CONCEPTUALIZING HOLOCAUST EDUCATION ACROSS CONTENT AREAS: A CASE STUDY AND CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS’ APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers across content areas conceptualize planning and teaching of the Holocaust. Although there are numerous studies on Holocaust education, particularly on teachers’ approaches and practices, there is little research regarding teachers’ use of secondary sources and the impact these sources have on their approaches to planning and teaching about the Holocaust. This study will examine New Jersey state standards and curricula, as well as educational practitioner journals, in order to highlight relationships between resources provided to teachers and their approaches to planning and teaching about the Holocaust. Further, it will provide researchers with an empirical analysis, contributing to the increasing scholarly literature on Holocaust education. This study addresses the following research questions: How do teachers and policy makers in Language Arts and Social Studies conceptualize teaching of the Holocaust? What approaches do Language Arts and Social Studies teachers use when planning for teaching about the Holocaust? In what ways do state standards and mandated curricula guide teachers’ decision-making when teaching about the Holocaust? What recommendations do content area specific practitioner journals make for teaching about the Holocaust? This intrinsic collective case study will triangulate data from multiple sectors of the educational system to provide a broad and detailed view of the approaches to teaching about the Holocaust across different content areas. This study will additionally serve as a tool for school districts and policy makers to inform their future decisions regarding the selection and use of secondary sources and
curriculum content, allowing teachers to make better pedagogical decisions with regards to their students’ learning.
For the eleven million —

We must never forget.

And for my mom, Jacalyn Crass —

I am the educator, scholar, and person I am because of you.

Thank you for instilling in me a love of learning, a passion for teaching,

and a determination to bear witness.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2015, I was presented with an opportunity that would, unbeknownst to me, change my life forever. I received an email from the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education with information about its annual Holocaust Summer Seminar, designed to take educators to the historical former sites of the Holocaust. I am a math teacher, and since I associated Holocaust education with Social Studies and Language Arts, I expected the other participating teachers to represent those content areas. Upon registering for the seminar, my assumptions were immediately proven wrong as the diversity of the other travelers broke down the boundaries of the assumed “norm,” showing that this organization’s approach to Holocaust education is inclusive of all content areas.

Perhaps the most iconic image from the Holocaust is the ‘Arbiet Macht Frei’ [work sets you free] sign hanging above the gates at Auschwitz. I walked through the gates under that infamous sign, entering the second largest concentration camp that ever existed, in which over one million Jews were killed. There, I stood inside a gas chamber, blue stains marking where the Zyklon B had killed millions of innocent people. Leaving that day, all was silent among the group. There were no words to be said. There was only a feeling, one that stays with me to this day. Yet, the pivotal moment for me was standing on the platform at Track 17 at the Berlin train station, from which over 50,000 Jews were deported to concentration camps. As I looked down the empty railroad tracks, I felt the presence of so many who had gone before me. Still, I was proud to be Jewish and I was proud to be standing there, free. I was determined to bear witness and inspired to educate others.
Having learned of my travel experiences, many colleagues and friends expressed a lack of understanding, wondering why I would opt for such a “depressing” experience. To me, this experience was not depressing, but humbling. It shed light on the unimaginable reality that was the Holocaust. These events tell the story of how discrimination and hate led to murder and persecution, and these places serve as a witness in educating others on the persistent effects of hate, discrimination, and anti-Semitism. My peers’ curiosities about why I would opt for such a travel experience continue to draw my attention to the need for Holocaust education and serve as the driving force in selecting Holocaust education as the topic of my research.

In the present day, the Holocaust is a largely recognized central event in world history. The Oxford dictionary defines the word Holocaust as the destruction or slaughter on a mass scale. Given the broad nature of this definition, there are many historical phenomena referred to as “holocausts” due to the large number of lives lost. However, the term “Holocaust” was given a new identity during World War II when the actions of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party caused the deaths of over eleven million civilians, most of whom were Jewish. In the years since, this culminating event has become the primary historical context for which the word Holocaust is defined. What made this phenomenon stand out amongst the others of its nature? In order to understand the value in the placement of Holocaust Education in United States curriculum, we must first understand what makes the Holocaust so unique to other genocides of its kind and, as a result, what implications should be considered when planning and teaching about the Holocaust.

This intrinsic collective case study explores how teachers across content areas conceptualize planning and teaching of the Holocaust and examines given curricula and practitioner journals to identify the influence of resources on teacher planning. Although there
are numerous studies on Holocaust education, particularly on teachers’ approaches and practices, (Bauer, 2001; Britzman, 2000; Donnelly, 2006; Eckmann, 2015; Fracapane, 2015; Friedlander, 1979; Hess, 2009; Lindquist, 2011; Parsons, 1991; Schweber, 2004) there is little evidence regarding teachers’ use of secondary sources and the impact these sources have on their approaches to planning and teaching about the Holocaust. This study examines given curricula and educational practitioner journals and draws on connections and disparities between resources provided to teachers and their approaches to planning and teaching the content. This study further provides researchers with an intrinsic collective case study with content analysis and contributes to the increasing scholarly literature on Holocaust education and further informs decision-making on the part of teachers, policy makers, teachers and museum educators.

The overarching question that guides this study is:

How do teachers and policy makers in Language Arts and Social Studies conceptualize teaching of the Holocaust?

Subsidiary questions are:

1. What approaches do Language Arts and Social Studies teachers use when planning for teaching about the Holocaust?

2. To what extent and in what ways do New Jersey state standards and mandated curricula guide teachers’ decision-making when teaching about the Holocaust?

3. What recommendations do content area-specific practitioner journals make for teaching about the Holocaust?
The Holocaust: A Brief Introduction

The events of the Holocaust evolved slowly from 1933, when Hitler first came to power, to 1945. During this time, Germany’s Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, developed and carried out a well-thought-out plan in an attempt to eliminate the existence of Jewish people. Adolf Hitler’s campaign ran primarily on the idea that the Jewish people, along with other non-Aryan and non-cis-gender heterosexual groups, were responsible for the troubles the German people were experiencing during the recession (Bartrop & Dickerman, 2017). Bartrop and Dickerman (2017) explain the process began with simple discrimination against the Jews and escalated as time went on to include their separation from their communities, imprisonment, and eventually death. These atrocities did not occur solely in Germany, where the Nazi party originated. Throughout this time, the Germans invaded and conquered many other countries in Europe, carrying out their plans for Jewish extermination in those territories as well. However, as Bartrop and Dickerman (2017) state, the Nazi Party cannot be solely responsible for the deaths of so many innocent victims. The Nazi Party made up only a small number of German citizens living in this territory at the time. The complicity and avoidance of the majority of not only German citizens, but also the citizens living in other Nazi occupied nations, led to many casualties, as their positions as bystanders and participants allowed for the mistreatment of Jews and other minorities. Without the complicity and help of ordinary citizens, the Nazis would not have been as successful in carrying out their agenda (Bartrop & Dickerman, 2017). This component of the Holocaust draws direct connections to the importance of building character and practicing humility. Bartrop and Dickerman (2017) state that the Holocaust “remains highly relevant to key problems facing
human society in the 21st century and beyond” (p. 4). Through learning and understanding the actions of the ordinary bystanders, as well as their role in escalating the Nazi’s power, students are able to relate the events of the Holocaust to current events and understand the importance of their roles as citizens.

