THE CULTURAL TRANSMISSION OF MORALS: A CASE STUDY OF WESTERN

VISITORS TO CAMBODIA'S GENOCIDE MUSEUMS

by

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Abstract

The "new" sociology of morality has issued a call for research. This revival movement has focused on combining findings in cultural sociology with new findings in cognitive science to identify morality as a "cultural schema" or habitus-like framework which shapes individual action. While invaluable, this research addresses only half of the equation. In line with previous theoretical work in cultural sociology, this paper endeavours to examine both the production and consumption processes through which morality is transmitted. The paper relies on data from an empirical study of visitor experiences to two genocide museums in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Material from both museums was analyzed to find two parallel narratives of genocide running through the museums: an emphasis on the universal nature of the genocide to appeal to international visitors, and an account of the particularities of the genocide to serve domestic political goals. To trace the reception of the museum claims, 45 in-depth interviews with Western visitors were analyzed. I found four "types" of experiences at the museums based on different ways visitors incorporated new information about the genocide into their existing schemas: firm universalism, push-over universalism, adamant relativism and new converts to relativism. While the majority of visitors had stable experiences, reinforcing pre-existing "schemas" (moral frameworks) of universalism or relativism, some visitors did have transformative experiences, where information about the Cambodian genocide overhauled existing schemas of genocide. Beyond the sociology of morality, these findings hold significant implication for globalization studies. What political implications do stable and transformative moral experiences at genocide museums have for genocide?

Preface

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Table of Contents

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To the Point Grey Five and their drinks on a Saturday night,

and to Phnom Penh

Chapter 1: Introduction

"He used a machete to cut off her hand and kill her baby. In today's Rwanda, they can be friends" (Headline from *The Globe and Mail,* April 6, 2014, day of the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide)

On the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, many of us would expect to hear the usual commemorative narrative of "never again" . Yet, while some editorials in *The Globe and Mail* on this day did hark back to this narrative, mapping out "six lessons to remember", drawing parallels with the conflict in the Central African Republic, and even chastising "never again" for being "just rhetoric", other articles have begun to document a different type of story. In the article quoted above, an AP reporter writes from Rwanda with the counter-intuitive story of survivors forgiving perpetrators. In the context of different, and often ineffective, arbitration processes, many of the 20th century's genocides are unfolding in reconciliatory ways a justice-focused Holocaust narrative hasn't prepared us to understand. Drawing on the case of the Cambodian genocide, one such genocide with a different political trajectory, this study explores how we are dealing with new endings to the well-known narrative of "never again" genocide.

In sociology, a number of leading scholars have worked to document how the Holocaust has become a "global memory" of genocide. In his article on the "social construction of moral universals", Alexander (2002) relies on a historical analysis of political statements and media representations of WWII to trace how the narrative of the Holocaust has come to "define inhumanity" in the 20th century. Levy and Sznaider (2002) have gone one step further,

suggesting that the global recognition of the Holocaust (at least in the U.S., Germany and Israel) is evidence for the possibility of "cosmopolitan memory", an event resonating in the consciousness of individuals across the globe. While the widespread moral status of the Holocaust has been well-documented, there has been very little evidence that other genocides have reached the same level. What happens to morality when the narrative of genocide shifts away from the Holocaust framework? Referring to the cases of Rwanda, Guatemala and Cambodia, Alexander (2003) asks just such a question: "Why have these horrendous phenomena of mass suffering not becoming compelling, publically available narratives of collective suffering in their respective nations, let alone to the world large?" Although empirically under-explored, the framework of the Holocaust, and hence its moral standing, may not be translating to other genocides.

More recently, another branch of cultural sociology has taken up the project of reviving the "sociology of morality". In a 2013 *Annual Review* article introducing the "new" sociology of morality, Hitlin and Vaisey (2013) reveal a dearth of research on how individuals are imbued with their morals. So far, most research (Lamont, 1992) has followed a Bourdieusian tradition, linking morality with habitus, and hence arguing that morals are passed down through our class experiences. However, the habitus perspective, rooted in often static class positions, suggests that morals remain largely unchanged over the course of one's lifetime. It is hard to believe that there are no life course events or experiences that lead moral "schemas", the subconscious moral frameworks we rely on to navigate the world, to change. Sociologists of morality have also expressed interest in this prospect, and Vaisey is now involved in a project about "transformative experiences", whose purpose is "to explore how people select into or find themselves in contexts

that facilitate these transformations, and to investigate their short- and long-term consequences" (The Experience Project, 2014).

Based on these theoretical and empirical observations, this study seeks to answer the question: "How do individuals incorporate new information into existing moral schemas?" And, more specifically to this empirical case, "How do individuals incorporate new information on the Cambodian genocide into their existing schemas of genocide?" To answer these questions, I rely on data from a study of visitor experiences at Cambodia's two main museums dedicated to the Khmer Rouge genocide. Although the definition of "genocide" remains contested, and the events in Cambodian between 1975 and 1979 are formally classified as "human rights abuses", both the Cambodian case and others have come to be commonly known as "genocides", the deliberate killings of a mass group of individuals, especially on ethnic and national grounds. Analyzing the content of the museums shows that there are two narratives of genocide promoted by the sites. On the one hand, the sites seek to be relevant for international visitors, by drawing on the "never again" rhetoric. On the other hand, they promote, both actively and inevitably, a narrative particular to the Cambodian context. Visitors respond in a number of different ways, which, for ease of analysis and communication, I organize into four "types" of experiences, or four different ways of incorporating new information about the genocide into their existing schemas. These include *firm universalism*, *push-over universalism*, *adamant relativism*, and *new converts to relativism*.

I find that the majority of visitors do not, indeed, alter their moral schemas significantly, but rather are attracted to, and draw selectively on, the museum content which supports their existing

understanding of genocide. In this way, visitors remain either "universalists", who believe that all genocides have a common root, or "relativists", who think genocides are products of particular contexts, based on their pre-existing moral schemas around the issue. However, in some cases, visitors *do* have transformative experiences, where they convert from a universalist position to relativism, and vice-versa. I explore the factors which contribute to stable and transformative experiences in more detail.

Theoretically, this research challenges the idea within the sociology of morality that moral schemas are necessarily stable or slow moving. Instead, I find that moral schemas may change rather abruptly, and especially in the context of learning new information about a particular political issue. Speaking to genocide specifically, this research challenges existing ideas that because we are surrounded by stories of "never again" genocide, our schemas necessarily follow this perspective. Seen through the lens of different patterns of moral schemas at work, the accusations of "never again" being empty rhetoric may even be an expected outcome.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1   Moral schemas and the sociology of morality

Within sociology, the question of how moral schemas work has long been explored under the cover of cultural sociology (Lamont, 1992; DiMaggio, 1997). Most recently, an explicit focus on morality has been reinvigorated through the "new sociology of morality", a movement headed by a group of sociologists seeking to bridge the gap between cultural sociology and cognitive psychology. Vaisey (2009) has argued that Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" finds its equivalent in cognitive psychology in the form of "cognitive schemas", both which suggest that individuals inherit their worldviews and "culture" unconsciously through their social positioning. Based on the assumption that one's culture, or moral framework, once inherited is relatively stable throughout one's life, Vaisey (2009) argues for the possibility of tracing an individual's moral schemas in order to predict their actions. Dismissing qualitative methods as overly deliberate, he argues for the importance of surveys in capturing the "thinking fast" expression of unconscious moral schemas.

