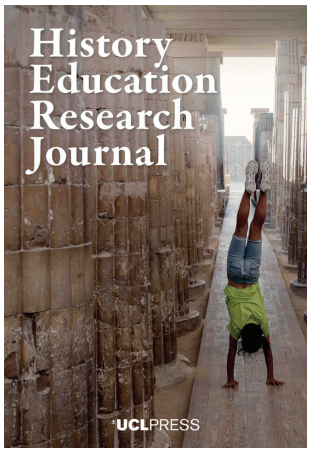


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# 'We too find it difficult': A consideration of site-based Holocaust education as emotional labour

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## Abstract

Among the growing body of literature concerning teaching and learning about the Holocaust, very little research has explored the experiences of teachers from an emotional perspective. This study considers the emotion work done by educators who are teaching about the Holocaust at the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Through the lens of 'emotional labour', the study explores how the educators articulate their emotion work, and how they manage their emotions *in situ*. The findings reveal a complex interplay of emotion work and self-preservation that results in educators variously altering the extent to which they are 'present' and how they choose to withdraw themselves emotionally from certain exhibits or spaces at the museum. The study also reveals the benefits of the informal emotional support network that exists between the educators, as well as the various routines they adopt to help them manage their emotion work. It is argued that the findings of this paper highlight a need for further research into how teachers teach about emotionally difficult histories such as this, in similar and more diverse contexts.

**Keywords**: Holocaust education, emotional labour, emotion work, history teachers, Auschwitz-Birkenau

## Introduction

According to published records, just over 1 in 12 visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in 2019 came from the United Kingdom (Bartyzel and Sawicki, 2020). Many of these visitors were young people on organised educational visits (Nesfield, 2015), and among these would have been around three thousand school students and teachers visiting with the Holocaust Educational Trust. The Trust coordinates and delivers the government-funded Lessons from Auschwitz Project (LfA) (www.het.org.uk/lessons-from-auschwitz-programme), which has enabled over forty-one thousand students and accompanying teachers to visit the museum since the programme's inception in 1999.

The Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) was established in 1988, partly in response to the proposal for a National Curriculum in the UK. The Trust was active in ensuring that the topic of the Holocaust was subsequently included as a compulsory element of the National Curriculum when it was implemented in 1991. Since responsibility for curriculum has subsequently been devolved to the individual nations of the UK, it remains compulsory only in England (and even there, only in schools whose funding arrangements require them to follow the National Curriculum). Over the last thirty years, a number of other organisations have been established to support teaching and learning about the Holocaust in the UK, such as the Anne Frank Trust (1991), the

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National Holocaust Centre and Museum (1995), the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (2005) and the Centre for Holocaust Education (CfHE, formerly the Holocaust Education Development Programme – HEDP) at UCL (2008). In 2009, the HEDP undertook an innovative and wide-ranging review of Holocaust education in England (Pettigrew et al., 2009). Among the report's many findings was the revelation that 'relatively few teachers were likely to incorporate visits to a memorial site … or museum outside of the UK' (Pettigrew et al., 2009: 46), although the actual number was substantial (20 per cent of the sample). Like most UK-based research before and since in the field of Holocaust education (see, for example, Foster, 2013; Fox, 1989; Hector, 2000; Maitles and Cowan, 2012; Pearce, 2017), the HEDP study focused primarily on *teachers*' perspectives of how and what they taught about the topic. However, there is also a growing corpus of research concerning *students*' perspectives on their learning (see, for example, Gray, 2014, 2015; Foster et al., 2016; Richardson, 2012; Short, 2005). Moreover, there is a wealth of work concerning the teaching of history in general (see, for example, Chapman, 2021; Davies, 2017; Kitson et al., 2011). Within these works, some of the authors explore students' emotional responses to the topic of the Holocaust, but there is a paucity of research that acknowledges or explores the emotional engagement of the *teachers* in any depth. This study hopes to begin to address this deficit through an exploration of the lived professional and emotional experiences of a group of educators engaged in site-based Holocaust education.

The intention of this study is not to evaluate or appraise the LfA project itself, or HET as an organisation more generally, as such work can be found elsewhere (see, for example, Chapman et al., 2010; Critchell, 2014; Richardson, 2021a; Tollerton, 2020). Rather, this study focuses specifically on the experiences of the freelance educators that HET employs to accompany small groups on its projects. Each project consists of four parts: a pre-visit orientation seminar (during which participants hear testimony from a Holocaust survivor); a one-day visit to Poland (which includes visits to Oświęcim as a site of pre-war Jewish life, and to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum); a follow-up seminar; and finally, a Next Steps project in their school or local community. This study principally concerns the reflections of the freelance educators on their role accompanying the participants in Poland on the one-day visit. The author acknowledges the specificity of this context, and the uniqueness of it in terms of the scale of HET's national programme – facilitating as it does around fifteen visits per year, each comprising two hundred students, teachers and invited guests. I suggest that while this study is therefore unrepresentative, there is *no* representative educator teaching about the Holocaust at an authentic site (or, indeed, in the classroom). Consequently, what the scale of this project and the size of this sample offer is an opportunity to explore a potentially transferable case (Denscombe, 2014). Furthermore, this study considers teaching about the Holocaust at sites through the employment of a novel theoretical framework that considers Holocaust education as *emotional labour*. The hope is that this innovative approach, with a distinct but sizeable sample, will provoke further conversation within the profession about the nature of teaching sensitive or difficult histories at sites, as well as more generally and in different contexts.

