves institutionally as a children's museum. The Zimmer fuses Jewish values, symbols, and tradition into learning and play with the hope of developing children into the best versions of themselves as they grow. She stressed that many Jewish values

are universal values, and therefore the Zimmer's inclusivity is a direct reflection of their Jewishness, not a veering away from it. "We are an institution that teaches people how to be a mensch. And we're anchored in Jewish tradition and text. That will always be how we were founded," said Esther Netter, Zimmer CEO.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, and subsequent Museum of Tolerance, was founded by Rabbi Marvin Hier, who approached Wiesenthal in Europe, "with a request to use his good name for an organization which is not only a memorial to the Shoah," Liebe Geft, Museum Director of the Museum of Tolerance, said, "but also be an activist organization that defends against anti-Semitism, bigotry, persecution, and prejudice today that stands up for those who cannot stand up and speak for themselves." Geft considers the Museum of Tolerance to be a Jewish museum because it was built on foundational Jewish values of human dignity, notions of responsibility, and justice. While the museum is strongly anchored by the story and history of the Holocaust, the museum aims to "apply the lessons of the Holocaust to contemporary issues of the day that not only extend to the Jewish community, but also the whole world itself," said Rabbi Meyer May, Executive Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

All four museums are similar in that they each acknowledge both Jewish and universal components in their respective museum experiences, at varying degrees. Yes, they are Jewish, and they also aim to fulfill larger purposes, with larger subject areas for content, for non-exclusively Jewish audiences. Jewishness is but the particular lens through which these museums embrace universal themes and goals; it is only part of their complete identities, which encompass many perspectives. Self-identification is independent of the subjective identifications museums may receive from the larger community. Within any institution, Netter recognizes that "there's a

legal identity, there is an identity of your users, there's an identity of your funders, there's even an identity of a graduate researcher," which was a reference to me.

Just because each recognizes a Jewish and universal component to their identities does not mean they all do so to the same degree. Jewishness can dictate both the inclusivity and exclusivity of museum visitors and content. At the Zimmer, Netter acknowledges that it is "Jewish" of the museum to welcome larger audiences, to teach them about *tikkun olam*, and to encourage all children in the community to give back. By contrast, the Simon Wiesenthal Center's executive leadership is mostly comprised of Orthodox rabbis, and in terms of museum content, the Museum of Tolerance strategically eliminates topics that might be appropriate to their "universal" exhibitions thematically, but do not reflect the political and religious beliefs of those in charge, such as Palestinian suffering in Israel. In his critique of the Museum of Tolerance, one of Edward Rothstein's issues is with the juxtaposition of anti-Semitism (particular) and intolerance (universal). Though I agree with Rothstein that anti-Semitism is unique relative to other forms of oppression, I do not believe that the Museum of Tolerance is wrong to introduce these universal conversations into the museum experience.

We find this, too, in terms of how these museums identify themselves institutionally. None of them have Jewish in their names or within their legal 501(c)3 status, none of them identify as religious institutions, and only the Skirball has the word "Jewish" in their mission statements. While their names rightfully suggest commitments to functions and goals beyond the Jewish community and Jewish religion, legally defining an organization as religious limits access to certain types of funding, which more than one interviewee admitted to me was a factor in defining legal status. In addition to a Jewish museum and Jewish institution, the Skirball by name is a cultural center, and according to Robert Kirschner, Museum Director of the Skirball,

also, “a secular institution and a cultural institution.” In addition to a Jewish museum, Hutman considers the LA Museum of the Holocaust to be “a sanctuary for memory and a community gathering space,” and legally, the Zimmer is an arts and culture museum.

Los Angeles Jewish Life

Jewish life in Los Angeles is unique in regard to its geography, population, and Jewish communal culture. Formally established later than most cities in the United States, Los Angeles, “and its atmosphere of freedom and lack of East Coast-influenced social norms made many Jewish leaders think that the city would be the home of innovative forms of Jewish communities, identities, and cultures” (Aviv, Shneer, 2005, 78). Compared to other cities, Los Angeles is physically very spread out, and over time Jews have concentrated into seven “socio-ecologies,” according to sociologist Bruce Phillips. These include the Coastline (Malibu south to Palos Verdes along the coast), West Los Angeles, the Urban (Pico-Robertson, Fairfax, and East Los Angeles communities), Valley Hills (Studio City, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Tarzana, and Woodland Hills), the Valley Flats (San Fernando Valley), the West Valley (Canejo Valley and Simi Valley), and Jewish Isolated Areas (those more distant to the more populated Jewish areas – the North consisting of areas such as Santa Clarita, and South consisting of those south of Downtown all the way down to Long Beach (Phillips, 2007).

By 1969, Los Angeles held the third largest Jewish population in the world behind New York and Tel Aviv (Aviv, Shneer, 2005). The Jewish population of Los Angeles is diverse and populated with Jewish immigrants from all over the world, which makes it an important location geographically for institutions, such as museums, to explore issues of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Professionally, many Jews in Los Angeles hold private-sector jobs in business, law,

medicine, and entertainment, which consequently makes the Jewish community wealthy. In terms of younger Jews, Benor cites the importance of social gatherings and "being seen" (Benor, 2011, 8). However, since Los Angeles is very spread out, and the Jewish community is fragmented, intermingling is a challenge (Benor, 2011).

The Los Angeles Jewish community offers individuals a menu of choices, also known as "boutique" Judaism, when developing their Jewish identity and practices. Organizationally, the Federation is not the central address of the community, and the communal landscape is vast and varied. There are many organizations and opportunities for diverse Jewish activities, engagement, and service provision that can be distinguished between "establishment" and "non-establishment" organizations. "Establishment" organizations refer to the traditional, long-standing organizations such as Federation, the American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation League, and "non-establishment" organizations refer to newer, smaller, more liberal, niche-organizations such as Yiddishkayt LA, Reboot, and JStreet (Benor, 2011).

By the 1970s and 80s, untraditional geography and wealth inspired a growth in innovation and creativity, which made Los Angeles the premier West Coast destination for museum culture (Aviv, Shneer, 2005). Unlike other cities in the United States, Los Angeles does not have one Jewish museum, but rather a small consortium of museums and permanent and temporary exhibitions that reflect the individualistic spirit, diverse population, and geographic layout of Los Angeles. Like all organizational life in Los Angeles, museums and exhibitions offer visitors a choice in what to explore, when, where, and how.