On the other hand, Swidler's (1986) toolkit model of culture has argued that individuals make decisions based on the practical constraints of their situation, using the cultural "tools" at their disposal, and make sense of their actions in a process of justification later. Counter to Vaisey's confidence in the consistency of moral schemas, this explanation suggests that individuals may come to different moral decisions based on which "tools", or elements of their cultural knowledge, win out against others. What remains largely unexplained are the reasons behind an

individual choosing one "tool" over another, for prioritizing one set of their values over others. Subsuming the process of justification into a "dual model of culture", Vaisey (2009) argues that we act on our unconscious moral schemas, which we later justify in inconsistent ways.

A large part of the conversation on moral schemas is about the best way to measure them. If morals are a set of tools which individuals pick up according to the situation, then a key way to uncover them would be by asking individuals about their thought processes and options at the time. However, if morals are deeply embedded frameworks which dictate thoughts and behaviour, more systematic methods of uncovering moral dispositions would need to be used. Speaking out against the simplicity of quantitative methods used by cognitive psychologists, Abend (2011) differentiates between "thin" and "thick" moral concepts, where the former simply engage individuals in identifying the "correctness" of actions based on societal norms, while the latter explore the complex processes through which individuals arrive at moral conclusions. Thus, research which aims to identify moral positions must look further than thin concepts to empirical investigations of more complex values, like dignity, integrity, humanness, etc. Responding to Vaisey's (2009) refutation of qualitative methods, Pugh (2013) lists among the virtues of qualitative research the ability to access the self-presentation of participants, the *way* they convey frameworks to see the world, non-verbal cues of interviewees, and "meta-feelings", or how participants feel about their responses. Tavory (2011) argues for the importance of measuring morality based on an individual's "salient characteristics". Likewise, Schwartz (2013) uses interview data to show that individuals subscribe to "moral polytheist repertoires" (diverse moral schemas), into which they self-select (in line with the toolkit approach), but which also become constraining.

While this research suggests ways a given set of morals can be measured, research on how morality is *transmitted* in sociology is more sparse. Cultural sociologists like Griswold (1987) have argued for the importance of looking not only at the reception-side of culture, to see what individuals believe, but also to the production side of culture, to see how this information is created, and even at the background context in which these cultural objects are produced. However, in the case of morality, sociologists have either looked at the reception end of values (Vaisey, 2009; Swidler, 2001) or the production side (Alexander, 2002; Illouz, 2003) in isolation. There is research on the transmission of morals in cognitive psychology, but most has been conducted through closed-system experiments. Studies on incorporating new information into existing cultural schemas in the context of bigotry (Billig, 2002), homophobia (Tucker and Potocky-Tripodi, 2006), and other contentious topics have mostly argued for the stability of moral schemas, finding evidence for cognitive tendencies like confirmation biases and prejudice. Recognizing the absence of sociological commentary on this process, Hitlin and Vaisey (2013) have called for more research on the context in which morals are created and received. Following up on this gap, as well as to test the stability of moral schemas over time, a new multi-case and multidisciplinary study, in which Vaisey is lead investigator for sociology, is under way about "transformative experiences". Once the results from this study emerge, there will surely be more explanations of the process of moral transmission from which to draw conclusions.

2.2   Morality and genocide

While conversations in the sociology of morality have tended to be quite theoretical and cases have often been selected for their theoretical importance, it is equally important to direct our

attention to key moral issues of the present day. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, sociologists interested in globalization processes started asking questions about the potential for developing a global system of values. Refuting Smith's (1995) idea that the globe is too abstract an arena to serve as a basis for community, Levy and Sznaider (2002) extend Anderson's concept of "imagined communities", arguing that, just as nations could overcome large territorial distances to form communities, so too could we arrive at a global community. They use the recognition of the Holocaust in the West as an example of a global "cosmopolitan memory", and argue it can be extended to conflicts as far ahead in time as Kosovo (Levy and Sznaider, 2006). Similarly, Alexander (2002) uses the case of the Holocaust to illustrate how moral and political responsibilities to take action against genocide have become "universalized".

Although both of these important studies rely on the Holocaust to illustrate the success of a global morality, the same global resonance hasn't *necessarily* extended to other genocides, or other cases of mass human rights abuses. While there has not been much sociological research on morality in the context of other genocides, there has been some interest in the impact of "global culture" on how different nations commemorate their genocides. In the case of Rwanda, Olesen (2012) argues that it has been compliance with international standards of commemoration which has elevated the Rwandan genocide to a global memory of injustice. On the other hand, Ryan (2011) uses the cases of Ireland and Austria to show that countries subscribe to international standards of commemoration unevenly, based on how well it suits their national interest. Thus, while Ireland "embraces cosmopolitan memory as a source of renewal and foundational values", Austria commemorates the Holocaust as a minimalist "measure of appeasement to mollify the international community" (Ryan, 2011: 6; 8). In the case of Croatia, Rivera (2008) finds that a

government interest in boosting the tourism sector has worked to entirely erase the genocide from public memory.

Given these various degrees of commemorating genocide, we can see that there may be structural barriers preventing other genocides from reaching the same level of global resonance as the Holocaust. Challenging world polity claims (Meyer, 2000) that the international community creates "common cultural principles" around human rights, to which nations must subscribe, Beckfield (2003) argues that international standards are internalized differently depending on the particular nation's place in the global hierarchy. He argues that developing countries have "weaker ties" to global culture, and hence may have weaker commitments to commemorating their genocides. However, what remains unaddressed is the issue of dependency between the first and third world. Both Rwanda and Cambodia have relied on international funding and input in memorializing their genocides, and in both cases the economic incentive of tourism has played a factor in their presentation (Ryan, 2011; Hughes, 2008). Thus, even by virtue of their global class positions, nations will paint their genocides in different degrees of likeness to the familiar "never again" narrative.

While some empirical evidence exists on the presentation of genocide, very little research has followed through to see the messages visitors are taking away from the sites (Biran, Poria and Oren, 2011). This being said, there is a very popular stream of literature on genocides sites which has worked with Lennon and Foley's (2000) concept of "dark tourism", advancing the theory that individuals visit these sites from a sense of morbid fascination and as entertainment (Stone, 2006; Stone and Sharpley, 2008). In this context, the idea that individuals may be experiencing

the sites as morally or politically significant is largely ignored (Hughes, 2008). Within sociology, researchers looking at the presentation of genocide have also relied on some basic assumptions about how it resonates with individuals. Levy and Sznaider (2006) rely on Beck's theory of "internal globalization", which suggests that individuals are developing a "cosmopolitan consciousness" of common values by virtue of their very exposure to globalization processes. Other sociologists have critiqued this assumption, suggesting that "true cosmopolitanism" goes beyond the Kantian assumption that we are moving toward one universal system of values, but rather takes into account a "culturally and historically bounded sense of universality" (Delanty, 2007: 31).

Outside of sociology, the question of how individuals respond to human rights atrocities has received much attention from philosophy, law, history and anthropology since the first Western claims to preserving "human rights" in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789. While many constitutional efforts have been made with the intent of moving towards universal rights, scholars haven't always been so optimistic about their reach into individual moral frameworks. Voicing such concerns, the American Anthropological Association addressed the Commission of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1947, stressing the importance of culturally-embedded rights in the face of individual rights and their abstract universalism. Human rights scholars Donnelly (1982; 2003) and An-Na'im (1995) have outlined different theoretical orientations when it comes to accepting universalism, including the distinction between cultural relativism in absolute terms (which leads to relativism and nihilism), and as a form of "enlightened ethnocentricity", which concedes the rights of others to be different, and can be seen as a positive trait.