## Theoretical framework

The term *emotional labour* is rooted in Hochschild's (2012) *The Managed Heart*, first published in 1983. Situated within the field of business and employment studies, Hochschild initially explored the emotional labour done by those in service industries (such as the corporate and retail sectors). Subsequent work has adapted and applied

the concept to fields as diverse as nursing (McCloughen et al., 2020), journalism (Knight, 2020), careers education (Olry-Louis, 2018) and librarianship (Jan and Anwar, 2018). Bodenheimer and Shuster (2020: 63) are among those who have advocated that the teaching profession should be included, since in their opinion it is one that 'requires employees to engage in emotional labour' – a view which corresponds with Olson et al.'s (2019: 130) previous assertion that 'teaching is imbued with emotions', as well as Kitching's (2009: 144) belief that 'the desire to teach [is] intrinsically emotional'. Other research illustrates how the acknowledgement and management of emotions are essential to effective teaching (see, for example, Hargreaves, 2000), as well as to teacher retention and burnout (see, for example, Bodenheimer and Shuster, 2020; Chan, 2006). Recent teaching guidelines from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance have recognised 'the emotional labour that forms a part of studying sensitive or traumatic history' such as the Holocaust (IHRA, 2019: 13), and there is a growing body of literature concerning learning and teaching of such histories (see, for example, Garrett et al., 2020; Gross and Terra, 2018; Hondius, 2010; Kessel et al., 2020). It is from this diverse and varied literature that this study draws its broad theoretical basis and context. While Hochschild's (2012) groundbreaking work distinguished between emotional *labour* (emotional management done for paid work) and emotion *work* (emotional management done in private life), in regard to the teaching profession the nuanced differences or interconnectedness between the two terms has been widely debated and developed (for a discussion of this, see, for example, Kimura, 2010). It is emotional *labour* that is central to this study (since the educators are paid employees of HET), and Kitching's (2009: 142) definition of emotional labour is adopted here as an understanding that 'the concept of emotional labour indicates that teachers not only have to present a certain emotional front, they must [also] act as role models, producing this "front" as a key part of the role'. It is the educators' understandings and performances of this emotional labour that are the focus of this study.

It is worth considering the concept of 'emotion' briefly here, as it can be quite nebulous in the various ways in which it can be interpreted (Olson et al., 2019). Eschewing a protracted discussion about the precise nature of what 'emotions' are (which would be beyond the scope of this article), Noon et al. (2013: 173) conclude that 'it is enough to note that many agree that emotions in the workplace centrally concern an individual's feelings'. This is the broad (although inevitably imprecise) definition that this exploratory study will adopt, together with Hochschild's (2012: 24) lens of the 'feeling as clue'. Her belief that 'emotion locates the position of the viewer' (Hochschild, 2012: 30) is a marked feature both in the design of the research instrument and in the analysis of the data that follows.

In her initial work on emotional labour, Hochschild (2012) explored the potential divergence between the emotions that workers were paid to present, and their actual emotions (for example, how a shop worker is paid to be pleasant to a customer, no matter how they might feel about the individual with whom they are interacting). Hochschild found that workers in such roles engaged in two types of emotional acting: *surface acting* (where they pretended to display emotions that they were not actually experiencing), and *deep acting* (where they attempted to feel those emotions genuinely), either of which could be performed within the context of the *feeling rules* of the organisation (that is, how they believed they should feel in that work situation). Consequently, she suggested three discourses relevant to a study of emotional labour: one concerning labour (the nature of the work itself); one concerning display (how workers show their feelings); and one concerning emotion ('what an emotion is and how we can manage it' (Hochschild, 2012: 10)). For this study, the nature of the work

itself (the first discourse) has been outlined above, in the introductory discussion of the research context of LfA projects. The second discourse (display) and the third (emotion itself) are central to this study – how respondents acknowledge, display and manage their emotions in this particular situation, and whether there are differences in authenticity between or within the two discourses. To this end, the study will also draw from Vallerand and Blanchard's (2000) identification of three elements of emotions. While the first concerns the physiological effects of emotions, and is beyond the scope of this study, the second (how emotions impact respondents' propensity to perform certain actions) and the third (respondents' subjective experiences of these emotions) are relevant. Acknowledging the limitations outlined above, it is from these two theories (Hochschild, 2012; Vallerand and Blanchard, 2000) that this study aims to explore the questions:

- How do educators describe their emotion work during a site visit?
- To what extent do educators manage their emotion work during a site visit?