A widely discussed topic of inquiry amongst historians worldwide involves the question: Could the United States have done more to protect the victims of the Holocaust? (Wyman, 1984). Some historians believe that President Franklin D. Roosevelt could have saved many Jewish lives had he acted sooner (Breitman & Lichtman, 2013; Wyman, 1984). Wyman (1984) supports this claim, arguing that Roosevelt could have gained Americans’ support for a vital rescue had he spoken up. Wyman (1984) asserts, “It appears that Roosevelt’s overall response to the Holocaust was deeply affected by political expediency. Most Jews supported him unwaveringly, so an active rescue policy offered little political advantage. A pro-Jewish stance, however, could lose votes.” However, opposing historians stand in support of Roosevelt, claiming his actions were appropriate and logical given the circumstances. Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. says of Roosevelt, “He knew that he must emphasize the large and vital interest all Americans had in stopping Hitler, and that is what he did. And he knew that winning the war was the only way to save the people in the concentration camps.” While Roosevelt’s actions and their impact on the lives of European Jews remain controversial, it is crucial to also consider the implications on Jews living in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s.

According to the Library of Congress, by the early 1930s, the United States’ diverse population consisted of an estimated 4.228-4.4 million Jewish citizens. It is therefore essential to consider the implications of these events on Jewish American citizens, as well as the
implications on the rest of the nation. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2001), “During World War II, rescue of Jews and other victim groups persecuted by Nazi Germany was not a priority for the United States government.” At the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Herbert Hoover ordered the State Department to enforce quota laws strictly, increasing the difficulty for immigrants to enter the United States. Despite the ongoing persecution of Jews in Germany, the economic hardships of the Great Depression caused anti-Semitism, isolationism and xenophobia in the United States to intensify (USHMM, 2001). Americans also feared the impact that immigrants could have on their nation’s already struggling economy. In fact, in 1939, 83% of Americans were opposed to the admission of refugees (“Facing History and Ourselves,” n.d.). However, despite strict quota laws, by 1940 mostly all immigrants in the United States were Jewish refugees from Europe. Over 200,000 Jews managed to escape Nazi persecution by immigrating to the United States before the start of 1941. As the war escalated, it became nearly impossible for Jews to escape from Europe.

In 1945, after the Soviet Union liberated the remaining concentration camps and freed the enslaved prisoners, the atrocities that had occurred in Europe became very clear. It was at this time that a committee of the United Nations, led by Eleanor Roosevelt, created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This doctrine was written with the stated purpose, “to bring peace to all nations of the world.” Many Americans made additional efforts to establish refugee placement groups and other organizations designed to aid immigrants. The anti-Semitism and xenophobia that had such a large presence in the years before began to decrease and Americans found unity in advocating for the safety and just treatment of all human beings. Among other
things, this shift in ideology creates a scope for which to view the value of educating about the Holocaust.

Holocaust education emerged in American schools amidst the end of World War II. The first introduction of the Holocaust into the curriculum took place in the early seventies (Fallace, 2008). At this time, the Holocaust looked very different instructionally than it does today. Material on the Holocaust was “selected for and organized around its ability to engage students, rather than its ability to reflect historical accuracy and context” (Fallace, 2008, p. 66). However, nuances aside, there has been consistency in the rationale for teaching about the Holocaust. Even in the early years of Holocaust education, students were encouraged to connect the events of the Holocaust to contemporary events and issues, including Vietnam. This would help students navigate values and conflicts in the present and empower them to prevent genocides in the future (Fallace, 2008, p. 66). This theme has continued to drive Holocaust education in American schools for the past fifty years.

**Statement of the Problem**

Bauer (2002) asks a key question that reflects the difficulty in understanding the Holocaust’s place in history and in history education: Is the Holocaust explicable? Feingold (1995) addresses this question in a rather straightforward manner, arguing one distinct uniqueness of the Holocaust compared to other genocides is the systematic and meticulous planning done by the Nazi Party to eliminate every single human being in a specific target group. However, Totten (2002) stresses the need to examine both the uniqueness of the Holocaust as well as its universal nature, cautioning readers to avoid the pitfall of establishing a false
dichotomy between the two. Bauer (2002) further suggests the need to “avoid thinking that the Holocaust is totally inexplicable, utterly mysterious,” pointing out that it is then “outside history and therefore irrelevant to rational discourse” (p. 14). Bauer claims that this question is best addressed circumstantially; for example, researching the resources available on a particular aspect of the Holocaust will help determine if that aspect is unique to the Holocaust or if the Holocaust serves more as an example, given the context. Bauer (2002) criticizes the generalization of the Holocaust, claiming that describing the Holocaust in a singular manner is outdated (p. 29). Elaborating upon Bauer, Niewyk (1995) adds that one must recognize the Holocaust’s inclusion of a “host of critical historical trends (anti-Semitism, racism, social Darwinism, extreme nationalism, totalitarianism, industrialism, and the nature of modern war) that one needs to be conversant with in order to even begin to understand the Holocaust (p. 175).

It is critical to maintain a balanced approach in categorizing the events of the Holocaust by acknowledging its exclusivity, while continuing to reinforce its connection to past and present prejudice, racism and discrimination. Levy and Sheppard (2018) point out that indeed this difficult history will be accompanied by powerful moral lessons (Fine, 1995; Lindquist, 2011; Schweber, 2004).

In order to conceptualize the enormity of this phenomenon, it is important to not only consider the development of the Nazis’ agenda, but also how discrimination systematically turned deadly. The German people were not born with a hatred of Jews. The chain of events that led to the wrongful deaths of over eleven million people began with simple acts of discrimination. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party’s abuse of power, and further the complicity of the majority of German citizens, ultimately led to this mass execution. It is key to consider not
only the actions of ordinary German citizens, but also their inactions, further connecting the role they played in the Nazi Party’s rise to power. Relevant and relatable to students in present day, this connection draws on the importance of inclusion and tolerance. This key point further establishes the relevance of Holocaust Education in the curriculum and draws on the need to understand how teachers responsible for teaching about the Holocaust conceptualize and plan for the teaching of this content.

**Purpose of the Study**

Given the unique factors that isolate this series of historical events from others categorized by the universal term, educating students about the Holocaust involves much more than just briefing them on facts about the events that took place during World War II, but should seek to make connections between the discrimination that led to the deaths of so many innocent victims and the discrimination that continues to take place all over the world. This education in itself can serve as a preventative measure against future genocides of its kind. In support of this notion, Dr. Linda Woolf of Webster University states:

Mass violence, torture, violations of fundamental human rights, and the mistreatment of human beings is not a new aspect of humanity; documentation of such events spans the historical record. It is imperative that a greater understanding of the psychological, cultural, political, and societal roots of human cruelty, mass violence, and genocide be developed. We need to continue to examine the factors which enable individuals collectively and individually to perpetrate evil/genocide and the impact of apathetic
bystanders as fuel for human violence. With such information, we can develop policies, strategies, and programs designed to counteract these atrocities. (p. 3)

It is important that we understand that the depth of this tragedy goes far beyond that of a history textbook. The Holocaust is a remarkable example of what people who preach hatred and practice discrimination are capable of achieving.