Surprisingly, in both sociology and other disciplines, very little empirical work has followed up on these important theoretical debates. Some qualitative research exists on "global citizenship", but the abstract nature of the term has led to very thin understandings and thinner conclusions. Quantitative researchers have also been working towards measuring "world values" (Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Inglehart, 2006;) and "cosmopolitanism" (Olofsson and Öhman, 2007; Pichler, 2009), but the complex nature of these terms has lead to difficulties with operationalization. Owing to this gap, it is important to look at how individuals in the 21st century are internalizing human rights discourse.

Chapter 3: Methods

Taking into account these concerns in the literature, this study uses the case of Cambodia's genocide sites to see how Western visitors incorporate new information into their existing moral schemas of genocide. Westerners were chosen as the group of study based on the global power relations through which their individual narratives of genocide are filtered – as Western nations (including the US, Britain, France, Canada, and others) have developed reputations for intervening in international conflicts, the narrative of "never again" is especially prolific in the Western imagination. The Cambodian case was also selected for strategic reasons. First, it represents a genocide that, compared to more recent genocides like Rwanda and Yugoslavia, remains largely underrepresented in the Western imagination. As was anticipated, and revealed in the interviews later, most young Westerners had never heard of the genocide before finding themselves in Cambodia on holiday. Its unfamiliar status as a genocide makes it ideal for observing individuals in the initial stages of processing new information into their moral schemas. Second, with Southeast Asia's gaining popularity as the new "hot spot" for young tourists, Cambodia has one of the most active genocide tourism scenes for Westerners in the non-Western world (Hughes, 2008). Whether researched or not, it is actively engaging the moral schemas of a large number of Western individuals, and as such becomes an important empirical case to examine morality and genocide in its own right.

To examine Western moral schemas of genocide, I rely on two sources of data which, taken together, account for the production and reception of the Cambodian genocide narrative. Both of Cambodia's main museums dedicated to the genocide were analyzed for the types of moral

schemas of genocide they present, and 45 in-depth interviews with Western visitors were conducted to see how they engage with these moral schemas. As mentioned, past sociological research has studied morality in a number of different ways: Alexander (2002) and Levy and Sznaider (2002) have applied historical analysis to trace the institutional shaping of morality around the Holocaust; Vaisey (2009) has advocated for the use of surveys for tapping into the unconscious nature of moral schemas; Schwartz (2013) has used traditional interview methods, combined with specialized techniques for tracing moral logics and emotion in discourse, to interpret the moral experiences of visitors to sites of mourning. However, none of these methods provide an exemplar for tracing the *process* through which moral schemas are negotiated by individuals, for connecting the production and reception aspects of morality. In line with a production-reception approach to cultural sociology (Griswold, 1987), I evaluate both the museum narratives and visitor responses for a more holistic understanding of how moral schemas of genocide work.

I use the museum method as a strategy for situating the schemas within a clearly defined spatial and temporal experience. I focus on Cambodia's two principal genocide commemoration sites to pinpoint the production of narratives around the genocide. The Killing Fields of Choeung Ek is the government-endorsed "main memorial site to all who perished" between 1974 and 1979, during the genocide (Cambodian Tribunal, 2011) and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, the main detention centre of the Khmer Rouge, is a longstanding museum dedicated to educating visitors about the genocide. The museum material analyzed includes the sites themselves, the displays, signage, brochures, the free audio tour at the Killing Fields, as well as off-shoots from their official capacity, like the book sales tables of two survivors in the courtyard of Tuol Sleng,

13

the unofficial Cambodian guides who offer tours of the prison, and the tuk-tuk drivers who make a living driving to the Killing Fields at the outskirts of town. This focus on the museums is effective, not only for isolating the schemas invoked to present the genocide, but also because of their status as a "tourist institution" (Hughes, 2008), making them the intuitive point of access for many Westerners learning about the genocide.

My interview sample consists of 45 interviews with Westerners visiting the sites, composed of 35 young Western tourists and 10 volunteers for the UN tribunal for the Khmer Rouge war criminals (still ongoing at the time of the study), who were also predominantly Westerners. For the purpose of the study, "Westerners" were defined as those visiting from North America, Europe and Australasia, and were selected as a group based on Alexander (2002) and Levy and Sznaider's (2002) claims that these nations share a common memory of the Holocaust. The two groups were chosen with an eye for comparison; as populations with different prior exposure to the Cambodian genocide, they can speak to how different levels of familiarity with the genocide may influence the trajectory of moral schemas at the museums. However, as this paper focuses on the *process* through which schemas of genocide play out, distinctions between the two populations will take on secondary importance in this case.

Two types of sampling strategies were applied. For the UN volunteers, information privacy regulations of the court qualified them as a sensitive population, for which a snowball strategy (Gamson, 1998) was used. This consisted of a key informant distributing a recruitment letter to their colleagues by email. In the case of the tourist population, a purposive sampling strategy was applied. Given the transitory nature of this population, all participants were sampled from the

same guesthouse in Phnom Penh. The primary criteria for selecting a participant was age range (18-35), but also included considerations based on gender and nationality. Typical limitations of a purposive convenience sample apply; those individuals were interviewed who were free and willing to engage. However, of those asked almost none declined, and those who did cited time constraints as the primary reason.

The interviews took place in Phnom Penh over the course of four months in 2013, and each lasted between one and three hours. They were based on a semi-structured questionnaire (see the Appendix), which focused on gathering the visitors' experiences at the sites with two intentions in mind. Following from Vaisey's (2009) critique of the interview method as an exercise in impression-management, I asked two types of questions: inductive questions about a visitor's experience, (including their expectations going, their favourite and least favourite displays, and their behaviour at the sites) aimed at reaching their conscious impressions of the experience, as well as carefully placed deductive questions and comments introducing alternative information about the genocide, to see how they would negotiate this with their existing moral schemas. Most questions centred on the museums, to encourage interviewees to use the displays as a point of departure for their moral assessments. However, questions were purposefully left open-ended as a way for allowing past experiences, self-professed beliefs, and meta-emotions to be included as data (Swidler, 2001; Pugh, 2013).

To evaluate the trajectory of moral schemas, I created a coding system which tracks the moral assumptions implicit in the museum material and visitor responses. Both a thematic analysis, where the main themes of visitor experiences to the sites were inductively extracted (Attride-

Stirling, 2001), and a typological classification, based on deductive codes around morality I borrowed from the literature (Bendtx, 1973; Ragin, 1982) were conducted. Together, these types of coding account for both the toolkit model of culture and the moral schemas/cognitive approach. Interviews were first coded inductively for themes like the ability to "imagine" the genocide, to "understand" the genocide, to "prevent" genocide, and other aspects of the museum experience of which visitors were consciously aware. The same interviews were then coded for the moral schemas at play beneath the surface. I relied on traditions within the human rights literature to discern three principal codes (Donnelly, 2003; An-Na'im, 1995): *moral universalism* (assuming the genocide was part of a historical human trend of violence, an extension of the Holocaust), *moral absolutism* (or cultural relativism, the genocide was a contextually-specific event in Cambodia's history), and *moral relativism* (or humanist relativism, the genocide was a culmination of context-specific individual actions, and hence difficult to classify morally).

I tested the reliability of the codes using the proportional agreement method (Campbell et al., 2013), an alternative to Kohen's Cappa designed especially for interview data. An independent coder was trained to identify the three principal codes in lines of previously-coded text. They were given a 10 percent random sample to code, which included excerpts from both the museum material and interviews. All three codes achieved a strong level of inter-coder reliability, together averaging 90% consensus of lines coded the same by the two coders.