## Methodology

In keeping with the majority of research into emotional labour (Lee et al., 2018), this study adopts a qualitative, constructionist methodology (aside from some demographic information which was collected using mixed methods). This is based on the assumption that teaching and learning is a communicative act, and that 'as we communicate with each other we construct the world in which we live' (Gergen, 2015: 6). This approach acknowledges (and embraces) the particular; it does not make an effort towards generalisability. Rather, through presenting the various constructed realities of the respondents, it is hoped that the findings might offer 'transferability' (Denscombe, 2014: 299). As such, the study's findings may be relevant to a diverse audience, such as colleagues in education who organise school visits to similar sites, or who accompany other youth groups to such sites. They may also offer transferable relevance to those working in the fields of museum studies or guide methodology, for example. Throughout the process of data collection, analysis and presentation, there was an awareness that the study's transferability would be dependent upon the researcher providing 'sufficient rich detail' for the reader to decide to what extent these findings may be transferable from this particular setting to others (King and Horrocks, 2011: 160).

The sample consists of 37 freelance educators who are employed on a casual basis by HET to accompany students on LfA projects (who will be referred to from this point as *educators*). This sample represents approximately one-third of the total educator population working with HET at the time of the study. The students, teachers and other visitors on the LfA projects will be referred to collectively as *participants*. In terms of the demographics of the educator sample, just under two-thirds of the 37 who responded identified their current 'main job' (outside their employment with HET) as being 'a teacher in a school or college'. When invited to clarify this, most reiterated simply that they were a 'teacher', but around half were more specific in offering job titles, including senior management roles, or certain subjects or ages taught. Over half of those who identified as a current or former teacher said that their main subject was (or had been) 'history'. A small number said that their main subject was 'religious studies/philosophy', one identified themself as a primary teacher, and a few others said that they were (or had been) teachers of other humanities subjects (such as citizenship or sociology). Of the remaining

third, the majority described themselves as being 'retired' – mainly from teaching, but also from other public service roles (such as health care). Those who were employed outside schools described themselves as having roles such as being 'self-employed' or being a freelance/independent educator in some way. Around half of the educators said that they had been in the role with HET for '5–9 years', while a third had been in post for '10 years +'. The rest had been employed by HET for '1–4 years'. The majority said that 'on average' they did '0–2' LfA projects per year, while the rest said that they usually did '3 or more'.

The educators represented a purposive sample (Denscombe, 2014), as their experiences were directly relevant to the study (Sue and Ritter, 2012). These data were part of a wide-ranging piece of research focusing on the LfA project (Richardson, 2019, 2021a, 2021b). Potential respondents were contacted about the study by email, via an education officer at HET (to reduce direct contact with the researcher and possible perceptions of coercion). They were provided with an information sheet and details of how to opt in to the study with informed, voluntary consent (and how to opt out at any time). It was made clear that the research was independent of the organisation, and anonymity was assured. The study was carried out in accordance with British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) guidelines. Educators could then decide to access the online survey if they wished to take part, and they were asked to indicate their consent on the first page. Given the geographical spread of the potential respondents, an online survey was chosen as it enabled equitable access for all (Sue and Ritter, 2012), as well as affording respondents additional anonymity and time to compose their responses. It was considered that this might be beneficial to the respondents, given the potentially emotionally challenging nature of the material (Cohen et al., 2011). The following open questions were asked, including prompts to potential areas of exploration by the respondents, to enable them to give comprehensive, rich answers (Sue and Ritter, 2012):

1) Please indicate below that you have read the consent form and that you are happy to take part in this research.
2) How would you describe your main job?
3) If you are (or have been) a teacher, what is your subject specialism? (If not, please tick 'I am not a teacher'.)
4) How long have you been an educator with HET?
5) On average, how many LfAs would you say you do per year?
6) I have been thinking a lot about how 'present' we are when we visit authentic sites. During an LfA visit, do you feel that you engage with the museum and the sites (as a visitor), or are you more removed (as an educator/guide)? Or is it a mix? Is this intentional on your part?
7) Do you find visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau an emotional experience?
8) Who/where do you get support from when you educate on LfA? This might be HET colleagues, work colleagues, employer, friends & family, etc…
9) During the visit to Poland, are there any places, or exhibits, that you avoid going to, or avoid engaging with, for any reason?
10) We all manage our visit in different ways. For example, some educators have routines they follow before or after the visit, or have particular clothes/items they only use for LfA … others know that it affects them particularly in the days following a visit … Are you aware of anything you do specifically around an LfA visit, or any other ways the visit affects you?

The questions were formed over the course of about two years, from discussions with the HET team and other educators. During this time, the author engaged with various

HET staff and educators about the desire to offer ongoing support for the freelancers, and to better understand their motivations and experiences for the work they did with the Trust. This process included responses from a training event that the author led with fellow educators, exploring how they managed their emotions on LfA visits.