Many teachers, particularly in the Social Studies, rely heavily on textbooks to provide them with content to be used in their instruction. Pate (1980) asserts that students cannot possibly grasp a deep understanding of the Holocaust if their learning is solely based on their textbooks (p. 18). The truth is that most of the world history textbooks address the Holocaust in a small segment, a mere paragraph or two with a passing reference to the actual enormity that was the Holocaust (Stuart & Richman, 1978, p. 295). Since most textbooks do not include a detailed treatment of the Holocaust, one might assume that if other resources are not utilized in conjunction with text books, then students will not be taught much about it. For example, there is a wide range of practitioner journals and secondary resources available, but the question remains: do teachers have knowledge of these sources or the impact they have on content selection or teaching approaches? Further, how can school systems and policy makers encourage, mandate or implement Holocaust education without ensuring teachers are well informed of the available resources? This study seeks to examine the conceptualization and planning process of Language Arts and Social Studies teachers who teach about the Holocaust, considering the extent to which this topic is covered, what resources they select for instruction, and how these resources guide them in their planning. The findings of this study will then serve as a tool for school systems and
policy makers to best inform their future decision-making regarding the selection and use of secondary sources and curriculum content, particularly highlighting the available resources and the actual utilization of those resources. This will ultimately allow for teachers to make the best pedagogical decisions with regard to their students’ learning.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is informed by theories of difficult knowledge and historical empathy, particularly as they relate to the teaching of the Holocaust (Britzman, 1998; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Differing historical viewpoints, especially given a topic as complex and difficult to comprehend as the Holocaust, produce profound implications for educational practice. In order to best plan meaningful instruction for students, we must first gain an understanding of how we, as individuals, learn history (Britzman, 1998). Britzman (1998) defines the term *difficult knowledge* as the problematic nature of teaching and learning about social trauma. He later draws on how students’ inner conflicts disrupt learning histories of hatred, aggression and suffering, concluding that a key component of this difficulty includes “experiencing the limits of the self through encounters with otherness of knowledge” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003). As with any form of difficult knowledge, individuals learn and comprehend the events of the Holocaust in different ways. Reactions are based on a variety of factors including background, prior knowledge, and positionality.

Pitt and Britzman (2003) frame the concept of difficult knowledge, stating, “The emotional significance of knowledge is decided in the strange time of deferred action, both because feelings may precede understanding and because a current event may take its force and
revisions from an earlier scene” (p. 758). Guthrie (2016) affirms that learning involves trauma and that education is the terrain of emotions that form and is formed by difficult knowledge (p. 428). Britzman (1998) originally used the term “difficult knowledge” to describe the teaching of the Diary of Anne Frank. She describes this experience as providing an opportunity to raise difficult questions about the learner’s painful encounter with victimization, aggression, and hatred (p. 117). Though there is much to be gained from sparking discussion through this type of question, it is essential to acknowledge that topics that are “difficult” in nature appear foreign or inconceivable, ultimately revealing the capacity to which learners’ are able and willing to understand (Simon, 2011, p. 433). Given the nature of the Holocaust as a profound example of difficult knowledge, a discussion is then warranted on the factors that influence individuals’ different teaching and learning experiences with the topic. Simon (2011) explains that content is deemed to be difficult knowledge not only because of its traumatic nature, but also because the learner’s encounter with the content is deeply unsettling (p. 434). For the learner, “difficulty happens when one’s conceptual frameworks, emotional attachments and conscious and unconscious desires delimit one’s ability to settle the meaning of past events” (Simon, 2011, p. 434).

Additionally, it is essential to also acknowledge that students’ learning experiences are greatly influenced by their teachers. Britzman (1998) points out that difficult knowledge requires educators to think carefully about their own theories of learning and how the stuff of such difficult knowledge becomes pedagogical (p. 117). Banks (1996) further connects this concept to that of teacher positionality, stating that “the teacher’s positionality — defined as the goals, knowledge, beliefs, strategies, and other normative frames of reference — is a significant factor
in the learning experiences of students” (p.5). Allison and Rehm (2006) agree that teachers who are positioned with openness, interest, and flexibility regarding cultural differences are likely to respond to individual students and continually grow in their ability to create dynamic learning situations (p.260). While most teachers likely aim to possess the above described openness, positionality is not always a controllable factor. Unbeknownst to teachers, their positionality can unknowingly influence their perceptions about topics and additionally influence the approaches in which they present information. Teachers can possess subconscious biases or harbor unknown feelings towards certain topics or people. As a result, it is possible that teachers also can stereotype, accentuate limited aspects of culture, or overlook individuality within cultural groups (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Silvers, 1999).

The same can be said for students. Student positionality can greatly influence the ways in which they discuss and learn topics, having significant impact on the outcome of their learning. One or more of an individual’s demographics can also be contributing factors. Generation, education, ethnicity, and gender are among the examples of demographics that could have an impact on one’s positionality. Similar to the influence of teacher positionality, the scope by which students view material can also be impacted by their own positionality.

Considering the degree to which positionality impacts instruction, Bischoping (1995) studied the relationship between social factors and Holocaust knowledge in order to determine the influence each has on Holocaust knowledge and attitudes. Bischoping’s findings suggest that Jewish students had a greater knowledge about the Holocaust and demonstrated values that reflected the Holocaust was of high importance more so than other ethnicities. Bischoping’s
findings also suggested a positive correlation between Holocaust knowledge and educational level, additionally noting an increase with each year of education.

Bischoping’s (1995) research further highlighted a weak link between Holocaust knowledge and attitudes, suggesting that having content knowledge about the events of the Holocaust does not necessarily improve upon attitudes towards antisemitism. Bischoping attributes this result to the disconnect he believes is present between knowledge and empathy. He points out that Hitler had great knowledge of the Holocaust, but that there is no evidence to suggest that this knowledge invoked within him any empathy towards the victims. Therefore, Bischoping argues that greater knowledge does not necessarily produce more motivation to teach or learn about the Holocaust. However, to this point, one could argue that the level of motivation may not be attributed to the extent of knowledge about the topic, but the positionality of the learner. For example, it is not clear that Hitler’s in-depth knowledge did not invoke empathy, but only that his empathy was not directed at the victims. Hitler’s increased knowledge of the Holocaust could have facilitated greater empathy for the Aryan race, fueling his actions. This further draws on the role of positionality and its influence on the learners’ conceptualization of content. Bischoping’s study does present a finding that agrees with this notion, as he reports a greater sense of importance as demonstrated by Jewish participants. Endacott and Brooks (2018) assert that one of the key goals of history education is to foster citizenship (p. 208). Given the indirect relationship between knowledge and empathy, it is essential to consider the role historical empathy plays in meeting the challenges that teaching this difficult knowledge often poses.
Presented with the difficult task of grasping the enormity of a phenomenon such as this, it is inevitable that all who study it will be faced with the realization of one’s inability to entirely empathize with those who were directly impacted. Endacott and Sturtz (2015) offer a solution to engaging students in history and fostering the conception of understanding the learned experiences through their explanation of historical empathy. They assert that “Historical empathy is the process of students’ cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualize their lived experiences, decisions, or actions” (p. 1). Historical empathy further encompasses considering how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted, and faced empathy. Facilitating historical empathy within lessons provides teachers with opportunities to actively engage their students with history (p. 1). Yeager, Foster, Maley, Anderson, and Morris (1998) offer further support of historical empathy, stating that it allows students to fill gaps between pieces of historical evidence and results in students understanding events, words, and actions of the past (p. 32). Davis, Yeager, and Foster (2001) further contribute an essential component to the conceptualization of historical empathy’s role in guiding students’ understanding of the past by stressing the importance of bias, limiting imagination, using hindsight, and generating tentative conclusions. Research has shown that developing historical empathy within students has been a successful engagement tool in teaching students about history (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Brooks, 2008; Doppen, 2000; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Scholars have suggested repeated engagement in historical empathy can promote complex ideas and decision-making (Doppen, 2000), moral judgment (Barton & Levstik, 2004), and a dispositional appreciation for the complexity of situations faced by people in the past (Endacott and Sturtz, 2015, p.2). Faced with the challenging, yet essential task of promoting
students to make meaning of the information with which they are presented, historical empathy can be monumental in fostering a meaningful experience for students.

