

Institution: University of Birmingham		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 26, Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: Testimony in Practice: Innovating in Holocaust Education and through Culture		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Sara Jones	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Modern Languages	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2011-Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Professor Jones has transformed how personal life stories are used and understood by others in a diverse range of contexts and for beneficiaries in multiple sectors. The impact has been delivered in three key areas: A) transformation of pedagogical approaches to using testimony in Holocaust Education nationally; B) inspiring new forms of creativity through innovation in the cultural mediation of testimony, including the co-creation of unique cultural artefacts; C) improved integration and cultural participation of Central and Eastern European migrants in the West Midlands by increasing recognition of their particular histories and experiences.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research was conducted by Sara Jones on the topic of mediation and first-person testimony. The work centred on an original conceptualisation of ‘mediated testimony’: the ways in which testimony is produced in and through different cultural forms (film, theatre, literature, autobiography, educational practice, the law etc.). Jones built on and expanded the scope of this work in a multi-disciplinary, international AHRC-funded network under the title, “Culture and its Uses as Testimony”, hosted by the University of Birmingham in 2016–2019. Much of the impact described below was also supported by AHRC follow-on funding for impact and engagement under the title “Testimony in Practice: Working with Stories of the Self and Others” (2019–2020).</p> <p>The significance of Jones’s work for non-academic beneficiaries lies in the innovative theoretical framework, which brings together memory and media studies with work done in political science on transitional justice. Importantly, Jones takes a multi-media approach to the study of testimony: she analyses autobiographical writing, memorial museums, documentary film and archives of video testimony (O1–O4). In her 2019 article, “Testimony through Culture” (O2), Jones brings together the insights from the multiple disciplines involved in the AHRC network to outline a cross-disciplinary approach to cultural forms of testimony that reflects on and provides a response to the complex ethical and methodological challenges raised by the use of testimony in these fields. In this work, she outlines how fiction in different forms (literature, feature film, theatre) can also be considered a form of testimony.</p> <p>The key insights from the research as they relate to the impact described are as follows:</p> <p>R1. All testimony is produced through culture, broadly understood to include artefacts (e.g., film, literature) and institutions (e.g., education, the law). A focus on culture and, in particular, setting different forms of testimony alongside one another, draws our attention to the impact of mediation on the production and reception of testimony (O1–O3).</p> <p>R2. The research has highlighted the potential of mediation to bring together the testimonies of people who share common experiences, but may never have met in what Jones describes as “mediated remembering communities”. Through processes of</p>		

empathy, these **communities can be extended outwards** to include the visitor, reader, viewer etc., which can promote political action on the part of the audience (O1, O3).

R3. Allowing witnesses of mass or state violence to speak and be heard means acknowledging them as worthy of 'trust' in the sense of recognising that they have an (albeit partial) truth to communicate to an audience that is ready to hear and learn from it. This can **function as a form of social recognition for marginalised groups**. Mediating testimony in different forms, including through transgenerational transmission, is essential to this process as it **allows for dissemination of testimony across space and time** (O1–O4).

R4. Testimony can be a very powerful way of fostering empathy with a particular group and thereby encouraging social recognition. However, to avoid overwhelming the audience and preoccupying them with their own emotional response (thereby hindering critical reflection on the causes of mass violence), **empathy must be 'other-oriented'**, that is, audiences must experience the emotions of the other as they would experience them. 'Other-oriented' empathy with perpetrators can foster recognition of how 'ordinary' people can come to commit horrific acts, that is, a deeper understanding of the causes of mass violence, without risking the adoption of xenophobic perspectives. Done well, **mediated forms can be particularly adept at fostering 'other oriented' empathy** (O2).

R5. Authenticity is a process. A text, film or production is constructed as 'authentic' by those creating and mediating testimony using signals or markers that suggest to the audience that the story being told is 'true' and the teller is 'trustworthy'. Audiences may or may not accept this construction. Embodiment (or 'liveness'), that is, the (real, mediated or imagined) physical presence of the witness is one such marker of authentication. However, non-witnesses can 'perform' the witness through culture to similar effect. This **problematizes the relationship between authenticity and fiction and between primary and secondary witnessing**, including witnessing by the children and grandchildren of survivors (O1–O3).

3. References to the research

O1. Jones, Sara, *The Media of Testimony: Remembering the East German Stasi in the Berlin Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Series: Memory Studies. DOI: [10.1057/9871137364043](https://doi.org/10.1057/9871137364043)

O2. Jones, Sara, "Testimony through Culture: Towards a Theoretical Framework", *Rethinking History*, 23.3 (2019): 257–278. DOI: [10.1080/13642529.209.1620909](https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.209.1620909)

O3. Jones, Sara, "Mediated Immediacy: Constructing Authentic Testimony in Audio-Visual Media", *Rethinking History*, 21.2 (2017): 135–153. DOI: [10.1080/13642529.2017.1305726](https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2017.1305726)

O4. Jones, Sara, "'Simply a little piece of GDR history'? The Role of Memorialisation in Post-Socialist Transitional Justice in Germany", *History and Memory*, 27.1 (2015): 155–182. DOI: [10.2979/histmemo.27.1.154](https://doi.org/10.2979/histmemo.27.1.154)

Research Funding

Sara Jones (PI) and Roger Woods (University of Nottingham, CI), *Culture and its Uses as Testimony*, Arts and Humanities Research Council Networking Grant (2016–2018), £43,668.