Data were collected using the SurveyMonkey platform (www.surveymonkey.co.uk), before being stored and handled using NVivo software. The constructionist methodology employed embraces the multiple realities present in the data (Gergen, 2015), as well as foregrounding the co-constructing role played by the researcher (both as an educator, and in the subsequent analysis of the data) (Hennink et al., 2020; Taber, 2007; Waring, 2017). Maintaining a reflexive awareness on the part of the researcher was important, given my position within the research field. My first-hand experience of the museum, my own experiences as an educator and any personal relationships I might have with the participants as friends and colleagues presented the potential to become 'caught up in an eternal web of meanings and language from which there is no escape' (Denscombe, 2010: 91). Consequently, continual effort was made to mitigate bias through vigilant '*reflective pragmatism* … to be both appreciatively curious and critical' (Gergen, 2015: 29). Data analysis was framed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) model for thematic analysis. This allowed themes to be identified, which could then be reflected upon from the perspective of the two aims of the study outlined above. An awareness of reflective pragmatism, together with the adoption of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, ensured reasonable safeguards against extraneous researcher bias, beyond the researcher's role as a co-constructor.

This study employs King and Horrocks's (2011) quality criteria, based on Lincoln and Guba's (1986) work as a means of ensuring validity through the four quality processes they identify: credibility, transferability, trackable variance and confirmability. This study's *credibility* has been achieved through discussions of the findings with a sample of respondents and organising staff at HET. The study's potential *transferability* has already been discussed at length, above. The *trackable variance* of the study has been acknowledged in the distinctiveness of the research context, and the 'integral part' played by the researcher in the production of the data (Hennink et al., 2020: 19). Finally, the study strives towards *confirmability* in the methodological processes outlined here. It is hoped that this process ensures evident validity in the research process and subsequent findings.

# Findings

## Motivations for being an educator

When asked about their motivations for working with HET on LfA projects, educators generally felt that it was 'important' in some way, either in terms of the work itself (for example, believing that 'LfA is an invaluable opportunity for post-16 students'), or for themselves (for example, feeling 'it's my duty and a responsibility'). There was evidence that educators found the work 'very rewarding', and that this was partly due to a commitment to 'the educational model', as well as feeling 'part of a supportive team even though we may only meet infrequently'. For some educators, the role enabled them to develop professionally; as one put it, 'there is always something new to read or hear. It is a constant learning journey.' Only two educators mentioned having a personal/family connection to the Holocaust (such as their own Jewish heritage). Several educators felt motivated by their desire that the events of the Holocaust 'must not be forgotten', and that their work would 'equip young people to take this baton forward in their lives and jobs'. Finally, a few educators saw their work as a legacy of

the survivors they had known or had worked with (some of whom are no longer here to give their testimony in person). For one, their work was now 'to fulfil a promise that I made' to two survivors they had known.

## Visiting the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum as an emotional experience

The majority of the educators felt that visiting the museum was an emotional experience for them. While a minority said that it was so 'sometimes' or 'occasionally', only four said it definitely was not. Of these, two said that they preferred to 'focus on the students' during LfA visits, while another educator said, 'often … I'm [so] focused on my group that I use that as a barrier' (suggesting that in their case they chose to prioritise their professional role over their own emotional experience). For those who said it was an emotional experience, degrees of feeling were evident. Some felt that they had been 'most emotional on my first visit', while others said it was 'always' emotional, or that 'the impact never fades'. Several said that they found that each visit was 'emotionally different', with one educator remarking that this emotion was 'sometimes too much so'. For a few of the others, however, that emotional connection was important, as without it they 'would worry [they] ought to stop doing it', with one wondering whether 'repeated visits' were having an effect on how they emotionally engaged with the site (with emotion decreasing over time). A couple of educators mentioned feeling that visits affected them differently on LfA projects compared to other visits (such as with their schools or family), although none explained which was more emotional, or how it was so.

Several educators mentioned particular events that had triggered an emotional response during a visit to the museum. These included personal matters outside the visit itself (such as a family bereavement), or their empathetic reactions to participants (such as an educator who said that supporting a student who got upset 'reminded me of the significance of what I was looking at'). Others mentioned particular readings from the educational materials during the day (such as a piece by Elie Wiesel), being at the unloading ramp at Birkenau, or the walk back to the coaches at the end of the day after the memorial ceremony. One reflected on these incidents as being a positive thing overall, because 'our students hear that we too find it difficult'.