Pride in being located in Los Angeles has led other institutions separate from museums, such as Wilshire Boulevard Temple and Cedars Sinai hospital, to create exhibit-like displays that highlight their respective histories and ties to the city of Los Angeles. Wilshire Boulevard

Temple is the oldest Jewish congregation in Los Angeles. Recently, they redesigned an "old fashioned" exhibition of little dioramas, black and white photography, and typed up statements into, "a museum quality history of not just Wilshire Boulevard Temple, but the history of Jews in Los Angeles," said Susan Gordon, Director of Communications and Marketing for Wilshire Boulevard Temple. The new exhibition, titled "Wilshire Boulevard Temple Making History," talks about Los Angeles' Jewish history vis-à-vis the temple, its founding families, and other famous Jews in Los Angeles. "What we've tried to do is give a sense of how Jewish life evolved in LA through our congregants," she said. "The congregation and the board and the rabbis have always felt a responsibility to represent Judaism to Los Angeles – that's been part of the temple's history from the beginning." An education professional at the Skirball highlights the experience of other cities in the United States that may have one historic synagogue that helped tell the Jewish stories of local communities. Even though Wilshire Boulevard Temple is one of many historic and more modern congregations in Los Angeles, this professional thought that Wilshire Boulevard Temple should fill this role for Los Angeles and the Jewish and non-Jewish tourists that visit.

Like Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Cedars Sinai also has strong roots in the history of Jewish Life in Los Angeles and presents their unique role as a hospital in their newly opened hallway exhibition "Cedars Sinai, Los Angeles." The exhibition is part of the hospital's larger historical conservancy project and displays the history of Cedars Sinai up until 1977 when its current campus was opened. "I think it's actually an important story about the Jewish community in LA and how we became integrated. We're a very unique hospital in that Cedars Sinai developed in parallel with the city of Los Angeles, and the way we designed this exhibition is . . . about how it hits those milestones in the context of the growth of this dynamic metropolitan area

that we call Los Angeles," said Jonathan Schreiber, Director of Community Engagement at Cedars Sinai.

The Jewish museums in my research were all founded in the 20th century, and instead of displaying their institutional identities relative to the Jewish identity and history of the city, they take advantage of its diverse populations and innovative culture to tell their stories and leave their stamps on Jewish life. The LA Museum of the Holocaust was the first Holocaust museum in the United States, originally founded in 1961 by Holocaust survivors who moved to Los Angeles and wanted to begin the process of what would become the museum's mission: commemorate and educate. "The fact that LA had the first Holocaust museum in the country is a spectacular finding and it's a point of pride," said Samara Hutman, Executive Director of the LA Museum of the Holocaust. "I think those early survivors, in addition to putting their lives back together and recovering from the trauma they had endured, had the wherewithal to also lay the groundwork for future generations should be a point of pride for all Los Angelenos, and not just Jewish Los Angelenos." The LA Museum of the Holocaust also embraces innovative educational methods both within and outside the museum, that not only keep the stories of the Holocaust relevant as survivor populations decline, but also help sustain commemoration well into the future. "We're doing very innovative work that's very much in the here and now of LA," Hutman said. One example of this is the museum's Righteous Conversations Project, which brings Holocaust survivors to local high school students in Los Angeles. Inspired by dialogue and education materials from the workshop, students create short public service announcement videos (many of which are award winning) aimed to raise awareness about social injustice and intolerance in their communities (Righteous Conversations Project n.d.).

Considering the diverse population of Los Angeles, the Museum of Tolerance is uniquely situated to engage in dialogue around tolerance and the ways we view, interact with, and treat people who are both similar to and different from us. Liebe Geft, Museum Director of the Museum of Tolerance, acknowledged the potential for the Museum of Tolerance to better the future of Los Angeles one person at a time. "It has the potential to see a critical mass of people in different communities, different stages of their lives, coming here for different reasons," she said. While a diverse population is an important characteristic of Los Angeles, it is not unique to large metropolitan cities, which is why the Simon Wiesenthal Center expanded its reach to include a museum in New York (and eventually Jerusalem) and offices in New York, Chicago, South Florida, Toronto, Jerusalem, Paris, and Buenos Aires. When the Simon Wiesenthal Center was founded, founder Marvin Heir leveraged the wealth of fundraising dollars from Hollywood particularly to help establish the organization.

While it does not come without problems, the Light & Shadows and Jewish in the LA Mosaic exhibitions succeeded in attracting particular Jewish audiences in Los Angeles to celebrate being particularly Jewish within more universal contexts. The Light & Shadows exhibition was uniquely important to Los Angeles because the city houses the world's largest Iranian Jewish population, and Westwood (and subsequently UCLA) is where a lot of that community lives. The exhibition was a fortuitous opportunity for one Jewish ethnic group to display its unique history and culture that not only boosted pride, knowledge, and nostalgia within the Iranian Jewish community, but aimed to enhance awareness and appreciation from the larger Jewish and museum-going communities in Los Angeles as well. Marla Berns, Executive Director of the Fowler, also saw an opportunity to display Iran in a way that contradicted

people's perceptions. "I think people become better citizens when they know more and when they can learn from information that isn't just in headlines in the newspapers," she said.

Another unique element of the exhibition was the larger grappling with how different Jewish ethnic groups establish themselves in different geographic communities. Like Israel, Jewish institutions in both Los Angeles and New York reflect a dominant Ashkenazi history and Jewish population, and often exclude Sephardic (and other Jewish ethnic) narratives. "Knowing [Light & Shadows] would be a travelling exhibition was important because that way we knew it would touch more people," said Sharon Nazarian, President of the Y&S Nazarian Family Foundation. In New York and LA there "are two very large Iranian Jewish communities, who for the first time felt acknowledged."

The Jews of the LA Mosaic exhibition at the Autry was not only a reflection of Dr. Karen Wilson's personal research on the Jews of Los Angeles, but an opportunity for a museum that tells ethnic narratives in the West to tell the LA Jewish narrative, which, relative to other cities in the United States, has only recently been explored and documented. "In 1870 the Chinese outnumbered the Jews, so it has never been a significant part of the population, and yet Jews have played significant roles in political life, economic life, social life, philanthropy, everything from the beginning and that did not change," said Wilson. She agrees that even though Jews in the LA Mosaic was comprehensive, there is no one LA Jewish story and no one way to tell it. "The exhibition told my version of the LA Jewish story. We tried to have as many voices and as many different kinds of representations as we could in the exhibition, but ultimately it's one way to frame the story and we tried to have activities where people could actually contribute their stories in different ways." She added that a permanent exhibition would not suit the city because "LA does not have that many history museums to begin with," and, "I think it would be out of

character for the LA Jewish community because I see one of the characteristics of the community is that they are more consistently engaged with the broader community than they are in just dealing with Jewish concerns. To have a permanent exhibition like that would betray that legacy and that consistency that I see throughout the history here."

Even though the geography of the Skirball within Los Angeles is important, their ultimate purpose is less so. From the beginning, the Skirball aimed to be a national institution that did not simply focus on the Jews of Los Angeles, but the larger Jewish experience in the United States. Their original collections contained objects brought over by Jews in Europe. As the Skirball Cultural Center developed, they conducted outreach to collect objects of American Judaica to better tell that story particularly with the intent to connect that story with larger American themes of immigration and democracy. "We've created an institution that LA Jews can be proud of and can feel, even if they don't come here or support us, that . . . this institution is well regarded; it's a part of the cultural fabric of LA," said an education professional at the Skirball. In addition to a reputable Jewish institution that tells more of the American Jewish story for West Coast audiences, the Skirball represents Jews' successful assimilation throughout history and around the world. An education professional at the Skirball said, "We know how to survive as a minority, that's how we were able to do so well here. I think that the experience of being a minority has served us well and helped us be a part of America. I think that's what we want to give back to the general community here: say we are a nation of immigrants, minorities from all backgrounds, and we have to all learn how to get along."