This chapter of my dissertation provides background on and context for the Holocaust and Holocaust education in the United States, the stated the purpose of my study, and my research questions. Further, the theoretical framework that guides this study is discussed. In order to build additional context and to validate the need for this study, the next chapter will present the existing research on Holocaust education, primarily focusing on rationale, teacher approaches, teacher preparation, implementation, and curriculum. The findings of this study present several similarities to existing research, but also illuminated some of the nuances related to Holocaust education.
CHAPTER 2
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are numerous studies on Holocaust education, particularly on teachers’ approaches and practices (Bauer, 2001; Britzman, 2000; Donnelly, 2006; Eckmann, 2015; Fracapane, 2015; Friedlander, 1979; Hess, 2009; Lindquist, 2011; Parsons, 1991; Schweber, 2004). This chapter presents and critiques the research that is most relevant to this study. In addition, this chapter offers an analytical look at the curriculum developed in the United States, with a focus on New Jersey, and the implementation of that curriculum by New Jersey public schools. Research discussed in this chapter includes the following: (a) Nature and importance of Holocaust Education, (b) approaches to teaching about the Holocaust, including content/themes addressed and methods/strategies used, (c) teacher preparation, including teacher professional development, (d) a look at how the implementation of Holocaust Education presents in a variety of different settings, and (e) curriculum.

**The Nature and Importance of Holocaust Education**

In present day, the Holocaust is a widely recognized historical event within the United States. However, in the past, such a mindset did not always exist. With the increase of survivors’ willingness to share their stories and the construction of various monuments to honor victims all around the world, the Holocaust slowly became a topic of discussion within the United States and worldwide. Holocaust survivor and author, Elie Wiesel, proclaims, “Auschwitz [used as a metaphor for the Holocaust in general] is a watershed event, a before and an after; after Auschwitz, nothing can ever be the same again”. Today, many educators, government officials,
survivors, and others now consider teaching about the Holocaust crucial, but for decades it was nearly absent from the curriculum (Dawidowicz, 1990). Bartrop and Dickerman (2017) speak to the importance of this continuous increase, stating that the Holocaust remains highly relevant to key problems facing human society in the 21st century and beyond (p. 4).

Prior studies have indicated that there is great importance in studying the events of the Holocaust. In *How They Teach the Holocaust*, Dawidowicz (1990) argues that the essence of Holocaust education is a combination of acknowledging and understanding the events of the past and using that understanding to prevent history from ever repeating. In the same vein, Totten (2002) asserts that the most common reasons for the inclusion of Holocaust education in the curriculum include developing an understanding of human rights issues both in the past and in the present and becoming aware of the results of extreme racism and intolerance so that students consider their own personal biases. Baum (1996) further asserts that Holocaust education may serve to teach students about developing empathy with others who are different from them. Cowan and Maitles (2016) refer to the Holocaust as a controversial issue and further provide the benefits of teaching controversial issues, including developing students’ independent critical thinking with a growing awareness of multiple perspectives and bringing real-life contexts into the classroom. These commonalities jointly speak to the justification of Holocaust Education within today’s curriculum.

However, despite its importance, the Genocide Education Project reports that only nine states in the United States mandate Holocaust Education in public schools. The topic often surfaces as part of a Social Studies or History curriculum, addressed as a segment of World War II in Europe. However, it is essential to recognize the Holocaust’s complexity and position in
history, and further to ensure that it is recognized as more than an isolated historical event. Totten, Feinberg, and Fernekes (2001) claim that the complexity of the subject matter of the Holocaust is daunting (p. 11). Baum (1996) adds, “Holocaust education’ is almost perverse in contradiction. 'Holocaust' and 'education' seem to pull in different directions, one pointing to the utter devastation of human values, the other insisting on their possibility” (p. 46).

Researchers often argue the degree of relevance and appropriateness in Holocaust Education, given certain age groups. While Sipenwall (1999) claims that Holocaust Education’s purpose for younger students is learning the importance of tolerance and respect for others who are different, and to acquire and practice skills for resolving conflicts peacefully, Totten (1999) argues that the Holocaust is inappropriate and too complex for this age group to study. Other researchers agree (Shawn, 2001; Totten, 1999) that elementary leveled students are not developmentally ready to learn about the Holocaust. Totten (1999) asserts that even attempting to teach about the Holocaust in a way that is understandable to a five, six, seven, or eight-year-old would be “folly” (p.161) He warns that because of the ‘torturously complex’ nature of the Holocaust and the historical background needed to contextualize the events involved, young children should not be exposed to its realities (p. 161).

However, the appropriateness of the content is most commonly questionable regarding middle school aged students. Donvito (2003), Holt (2001), and Maitles and Cowan (1999) are among the scholars that have studied the appropriateness of middle school Holocaust curriculum. While research findings about this inquiry have presented both oppositional views and supportive views, (Kochan, 1989; Maitles and Cowan, 2007; Short, 2005) the latter argument is most predominantly favored. Landau (1989) states that teaching about the Holocaust has the
power to sensitize students to the dangers of indifference, intolerance, racism and the
dehumanization of others (p. 20). Jewish Historian Lionel Kochan (1989), however, suggests an opposing viewpoint, objecting to teaching the Holocaust in middle school, by claiming that such ‘immature and unsophisticated’ teaching can have deleterious consequences for pupils (p.25).

Several studies have sought to provide further insight about the long-term value in Holocaust Education (BenPeretz, 2003; Brown & Davies, 1998; Carrington & Short, 1997; Davies, 2000; Hadzima, 1999; Hector, 2000; Maitles and Cowan, 2007; Schweber, 2003; Short et al., 1998; Totten, 2000). Through both qualitative and quantitative analysis, Elmore’s (2002) study on the impact of Holocaust Education showed a positive change in students’ knowledge, attitudes and understandings after completion of a Holocaust Education course. The findings suggested that students who were participants in the program demonstrated an increased knowledge of the Holocaust and showed “more culturally tolerant attitudes” as a result of their participation in the program (Elmore, 2002). Elmore indicated that student responses showed greater empathy and understanding of complex topics and reflected their abilities to connect lessons from the Holocaust to their own lives (Elmore, 2002, p.98). Beyond assessing the immediate impact Holocaust Education has on students, Elmore (2002) additionally sought to analyze the long-term impact. A four-month follow-up from the previously collected data provided insight into the effectiveness of teaching Holocaust Education. Elmore (2002) indicated that the program demonstrated the potential to influence students’ behaviors in the future (p. 122). Maitles and Cowan (2007) provided additional insight into this theory through a longitudinal study, examining whether there are ‘immediate’ and ‘lasting’ effects on students’ attitudes as a result of Holocaust Education. Through their comparison of the values between
students who had been exposed to Holocaust instruction and those who had not, they provided empirical evidence of the contribution of Holocaust Education in developing attitudes relating to citizenship. The studies discussed in this section suggest that the presenter and the actual presentation of content produce differences in students’ perceptions. This draws importance to the next section of this review, in which research is presented regarding teachers’ approaches, methods, and strategies to teaching about the Holocaust.