## Sources of support for educators

Almost all of the educators said they received emotional support for their work on LfA projects (only one said they didn't need it, while another said they 'rarely' sought it). The majority of the educators said that a key source of support came from 'colleagues' from the Trust, mainly 'fellow educators'. They felt that this support came from 'shared experiences', which had left many feeling that 'through the years there has been an excellent rapport that has developed between colleagues'. In their opinion, there was a general feeling of 'camaraderie and support which is hugely important' among the educators. How and when this support was received was not always clear, however, although some educators mentioned being able to 'chat on [the] return plane journey, also en route to [the] follow-up [seminar]'. Some of the educators found the post-visit debriefs to be an important part of this, or being able to talk things through during the visit with their 'bus buddy' (the educator who leads the other group sharing the same bus in Poland). Overall, there was a sense among many of the educators that the support they received from one another helped them realise 'that I am not the only one struggling with emotions on the day [because] I want to do a good job but it is

hard'. The vast majority of these responses suggested that educators have created and sustain their own informal support network, linked to the idea of shared experiences – as one educator put it, 'you can't explain to those who haven't done this what it is like. You also can't explain to others the relationships that the educators have built over time.'

Other sources of support that the educators mentioned they could draw upon included friends and family. It appeared that educators' families tended to show an awareness about the visit, which enabled them to talk about it directly with them on their return. A few educators mentioned supportive friends who 'have a greater understanding of the work and I talk to them sometimes'. Finally, a small number mentioned 'work colleagues', or a supportive employer, who could additionally provide support. Some educators reflected that they needed support from themselves – to take some time and space after their visit, such as going 'for a long cycle … to go over the whole visit again without interruptions – it helps me!' Another mentioned that given the frequency of their visits to this and similar sites, they 'have had to find ways to manage my own mental well-being' independently. Finally, one educator wryly observed that their main source of support was their 'very dark sense of humour', which saw them through the process.

## Emotional 'presence' at the museum

When asked about how 'present' educators felt they were during their visits to the museum with LfA projects, the majority explained that this was quite a complex issue. They illustrated this point with a diverse range of responses. For example, while one educator described each visit as being 'a completely immersive experience for me', and that it was 'essential that it be that way', conversely another described that they would 'try to remove myself as much as possible'. On the whole, there was 'a mix' of presence described, which evidently depended on several factors, as will be illustrated. Many of the educators felt deeply emotionally present at certain places, at certain times, but not consistently on different visits with different groups. For some of the educators, 'some of the exhibits hit me more', while others found they would 'engage with the experience of the participants but not necessarily with the site'. Occasionally, educators felt that they were 'totally engaged' until they had 'to concentrate on my input [speaking to their group]', or that their sense of emotional presence 'in part depends [on the input from] the Auschwitz guide' accompanying their group. One educator described how 'different sections of the camp resonate in different ways at different times', and there was a sense from some of their colleagues that this 'partially … depends on my own mood', or 'where I am emotionally in my life'.

Some of the educators reported that they still tried to consider themselves as a visitor to the site, for example, by asking questions of their museum guide to encourage their group to be more active participants. Despite their role leading a group, for some of the educators visiting the museum remained an immersive experience – indeed, one observed that 'being too removed limits personal learning about the site'. For many, however, there was quite clear evidence in their responses that they consciously distanced themselves emotionally from the site while they were there. This was predominantly achieved through foregrounding their role as an educator/group leader. As one put it, 'I think I engage as an educator rather than visitor when I visit the site. There are lots of practical points to guiding that dominate my thoughts.' Another reported being thankful for this distraction, reflecting on how they had come to 'appreciate the distance that being an educator gives me as I find the process personally quite distressing at times'. Interestingly, one educator described

this as going into 'educator mode' – a form of professional and/or academic retreat – which enabled them to comment that 'I personally do not feel like I have been to Auschwitz-Birkenau when I take a group on LfA'. For some of the educators, this was evidently a deliberate 'strategy for dealing with where I am', with one asserting that they needed to do this 'to remove myself enough to do my job'. Furthermore, some of the educators were aware that this was a consciously different strategy to when they visited at other times. The general feeling was that managing their own emotional presence required a challenging balance for the educator, where, as one put it:

> … the experience requires a multi-layered engagement with the site and guide as well as close monitoring of the participants' experience and reactions whilst employing a range of teaching strategies to engage the range of students and respond to factors that may impact on timings and activities such as weather.