Jewish Museum Professionals as Jewish Communal Professionals

All of my interviewees identify as Jewish. Only about half of my interviewees identify as Jewish communal professionals, and some more strongly associate with that identity than others. More interviewees identified as museum or community professionals than Jewish communal professionals, similar to the historic trend, which I referenced earlier in this thesis. In a discussion of Jewish communal professionals as "jugglers," Gerry Bubis explains how Jewish communal professionals more often than not identify with, and actively participate in, the profession associated with their Jewish communal work, such as Social Work and Public Administration. Such will be the case with Jewish museums. He argues, "They may be lawyers, rabbis, political scientists, community organizers, and even graduates of schools of Jewish communal service, but there is no articulated core set of knowledge or values" that bridge them together (Bubis, 2009, 187). Based on Bubis' understanding, the Jewish communal profession is independent of the museum profession, and this fragments my interviewees' expressed professional identities.

When asked if she considers herself a Jewish communal professional, Nancy Berman, former Director of the Skirball said, "Yes. I do. I feel like I was privileged to be part of the process of growing Jewish identity and Jewish connection and opportunity for Jewish expression. I think of myself as a Jewish museum professional, I think of myself as a museum professional. I think of myself as an art professional and yes, I think I feel connected to the Jewish and academic communities." Samara Hutman, Executive Director of the LA Museum of the Holocaust, said she "proudly" identifies as a Jewish communal professional, because her work in this field ultimately led to her daughter's bat mitzvah. "How can you not be a Jewish communal professional if that's the door you entered through?" she said. "This work [at the LA

Museum of the Holocaust] has connected me very much to my father who died before I was born, and it taught me a lesson that people who lived before you, even if you don't know them, you can love them, and even if you don't meet them you can really learn and be shaped by them in your lifetime . . . it's a very Jewish idea." Similarly, Liebe Geft, Museum Director of the Museum of Tolerance, identifies as a Jewish communal professional because, "it's so much a strong part of my own personal identity, and what I'm doing here is so governed by my Jewish values. And in many respects, I'm representing the Jewish community to the 98 point something percent of our visitors who are not Jewish. So in that regard, I very much identify with it, and we do serve the Jewish community. But in serving the broader community as a Jewish woman, I'm very conscious of the importance of being a good role model and living the values that I'm trying to teach," she said.

Some of my interviewees who identify as Jewish communal professionals, though, do not identify that way exclusively. Esther Netter, Zimmer CEO, said, "I consider that one of the lenses through which I see myself. But not only. I think when you're saying Jewish, there's Jewish as the summation of the description and then there's the Jewish comma, and all the other ways I think of myself or I think of the Zimmer. I'm a Jewish communal professional and I'm also a communal professional who happens to be Jewish." Others acknowledged that how they self-identify professionally has changed over time, indicating they once identified as Jewish communal professionals, but in their current roles feel less connected to that identification. An education professional at the Skirball said, "When I started in 1984, I certainly thought of myself as a Jewish communal professional. I do less so today because I feel that the work of the Skirball has evolved in such a way that I feel that Jewish communal professionals' job is to serve the Jewish community primarily although not exclusively, and I feel [at the Skirball we] service the

community of which the Jewish world is a component, but it's not the only component, or prime component." Robert Kirschner, Museum Director of the Skirball, does not identify as a Jewish communal professional in his current role. "I don't think of myself that way exactly. I was a congregational Rabbi; I also have a PhD. I've been in the academic world; I've been in the synagogue world. Through both of those avenues I've participated in Jewish communal life. But I don't necessarily identify as a Jewish community professional. I'm a museum director at a Jewish institution," he said. Karen Wilson, PhD and curator of the Jews in the LA Mosaic exhibition, said she once was, "but I don't think of myself quite that way now, but before I went back in school I actually worked for JVS. I was a development director. I was a Jewish professional then. I think of myself as a historian now. My interests include Jewish history, but it's also broader than Jewish or Jewish LA," she said.

For those who do not consider themselves Jewish communal professionals, each still indicated some personal connection to their Jewish identity. Stacy Lieberman, Executive Vice President and Deputy Director of the Autry emphasized how her Jewish principles guide her professional behavior, saying, "I think of myself in this role as a leader who is ethical and humane, and also decisive. . . we have stakeholders, and we need to make some strategic decisions, but I do feel very sensitive to the human resources side of things and I feel that is sort of a Jewish ethic." Marla Berns, Executive Director of the Fowler, said, "No. I mean, I'm a museum professional, and I'm Jewish, but I wouldn't characterize myself as a Jewish communal professional." She added, "I think what you're asking is whether my Jewish identity informs my practice in what we do at the museum, and I would say yes of course: by being Jewish I probably have a bit more interest in projects that deal with Jewish history. But I don't think that all things considered, that would be a larger factor than any other factor." Rabbi Meyer May, Executive

Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, is not a fan of labels but expressed, "What's important to me is trying to give meaning to what I'm doing. As it happens I get to do it through Jewish communal life, I do it through the Wiesenthal Center, I do it through former president of the Rabbinical Council of California, I'm on numerous worthwhile Jewish boards that are serving broader interest. But that's not because I like the label of Jewish communal leadership, it's because I think it's important," he said.

Jewish Museum Fundraising

Museum Giving

Jews were a large part of American cultural development, and funding it. Not only did they provide the funds, but many also held the collections that started many museums. However, from my research, I have learned that many Jewish museums rely increasingly on non-Jewish funding. According to Ruth Seldin, Jewish communal life did not prioritize Jewish museums financially, which led to heightened competition for donor dollars as more museums and Holocaust institutions opened their doors (and to the necessity to seek funding from different sources). Jewish museums are also in competition with non-Jewish cultural institutions (Seldin, 1991). Many Jewish museums have gone through capital campaigns to build or expand facilities. These campaigns are important to Jewish museums specifically because they rely heavily on their physical space. Seldin found two consistencies in Jewish museum funding: Funding sources are mixed for each institution, and for any museum that mix can vary from year to year (Seldin, 1991). The funding sources include, but are not limited to, individual donors (gifts, membership fees, donations at fundraising events), corporate donations and sponsors, private and public

foundations, government grants, and Federations. She also found that museums that are part of larger institutions are at an advantage financially over those that operate independently.