**Approaches to Teaching About the Holocaust**

Holocaust Education is a controversial and complex topic in the K-12 context. Teaching about the Holocaust, as is the case with teaching about any form of difficult knowledge, involves a number of considerations. Regardless of the topic, choosing instructional approaches requires teachers to make reasoned judgments about the availability of resources, time constraints, students’ ages and maturity levels, the general school environment, and a range of other factors (Lindquist, 2011, p. 5). Lindquist (2008) further adds considerations for teaching specifically about the Holocaust, including: (a) historical accuracy, (b) the topics to be included, (c) the selection of materials to be used, and (d) the use of graphic materials given the possibility that unintended consequences may result from the use of emotionally wrenching images that depict the horror of the event (p. 26). The consideration of these particular factors is especially relevant, given the complex nature of Holocaust education.

Holocaust instruction must not only be contextualized within the time frame of the Nazi era, but also as events occurring before and after that time” (Lindquist, 2011). Totten and
Feinberg (1995) agree on the importance of contextualizing the Holocaust in a way that will allow students to see the relationship of political, social, and economic factors that impacted the times and events that resulted in that history (p. 325). Totten and Feinberg (1992) rationalize providing students with a solid knowledge base, addressing the whys, hows, whens, and wheres (p.11).

To stress the need for extensive and valid historical context, Short (2005) conducted a study on students’ outtakes from genocide education after participating in a commemoration event for Rwanda. Short (2005) drew on connections between Rwanda and the Holocaust through interview questions with a group of diverse 14-16 year-old students. After initial interviews with students, Short found that the students had limited knowledge of either genocide, and even after exposure to these two historical events, the majority of students were unable to identify a valuable lesson or make meaning of either phenomenon. Regarding this finding, Short reported that the students’ views drew attention to the need for extensive coverage, as the limited exposure they were given paired with their lack of prior knowledge resulted in half of the students not remembering what had happened or what lessons could be learned. Short’s findings show the implications of delivering instruction about genocides to students without providing proper contextualization. In doing so, the aftermath reflected the instruction’s inability to make meaning of the phenomenon for students. Gates-Duffield’s (1993) study on the teaching and learning practices of teachers as they implemented Holocaust units in their middle school classrooms further supports the need for building historical context within Holocaust instruction. Gates-Duffield studied separate sample groups of middle school students as they were taught the
same lesson about the Holocaust in their Language Arts classes. One sample group was provided one day of discussion about World War II, key vocabulary terms, and a brief timeline highlighting Adolf Hitler’s rise to power. The other sample group began the lesson immediately with no discussion of the historical context. Gates-Duffield used a series of interviews, field notes and work samples in order to conclude that providing students with a historical context was among the key elements related to students’ understanding of the implications of racism and prejudice, a key facet of Holocaust Education.

Another key element regarding the impact of Holocaust instruction, according to Gates-Duffield (1993), was the use of literature in providing a scope for viewing racism and prejudice. The selection of materials is a critical process in planning Holocaust instruction. Friedlander (1979) offers additional insight regarding this factor, claiming that literature is one of the best ways to study human behavior in such extreme situations such as genocide (p. 526). By doing so, students are able to view situations as actual experiences, as opposed to simply historical events. Possibly the most critical component of teaching students about the Holocaust is to show them that the Holocaust involved real human beings. It is necessary for teachers to show that behind the statistics are real people, comprised of families of grandparents, parents, and children. Totten and Feinberg (1995) recommend using first-person accounts to do this, as they provide students with a way of “making meaning” of collecting numbers (p.11).

Further, in order to provide meaningful and effective instruction on the Holocaust, materials must be selected carefully and appropriately. Shawn (2001) suggests literature books that reflect historical reality, personalize the statistics, and foster empathy and compassion (p.
141). She also states that the selected literature should highlight the Jewish experiences and not solely focus on the actions of the perpetrators. Baum (1996) agrees with the importance of fostering empathy and compassion through the selection of literature, and his review of the relevant research additionally stresses the importance of multiple perspectives.

Totten (2002) supports using a balanced approach to Holocaust education by stressing the need for representing a multitude of themes. Totten (2002) provides such examples as studying human behavior; teaching why, how, what, when, and where the Holocaust took place; prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, racism, anti-Semitism, and obedience to authority (p. 5). The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s *Teaching about the Holocaust* (2001) offers additional suggested themes, such as the use and abuse of power and gaining a perspective of how history happens (p. 2). Exposing students to a variety of themes can be very beneficial for students, as it creates a number of avenues for understanding. Specifically pertaining to the Holocaust, gaining a perspective of how history happens allows for students to conceptualize events on a deeper level by providing students the opportunity to learn of the events leading up to the phenomenon and to analyze these events from a number of different perspectives. Through this process, students build understanding on how different stakeholders perceived these events in history and, in turn, they are able to better understand the actions of others.

Among other common themes embedded in Holocaust education is morality. Schweber (1998) sought to assess the integration of this theme through the observation of several teachers’ implementation of Holocaust units in their respective history classes. Schweber noted interesting observations, including teachers’ heavy reliance on the textbook and an emphasis on facts and content, paired with very little questioning. Schweber’s (1998) interviews with teachers
uncovered a common fallacy within teachers’ perceptions. She reported finding that the moral component is an assumption; therefore it is often not intentionally addressed. Schweber (1998) concluded that the difficulties students faced relating to and conceptualizing the phenomenon were based on the emphasis on factual content and the ignorance of morality.

It is also important to note the complexity of morality itself. By integrating lessons of morality throughout Holocaust education, teachers seek to educate students about right and wrong through the actions of various people during the Holocaust. In *We Are Here*, Ellen Cassedy (2012) supports the notion that it is essential to consider that focusing solely on the actions of the Nazis often minimizes the actions of the majority of people present during the Holocaust. She asserts, “Being a bystander, a passive witness, was perhaps a moral failing, even a moral crime” (p. 122). Tinberg and Weisberger (2013) draw attention to the fact that throughout the timespan of the Holocaust many people both in Europe and the United States did very little or looked the other way (p. 55). Considering this realization, Tinberg and Weisberger pose a critical question: Could more have been done to save the Jewish population, who were murdered wholesale by the Nazi regime (p. 55)? In their study about teaching and learning about the Holocaust, Tinberg and Weisberger (2013) offer insight regarding students’ reactions to bystanders during the Holocaust. The goal for the study was to assess students’ positions regarding bystanders and observe at what point in the instructional delivery students would have a critical reaction to the information presented. Tinberg and Weisberger (2013) communicate concern with their findings, stating that some students took the “desperate times call for desperate measures” standpoint. They explain this standpoint further by recalling that students excused the actions of perpetrators and bystanders, claiming the difficult position they were in
forced them to make questionable decisions. Other students excused the actions of bystanders claiming that they had been brainwashed by Hitler (p. 55). This outcome points to the necessity of discussing bystanders and morality throughout Holocaust instruction as it demonstrates the lack of connections being made between the minimal actions of the bystanders and the indirect consequences of those actions.