Despite the multifaceted complexity of this challenge, many of the educators reported that they still physically engaged with all of the parts of the site on the itinerary during an LfA project. For the rest, however, there was evidence that they intentionally avoided certain aspects of their visit to protect themselves emotionally (and to better fulfil their role as an educator, professionally). Primary among the places they avoided was the site of the gas chamber at Auschwitz I. Participants visit the reconstructed gas chamber and crematoria at the end of their visit to this part of the museum, and they are led through the building by the museum guide. Several HET educators were observed waiting for their group as they came out of the gas chamber, having not gone in with them. Evidently for many this was a conscious decision, for a variety of reasons. For most educators, it was because they simply did 'not look forward to visiting the gas chamber', choosing instead to 'wait for the students outside and take a moment of reflection'. For others, this was for practical reasons – 'to avoid one more person adding to the numbers inside', for example. Several educators said they simply found the thought of going into the gas chamber 'feels inappropriate and immensely difficult' – 'inappropriate' in the sense that 'once is quite enough'. However, two educators did raise concerns about the 'problematic' nature of the reconstructed gas chamber per se, and their concerns over aspects of 'dark tourism' related to that space.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the other locations mentioned as being avoided by the educators were the exhibitions concerning child victims, and those containing victims' hair and personal effects (Block 5). Some educators chose to 'look away from the children's clothes', for example. These exhibits caused them to 'struggle', as they found them 'very upsetting'. One educator reflected that, as a parent and grandparent, they found these exhibits particularly hard. Having said that, they added that 'I will tell them [the participants] my feelings, [because] I think that helps them come to terms with their own reactions in some cases.' Several educators appeared to 'avoid' the display of victims' hair, considering that 'it is difficult to stay detached in these places'. One educator raised the issue of the ethics of the display of human remains in the first place, which they said 'upsets me pedagogically and pastorally'. Similarly, another educator reflected on how they 'avoid engaging with the suitcase room', where victims' baggage is displayed bearing their names, addresses or occupations. For two of the educators, the room in Block 5 that exhibits the prostheses from victims who had physical disabilities was another space they avoided. Among the other places mentioned by a handful of educators, it was apparent that some had visited Block 11 (the so-called 'punishment block') during previous LfA projects (despite this not being part of the official HET programme). There was a general consensus that visiting

this particular block was not pedagogically beneficial for the participants, and was emotionally difficult for the educators. As one educator reflected, 'I … don't really think there is much educational benefit from going to see torture cells … it is a place which does not allow easy discussion.' The feeling was that Block 11 'is unnecessary and does not do anything to "humanise" victims'. This is why a visit to the block is not part of an LfA project, but it appears that educators had been led there by their museum guides on occasion (for example, if one of the other blocks was overcrowded and inaccessible at the time).

When considering the issue of whether there were any places that educators actively avoided at the museum, two of them mentioned exhibits that they *actively* visited. For example, one educator said that they 'make a point of seeing … the illicit photos taken by prisoners' (a set of pictures taken illegally by members of the Sonderkommando, displayed in Block 4). Distinct from the majority of their colleagues, another educator justified their active engagement in this way because they said that on each visit they were trying 'to engage with all the exhibits because I am "bearing witness" to the victims and their personal belongings or images'.

## Educator routines

Many of the educators did not feel that they had particular routines that they followed to manage their visits practically or emotionally. Their responses tended not to be exact, however. Even if educators felt they did not have particular routines, they couched their replies by saying there was 'nothing I am aware of', or 'not that I know'. One in particular explained that they did not 'believe that any routines will change the experience. The factors that will affect my experience are more unmoveable – my particular mood/context and the social/emotional make-up of my student group', for example. For most of the educators, however, there was an apparent awareness of the routines they had around their LfA visits, specifically before, after or throughout the project.

The educators' general awareness of their routines was expressed as a need 'to be mindful of myself' in the days around a visit. One educator summed this up in their conscious decision 'to do practical things … I suppose I'm conserving my emotional resilience in order to "get through" the visit to make it successful for HET and the students', adding that this happened 'throughout the entire process, from orientation to follow-up'. Another commented that they would 'find I am quite stressed around the time of the visit and quite drained physically and emotionally when I return'. Some further practical issues were mentioned, for example, printing off copies of their educator notes, or reminding themselves of the names of participants in their group, or the timings for the day. These all reflected educators' desires to 'be well prepared for all aspects of the visit', and to do a good job.

For some educators, routines before the visit primarily concerned their own continuing professional development. This included 'extensive reading' in preparation for 'unexpected questions' from the participants. For most, however, pre-visit routines concerned their kit and equipment for the coming day in Poland. Aside from a few educators having routines around food (for example, '[I] always buy the same lunch', or 'I always have a coffee at 4.15 a.m. and one at the airport'), and one ensuring that they always packed 'a spare pair of gloves or hat' in case they had an underprepared participant in their group, most of the pre-visit routines involved their own clothing for the visit. Some educators explained that they had particular clothes that they wore for LfA projects. For a minority, these were simply clothes that 'were appropriate for the weather' or the practicalities of the day (such as a rucksack), but for most, these appeared to be specific sets of clothing that they kept exclusively for these visits.

Some educators described these sets of clothes as being their 'set of "LfA clothes"', 'dedicated Auschwitz warm clothes', or their 'Auschwitz coat and Auschwitz boots', from their '"Auschwitz only" wardrobe'. As part of their clothing routines for the day, two educators commented on particular items that they always had with them. One took a bag that was 'a gift from the first pupils in my school that I went on LfA with', while the other said they always had their 'Poland coat' on, and 'in the pocket of the coat I keep a Star of David from my grandma'.