David Callahan from the Center for the Future of Museums also acknowledges the inconsistency in museum funding, for all museums, but is encouraged by findings in recent studies. According to the Giving USA report for 2013, giving to Culture, Arts, and Humanities increased by more than 7%, twice the average increase for giving overall that year (Callahan, 2014). While the study shows museums rebounding faster than any other in the nonprofit sector, he recommends that museums find more opportunities for increased income streams (Callahan, 2014).

To better understand American Jewish giving patterns in the 21st century, I turned to a report on the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) from 2001, which had four key findings in regards to giving among American Jews (Cohen, 2004). First, Jews living in the west are less likely to give to Federation than those residing in other regions of the country (Cohen, 2004). Second, that as Jews affiliate with Jewish institutions and organizations, they donate more to Jewish causes (Cohen, 2004). Third, people with higher household incomes give a greater proportion of their charitable dollars to Federation than those with lower incomes (Cohen, 2004). Fourth, those born after 1950, who are today middle-aged or younger, display a more significant drop-off in Federation giving than in contributions to other causes compared to those born before 1950, who generally donated more to Federation (Cohen, 2004).

Fundraising Sources

Since Light & Shadows was a travelling exhibition established originally at Beit Hatfutsot in Tel Aviv, it relied on much of its own fundraising dollars independent of the Fowler

budget when it came to Los Angeles. The primary funder for the Light & Shadows exhibition in Tel Aviv (and also Los Angeles and New York) is the Y&S Nazarian Family Foundation, and the exhibition also received support from other private foundations, individuals, and Jewish Federations. By contrast, the Jews in the LA Mosaic exhibition was more of a collaborative project between Dr. Karen Wilson and the Autry, and relied on the Autry's leadership and institutional support to fundraise. The Jewish members of the Autry's board of trustees leveraged their networks and relationships to reach out to the community and collect financial support. The exhibition also received support from the Jewish Federation, private foundations, and individuals, some of whom had never donated to the Autry before, because the content of this exhibition in particular was important to them. Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary was one of the sponsors of the exhibition, and ultimately a meaningful partner because they had their own publication about prominent Jews who lived in LA.

The Zimmer and the LA Museum of the Holocaust are both independent museums, unaffiliated with a larger organization, and therefore manage their own unique sources of fundraising. Less the 25% of the Zimmer's annual budget is earned revenue, and the rest must be raised each year. According to Esther Netter, CEO of the Zimmer, their funding comes from individuals, family foundations, general foundations, and grants. Very little of their funding comes from government grants or corporate sponsors. Their biggest funding sources are individuals and family foundations. They also receive support from the Jewish Federation. Many of the Zimmer's individual donors are personally or professionally connected to their board of directors, which is comprised of many individuals from the entertainment industry. Looking to the future, Netter hopes to increase corporate sponsorships as well as donations from the

Zimmer's 1,800 member families, who may not see their membership fees as general donor support to the museum.

The LA Museum of the Holocaust raises much of its annual operating budget from their annual gala. Another large funder is the Jewish Community Foundation in Los Angeles, which awarded the museum a $250,000 Cutting Edge grant. Other sources of funding include the Jewish Federation, private family foundations, and individuals. With no admission fees, the museum displays a donation box in the museum lobby for those who feel inclined to donate. Samara Hutman, Executive Director of the LA Museum of the Holocaust said, "We get five dollars in the cash box from some people, and we get $20,000 and $50,000 from other people. There are people who care about this history being held, there are people who are committed to supporting the oldest survivor-founded museum in the nation, and there are people who think we're doing a really good job of holding down that fort and fulfilling that mission."

The Museum of Tolerance and Skirball museum are two museums affiliated with larger organizations, the Simon Wiesenthal and Skirball Cultural Center, respectively, and they are arguably the two most well-known, recognizable, and established in the city. Both the Skirball museum and the Museum of Tolerance are at an advantage being positioned within larger organizations in terms of fundraising and sustainability. Both the Skirball Cultural Center and The Simon Wiesenthal Center receive a larger percentage of their funding from Hollywood and corporate sponsors, though not exclusively. The Museum of Tolerance's budget is primarily comprised of fundraising dollars from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, which receives its funds from state and federal grants, individual donors, and revenue from their annual gala. Additional, though not significant, funds for the Museum of Tolerance also come from sales from admission to the museum and its special events, as well as the museum gift shop.

Interestingly, between 30-40% of the original funding for the building of the Skirball Cultural Center was from non-Jewish sources, which continue today, and include (but are not limited to) the Ahmanson, Walt Disney, the Dream Fund, Ella Fitzgerald, the Parsons Foundation, Rose Hill, the Weingart Foundation, and Wells Fargo. According to an education professional at the Skirball, "they feel that it's important for the Jewish community to have a place to share its story and they want to see it thrive, and so they support us, and they support the good work we do with schools and children, so that raises a lot of money for us." In addition to fundraising for the cultural center and its activities each year, the advancement department of the cultural center also fundraises for museum exhibitions, which are expensive, and paid for by their own operating funds, according to Robert Kirschner, Museum Director of the Skirball. Similar to other organizations, a small cohort makes up the Skirball's "very largest givers," said Kirschner.

Additional funds for the center come from the Skirball Cultural Center endowment, which is "substantial and owes itself entirely to the founding President and CEO Uri Herscher, who single handedly raised this money all from private sources," said Kirschner. The Skirball also takes advantage of its physical space and uses it to earn funding through rentals. The hospitality and private events department rents Skirball's facilities for private parties and organizational events (nonprofits, Jewish or non-Jewish, receive discounted rates). "We have our own in-house catering and it's taken years to build up that practice, but it's a major source of income for us," Kirschner said. "The business would not be possible without that." Skirball membership fees generate about $500,000 a year, which is a small fraction of funds raised.

Fundraising Practices

Both exhibitions, Light & Shadows and Jews in the LA Mosaic, successfully fundraised and opened because they garnered interest, audiences, and financial support from specific communities who really wanted their respective content to be there. While interest and visitors do not necessarily guarantee donors, both navigated the LA Jewish landscape to find much of the funding they were looking for. Marla Berns, Executive Director of the Fowler, explained how the Fowler helped to form community support committees that helped raise funds and bring in community partners for the Light & Shadows exhibition, which worked successfully for this exhibition. "Some exhibitions lend themselves to community-based partnerships more than others," she said. "Other audiences are not so present, they don't have as many people and as much of a profile, so we don't connect with as much depth." Relative to other exhibitions the museum has held, however, there was a clear and present audience in LA for the Light & Shadows exhibition: the Iranian Jewish community. What also made fundraising successful for the Light & Shadows exhibition was the large financial commitment from the Y&S Nazarian Family Foundation, which helped inspire others to give, knowing there was already large donor buy-in. "They were not the sole funder and that was really important to all of us, that we came to the larger community and said okay, we have a great deal of support from this one foundation and would like everyone else to join on board, said Stacey Abarbanel, Marketing Director for the Light & Shadows exhibition. "We had nice solid funding to have a robust series of programs and marketing plan as part of the exhibition." In regard to Fowler fundraising more generally, Berns emphasizes the importance of diversifying fundraising sources and building endowments to help support exhibitions that may be more difficult to fund otherwise.