An equally crucial set of factors in considering the implementation of Holocaust instruction is the perspective and positionality of the students and teachers. Berkovits (1987) suggests that the different attitudes about the Holocaust of Jews and Christians are largely based on a difference of historical experience. He claims that there is inevitably a major difference of perception between those who “experience hell as existential reality” and those who “merely see it as observed from a distance.” While positionality is one determinant of the perceptions students are likely to have, Banks (1993) suggests acknowledging differences in positionality and utilizing it as a tool for teaching about multiple perspectives. He asserts, “Students should be given opportunities to investigate and determine how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline influence the ways knowledge is constructed” (p.10). Shedding light on not only the fact that there are differences within our perceptions, but also discussing the possible reasoning for those differences allows for a deeper understanding of the ways in which we learn and perceive history.

Additionally, presented with the difficult task of grasping the enormity of a phenomenon like the Holocaust, it is inevitable that all who study it will be faced with the realization of one’s inability to entirely empathize with those who were directly impacted. Endacott and Sturtz (2015) offer a solution to engaging students in history and fostering the conception of
understanding the learned experiences through their explanation of historical empathy. They assert, “Historical empathy is the process of students’ cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualize their lived experiences, decisions, or actions” (p. 1). Further, “Historical empathy involves understanding how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted, and faced empathy, demonstrating its potential for assisting teachers in actively engaging their students with history” (p. 1). Research has shown that developing historical empathy within students has been a successful engagement tool in teaching students about history (Brooks, 2008; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Doppen, 2000; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Scholars have suggested repeated engagement in historical empathy can promote complex ideas and decision-making (Doppen, 2000), moral judgment (Barton & Levstik, 2004), and a dispositional appreciation for the complexity of situations faced by people in the past (Endacott and Sturtz, 2015, p.2). Faced with the seemingly impossible task of promoting students to make meaning of the information with which they are presented, historical empathy can be monumental in fostering a meaningful experience for students.

Schweber (1998) acknowledges the complexity of the Holocaust as an instructional topic, yet claims that while teaching the Holocaust is complex, it is necessary. A core combination of the essential themes must be considered when planning and implementing instruction so that students are able to grasp its true depth. This foundation is affirmed by The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's guidebook, *Teaching about the Holocaust* (2001):

[The] study of the Holocaust assists students in developing understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. It helps students develop an awareness of the value of pluralism, and encourages tolerance of diversity in a
pluralistic society.... The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of others' oppression... Holocaust history demonstrates how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.... Students gain a perspective on how history happens, and how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of civilized values. Part of one's responsibility as a citizen in a democracy is to learn to identify the danger signals, and to know when to react, (p. 2).

According to Schweber (1998) it is critical to maintain a balanced approach in categorizing the events of the Holocaust by acknowledging its exclusivity, while continuing to reinforce its connection to past and present prejudice, racism and discrimination. Totten (2002) agrees that there is a critical need to examine both the uniqueness of the Holocaust as well as its universal nature. In doing so, he stresses the need to avoid the pitfall of establishing a false dichotomy between the two (p. 18).

The research provided draws on a range of approaches to teaching about the Holocaust that have provided beneficial and meaningful outcomes for students. These outcomes further draw on the importance of selecting appropriate activities and avoiding ones that are not considered pedagogically sound. Among the most criticized activities is the simulation. Dawidowicz (1990) explains that simulation activities are role-play lessons designed to put students in the place of the people who experienced the Holocaust. Totten (2002) provides context for some examples of simulations, including an activity in which students are told to stand in a small space together in an attempt to recreate the transportation to concentration camps.
by cattle car (p. 119). Other examples of simulations include teachers encouraging students with one eye color to isolate or “persecute” students with another. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s *Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust* has a strong opinion regarding games and simulations as tools for teaching about the Holocaust. The guide states:

> Even when teachers take great care to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound. The activity may engage students, but they often forget the purpose of the lesson, and even worse, they are left with the impression at the conclusion of the activity that they now know what it was like during the Holocaust… The problem with trying to simulate situations from the Holocaust is that complex events and actions are over-simplified, and students are left with a skewed view of history (p. 2).

Totten (2002) agrees that simulations can be detrimental to students’ understanding and conceptualization of the Holocaust. He adds that simulations frequently convey skewed and incorrect information about the Holocaust and are often ahistorical (p. 119).

An additional contribution to the depth of Holocaust education is the variety of themes embedded within. Focusing on only one or two key themes such as anti-Semitism, victimization, persecution, or the Nazi government in instruction fails to address, even briefly, the other key themes that are highly relevant in developing a deep understanding of the Holocaust (Totten & Feinberg, 1995). Totten and Feinberg (1995) point out some common exclusions: focusing on the crimes of the perpetrators but not the antecedents of the history; the actions of the perpetrators but not the lives of the victims; the fact of the death camps versus the ever-increasing discrimination that marginalized and isolated the Jews and other victims in the first
place; the role of the rescuers to the exclusion of the policies and/or actions of the perpetrators, victims, and bystanders; the passivity of Jews but not the varied forms of resistance they put up; the notion that Jews allowed themselves to be herded into ghettos, camps, and gas chambers but nothing about the deceit and overwhelming power of the Nazis; and the obedience to authority but nothing about the terror induced by the Nazis (p.11). These exclusions, among others, draw the conclusion that the absence of essential themes in instruction is one possible cause for the lack of depth in students’ understanding of the Holocaust. For a full comprehensive understanding and conceptualization of the events of the Holocaust, it is crucial to consider opposing viewpoints and the factors that contributed to the actions of the various key players. Providing students with appropriate activities and materials, as well as facilitating opportunities for students to explore all sides are essential components in planning and delivering Holocaust instruction.

As outlined above, several researchers have recommended approaches to planning and teaching about the Holocaust. These approaches include the need to establish historical context prior to and during instruction about the Holocaust (Gates-Duffield, 1993; Lindquist, 2011; Short, 2005; Totten and Feinberg, 1995), the use of literature in providing a scope for viewing racism and prejudice (Gates-Duffield, 1993; Friedlander, 1979; Shawn, 2001), using a balanced approach and allowing for a representation of a multitude of themes (Totten, 2002), and acknowledging differences in positionality and utilizing it as a tool for teaching (Banks, 1993). These approaches have been proven to provide beneficial and meaningful outcomes for students.

Teacher Preparation
Teachers’ Challenges

Teachers face an array of complexities in the planning and implementing of Holocaust Education. Regarding personal teaching experiences, Farnham (1983) likens the teaching of the literature of the Holocaust as a “guided tour through hell” (p. 63). Klein (1995) recognizes that Holocaust education is burdened by unique problems that place extraordinary demands on teaching (p. 2). Lindquist (2007) explains the burdens of these and other teachers’ experiences by suggesting, “These voices indicate that one does not teach the Holocaust as much as one confronts it” (p. 21).

Motivation

Many educators who consider teaching the Holocaust feel deterred from doing so (Lindquist, 2007, p. 27). Various scholars offer insight regarding the reasoning for teachers’ lack of motivation to teach about the Holocaust. Donnelly (2006) believes that teachers lack the confidence needed to develop a Holocaust unit since they feel that they do not have the subject matter knowledge necessary to teach the event successfully (p. 27). Alan Singer, a professor at Hofstra University and expert on Holocaust education in public schools, explains, “The main challenge for teachers presenting a Holocaust curriculum is generational; the Jewish experience in World War II seems far removed from contemporary lives. Today, it's ancient history for students. It's also ancient history for teachers” (as cited by Lipman, 1994).