Chapter 4: The case of Cambodia's genocide museums

As well as being a relatively unfamiliar genocide in the contemporary Western imagination, the case of Cambodia's genocide is also useful for its presentation of a different type of genocide story than the well-known model of the Holocaust in the West. Where Nazi Germany's dramatic fall from power and subsequent unanimous guilty verdicts for its leaders created a clear-cut line between perpetrators and victims, the Khmer Rouge genocide of 1975-1979 has followed a messier legal trajectory. With the West condemning the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia beginning in 1979, the Khmer Rouge was recognized as Cambodia's official leadership by the UN until 1993, almost 20 years after the start of the genocide. Only in the late 1990s were Khmer Rouge leaders brought out of hiding, and only in 2009 were the first leaders tried by a joint UN-Cambodian tribunal (Marchak, 2003). This slow process of jurisdiction can be attributed to the reluctance of Cambodia's current government, headed by the post-1979 Vietnamese-appointed ex-Khmer Rouge cadre Hun Sen (now Prime Minister of the Cambodian People's Party), to bring the Khmer Rouge leaders to trial. Hun Sen is known as an authoritarian leader who has retained power through intimidation and corruption.

The situation is further complicated by Cambodia's precarious position in the global economic order. Ex-colonies like Cambodia, with little natural resources beyond rice milling and fishing, and some industry around textiles, also have a big financial dependence on international tourism. In line with presenting their historical landmarks, including Angkor Wat, in ways friendly to tourism, they have had a financial incentive to represent their genocide in a way attractive to tourists (Lennon and Foley, 2000). Given this context, the presentation of Cambodia's genocide

falls in an interesting position between balancing international expectations for recognition and commemoration, and domestic political goals not to upset the existing ruling order by emphasizing its contentious ties back to the Khmer Rouge regime.

In 2005, the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek, the largest burial ground and memorial site for the genocide, were rented by the government to joint Cambodian-Japanese company JC Royal, under a 30-year lease agreement to manage the sites. This privatization has led to the introduction of an audio tour, created by Australian company Narrowcasters, which pointedly draws on Western universalist themes in the presentation of the genocide. For example, from the very beginning of the tour, it emphasizes the universal nature of human history by drawing comparisons between different genocides and stating that genocide (as if a stable and identical phenomenon throughout history) will always recur:

> *"This was hardly the first case of genocide. We never thought it could happen here. But it did. And the thing is, it can happen anywhere. It did in Nazi Germany. And in Russia, under Stalin. And in China. In Rwanda. In the US, with its Native Americans. And in Argentina, and in Chile. Tragically, it will probably happen again"* (Cambodian Tribunal, 2011).

Other strategies of the tour include those of insertion, asking visitors to imagine trading places with Cambodians: *"Wherever you come from, imagine if more than one out of every four people in your country was killed – and by your own people. This is what happened in Cambodia"* (Cambodian Tribunal, 2011). The universalization of the Cambodian genocide is also achieved

through mirroring strategies used by Holocaust sites. Many of the displays at the Killing Fields are reminiscent of famous displays at Auschwitz and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, including glass boxes filled with the different belongings of victims, and the use of personal stories of the victims as a way to create empathy.

In this way, what could be presented as a historically-bounded event that took place in Cambodia in the 1970s, becomes a non-specific genocide, something to be inserted into an individual's moral schema alongside the Holocaust and existing understandings of genocide. The Killing Fields in this format have also become a lucrative tourist destination. Once described by Cambodia scholars as a "vast compound that includes excavated pits with signs bearing minimalist descriptions" (Sion, 2011), the site is now among Cambodia's top tourism destinations, ranking third on the popular travel site Trip Advisor (2013), after the legendary temples of Angkor Wat and Bayon. This growing popularity has allowed the museum to raise admissions costs, which have doubled within two years, fulfilling its initial purpose of raising revenue. Profit-oriented motives by JC Royal and the Cambodian government have been met with controversy by the international media, with *The New York Times* publishing a 2005 story shaming Cambodia's decision to privatize.

In contrast with the highly stylized universalist narrative promoted at the Killing Fields, Tuol Sleng, the school-turned-prison where the Khmer Rouge interrogated and tortured its alleged political enemies, has been left seemingly untouched. This is not to suggest that it's been created in a way unfriendly to Western understandings of genocide, but rather that preserving the site untouched has been in itself a successful way to draw in tourists, who see the museum's

19

minimalist intervention with the torture chambers and prison holdings as "authentic". It would be naïve to assume that the museum's presentation of the genocide isn't done with set assumptions about where it will lead the audience. Visitors can hire guides, whose tours revolve around pointing out the physical reminders of how the atrocities were committed, including presumably original blood stains on the ceilings and floor, and insider information about different torture strategies, all based on the assumption that Westerners are interested in learning about the brutality of the genocide.

Similar to the Killing Fields, many of the displays are also reminiscent of those at Holocaust sites. The giant collection of prisoner mug shots displayed against the walls (which an observant visitor will notice repeat throughout the museum), the testimonies of victims in the form of forced signed confessions, and the paintings of the event by survivors, are similar to the types of museum displays one has come to expect at Holocaust sites, and reflect an effort to personalize the genocide in a way compatible with Western strategies of individualizing genocide. The museum features a room dedicated to explaining the ongoing trials of Khmer Rouge criminals, a UN-sponsored project reminding visitors that the Cambodian genocide is being dealt with in line with post-Holocaust ideas of justice. As well, the museum has been modified in ways that are conscientious of its visitor base over the years. The once notorious pile of skulls stacked in the shape of a Cambodian map has been re-arranged into a shrine, consistent with universalist ideas of a respect for the victims.

Although having avoided privatization up until now, Tuol Sleng also faces pressures to abide by external ideas of how the genocide should be presented. At the time of the study, one of the

rooms housed a display by the Japanese Okinawa Prefecture Peace Memorial Museum, dedicated to educating visitors about the atrocities of the U.S. military against Japanese civilians at the Battle of Okinawa. A process is in the works for having Tuol Sleng museum staff trained by Japanese curators to direct the museum's development into a "Peace Museum". This has been met with a backlash by local representatives of DC-Cam (Cambodia's only archival centre for the genocide, notably started as part of Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Program and directed by Cambodian refugee to the US, Youk Chhang), who claim that Cambodians should have independent say in directing the sites. Presenting the genocide in a way friendly to a Western audience isn't unique to the Cambodian case, but seems to be a trend among non-Western countries which have seen U.N. involvement in their arbitration processes. In Rwanda, where the main genocide site has been primarily funded through external agencies like Oxfam, the genocide has also been presented in a particularly Western-friendly image (Olesen, 2012).

In spite of all the international pressure in determining the direction of the genocide sites, however, both domestic political pressures, as well as on-the-ground economic issues, sometimes interject with the legitimacy of the universalist presentation of the genocide. As mentioned, the internal political situation in Cambodia prevents a perfect alignment with Western ideas of the trajectory of genocide. As many ex-Khmer Rouge members continue to hold positions in the current government, both museums face pressure to take the spotlight away from the political mechanisms which led to the genocide. To avoid elaborating on structural factors, the audio tour at the Killing Fields draws express attention to the Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot (now safely dead) and his "extreme" ideas as the leading force behind the genocide. While emphasizing the role of one leader is reminiscent of the Holocaust narrative's emphasis on Hitler, unlike in the

case of Hitler, where his anti-Semitic beliefs are highlighted as the motivating factor, at the Cambodian sites there isn't much context provided for Pol Pot's incentive to get rid of the educated class, and the overall impression given of him is of a "paranoid", "deranged", "fanatical leader" .