Professional development staff and Jewish lay leaders were important players in the fundraising strategy for the Jews in the LA Mosaic exhibition at the Autry. The development campaign, like most museums and even other organizations, "figure out who would have the most interest or stake in an exhibition and they would approach them, too," said Wilson. Recruiting those donors, she explained, also entailed inviting them to social gatherings where they would get a preview of the exhibition. Those individuals were invited to these gatherings mostly by the three or four Jewish trustees of the Autry at the time. Looking back, Stacy Lieberman, Executive Vice President and Deputy Director of the Autry, admits that while they ultimately found donors to support the exhibition, there were also challenges to fundraising for this exhibition, and that led to raising fewer dollars than hoped. "Most people who support Jewish projects and institutions have long term relationships with them, and we had this one-off project. What was that going to mean to them, and what kind of long term relationships would they have here? . . . What's in it for them?" she said. Lieberman also added that the professional fundraising department experienced some transition during this time, which hindered meaningful relationship building and ultimately number of dollars raised. Lieberman sees the potential for the Autry to shift their fundraising and propel the museum into the future. There is potential to maximize relationships with the many groups of people the Autry exhibitions and collections may attract, to build endowment funds in addition to those promised from Mrs. Autry (about $7 million a year), and to expand their physical space with the recent launch of a capital campaign.

Esther Netter, CEO of the Zimmer, believes definition – who you are and how you are viewed – is important for fundraising because it informs donors about their funding choices. At the time the Zimmer museum incorporated into its own 501(c)3, Netter and the leadership staff decided to define it legally as an arts education institution and, only secondly, "born out of the

Jewish community and based on Jewish tradition and teaching," she said. The legal definition of the Zimmer was not going to use the word Jewish so that the organization could access government funding and more corporate sponsors. "The universe thinks Jewish is religious, not Jewish cultural," Netter said. Their name also changed from "discovery place" to "children's museum," which was a change also motivated by fundraising because, "people give more money to children's museums than they do places. Places sound cute and small," she said. "It was strategic for funding purposes to present ourselves as big as we can be." Similar to the Fowler, Netter also strives to diversify funding sources at the Zimmer for sustainability purposes, most notably in the event Jewish donor dollars are directed toward pressing concerns such as an emergency in Israel or a natural disaster.

Netter believes the strengths of the Zimmer's fundraising are in their strong board, their strong ties to the entertainment community, and the relationships built to attract more gifts. "I think people give to people first, and then they give to causes. So we have very well networked people connected to us," said Netter. Even though Netter has support fundraising from her board, she sees the opportunity to make philanthropy at the Zimmer less executive leadership centric, and instead involve staff and constituents more formally in the process of raising funds through relationship building exactly where they are positioned. In line with their mission, the Zimmer aims to develop children into the best they can be and, according to Netter, is well situated to develop our next generation of donors. "I think starting to teach philanthropy doesn't just happen at the end of your life when you have leftover and extra discretionary money; it's from the very beginnings," she said.

Since relocating to their new location, the LA Museum of the Holocaust has consistently grown their staff, programs, and operating budget, and Samara Hutman, Executive Director,

credits her "team" for the museum's success. "I think we're building a community, each person has connections and roots in the community, and we're building relationships every day," she said. The real success, however, is not just building relationships for the sake of building relationships, but doing so with constituents who strongly associate with the museum. Hutman said, "I think [building relationships] is true of any of these wonderful organizations that are doing such important work, the key is you have to have your stakeholders be people who not only think what you're doing is great, but who are willing to sign up to be on your team – to be in your boat with you." Hutman's people-centric leadership style also connects to the museum's messaging, and how the staff took the time to pause fundraising efforts in order to refine and rally around the museum's messaging, which would eventually maximize fundraising. Using this strategy, the LA Museum of the Holocaust raised over $1 million at their annual gala last year, which the museum had not done before, and closed with a surplus for the first time ever since its founding in 1961. The core of what the LA Museum of the Holocaust offers as a museum is free access, parking, and content, in the spirit of the founding survivors who felt the public should not have to pay for Holocaust education. "It's just open, open, open, and I think that's a very liberating and compelling idea to donors. That's like a rock solid foundational concept; if what you really want is education, then if you want to support education, supporting something that is really pure to the core is very appealing to people who have choices about where they give their dollars. Everything's finite," Hutman said.

Simon Wiesenthal fundraising is rooted in relationships, and, like the Skirball, benefits from having the founder of the organization, Rabbi Marvin Heir, still actively involved as CEO. Rabbi Meyer May, Executive Director of the Simon Wiesenthal, oversees development and has been in his role for 38 years. "I have to make new relationships all the time. Takes a lot of time

and effort. People have to respect you. You have to get people to understand that you're worthy of their respect, so the Wiesenthal Center has been able to achieve that," he said. While there are critics of low turnover at the executive level of nonprofit organizations, from a fundraising standpoint the Simon Wiesenthal Center has benefited from the opportunity to build long term relationships with donors that help sustain it, with special (though not exclusive) focus on major donors and small, but consistent donors. "Consistency is a very critical measure as to whether a person will leave a large gift to the Wiesenthal Center in their will. It's amazing," said Rabbi May, citing an example of a donor that gave $15 annually for 20 years and eventually left a $1 million bequest.

Executive leadership has also been able to maintain these relationships, and subsequently build others, to help fund the Simon Wiesenthal Center's expanding operations, offices, and museums around the world. The scope of their activities internationally also provides for many opportunities for new donors to connect to the organization, and donors can specify where their donation is directed. "Sometimes you have a film, and a person who was not a donor saw it and all of a sudden gets excited by it and wants to invite many wealthy people to it. Next thing you know you have five people saying how do we do the next film?" Rabbi May said. Additionally, the Simon Wiesenthal Center has an annual gala, and well-connected lay leaders consistently attract high-profile honorees. Looking long term, the Simon Wiesenthal Center is endowed, but "it's not endowed enough," said Rabbi May. He increasingly thinks about the long-term future of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, especially with inevitable leadership transitions, even if they do not occur for a number of years. Their capital campaign for the new Museum of Tolerance, Jerusalem, is $100 million, which includes endowment funding for the site.

When the Skirball collections were still part of the museum at Hebrew Union College under Director Nancy Berman, they slowly built their financial assets through grants and museum membership. Berman explained that back in the 1970s, it was much easier to receive funds from state and federal grant programs from agencies such as the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment of the Humanities, because there were fewer institutions competing for funds then relative to how many compete for them now. As the Skirball transitioned to its new location, Uri Herscher became the President and CEO, and ultimately the primary driving force for fundraising. His personal relationships with individual donors and foundations built over time solidify much of the cultural center's operating budget and endowment funds. "So much has depended upon the protean and herculean efforts of Uri. He's just a remarkable fundraiser," said Robert Kirschner, Museum Director of the Skirball, who emphasized the success of Herscher's fundraising, not just for the opening of the cultural center in 1996, but for the continuous construction the center underwent up until just recently.