Emotional Connection

However, Schweber (2006) believes that a powerful explanation for a shift in attitudes towards the Holocaust is rooted in its exposure (p. 44). One key player in this shift in attitudes can be attributed to Holocaust Fatigue, a condition often referenced to explain individuals’ lack of
emotion or reaction while discussing the events of the Holocaust. Schweber adds that a facet of Holocaust fatigue includes “the acceptability of Holocaust humor in the larger culture,” as it “has permeated students' notions of the subject matter, posing the challenge of orienting students in the classroom to take it seriously” (p. 44). She further suggests the difficulties Holocaust Fatigue presents for teachers, as the buildup of the topic often decreases students’ views on the importance of the event. Lindquist, (2007) however, proposes that the most significant reason for teachers to feel discouraged about teaching the Holocaust is their worry about whether or not they can present such an emotionally charged subject in a way that does justice to the topic (p. 27).

Content Knowledge

All of these reasons contribute to the pressures and difficulties teachers face when planning and implementing Holocaust education into their classrooms. However, as previously discussed, it stands true that in order to deliver effective Holocaust education, teachers need to have a deep understanding of the phenomenon. Shawn (1995) further justifies that those who teach the subject should to be able to explain the importance of their work and be knowledgeable about Holocaust history and literature” (p. 16). Holt (2001) found in his study of Indiana’s implementation of Holocaust education that 80% of teachers were not familiar with the series of events that ended the Holocaust and most teachers reported their primary method of preparation for teaching about the Holocaust was self-study. In Schweber’s (1994) study on best practices for teaching about the Holocaust, she noted the emphasis on teachers’ use of factual and knowledge-based approaches.
Resources

As most textbooks fail to give teachers adequate background, understanding or analysis (Totten, 2000; Totten & Riley, 2005), a valid question is raised: How are teachers being prepared to teach about the Holocaust? It is essential to consider what resources and tools are being provided to teachers in order to best prepare them to plan and deliver meaningful instruction.

Professional Development

One type of staff development offered to help prepare teachers to teach about the Holocaust is a museum-based approach. With this type of professional development, teachers and/or school districts work together with museums specializing in one or more of the desired teaching topics. This approach seeks to increase the resources available in order to create a more meaningful and relevant learning experience. Goldberg (2012) studied the meaning-making of teachers as they attended a professional development program at a Jewish Heritage Museum. Goldberg explains that it is essential to consider how individual teachers come to understand the Holocaust as a result of learning activities because the meanings that are formed may “impact teachers’ pedagogic interpretation of the Holocaust, which may in turn shape their instructional practices” (p. 5). Aside from museum-based professional development, other programs have met success in preparing teachers for Holocaust instruction. Research has shown professional developments taking place at tolerance centers, foundations, and state-sponsored educational and academic conferences have been successful in addressing topics related to the difficulties teachers face instructionally (Donoho, 1999).
**External Resources**

With the continued growth and prominence of Holocaust education, research has examined other resources and their effectiveness in educating and preparing teachers to instruct about the Holocaust. The increase in media and internet reliance has called for a closer look at the internet as a tool for preparing teachers. Davis, Fernekes and Hladky (2010) presented the findings from their action research on faculty members’ use of the internet for high-quality learning about the Holocaust. For this project, the participating high school partnered with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to assess the effectiveness of the internet resources provided on the website. The research showed that the internet resources provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum were an effective tool for educating both teachers and students about the Holocaust.

With an array of professional development opportunities and resources, teachers have access to the deeper understanding necessary to tackle the Holocaust as an instructional topic. Schweber (1994) urged teachers to not only take advantage of such preambles, but to also ensure that their education is ongoing. She stressed the need for teachers to collaborate with one another and encouraged them to take the time to reflect on their work. These strategies are essential tools in the successful implementation of Holocaust instruction.

**Teaching the Holocaust Across Content Areas**

A growing debate in the field of Holocaust education surrounds the question of where the instruction should take place. According to Totten and Riley, (2002) the obvious choice for curriculum implementation is secondary social studies, primarily world history and American
history courses (p. 544). Donoho’s (1999) research similarly suggests that the Holocaust is most frequently taught in history and Social Studies, but references its inclusion in English and Library/Media classes as well (p. 113). Ellison’s (2002) comprehensive study on the mandate to implement Holocaust instruction found that 88.8% of respondents reported Holocaust instruction taking place in United States history courses, while literature courses, the next most frequent subject for lessons on the Holocaust, attributed to only 14.4% of respondents’ implementation settings.

History courses, deemed as the primary setting for Holocaust studies, address content and themes in differing ways than in other settings (Donoho, 1999; Ellison, 2002; Fischman, 1996). As opposed to English teachers who were more likely to utilize student journals, literature, and first-person accounts, Donoho (1999) found that history teachers were more likely to represent facts, covering antisemitism, Nazi ideology, the Nazi rise to power, and concentration camps in their Holocaust units. However, with historical content presenting as the key focus for social studies instruction, Totten and Riley (2002) stress that a list of memorized names, dates, and places will yield little in terms of understanding the event (p. 545). Totten and Riley (2002) reaffirm the complexity of the Holocaust, further drawing on deficits often presented with teaching about the Holocaust solely in the social studies classroom. It is their claim that even the employment of the National History Standards in planning for instruction will not wholly succeed in preparing students to think historically, especially where the Holocaust is concerned (p. 542). Teachers must recognize that in order for students to understand a historical event of
such magnitude, they must engage a complement of intellectual skills and dispositions and a
good variety of primary evidence and secondary sources (Totten and Riley, 2002, p. 543).

Of the recommended sources for effective instruction on the Holocaust, researchers have
found literature to be a thriving resource for instruction (Ellison, 2002; Fischman, 1996;
Friedlander, 1979; Totten & Feinberg, 1995). The use of literature as a tool for Holocaust
instruction has presented itself most in the English classroom. As previously stated, Donoho
(1999) found English teachers were more likely to utilize literature, among other resources, in
their instruction. Researchers have presented findings on the benefits of using literature to
instruct about the Holocaust. Gates-Duffield (1993) stresses the importance of using literature to
provide a scope for viewing racism and prejudice and attributes that as a key element in the
success of Holocaust instruction. Friedlander (1979) recommends consulting the memoir
literature as an original source (p.526). Totten and Feinberg (1995) offer that the instructional
focus should be on individuals as well as groups, as teachers and students will come to
understand and appreciate that real people are behind the mind-numbing statistics (p.11).

Macvay (2015) suggests the focus is on human resistance, unselfishness, and bravery as themes
and morals to address in the English literature classroom.

Researchers agree that regardless of where Holocaust instruction takes place, it is
essential to develop an understanding of the historical context surrounding the Holocaust. Totten
and Feinberg (1995) state that doing so allows students to see the relationship of political, social,
and economic factors that impacted the times and events that resulted in that history (p. 325).
While building historical context is essential in facilitating a deep understanding of the
Holocaust, the use of literature is proven to be equally valuable. Fischman (1996) reaffirms these critical components, explaining that Holocaust education is multidisciplinary, the use of literature is essential, and the context of history is critical.

**Curriculum**

Curriculum guides set the stage for teachers and provide the topics and resources necessary to teach. The careful development of Holocaust curricula is essential, as it is a complex, yet necessary task. Sowell (2005) provides four general considerations for determining the content for any curriculum: (a) the validity and significance of the content for the intended academic setting, (b) the learnability of the content by the students for whom the curriculum is being planned, (c) the appropriateness of the content for those students, and (d) the consistency of the content relative to the culture in which it will be taught.