Based in similar political reasons, both museums seem to divert attention from the process of accountability. While asking visitors to put themselves in the positions of victims when imagining the universalist capacity of genocide, the same sentiment isn't extended to visitors deciding on the appropriate form of punishment for the genocide. Information on the trials is indeed included in the displays, however the question of who is at fault and who should be held accountable is reserved for Cambodians. Quoting DC-Cam director Youk Chhang in his story of returning to Cambodia to seek revenge for Khmer Rouge crimes, the audio tour communicates a reconciliatory message of genocide:

> *"I discovered later that it was not what she [my mother] wanted me to do at all. All she wanted was to see me safe and happy. […] She had even forgiven the guy who killed my sister 30 years ago. I see my mother everywhere. I see my sister everywhere. I see the whole country as my family. […] Everyone has different means to deal with what they went through, to put those pieces together. I do this on my own. That's the only way"* (Cambodian Tribunal, 2011).

By introducing this story of particularism in dealing with the genocide, the museum creates a unity among Cambodians from which the visitor is excluded. This serves to actively distance

visitors from identifying with the genocide in the completely universal way the Holocaust narrative allows and serves the political purpose of warding off international scrutiny and involvement in Cambodia's affairs. Whether an express political commitment, or an inadvertent result of a failed justice process, the reconciliation orientation of the genocide disrupts the clean Western narrative of justice around genocide.

Other ways the museums distract from promoting the Cambodian genocide within a universalist framework are completely out of their hands. One factor differentiating the Cambodian case is the blatant poverty of the country, which bears no resemblance to Germany's post-Holocaust prosperous economic conditions up to the present day. In Cambodia there are a lot more individuals trying to make money out of the genocide than in the Western context. Whereas in the Holocaust narrative, survivors share their story as a form of civic responsibility to raise awareness, in Cambodia two of the survivors have set up tables in the courtyard of Tuol Sleng, where they make a living selling books of their personal accounts to visitors. Even before going to the Killing Fields, tourists are approached by tuk-tuk drivers vying to take them there, as a trip to the outskirts of town amounts to a good day's business. When they reach the Killing Fields in a poor rural area outside of Phnom Penh, visitors are met by children and landmine victims begging outside the museum's fence.

Such economic conditions provide a different nuance to the story of genocide. It becomes hard to concentrate on the past, like individuals would in a Western museum, in a context where poverty and the legacy of genocide are constant intruders into the mainstream Western imagination of genocide. Even historical forms of poverty are a departure from the Western narrative of

23

genocide, where the rudimentary weapons used to execute the Cambodian genocide, including simple farm implements and chemicals like DDT, are difficult to reconcile with the Western image of the Holocaust's notorious gas chambers as the culmination of Western science and rationality (Bauman, 1989).

Finally, it is the relationship of Cambodians themselves to the genocide which departs from the Western framework of reverence around genocide. At the Killing Fields, organized tours from local Cambodian high schools often lead to the site being overridden by over-excited students, running around, taking photos with their cell phones, and laughing – an attitude very much at odds with the Western understanding of respectful behaviour at such a site. If not led to curiosity by the seemingly insensitive behaviour of Cambodian students, visitors often find a conspicuous absence of Cambodians at the sites, who, despite free or cheap admission, have not treated the sites as the cornerstone for paying respects to victims. As well, the fact that the Cambodian genocide is more recent in history means that tourists face the idea that locals they meet may have had direct experiences of the genocide. The status of the Cambodian genocide as a "living" trauma introduces a new element to the schema of genocide as safely stowed away in the past.

These different political, economic and cultural roles of the sites create a stark contrast with the universalist framework of genocide. While the Cambodian genocide is in many ways constructed to remind visitors of the familiar Western genocide narrative, there are circumstantial and purposive ways in which it differs. It is this new empirical information which complicates the capacity for visitors to simply incorporate the Cambodian genocide into their existing schemas of genocide.

24

Chapter 5: Stable and transformative experiences at Cambodia's genocide sites

To answer the question of how museum visitors incorporate new information about the Cambodian genocide into their existing moral schemas, three different considerations need to be laid out. First, visitor experiences need to be looked at temporally – does the visitor arrive at and depart from the site with the same moral schema of genocide? Second, it is important to pay attention to the types of stimuli which influence moral schemas – which particular aspects of the museum experience contribute to reinforcing existing schemas, and which trigger their transformation? Finally, it is important to think about the moral schemas substantially – what are the moral schemas individuals emerge with, and what political implications do they have for genocide? Based on these considerations, visitor experiences have been classified into four types of experiences: *firm universalists*, *push-over universalists*, *adamant relativists* and *new converts to relativism*. Collective memory scholars studying the presentation of genocide point out that memories of trauma within nations are highly contested; studying memorialisation in Germany, Poland, Israel and the U.S., Young (1993) argues that commemoration projects are representative of specific interest groups, including governments and community organizations, rather than collectivity of the nation as a whole. Similarly, it is important to note that interviewees rarely fall into one category of experience exclusively. It is for ease of analysis and communication that I engage with each separately below.

5.1   The firm universalist experience: A genocide is a genocide

The universalist moral schema (the schema emphasizing the common 'human' root of genocide and similarities between different genocides) is the ideal moral framework in many Western societies. This is the position Westerners have in mind when thinking about the way people respond, or "should" respond, to genocide. This is the image that the media and political leaders convey when they denounce human rights atrocities by drawing on "never again" discourse. This is the position that Alexander claims has arisen out of the Holocaust, and Levy and Sznaider claim have resulted in "cosmopolitan memories" of genocide. This is also what the museums intend to invoke when they compare the Cambodian genocide to other genocides, and ask visitors to imagine this happening in their own countries.

While these theoretical and intuitive assumptions would lead us to imagine the universalist position prevailing at the genocide sites, individuals who were able to hold on to a universalist schema consistently throughout their visit were actually a minority. What characterized the *firm universalist* position was drawing on museum stimuli which supported existing understandings of genocide, and dismissing new empirical information which did not fit in with these moral schemas. Pre-existing schemas of genocide included an emphasis on the value of life, and many visitors were drawn to displays showing the callousness with which the life of victims was treated, as a form of reaffirmation of this familiar schema. One of the biggest giveaways of a universalist experience was a visitor describing their shock and horror at the audio tour's presentation of the "Killing Tree" at the Killing Fields, where, as the sign at its roots indicates, "babies were smashed". However, when asked to elaborate on why this display was so shocking,

26

visitors didn't explain its resonance in terms of improving their understanding of the Cambodian genocide, but rather drew on the existing universal moral schema of the innocence of children: *"Because – babies – they're just so innocent. It's unbelievable that someone can do this to babies – to children. Because children are innocent."*

Some visitors described the importance of understanding *how* the victims had been killed, as if this were to create a deeper understanding of the genocide, rather than meet the self-affirming expectation that these descriptions would be horrible. Other universalists interpreted the displays of graphic photos of torture victims based on their compatibility with existing schemas of a respect for victims. As one visitor explains: *"For me at least, some of the horrific things you hear about, which is disgusting and obviously heart wrenching, it's important – because people did live through that and survive that. And it's discounting their experience if I was like – 'please sanitize this for me'. Cause it wasn't sanitized for **them**."* In a similar form of reasoning, many universalists latched onto objects which they felt had symbolic value. For example, universalists regularly interpreted the display of prisoner mug shots in ways that reaffirmed their existing aspirations for the meaning of the genocide. One visitor describes an influential photo: *"She has a very intense gaze saying – it's almost smiling in a way – whatever you do, I don't give a shit. I'm happy with who I am. And you can do whatever you want with my body, you won't kill me anyway. That's what it said to me."* The message of defiance in the face of genocide was not a byproduct of the museum narrative itself, but rather based on the visitor's pre-existing framework of meaning around genocide.