The Skirball successfully secures more financial resources by renting their facilities for events. "If you have your event here, the money made is going back to support this gift to the community, not some stockholder's profit. People like that. That's been a very successful model. I can't stress enough other places don't have the facilities we have," said an education professional at the Skirball. In addition to facilities rentals, long term fundraising includes the endowment that Herscher has built over time, which should limit the amount the Skirball is forced to raise annually moving forward, with or without Herscher present. "Whenever the founder of an institution hands over the reins, it's a transition to be sure . . . I don't think anybody can quite replace the person who founds the institution," Kirschner said.

Fundraising Challenges

Jewish museums, relative to other organizations, face certain fundraising challenges. More generally, Jewish museums (and even non-Jewish museums) had increased challenges recovering from the economic recession, as donors had to make more strategic choices about where reduced funds would go. "Many of them are still in recovery, and many of them have not been able to make up for the loss of money or the cutbacks in staff and programs they had to deal with since 2008," said a lay leader for the Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM). These effects extended to CAJM, an umbrella organization that does not directly fundraise for other Jewish museums, and that also struggles to fundraise for its own operational and program costs. Separate from the economic crisis, CAJM board members are sometimes conflicted between supporting an umbrella organization and supporting the Jewish museum they are personally affiliated with. In difficult financial times, Jewish museums are in many ways alone in developing a recovery plan. Robert Kirschner from the Skirball reiterates the importance of a healthy economy on institutions like Jewish museums, saying, "times of prosperity and times of stability are always optimal for any enterprise who wishes to get public support when people have the support to give."

Other challenges for Jewish museums and their fundraising are internal and relate to resources and messaging. Hutman, from the LA Museum of the Holocaust, said their biggest challenge fundraising is the time available in the day. "I don't think it's difficult, there's just not enough time. [Like schoolwork], the work isn't hard, it's getting it all done in the time that you have . . .it's big work, it's relationship based work, and so it needs a lot of time and attention," she said. Esther Netter from the Zimmer said one of their bigger challenges is their location within the Jewish Federation building, which limits their publicity and ability to attract new

donors. “It’s a challenge having a site that has no outdoor signage,” she said. Additionally, their messaging, which is broad and inclusive of all children, families, and even teens, sometimes contradicts outside perception. “The universe thinks that because we’re in this building and we’re closed on Shabbat that we are only a Jewish facing children’s museum, serving the community,” Netter said. “That has a lot of doors closed to us.”

Another challenge for Jewish museums is attracting donors to their niche messaging. Marla Berns, Executive Director of the Fowler, said, “It’s just difficult to always identify individuals who will have an interest in what we do, because what we do is so unexpected. It’s not like our mandate is primarily to show contemporary artists from LA – where you would have a much bigger pool of supporters. How many people care about contemporary African art? How many people care about contemporary Iranian art? Depending on the subject matter, the pool is bigger or smaller and makes the work harder.”

As Jewish museums and exhibitions as well as Jewish communal life expand in Los Angeles, these respective causes compete for limited donor dollars. “I don’t think [our fundraising challenges] are any different than any worthy case, because there are a lot of worthy causes. There are a lot of people with means, not all people with means are receptive, not all of them are generous. By the time you narrow it down to the ones who are, the one you can manage to meet and cultivate and establish trust with, that’s very intensive and competitive work,” Kirschner said. In addition to identifying those capable of giving in the community, Jewish museums, like other organizations, need to use their messaging to attract donors who connect to their respective causes and understand their value. “I would hope that we could develop a broader and broader base of people who look at the Skirball and say, ‘Aren’t we fortunate in our community to have an institution that offers this to the public, that works so hard to enrich the

lives of underserved communities and children and seniors and people who wouldn't have the opportunity otherwise, and I'm just giving because I think that's great and that's what I should do with the money I have to give,' as opposed to saying, 'What do I get?'" said Kirschner.

Jewish Museum Donors

The general sense among my interviewees was that Jewish museums have particular types of donors. "I think that museums (generally) attract a certain type of funder, people who are into the arts, collections, and those kinds of things. And you can have an Eli Broad who is going to put millions and millions of dollars into his own museum," said an education professional at Skirball. Jewish museums face the additional struggle of trying to attract the Jewish donors who may wish to support other non-Jewish museums. "I think there's a prestige factor. I think to give to the MOCA or LACMA has a prestige that we don't have the Jewish equivalent . . . I hope one day we will," Nazarian said.

Why do donors donate to cultural causes, let alone Jewish museums? From the few donor voices I heard from, the answer is ultimately personal. Family foundation giving reflects the unique interests and goals of each family. The parents of Nancy Berman, former Director of the Skirball, established their own family foundation, and one of their giving priorities was to Jewish culture. "It was very valuable to my family to donate to Jewish cultural causes," Berman said, "I think they felt very strongly about tzedakah as a privilege and a Jewish mandate and they felt very fortunate to be involved in giving to the community, the Jewish community and the general community as well." In addition to Jewish cultural causes, her family's foundation is involved with arts education in Los Angeles and other cultural contributions in Israel and on the East Coast, where Berman's parents lived. Separate from cultural causes, the family foundation also

contributes to food security issues, LGBT issues, and Jewish organizations such as NewGround: A Muslim Jewish Partnership and Hebrew Union College.

The Y&S Nazarian Family Foundation is an Iranian Jewish family whose foundation has a core mission of promoting Iranian Jewish culture, which justified their funding of the Light & Shadows exhibition. "The fact that Iranian Jewish history has been so overlooked, we are not people who have been published, who have been documented. Although we have a very long, rich history, there's been very little to show for it. And while this exhibition would be a very small step in that direction, we also knew it would be a beginning," Sharon Nazarian, Y&S Nazarian Family Foundation President, said. "Since the foundation is our family, and that's the makeup of the Foundation board, it was a very clear reflection of our identity and our mission in terms of who we are and what we hope to do."

In addition to Light & Shadows, and specific Iranian Jewish causes, Nazarian also expressed that almost all of the gifts the Foundation makes to education, medicine, and policy "have a Jewish head behind it." The Y&S Nazarian Family Foundation established an Israel studies program at UCLA, and a distinguished annual lectureship as part of an arts and humanities program in Israel studies at USC. At one point, Nazarian's father wanted to make a gift to the Mayo Clinic, where he and his wife would go for checkups. Typically, the foundation's funding is not prioritized for medicine, but Nazarian discovered that the Mayo Clinic partners with Sheba Hospital in Israel for a program about simulation education, where they simulate medical situations and learn from them. "Any time we can build relationships with an Israeli institution, that comes from our Jewishness, because we believe in Israel and want to see it strengthened," Nazarian said.