Sara Jones (PI) and Emilie Pine (University College Dublin, CI) *Testimony in Practice: Working with Stories of the Self and Others*, Arts and Humanities Research Council Follow-on Funding for Impact and Engagement (2019–2020), £100,653.

4. Details of the impact

The impact described in this case study is three-fold: (A) impacts on **practitioners and pedagogical approaches** in Holocaust Education; (B) impacts on **creativity and culture through innovation in the cultural mediation of testimony**; and (C) impacts on **integration and cultural participation** of Central and Eastern European migrants in the West Midlands by increasing recognition of their particular histories and experiences.

A. Transformed pedagogical approaches in Holocaust Education

This pedagogical change has occurred in two ways: 1. The view that the use of second-generation testimonies in Holocaust education is unethical has been overturned, and 2. the inclusion of diverse forms of testimony in educational projects has been facilitated.

This has enabled three of the most important institutions responsible for Holocaust Education in the UK to **transform their approach** with regard to the use of testimony for educational purposes. Until now, the focus has been on live first-person testimony, but as the survivor generation is lost, other approaches are needed (E1–E3). Sara Jones has cultivated the use of second-generation testimony by the children of survivors, and promoted new approaches to diverse mediated forms of testimony (in film, literature, diaries, theatre, video etc.). She provided the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET), Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) and National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM) with **new ideas and techniques** in these areas.

1. Jones **changed perspectives on the use of second-generation testimony** (that is, live testimony by the children of survivors, R5) within HET. The Trust is now using this form of testimony as part of an integrated approach, a clear change from previous eschewing of this form of testimony. As the HET's Outreach Officer explains: "it [Jones's work] has encouraged more positive conversations in the office around second-generation testimony and how we might incorporate it" (E1). HET now organise events including second-generation speakers and use the "family frames" section of the resources co-produced with Jones (see below) to mitigate the perceived risks (E1). The resources brief second-generation witnesses on the importance of focusing on what happened to their parents (rather than what it felt like) and on the benefits of drawing connections between the Holocaust, its legacy for them as the children of survivors and contemporary events. They emphasise the additional benefits of such testimony: the continuation of 'liveness' and linking the past to contemporary events in ways that recorded survivor testimony alone cannot do (R3, R5).

2. The **change in the use of different forms of mediated testimony** (in literature, theatre, films etc.) has **shaped major national projects** at each institution, so enhancing the way they engage with students and teachers across the UK:

(i) The HMDT reconceptualised the "Know, Feel, Do" model that is central to all of the Trust's work as result of working with Jones. This rethinking was adopted in the Trust's new *Guidelines for Teachers – Holocaust and Genocide Education*. Launched in September 2019, by the end of December 2020, these have been downloaded a total of 1,060 times. Working with Jones, by "recognis[ing] her expertise in this area", has meant, as the HMDT Education Officer explained, that the Trust was able "to consider what exactly it is that we want students to 'feel' in their engagement with testimony. We have since been able to articulate the different types of empathetic responses, and consider which methods are most conducive to positive and meaningful experiences" (E2; R3, R4).

(ii) Jones's intervention shaped the *Forever* project at NHCM (the first UK-based use of digital projections of survivor testimony) by ensuring greater diversity in their understanding of what testimony is. This change to a "polyvocal approach", including literary texts "not rooted in first-person, direct testimony" resulted from the collaboration with Jones. As the Director of Learning at NHCM explains: "our focus has, rightly, been the sharing of testimony in the first-person; nonetheless, in a post-survivor age, other approaches become more critical. Sara's work has provided us with the tools to reflect critically on key aspects of sharing testimony through a diversity of media" (E3). The NHCM welcomes 20,000 school pupils per year.

(iii) HET changed its approach to testimony, inspired by Jones's research, and applied this to the *Belsen 75* project (a collaboration between HET, NHCM and the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education). It ensured the ambitions of the project could be met despite the advanced age of the survivors: "We wanted testimony to underpin the whole project, but with so few Belsen survivors able to travel and speak to our large audiences we weaved various forms of testimony throughout all parts of the project. Being part of the Culture as Testimony group [led by Jones] helped us to broaden our thinking around what testimony is, where we could find it, and how we could use it, allowing us not to rely so heavily on our survivors" (E1). Despite early closure of the programme due to the COVID-19 crisis, *Belsen 75* reached a total of 908 participants and 256 schools.

The importance of these collaborations for these three national providers is further evidenced by the decision to co-produce with Jones a set of **educational resources: *Using Testimony in the Classroom***. The resources **extended the reach of the impact on pedagogy by engaging teachers directly**. As noted by HMDT's Education Officer, "this kind of resource does not currently exist and is an important gap that needed filling" (E2). Feedback from teacher practitioners indicated their intention to change their use of testimony, such as "more focus on testimonies of bystanders and perpetrators and the use of other types of art and literature" (E9). Approximately 200 teachers attended in person CPD events relating to the resources. Between the launch in January 2020 and December 2020, they have received 500 views on the hosting site, plus a further 70 downloads from TES resources and the network website.