If we were judging the degree to which universalists described feeling shocked, we would indeed conclude that their experiences had been transformative. However, if we pay attention to the way they respond to new information about the genocide, we can see that they dismiss those uniquely Cambodian aspects which challenge the universalist schemas. In fact, one key trend among this type of experience was the mental distinction between the universality of genocide, and the particularist nature of experiencing it as a tourist. By treating the Cambodian genocide as above the political and economic context of its representation, firm universalists were able to exclude factors like tourism from ethical debates about genocide. For example, many universalist visitors didn't even notice the Tuol Sleng survivors selling their books, and when this was brought to their attention, they treated the case purely as an economic problem: *"Well that's a moment where I felt like – oh, I'm at a museum. Someone is trying to sell me something, trying to make money off of this. But when you first called it a museum, I was like – what are you talking about a museum? […] It's a prison."* These types of dismissive reactions, paired with a selective reading of the museum, meant firm universalists left with their ideas of genocide reaffirmed.

5.2   The push-over universalist: Reconciling the Cambodian case with universalism

Unlike firm universalists, who latched onto familiar moral schemas and dismissed new information which didn't fit, what I refer to as "*push-over" universalists* were more conscious of discrepancies between the universalist schemas of genocide and the Cambodian narrative. Museum stimuli which firm universalists had taken for granted as compatible with universalist schemas, this group of visitors found questionable. For example, while firm universalists interpreted the display of photos with torture victims as a necessary sign of respect for their

experiences, these visitors questioned whether the photos were actually compatible with other universalist schemas, like the respect for human life. One such visitor explains their concern about the graphic nature of the photos: *"It became not so much about the lives lost, but – look at how they tortured them. […] I just wanted to make sure it was the human life that was in the forefront."* Like the former group of universalists, they were interested in the similarity between genocides, but unlike firm universalists, they felt the museum had failed at making this point.

The majority of these visitors faced their greatest challenges reconciling the universality of the genocide with its own commodification through tourism. Rather than dismissing the case of Cambodian survivors selling books as an economic necessity, like the firm universalists had, this image disrupted these visitors' existing schemas of the sacrificial qualities of survivors: *"They're sitting there, all smiles, people are taking pictures of them, and they're selling and autographing books. And that to me was baffling. That they were – making a profit, out of this terrible thing."* Related concerns included uncertainty about how Cambodians themselves felt about Western tourism at the sites. The idea that tourists might be exploiting Cambodians in this context also went against the universalist schema of respecting the victims. One visitor expresses anxiety about the possible exploitation of the survivors at Tuol Sleng: *"I walked by and I saw him eating his lunch, and thought – I hope that's a good lunch, and I hope he gets at least 90% of the proceeds. I just don't know what happens a lot of the time behind the scenes."*

Although these visitors had reservations about the compatibility of the Cambodian case with their existing schemas of genocide, what characterized this experience was the *smoothing out* of differences in the moral schemas, their "push-over" back onto a universalist track. Depending on

the experiences of visitors, this usually happened in one of two ways: through a process of justification, where a dedication to the universalist schema of genocide outweighed the importance of maintaining distances between the two cases, and through a process of catharsis, where one pivotal part of the experience was influential enough to offset skepticism of the Cambodian narrative. In both cases, the result was the incorporation of new information about the Cambodian case into a visitor's existing moral schema of genocide. For example, describing their concerns that a survivor seemed "really cheery" for spending his days outside Tuol Sleng where he had been held captive, a visitor revises their schema of survivors later in the interview, by justifying his behaviour in a new light: "*I don't know – maybe it's like a therapy for him to keep going there.*"

Those who had felt particularly skeptical about the commodification of the genocide on the basis of strong universalist schemas, seemed to look for other aspects of the museum which would tip them back in favour of reconciling the two schemas. Dealing with concerns about the graphic displays at Tuol Sleng, some visitors found solace in the peaceful setting of the Killing Fields:

> "*Honestly, I was expecting to cry. Like, really, really cry. But I think that it was so well presented, that it wasn't as heartwrenching as I thought it would be. […] And people seemed really casual there […] the birds are singing, and there's flowers, and the trees are blooming. Yeah it wasn't as bad as I thought.*"

While the visitor's expectation of the site was based on an existing schema of genocide as a tragedy, their search for meaning expanded their moral schema to include thinking about the genocide in the context of peaceful reconciliation.

Perhaps the biggest cause for the transformation of a visitor's schema, however, was a personal interaction with a Cambodian person who had experienced the genocide first hand. This was especially true of visitor encounters with one of the survivors at Tuol Sleng, who describe this as creating a feeling of inclusivity in regards to the genocide: *That becomes him sharing the story with you, rather than him telling the story, or just relaying the story."* Visitors who had such an encounter were more likely to move away from a rigid universalist schema, towards one more inclusive of the particulars of the Cambodian case.

5.3   The adamant relativist experience: Genocides as historical and political events

Judging by the number of visitors to the sites who entered with relativist moral schemas (schemas emphasizing the social and cultural context of the genocide) it would seem that a universalist morality around genocide is less widespread than previous research would lead us to believe. Defying the assumption that a relativist approach undermines the severity of genocide, many relativists interviewed were highly reflexive about the limitations of the universalist perspective. Two types of relativism were common amongst visitors: historical relativism, which emphasized cultural and political differences between genocides, and humanist relativism, which emphasized the differences in the individual positions of victims. As a certain level of humanist relativism was present across all experiences, where visitors felt unequipped to speak to the

individual experiences of victims, this section will focus primarily on historical relativism – the defining experience of "adamant relativists".

Where universalists valued the museum stimuli which helped to answer *how* the genocide happened, relativists instead valued information that explained *why* it happened. Unlike in the experience of universalists, whose expectations of universality had often been met at the museums, the absence of very much historical and political context left many relativists disappointed. However, just as in the case of firm universalists drawing on existing universal schemas through which to experience the Cambodian genocide, so too did these relativists extend existing relativist schemas of genocide to the Cambodian case. The main difference between these two types of experiences, apart from their commitment to different moral schemas, was the style of their interactions with the museum displays. Where firm universalists selected museum stimuli which reinforced their existing universal schemas, relativists, without the same physical manifestations in which to reinforce their values, depended on inserting political context into the displays. The *adamant relativist* experience is characterized by reading between the lines of the museum stimuli to build a contextually strong argument, and dismissing the parts of the Cambodian story which don't fit in this schema. Like the firm universalist experience, the adamant relativist position is characterized by static moral schemas which fail to include new information from the Cambodian case.