The Skirball Cultural Center, Simon Wiesenthal Center, and LA Museum of Tolerance all feel that donations to their organizations are reflections of their donors' Jewish identity. "I think [our donors] recognize the Skirball brings a certain set of Jewish values and ideals that are realized in a certain way here through performing arts and exhibitions and classes and festivals and the like. And they seem to approve of that. One of the particular things that we are committed to is the education of public school children, and the vast majority of LA public schools are certainly not Jewish. In fact, I think it's estimated that well over 80%, maybe more toward 90% even of these students are some form of Latino identity or ancestry, and here we are bringing them to a Jewish institution and trying to introduce Jewish ideals, and that's a certain kind of challenge and I think a lot of Jews and non-Jews see that as a positive," said Kirschner. Rabbi May from the Simon Wiesenthal Center sees giving as a Jewish act. "If 95% of your donors are Jewish, they see it as part of their obligation . . . Many of our donors, certainly many of our trustees are not kosher observant or Sabbath observant, and I believe they have achieved a great deal Jewishly by their good deeds, he said. "They may not be keeping the Sabbath, but they're acting Jewishly."

Hutman, from the LA Museum of the Holocaust, sees donating to the museum as a Jewish act because of the Jewish values found in the museum's content. "I'm not a rabbi, but I do know and understand that the idea of remembrance and action are core tenets of Jewish foundational life and spiritual life. I think we do both of those things very beautifully, and I think even the extent to which we're using this history and this place which is full of so much sorrow and pain also as a transformative place of learning for the whole city, regardless of people's ability to pay, regardless of whether you're in the crappiest school in the city or the fanciest, everybody is treated equally here," she said.

Esther Netter from the Zimmer and Marla Berns from the Fowler were less compelled to identify their fundraising gifts from Jewish donors as Jewish acts. While both acknowledged that giving back to the community is an important Jewish value, they focused more on the individualistic nature of giving and less on their causes being more necessarily deserving of Jewish dollars.

The Value of Jewish Museum Giving

At the beginning of my research, Steven M. Cohen suggested that the donor class views Jewish culture – and museums in particular – as low-value investments relative to other Jewish causes, and that museums have not been able to gather similar amounts of enthusiasm among Jewish philanthropists. My research reflected mixed opinions about whether that suggestion was true. None of the interviewees downplayed the importance of what may be considered high-value investments, which include, but are not limited to, direct Jewish social services, education, medicine, and emergencies domestically, in Israel, and in other parts of the world. However, many were quick to justify that Jewish cultural activities, including museums, attract donors who are interested in arts and culture, or other subjects included in museum content, and who may also donate to other Jewish high-value causes. "I found as a developer that Jewish community is very diverse and so you do your homework and you can find people that are interested. If it's a good project. . . I think you can find people to support it," Wilson said. While it may not be practical to believe cultural causes can always compete with other causes, Berns said, "we know that the number of arts organizations that exist out there would not exist if there were not a lot of people who believe[d] that art and culture is necessary for a civic culture and for people to be informed about the world and to appreciate how artists give us a better world to live in. I don't

think there would be anyone who would say I think all arts funding should be redirected to social services. People make choices," she said.

Sharon Nazarian feels similarly to Berns that giving is personal, and each family or individual brings their own unique values and identity into their giving. "So you can see for us for example as a family our identity as Iranian Jews really brought us to [Light & Shadows] because what other avenues do you have to make sure that you promote and preserve your cultural heritage? The arts are the perfect way to do that and do lend themselves to that specific goal for heritage preservation. As a family it made sense to us," she said. Even though she acknowledged that giving to health organizations was also a very personal act of giving, Nazarian highlights the popularity of arts in Los Angeles and the visible support they receive. "I think, especially in LA, in the city arts are very valued in general and I think even in Jewish LA you see most of the museums and you can see the contributions to those museums, and the Jewish community is very much a part of those. The walls, the donor walls, have a lot of Jewish names on them," she said.

Kirschner from the Skirball does not "really subscribe to those kinds of characterizations" between different types of Jewish causes. "Culture is a term that can be constructed in a number of ways. If the distinction people are making is between Jewish life, which includes culture, or say Jewish self-defense, which include fighting anti-Semitism, or protecting the state of Israel from its many enemies and so on, I can see where for some people those dollars would be more urgently spent, but I don't think everybody feels that way," he said. He also makes a timing distinction between these two types of causes. "I think Jewish cultural institutions, any cultural institution . . . may not seem as urgent as other things like global warming or HIV or defending privacy from digital invasion or something like that – those things may seem urgent at the

moment, and they may be urgent at the moment – but culture endures in part because it's a longer term form of realization of the human condition. It's realized incrementally, it's not necessarily realized in ways that are measured. And for some people that's because it's not perhaps as visible or urgent – it may not earn the same kind of ostentatious philanthropy – but there are some who realize that what endures in a civilization is worth sustaining and that life has to first be saved but it also has to be worth living," he said.

Berman and Netter agree with the statement, but for different reasons. Berman believes this perception isn't unique to the Jewish community, but larger society as well, and is more of a reflection on the cultural institutions than their donors. "I think culture and the arts haven't done a great job in communicating and educating people as to their impact: their current impact and potential impact that they can have on people, including the commercial world in terms of film and television," she said. Netter acknowledges the validity of donating to more urgent causes and hopes to diversify the Zimmer's funding enough that they are sustainable despite donors' varied giving choices. "You need to make sure you're an institution that has a broad enough message and that your donor base doesn't all look alike," she said. Netter added that she takes pride, within the messaging of the Zimmer, that there is value to funding it because it helps develop not only the next generation of museum supporters, but also the next generation of young people, "who will take their place in leadership roles and who will be change makers in fixing things that are broken. But first you're going to want to make sure bombs aren't flying over Israel and that the homeless have shelter," she said.

In terms of fundraising, Hutman disagrees with Cohen's statement that Jewish museums are seen as a low-value investment in part because of the LA Museum of the Holocaust's modestly sized budget and loyal donor base who "really want to give to us, and really seem to

give freely and from their heart. And that's not everybody, and that's okay, because no organization should have every donor. That would be unnatural . . . what organizations need is a sustaining community of supporters," she said. Rabbi May disagrees with Cohen's statement for different reasons than Hutman and does not see donating to the Simon Wiesenthal Center or the Museum of Tolerance as a low-value investment because they actually are an urgent, high-value Jewish cause. "We're getting money because people see us in the same range as they see Israel emergency. They see our activism and the fact that we're acting and confronting hate and confronting anti-Semitism," he said. "So I can understand when the house is on fire, you want to put the fire out, but you also have to understand that you need to have a place for people to go, for people to be inspired. So you can't say I'm going to support my synagogue or AIPAC . . . people balance their portfolios. You can also balance your Jewish portfolio at the same time. Sometimes you weight it more in this area or another, but I think the idea of ignoring the cultural stuff ignores the values of who we are," he said.