B. Inspired new forms of creativity through innovation in the cultural mediation of testimony

This impact **transformed the creative practices** of approximately 90 artists working with testimony in theatre and literature enabling them **to think in new ways about authenticity, empathy and mediation** (R1, R4). It fostered a new understanding of the complex interplay between testimony and fictionalisation (R5), which resulted in **changed practice** (working with multiple types of testimony, experimenting with perspectives and genres) and the **production of distinctive cultural artefacts**.

An **innovative and unique piece of theatre, *A Land Full of Heroes (Heroes)***, was co-produced between Jones, the Barcelona-based theatre company, La Conquesta del pol sud and award-winning Romanian and German novelist, Carmen-Francesca Banciu. The play included literary testimony, which resulted in, according to the Director, "a poetic level that in other pieces we don't have". Despite putting witnesses on stage in other productions, the company had not considered working with literary testimony before the collaboration with Jones. Similarly, Banciu had never previously performed her literary testimony on stage (E4). Published reviews (E7) confirm the uniqueness of this form; describing *Heroes* as "an extraordinary piece that proves that political theatre can use a cross-art form approach, and experiment in form, whilst simultaneously conveying the truth of real-life historical and biographical experience". For another reviewer, the piece jumps "to great effect between an interview or spoken word piece and a theatrical recreation of [Banciu's] novels". *Heroes* was performed, to a full house, at the Birmingham European (BE) Festival (July 2019), in the Salle Juliette Greco (Carros) (February 2020) and two further performances (in Marseille and Vitry-sur-Seine) were postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Experimental practices with different media and genres were undertaken by theatre practitioners, creative writers and youth artists who attended five CPD workshops in 2019. Three months later participants reported the **production of several new creative outputs** (most significantly: a novel, two memoirs, new pieces of short non-fiction and an autobiographical short story collection, E6). Qualitative feedback was collected from 66 attendees out of a possible 75. 62% of these participants indicated a planned change of practice and a further 27% changed thinking or approach. 39% indicated a greater willingness to try out the use of multiple perspectives or the use of different media (R1). In terms of changed thinking, 42% indicated a new understanding of the blurred boundaries between fiction, authenticity and testimony, the complexity of testimony and/or of testimony as a trigger for creativity (R4, R5).

C. Improved integration and increased cultural participation of a marginalised migrant group

Jones's work has **fostered an increased public recognition of the experiences and histories of Central and Eastern European (CEE) migrants in the Midlands** and has **brought greater visibility to CEE art in the region**. CEE migrants increasingly find themselves the subject of xenophobic attacks, particularly in the context of Brexit. There are approximately 191,000 migrants from Central and Eastern Europe in the West Midlands (*ONS Population by Nationality Report, 2019*). The Polish Expats Association (PEA) — the principal institution supporting the integration of CEE migrants in the region — note that in post-Brexit Britain the "voices of Central and Eastern Europeans are often or usually misheard" (E5). Jones worked with the PEA and their associated arts space, Centrala, to improve integration and inclusion by collecting and exhibiting testimonies of Central and Eastern Europeans living in the UK in an

innovative art installation (reflecting R2 and R3). More than 2,000 people visited the exhibition, *Testimony in Practice*, in Birmingham and London in the autumn of 2019. PEA/Centrala describe this figure as a “great success” (E5). They consider the exhibition to be “a fantastic way to increase public understanding of CEE communities, their lives, culture, past and everyday struggles”, adding “we believe it gave the members of the community a chance to be heard and feel that their voice is being heard and respected” (E5). Qualitative feedback provided by 88 visitors to the exhibition supports this view. 51% reported an **improved understanding of communism and/or the experience of post-socialist migration** and 27% a **new recognition of the similarities between the UK and Poland**. 20% of visitors with experience of living in Central and Eastern Europe saw themselves and their past represented in the exhibition. One visitor considered stories they had heard from friends from the region, “I now realise they were sharing their testimony with me and I’m thinking about my role as a witness (as second hand) to this”. Another noted: “The [exhibition] has encouraged me to more thoroughly consider the experiences of others who vastly differ from my own” (E8). The significance of the exhibition was recognised by the Director of Culture Central, the leading organisation supporting arts in the West Midlands: as a result, Centrala was invited to host a VIP opening of Birmingham’s major arts festival, the *Birmingham Weekender*, in October 2019 (E5).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1. Testimonial Holocaust Educational Trust (19 November 2020)
- E2. Testimonial Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (14 January 2020)
- E3. Testimonial National Holocaust Centre and Museum (10 November 2020)
- E4. “Making-Of” film for [Land Full of Heroes](#)
- E5. Testimonial Polish Expats Association/Centrala (5 April 2020)
- E6. Feedback forms from workshops
- E7. Reviews of Land Full of Heroes
- E8. Exhibition visitor feedback
- E9. Feedback from CPD webinar