Pre-existing relativist schemas of genocide included the idea that "a genocide doesn't just happen", and many relativists pointed to the conspicuous absence of political context from both Tuol Sleng and the Killing Fields audio tour. One visitor identifies the emphasis on the central

role of Pol Pot by the audio tour as a form of scapegoating: *"There must have been some tension in the country for him to play into, for this to happen. And the museum doesn't dig into that at all."* Such a presumably skewed representation of the genocide was linked, not to intrinsic failings of the museums, but to greater political forces by which they were bound:

> *"There might be a lot of people […] supporting the Red Khmers back in the day, and it would be easy for them to say – oh yeah, Pol Pot did all of these things to the Cambodian people. […] But it sounds too convenient. […]. It's a way for the other people, political people, to go on doing their stuff without actually being actually brought to justice."*

In the same way that universalists projected personal meaning onto the museum displays, so too did this group of relativists. Drawing on their pre-existing schema of genocide presentation as politically convenient, a visitor reads into the museum message about communism: *"I can't remember actually [what the museum said], but I'm thinking they wouldn't down-talk communist at all […] if you have a communist party in power at the moment, you can't really say, oh yeah, communism led to this genocide. That would be shooting yourself in the foot."* In fact, the tour had on several occasions referred to communism as a "deranged vision" and an "extreme regime", but this information hadn't stayed with the visitor

Just as the firm universalist experience rejected the particularities of the Cambodian genocide, adamant relativists rejected claims to universality. In contrast with the standard universalist schema of the importance of museums for the prevention of future genocides, and because of

their perception of the genocide as a domestic political issue, the adamant relativists rejected the idea that foreigners should have a duty to attend the sites: *"I was also like – do Cambodian people actually go there? I mean, it's only set up for tourists. Why should I be emotional at a place where not even Cambodian people will go to remember their dead?"* One visitor describes the futility of attending the sites as a foreigner: *"It's not to say that – it's a terrible thing, of course it is – but it's like, it doesn't make a difference that I am there at that time. It doesn't really make any difference. It doesn't really make anything better, you know?"* Taking a more extreme cultural relativist stance, a visitor rejects the idea of foreigners identifying with the genocide at all: *"Do I need to go to these places? The Killing Fields here have nothing to do with me. Nothing to do with my family, my country."* As can be seen, the experience of adamant relativists is just as filtered through their relativist schemas as the universalist position is through universalist schemas.

5.4   New converts to relativism: Privileging the particulars of the Cambodian case

Whereas push-over universalists began their experience with reservations about the universality of the Cambodian genocide but eventually reconciled this case into their existing moral schema, *new converts to relativism* started off with universalist tendencies, but by the end of the tour had developed a schema particular to the Cambodian case. As in the case of a universalist experience, these visitors started with moral schemas of respect for victims and valuing human life, however, as they learned more details about the experiences of Cambodian victims, universalist schemas gave way to schemas relative to the Cambodian story. One visitor describes beginning the tour with the idea that the Cambodian genocide and Holocaust were on equal

footing, however learning that the Cambodian killings weren't confined to a particular ethnic group created a breakdown of the universalist schema of suffering: *"I was telling a friend right before you came over that I think it's [the Cambodian genocide] worse, I think it's a lot worse. Because in the Holocaust, people were targeted, and this was – every single person was targeted."* The same visitor describes the importance of recognizing the resilience of Cambodians outside of comparisons with American tragedies like Hurricane Katrina, indicating the formation of a new culturally-specific moral schema.

Other ways this shift in moral schemas took place includes first-hand encounters with Cambodians, similar to those experienced by push-over universalists, which bring up unfamiliar differences in the way Cambodians experience the genocide. A visitor describes an encounter with a Cambodian doctor, whose story of the evacuation of Phnom Penh during the genocide challenges their schema of genocide as a tragedy:

> *"And he said the city was empty, all the building were there but it was just a ghost town. But he very much said it in a celebratory way – like it is now over, and life is better now. He wasn't depressed about it, or angry, or anything like that. And so maybe that's just the culture. To celebrate that it's over."*

The surprise displayed by the visitor at the schema of celebration causes them to rethink a universalist schema in favour of a culturally specific morality.

Unlike in the case of push-over universalists, where a skeptical view of the commodification of the genocide was eventually smoothed out, in the case of these visitors, the inability to reconcile the universality of the genocide with its commodification led to a dramatic breakdown of universalist schemas. Many new converts to relativism owed their transformation entirely to learning that the Killing Fields were not a public memorial site consistent with schemas of a respect for victims, but a business owned by a partially foreign corporation for profit. Where firm universalists took a degree of commodification for granted, adamant relativists welcomed such a revelation, and push-over universalists were eventually able to reconcile the two schemas, for many of these relativists, this revelation overhauled their previously universalist inclinations. A visitor who had even described a moving first-hand encounter with a survivor, reconsidered the universalist message of the sites:

> *"I mean, I was happy to pay 6 dollars to see it. But now that I know it's a privatized thing, I don't know if I'm okay with [that]. [I: Would you go again, knowing that it was privatized?] I don't know. I don't think so. […] But it definitely alters a bit of what it means."*

Perhaps the most interesting observation to come out of the new convert to relativism position is the potential for this kind of experience to tread where the three other types of experiences showed little promise – toward action. Many newly converted relativists, seemingly surprised by having had a change in perspective, describe plans to act on this new understanding. One visitor describes documenting the sites for their family, as a way to introduce a different story of suffering to their schemas based in the Holocaust: *"To be honest, a lot of it was to be able to talk*

to my mom and my stepmom. I think they're so caught up with – 'everything horrible has happened to the Jews. Always the Jews.' Seriously. I want to say – this was bad too." In the most directly tangible outcome, a young visitor refers to visiting the Cambodian sites as the most political aspect of their trip, and expresses a desire to vote at home: *"I've never been interested in politics, but I really want to go and research all of this. So maybe it'll make me more into politics. I've never used my vote, cause I felt like if I don't know enough, I shouldn't use it."* The channeling of the new convert to relativism experience into the democratic process highlights the importance of moral schemas for determining political decisions.

5.5 Political implications of genocide schemas and issues of temporality

In human rights studies and history studies (Seixas, 2002), relativism has often been seen as a threat to uniform judgments of atrocity, around which preventative policies could be lobbied. It has been firm universalism, with its unwavering dedication to human rights, that has been seen as the valuable moral position to hold. But what is the value of the firm universalist experience compared to the more flexible universalist, or even the reflexive relativist position? While universalism may be critiqued for its abstract character, sociologists (Alexander, 2002) have shown that its universality is a product of social construction, and does manifest in very particular moral schemas, whose proliferation creates the illusion of universality. In this sense, a position of firm universalism which rejects the particulars of the Cambodian case can be seen as an overly rigid commitment to particularly Western ideas of genocide (Delanty, 2007).

On the other hand, push-over universalism does expand universalist schemas to accommodate the historical particularities of the genocide at hand. This comes with its own set of critiques. Does this accommodation of historical particulars foolishly accept moral schemas which should be denied legitimacy? Does expanding our understanding of genocide to include a reconciliatory moral schema undermine our dedication to seeking justice? However, for all of these frightening suggestions, it can also be said that in the same way a dedication to universalist schemas in the West hasn't amounted to the prevention of genocide abroad, so too does the optimism of push-over universalists hold little practical promise.

In contrast with universalist positions, the adamant relativist moral experience asks us to be conscientious of the historical and political circumstances at play in determining the circumstance of atrocities. Given this dedication to reflexivity, relativism has come under scrutiny for endorsing inaction in the face of real human suffering. On the other hand, it is this reflexivity which may give us the tools to direct our preventative action in a productive direction. However, in the same way that the old universalist position remains fixed in existing moral schemas, adamant relativism may also ignore new schemas for gleaning insight into contextually-specific preventative measures.

It is the new convert to relativism position which perhaps gives us the least confidence in how individual moral schemas of genocide are shifting. Having started with a cautiously universalist position, these visitors seemingly regressed into seeing the genocide as contextually specific. However, this was the only group from which ideas for tangible actions regarding genocide emerged, including expanding the knowledge base of one's network to raise the profile of

different and unfamiliar victims of genocide, and using one's political vote at home to lobby against violence abroad. Regardless of which type of experience we see as the most effective for addressing the issue of genocide, it is important to recognize that these moral schemas do hold the potential for affecting future actions regarding genocide. In fact, it may be that moral schemas *are* the tools we have for directing the course of genocide, and their neglect in the conversation of genocide so far has been a serious academic, if not political, shortcoming.