When educators specifically mentioned post-visit routines, they described what they did immediately upon their return and, in some cases, in the following days. For a couple of educators, it was important that the clothes they had worn on the visit were washed, as well as themselves, 'irrespective of what time it is' when they got home. Four educators said that part of their routine was to unwind with a 'drink' at the hotel or at home (the drink of choice ranging from alcohol to 'camomile tea'). Some educators said they felt 'jetlagged the next day', explaining that this might be 'a mixture of tiredness and emotion'. A couple of educators said that they processed their reactions by needing 'time, space and solitude after a visit', and that sometimes this need was noticed more by family members than by themselves. Friends and family evidently played an important role in these post-visit routines for some educators. Being able to 'unload about my experiences' helped in some cases, while several expressed a renewed appreciation for their loved ones each time they came home. One educator explained this, reflecting that 'I suppose when faced with a loss on that scale, you reach out to your own family.'

## Conclusions

This study sought to consider the experiences of a group of educators engaged in site-based Holocaust education, from the theoretical perspective of emotional labour. The specific aim was to explore the following questions:

- How do educators describe their emotion work during a site visit?
- To what extent do educators manage their emotion work during a site visit?

It was clear that most educators regarded their role as involving an emotional experience. For many of these, it always had been and continued to be so, while for others, this awareness had been amplified by the changing nature of their emotional experiences over time (or when visiting with different groups). It is notable that some educators suggested the transitory nature of their experiences in these ways, suggesting the significance of the museum as a 'socially constructed product' in which social interactions 'play a critical role in shaping the museum visit' (Falk and Dierking, 2016: 148). Undoubtedly, the contemporary site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum itself is the product of evolution and change over time and any meaning making on the part of the educators should be viewed within their own 'particular cultural narrative framework' and its evolution (Jilovsky, 2015: 125). This could be a consideration for a future, more longitudinal study exploring the nature of how educators' experiences evolve over time and with different social groups.

From the findings of this paper, we can see that although some educators found their emotional engagement something of a burden, it was rather a fear of it *diminishing* that would lead some to give up their role, rather than its continued presence. Such findings illustrate that 'emotion labor is potentially good' (Hochschild, 2012: 9). Since most of the educators are (or have been) teachers in schools or colleges, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they are well versed in managing emotional labour 'as a routine part of their

jobs' (Bodenheimer and Shuster, 2020: 69). Perhaps it is this skill, honed over many years in classrooms, which enables them (and better prepares them) to manage their emotions in a situation as potentially intense as this museum space. Hochschild (2012: 18) notes that 'in managing feeling, we contribute to the creation of it', and it may be that the awareness shown by many of the educators was (and is) self-perpetuating.

It was evident that many of the educators managed these emotional aspects of their visits deliberately, through conscious stewardship of their emotional 'presence' while on site (although, again, this could vary greatly from visit to visit, often dependent on the educator's 'own mood', or 'where I am emotionally in my life'). They did this in the following ways:

- retreating into their professional role as a means of distracting themselves emotionally during their visits
- intentionally distancing themselves emotionally from particular exhibits and spaces during their visits
- engaging in routines before, during and after their visits (including the use of particular clothing or equipment for their visits).

Many educators appeared to manage their emotions on site by retreating into the safety of their professional role – going into 'educator mode'. Taking refuge in a particular mode of conduct reflects the work of researchers such as Bolton (2000) and Bodenheimer and Shuster (2020), but it is perhaps most akin to Knight's (2020) work with journalists who had reported on genocides. Knight's (2020: 615, 614) research found that 'several journalists said they detached emotionally' to 'focus on their professionalism' to be able to complete the tasks of their work without being overcome by the emotion of it. By acting in a similar way, the educators were making a conscious decision to disconnect from the physical site, in the interests of the participants in their group. As one educator put it, '*I* am intentionally not fully engaged with the museum as I feel my role is to make sure the *participants* are able to engage with the site' (emphasis added). This often resulted in educators actively avoiding engaging with certain sites (such as the exhibits of personal effects). In other instances, they opted to remove themselves to what have been termed '"off-stage" areas' (Noon et al., 2013: 190), such as waiting outside the gas chamber at Auschwitz I while their group visited the space with the museum guide. Such '"off-stage" areas' provide workers with a space in which they can drop their 'emotional mask' (Noon et al., 2013: 190). By gathering together, the educators might also reinforce 'co-worker solidarity … an important factor in coping with jobs with high emotional labour demands' (Noon et al., 2013: 191).