Fundraising for the Future

The reality, however, is that Jewish museums are just one of many Jewish institutions in Los Angeles and consequently compete for funding. Based on my research, there are a number of factors that can, and do, make fundraising more successful, and interestingly not all of these characteristics are unique to museums. First, a diverse portfolio of funding sources helps to ensure sustainability, especially when emergencies and other urgent matters shift some donor dollars away to support other causes. None of the Jewish museums in my research legally identify as a Jewish institution, or claim to serve just Jews, which in almost all cases, opens the door for funding opportunities from non-Jewish funding sources, be it individuals, foundations,

or government funds. Especially for those institutions with founders still active, Jewish museums are engaged in the process of endowment building, also to ensure that these institutions are sustained even after a prominent fundraiser retires.

Since there are a number of Jewish museums (and have been Jewish exhibitions), each must be very particular in their messaging to best hook new donors to their institutions. Jewish museums are well suited and positioned to attract many types of donors, whether Jews, museum lovers, those interested in the arts, those interested in education, or those drawn to a particular identity or ethnic group, etc. Therefore, a clearly articulated message about what the museum is – its mission, goals, and identity – can better attract those potential donors in the community that might be drawn to a particular hook. As we saw with the Jews in the LA Mosaic and Light & Shadows, in addition to the museum's larger message, particular exhibitions may have more narrowed content and target audiences, which may bring about new opportunities for funding sources within the community.

According to former Jim Joseph Foundation CEO Chip Edelsberg at a presentation at a Council of American Jewish Museums' conference, in order to both attract funds and better measure and evaluate impact, Jewish museums can and should engage in more strategic philanthropy with foundations that develop strong and personal relationships, as opposed to purely transactional relationships. A number of museums as part of my research also strategically separate membership from development, where purchasing museum membership is more of a transaction than a donation. There is a lot of potential to reevaluate membership in a way that museum members do see themselves as supporters of the museum, and through their membership experience be cultivated as donors moving forward. This is especially true of the

Zimmer, which already taps into that potential by more strategically targeting children and families for an introduction about philanthropy and giving back.

Despite the reality that museums may be a more difficult sell to donors relative to other more urgent and timely Jewish causes, Jewish museums (at least those involved in my research) do not seem to be worried or question their existence moving forward because of this situation. I am wary of this confidence based on the tension presented in regard to Jewish identity. In order to achieve sustainability, Jewish museums must actively identify the right kind of donors (which, for any museum, do exist in Los Angeles), diversify funding sources, and constantly refine their messages. The Council of American Jewish Museums is well situated to facilitate these discussions, and I recommend they do so more aggressively.

Conclusion

My research offers some insight into what makes Jewish museums in LA Jewish. In terms of what is more universal among these four Jewish museums, there is commonality among mission, audience, and funding sources. All four of the Jewish museums I researched aim to fulfill missions that extend beyond the Jewish community. As noted previously, the Skirball is the only one of the four that even mentions "Jewish" in their mission statement, but even the Skirball's leadership acknowledges their work serves and impacts the greater community. In terms of target audience, leaders from each of these four Jewish museums acknowledged that Jewish visitors are among target audiences, though they also work to attract and engage the general public. Leaders within each of these four Jewish museums identified their institutions as cultural and/or educational spaces, and as a result, all of them take advantage of the opportunity to fundraise both within and outside of the Jewish community.

In terms of what is particularly Jewish among these four Jewish museums, there is commonality among their founding, values, and professional and lay leadership. All four were founded by Jews and were historically grounded in Jewish values that still permeate their messaging and operations today. The professional leaders (CEOs and Executive Directors) of these four museums personally identify as Jewish, and all of them have identified as Jewish communal professionals either to some extent currently or at some point in their professional careers. Similarly, the boards of these four museums are all somewhat, if not entirely, comprised of individuals who identify as Jewish.

Based on my interview findings there are more commonalities among what makes these Jewish museums universal than particular, and I understand this to be more beneficial than detrimental. Recently, there was a discussion online in Mosaic Magazine that began with a critique of Jewish museums by Edward Rothstein (2016). Part of the critique from this essay was that universalism diminished Jewish particularism. Rothstein says, "As faithful as Jewish museums might be to the promise of America, they tend to turn a peculiarly blind eye to the promise, and the substance, of Jewish identity itself" (2016). While this is only part of his argument, nowhere in his essay does he acknowledge the organizational implications of Jewish museums struggling so much with their Jewish identities.

Unlike Rothstein, I approached this topic from the perspective of a Jewish professional within the context of what I have learned about nonprofit organizations in graduate school. To me, Jewish museums are not just museums, but Jewish organizations, even though some may not identify that way legally. Within the Jewish communal landscape of Los Angeles, there exist different levels of organizational Jewishness. This thesis aimed to expose and explore some of this variation among Jewish museums, which, relative to other Jewish communal organizations

in Los Angeles, serve the unique purpose of telling an aspect of the Jewish story to the general public. Though other Jewish organizations, such as NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change and Jewish Family Services, interact with the broader public, they do so differently than Jewish museums. The benefits of universalism incorporated into Jewish museums' practice is most strongly found in my two examples of the Autry and the Fowler, both of which are non-Jewish organizations whose missions justify incorporating Jewish content into their exhibitions and contributing to the conversation about Jewish culture and history that Jewish museums have initiated.

Even though from a professional point of view I disagree with some of the critiques of Jewish museums, I still recognize opportunities for growth and change moving forward. Based on my experience (though short) with the Jewish Communal Professionals of Southern California, I have not seen any of my interviewees in attendance at workshops and conferences. However, I have seen all four Jewish museums featured in the Jewish Journal, whether through advertising, mentions in the Community section relative to particular events, or features in longer articles. I feel there is potential for these institutions, and their Jewish leaders, both professional and lay, to become more consistently active and present at the table for larger Jewish communal discussion of Los Angeles, and I feel the Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM) is well positioned to act as that convener, both in Los Angeles and in the United States.

Part of CAJM's upcoming annual conferences should be devoted to the gathering of Jewish museum leadership to discuss which elements of the Jewish story their institutions bring to the general public, in hopes of possibly collaborating in a unified project, or identifying holes that the field can fill. In my opinion, if "Jewish Museums" is in CAJM's name, as an umbrella organization it should be able to reinforce what that means and how different Jewish museums

can articulate it in their messaging. Topics that would work to unify Jewish museums around their Jewishness could attract those Jewish museums that may not typically attend CAJM conferences, such as the Zimmer. The more Jewish museums that CAJM convenes around the table the better they will be able to share best practices for fundraising, marketing, and exhibitions. They could even act as a resource for non-Jewish museums that feature Jewish content.

While not compromising their universal elements, being able to gather these Jewish museums together in discussions around their Jewishness can help collectively reinforce their institutional "yes" in answering "Do you consider your museum Jewish?" My recommendations aim to maximize the potential of Jewish museums to contribute to the enhancement of Jewish life, sharing the Jewish story with the American population now and in the future.

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