Having outlined the potential for these positions, it is also important to engage in a discussion of temporality in assessing their implications. An important limitation of this study and other studies of morality (Schwartz, 2013; Dromi, 2012) has been their brevity. A very small subset of sociological research has looked at morality longitudinally, and this research has focused on actions (Vaisey, 2009). In looking at how moral schemas change over time, it is important to consider that this experience, although making room for short-term reconsiderations of genocide schemas, may not have a lasting impact. As such, it is important to follow up with visitor experiences longitudinally, both forwards and backwards in time. How were schemas of genocide established to begin with? How will this experience influence moral schemas in the future, two months, one year, five years after visitors have attended the sites?

Although not having followed up with visitors, I do have reason to believe the schemas communicated during the interview are reliable representations of their impressions of the museum – in fact, it was through the interview process that individuals likely solidified their interpretations of the events, having been forced to articulate them soon after their visit. It is also important to note that the interview process may have played some role in influencing

perceptions of the sites. For example, two visitors have followed up with me since the interview, to revise their positions. In both cases, visitors had been classified as having had stable experiences, and in both cases, they felt remorse for having expressed such steadfast positions – a firm universalist had reassessed their experience with a more critical eye, and an adamant relativist felt they had been too insensitive to the experiences of victims. This shows not only insights into the changing nature of moral schemas, but also the variety of circumstances in which they may shift. To get a fuller picture of how moral schemas work, more research needs to engage with the temporal dimension of morality.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

I began this paper by pointing out a shift in the way the genocides of the 20th century are being presented. Whereas the "never again" narrative of the Holocaust has served as the basis for Western understandings of genocide, the different legal and social trajectories later genocides have taken are asking individuals to reconstruct their moral schemas of genocide. In answering *how* this is happening, I have used the case of Westerner experiences at Cambodia's genocide sites to identify four different ways of dealing with new information about genocide, two of which are self-affirming, and two which have been transformative. While existing research in sociology has argued that moral schemas are largely stable, this points to the possibility that under particular circumstances, schemas may change.

My findings have consequences for at least two areas of sociology. On a theoretical level, they contribute to the growing discussion in the sociology of morality about the production of morals: where do our values come from, and how do they change over time (if at all)? I have used a closed case method to see how individuals react to a defined set of values about genocide, and what strategies they use for bridging or discarding this new information into/from their existing schemas of genocide. Having identified the types of responses that become possible when individuals encounter new information on an issue, more research is needed on the background experiences which may contribute to individuals having these different reactions, as well as on the future effects of this experience.

On an empirical level, this study has aimed to fill a gap in existing research on how Western individuals respond to non-Western genocides. What research on perceptions of human rights abuses does exist has been either conducted at a macro-political scale (Alexander, 2002; Levy and Sznaider, 2002), or confined to the theoretical realm (Donnelly, 2003; An-Na'im, 1995). My findings suggest that, contrary to popular and theoretical assumptions that most Westerners hold universalist values around genocide, there is a large degree of relativism which permeates Western perceptions of genocides abroad. There may also be a necessary degree of relativism for adapting new cases to align with existing universalist values. While this may seem a cause for concern for those used to a universalist rhetoric around genocide, forms of relativism which call for things like increasing state accountability may be a welcome shift from the static narrative of "never again".

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Appendix: Interview questionnaire

Part I: Expectations – Why do we go to genocide sites?

- 1. How did you find out about the museums?
    - Friends/other travelers
        - What were they saying?
        - Why do you think they thought it was important to go?
    - Guidebook
        - What did the guidebook say?
        - What did you think after reading that description?
    - Prior knowledge about the genocide *probe*
- 2. What did you expect going in?
- 3. Did it meet your expectations?

Part II: The stimuli – To what degree can we empathize?

For each museum, based on whether the visitor attended

- 4. What did you think of the museum?
- 5. What was the most impactful display for you?
    - Specific display
        - What was it about X that you found impactful?
        - Did you picture anything while you were observing it? Was it hard to imagine? Why did you try to imagine?
    - Bring up a different display
        - What did you think of display X?
        - Did you picture it? Was this easier to imagine?
    - If the visitor mentions feeling "shocked"
        - Is it important to shock people in order to make them understand?
    - If the visitor mentions ethical concerns
        - Is it still justifiable as an educational practice?
- 6. Did you approach any of the displays?
    - Why/why not?
- 7. What did you think about the number of people killed?
    - Was this harder to imagine? Is this important information?
- 8. Did you feel emotional at any point?
    - Yes – When? Did this surprise you?
    - No – How did you feel about the fact that you weren't?
- 9. Did you go in sequential order?
    - Did you follow any of the prompts? Ex. sit down, walk around the display. Why/why not?

- 10. Were there any particular stories that stood out to you? What was it about them?
  - o Did you think about what you would have done in this situation?
    - ▪ Did you find yourself imagining what it would have been like to be the victim?
  - o Can you think of a reason for which this resonated?
- 11. Did you think about your own life while you were there? Your family?
- 12. Did you ever think about the people who had done the killing?
  - o Did you think about the guards? Did you find yourself empathizing at all?
  - o Did you think about the leaders?
    - ▪ What do you think about the leaders expressing remorse?
    - ▪ What do you think about Pol Pot?
  - o What do you think about the trials? Do they matter at this point?
- 13. What did you think of the audio tour?
  - o What did you think of the voice in the audio tour?
  - o How did you feel about the physical act of having head phones on?
    - ▪ Did you ever take them off? What were you thinking in that moment?
    - ▪ Did you ever think about whether the audio tour might have been putting across a particular orientation?
- 14. Did you feel like sharing something with anyone throughout the tour?
  - o If so – what?
- 15. Did you notice what other people were doing throughout the tour?
  - o Rude behaviour – what did you think of that? What was rude about it?
- 16. Did you think about what to wear before going?
  - o What did you end up wearing? How did you feel wearing that?
  - o How would you compare this with going to a temple?
- 17. Did you take any photos?
  - o Of what? How did you decide to take the photo at that moment?
    - ▪ What do you usually take pictures of?
  - o What will you do with the photos?
    - ▪ If the visitor mentions it would be strange to post the photos online – Why would be it be strange?
- 18. Did you see any Cambodian people while you were there?
  - o Yes – Did they act any differently?
  - o No – Did you think about why they weren't there?
  - o Have you wondered what Cambodian people think about tourists visiting?
- 19. Would you recommend going to others? What would you say?
- 20. Is there anything more you would have liked to see?
  - o What/why?
- 21. What will you remember the most of your visit?

Comparison KF and S21

- 22. Which of the two museums did you like better?
- 23. Did you ever think about the admission cost?

- o   What if it had been free?
- 24. How would you compare this experience with visiting the temples/Royal Palace/National museum?

Other sites

- 25. Have you been to any other genocide sites?
  - o   Auschwitz/concentration camp in Europe
    - ▪   What was the most memorable?
    - ▪   How did you feel compared with the KF/S21?
  - o   Holocaust museum
    - ▪   What was the most memorable?
    - ▪   Was this different than visiting a site where people died?
- 26. Do you think it's fair to compare the genocide here to the Holocaust?
  - o   Is a mass killing a mass killing?
- 27. What is the difference between genocide and war?
  - o   Same – What makes them similar?
  - o   Different – What about when civilians are killed during a war?

Part III: Genocide tourism – Does it influence future actions?

- 28. Is it important to go? Why?
  - o   History
    - ▪   Why is this part of their history privileged over others?
  - o   Prevention
    - ▪   What have you learned that would influence your actions if something like this were to happen in the future?
  - o   Learn about culture
    - ▪   What is the relationship between genocide and Cambodian culture? (Have you thought about what the local people think about their culture being associated with genocide?)