Over time, such actions had led many of the educators to formally *bracket* their visits with certain routines. These routines enabled them either to be protected emotionally (such as using items of clothing exclusively for these visits), or to ensure they would not be distracted in their professional role (such as through thorough preparation of their kit beforehand). Again, these findings echo Knight's (2020: 615) revelation of 'the nuances in emotion management' that can be present in such situations, and possibly resonate with the 'cognitive loop' suggested by Hopper and Huxford (2015: 38), where the management of emotions enhanced a focus on the job, while the job helped to manage the emotions. In this way, it could be viewed as what Sutton et al. (2009) refer to as *emotion regulation* – attempting to pre-emptively manage emotions in order to best fulfil a professional role. This raises questions for further investigation about how these routines are being enacted as strategies for emotion management – and how such acts might originate from deep acting, becoming surface acting through repetition and routine over time. Throughout, it

was evident that the support network formed between the educators played a key role in helping them manage their emotions during a visit (the 'HET community/ family', as one put it). Such interdependent networks can be vital to the emotional well-being of an organisation as a whole (McKenzie et al., 2019), as well as increasing staff retention and avoiding burnout (see, for example, Bodenheimer and Shuster, 2020). It should be noted, however, that such support networks often 'remain largely invisible because of the sort of work that gives rise to them – emotional labor' (Hochschild, 2012: 197).

What has been evidenced in this study is a complex picture of the educators' descriptions of their emotional engagement with their role teaching about the Holocaust at an authentic site, both personally and professionally. In the field of museum studies, much has been written about the nature of visiting the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and the emotional demands the site places upon visitors (see, for example, Bilewicz and Wojcik, 2018; Griffiths, 2018; Richardson, 2019). The current museum director has observed that even for employees who go to the site daily, 'Auschwitz overwhelms … you can never get used to it' (Cywiński, 2015: 45). HET educators attend the site both as visitors and as employees, so it is therefore unsurprising that there was evidence that they were negotiating their professional role in this context both as 'emotional labour' (their professional emotional engagement as a paid employee), and as 'emotion work' (their private emotional feelings) (Hochschild, 2012). However, the links between the two were not clear. Arguably, these educators are not subject to 'emotional labour' in the sense that Hochschild (2012) originally intended (since it is not their primary or permanent employment, and educating is undertaken for a relatively small fee). Rather, the demographic information suggests that this group is largely made up of professional teachers who undertake this work because it is 'important' to them in an emotional sense (and financial gain was not mentioned as a motivation by any of the sample). Consequently, it is perhaps unsurprising that for most of them these projects are an emotional experience, as many are emotionally invested in the work (for a variety of reasons). Most educators said they found the work to be a 'privilege', 'personally rewarding', 'life changing' and, in one case, 'one of the most powerful educational experiences I have had'. Such responses illustrate, within this study as a whole, the 'positive and negative effects of emotional labor' (Hopper and Huxford, 2015: 27) – on the one hand, immensely emotionally demanding and involving the need for self-protection, while, on the other hand, incredibly rewarding and affirming. For many of the educators, it seemed that the opportunity to reflect on all of this in the survey had been beneficial in itself (although the potential for a negative impact must also be acknowledged, whereby participation in a study such as this might actually make the work harder for them). This is perhaps unsurprising, as reflective practice has long been regarded as a key aspect of successful teaching (see, for example, Appleyard and Appleyard, 2015; Sellars, 2017). The act of engaging with this research instrument undeniably had an effect on the participants. For example, in the original survey, one educator reflected on the process of participating, and how it had made them think about the other educators and 'what they carry with them', remarking that, 'perhaps some of us are more affected than we realise by exposing ourselves to these visits'. Initial feedback from those who have reviewed a draft of this paper (as part of the member check process for ensuring its validity) has been entirely positive, including one educator who felt the findings were 'immensely reassuring', in that their experiences had been evidently so similar to those of others. It is hoped that this process will ultimately contribute positively to the educators' ongoing professional development (and that of the organisation more widely). However, the findings of

this study perhaps suggest the need for such professional development to adopt the 'continuum' perspective advocated by McLeod and McLeod (2014: 3), rooted in their work with counsellors, psychotherapists and mental health practitioners. Such an approach views personal and professional development as parts of an interdependent continuum, rather than as discrete concerns, and would thereby better reflect the educators' engagement in both 'emotional labour' (their professional work) and 'emotion work' (their private feelings).

This study has presented some thought-provoking and substantial data, which warrant further exploration in future studies to broaden the context and potential for transferability. While the process of thematic analysis in this exploratory study necessitated the decoupling of individual educators' responses for them to be structured into themes, further analysis could be conducted on individual educators' complete data sets to explore trends. The findings presented here aim to provoke and continue a conversation about what emotional labour is (and might be) in this particular context, and how educators in such situations might choose to present their feelings (Hochschild, 2012), while exploring the educators' subjective descriptions of these emotions and the impact these have had on their actions (Vallerand and Blanchard, 2000). The task now will be for those engaged in this (and similar) work to consider how best such educators can be supported in the emotional aspects of their work as evidenced here, and to what extent this is necessary (and welcomed) by educators in transferable contexts.

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## Conflicts of interests statement

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## Originality statement

This article contains original research, which has not been submitted for review or publication elsewhere.

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