However, upon analyzing a range of Holocaust curricula, Dawidowicz (1992) found that most curricula are better at describing what happened during the Holocaust than explaining why it happened (p.69). Dawidowicz (1992) used this finding to develop perhaps the most common and crucial model regarding content and themes for Holocaust education. Her study highlighted several essential questions that curriculum directors, administrators and teachers must address before planning and implementing effective Holocaust instruction: Where is the Holocaust being taught? How? What? Why? To what effect? These questions are at the core of many significant research studies.

Dawidowicz (1990) first took an analytical look at all of the available curricular guides, including a comprehensive look at the treatment of the Holocaust in textbooks. She reported that
events of the Holocaust were often just briefly sketched in history textbooks (p. 26). Additionally, she noted that she discovered several factual errors about dates, locations, and statistical information within the curricula. Dawidowicz found in her analysis of 25 curricula guides that most of the guides were not produced at the state level, but by respective school districts. According to Dawidowicz, the guides provide basic information (p. 27). She added that the common goals of the given curricula aimed to foster a commitment to democratic values (p. 27). In conjunction with an earlier presentation, it is important to note that Dawidowicz reported that most of the curricula use simulation games and/or role playing to teach “moral lessons” (p. 27). She further noted the degree to which role-playing and games were recommended, adding that the use of such activities was inappropriate and ineffective in helping students understand the events and issues of the Holocaust. This finding further supports the above-mentioned research that suggests the ineffectiveness of simulations in teaching about the Holocaust.

Dawidowicz found as a result of her research that most curricula presented the content on a conveniently simple level. Many omitted the use of racial ideology and anti-Semitism, which Dawidowicz (1992) interpreted as a way of avoiding potential “minefields of opposition” (p. 71). She emphasized a particular neglect to address anti-Semitism. In noting this omission, Dawidowicz (1992) argues the curriculum provides a distorted picture of the cause of the Holocaust and is especially rooted in a Christian doctrine (p. 71). She notes that the curricula also omitted the role of government policy and law in the events of the Holocaust, maintaining a key focus on individual attitudes, beliefs and opinions (Dawidowicz, 1992).

The 50 States Genocide Education Project reports that there are currently nine states in the United States that mandate Holocaust education. However, of these nine, only three- Florida,
Illinois and New Jersey require genocide education from grades K-12 and have a state commission or task force to keep genocide education comprehensive and up to date. California, Michigan, Indiana, New York, Illinois and Rhode Island require genocide education only from grades 7-12. The other 41 states and the District of Columbia do not require genocide education in public schools.

**Future Direction**

The literature presented demonstrates the importance of Holocaust education, and provides an overview of how the Holocaust is implemented instructionally within various classroom settings. The research surrounding Holocaust instruction shows a variety of findings and analyses regarding appropriate and meaningful approaches to teach students about the Holocaust. However, these studies have been content specific, presenting findings on the implementation of Holocaust instruction within the Social Studies classroom or the Language Arts classroom, respectively. As the findings presented only provide insight regarding specific instructional settings, they lack in their ability to draw connections and identify trends across content areas.

Additionally, studies have shown that teachers often feel underprepared to teach about the Holocaust, often expressing their need for more extensive preparation. The research presented in this review provides analysis of several differing Professional Development opportunities and offers suggestions for teachers. However, the findings regarding teachers’ preparation for teaching about the Holocaust focuses specifically on trainings, workshops, and seminars. Noting that preparing teachers for instruction goes beyond Professional Development,
Totten and Riley (2005) did analyze the textbooks used as a supplementary tool for teaching about the Holocaust. However, their findings present a need for future research, as they showed that most textbooks fail to give teachers adequate background, understanding or analysis. It is also clear that textbooks are not the only supplemental materials used to assist teachers with this topic. There are other supplemental resources provided to teachers, yet the research presents minimal analysis on most of these additional materials, and a complete lack of analysis on others, primarily practitioner journals.

The findings presented regarding the Holocaust lack a rich description of the differing approaches to teaching about the Holocaust across content areas. Additionally, practitioner journals had not been used in conjunction with other data to explore this topic. Understanding the treatment of the Holocaust in these contexts will not only highlight the recommendations that practitioner journals make for teaching about the Holocaust, but further provide a scope for how these resources, in addition to curriculum guides and state standards, guide teachers in their decision-making when planning and teaching about the Holocaust.

Previous research findings did provide isolated information regarding approaches, themes, and rationales for teaching about the Holocaust, in addition to suggested resources and activities as presented in the Language Arts or Social Studies classrooms respectively. However, there was a limited body of organized information concerning the approaches to teaching the Holocaust across these different content areas. Additionally, the existing research methods only targeted one or two sources of data (teachers and students or curriculum and text material). This study triangulates data from multiple sectors of the educational system.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Through this intrinsic collective case study with content analysis, I provide a broad and detailed view of the approaches to teaching about the Holocaust across different content areas. While the goal of this study was not to identify best practices, a detailed account of approaches, resources and materials are discussed and further provide stakeholders with information relevant to exploration on that and various other topics concerning Holocaust education. This study serves as a tool for school districts and policy makers to best inform their future decision-making with regard to the selection and use of secondary sources and curriculum content, further allowing for teachers to make the best pedagogical decisions with regard to their students’ learning. Additionally, just as Creswell had previously identified, the researcher’s role as an active learner is one of the reasons for selecting qualitative research, and I learned a great deal from conducting this research. Further, the findings from this study will guide my own future research on this topic. This chapter of this dissertation outlines and discusses the methodology that was used in this study. The chapter is organized into seven sections: (a) rationale for case studies and content analysis, (b) participants, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) limitations, (f) positionality, and (g) trustworthiness.

Rationale for Case Studies and Content Analysis

Creswell (2009) describes a case study as the “strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program event, process, of one or more individuals.” Case studies allow for a comprehensive view of the research and provide a rich and thorough understanding of how
teachers think about teaching history (Lichtman, 2013). Stake (1995) asserts that a case study is a separate qualitative method that has a level of flexibility which is not readily offered by other qualitative approaches, and that it is designed to suit the case and research questions. Further, the main purpose of a case study approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the themes inherent in the raw data of the study (Stake, 1995). Further, an intrinsic case study is one in which the case itself is unique and therefore worth studying, while a collective case study is done to provide a general understanding using a number of instrumental case studies (Yin, 1999). This study specifically combines an intrinsic case study and a collective case study.

Krippendorf (2004) provides a rationale for content analysis, describing it as a technique that “allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data in view of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents they have and the communicative roles they play in the lives of the data’s sources” (p. 44). I used content analysis in order to better understand resources such as practitioner journals and curricula that are meant to guide the participants’ teaching.

This study is fitting of qualitative research in that it seeks to explore the “how” or “what” in a particular inquiry. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine if and in what ways approaches to teaching the Holocaust differ across content areas. Included in this inquiry is a review of relevant English-Language Arts and Social Studies curriculum, Common Core State Standards, and content analysis of related practitioner journals. This study was guided by the following overarching research questions:

How do teachers and policy makers in Language Arts and Social Studies conceptualize the teaching of the Holocaust?
Related subsidiary questions are:

1. What approaches do Language Arts and Social Studies teachers use when planning for teaching about the Holocaust?

2. In what ways do state standards and mandated curricula inform teachers’ decision-making when teaching about the Holocaust?

3. What recommendations do content area specific practitioner journals make for teaching about the Holocaust?

**Participants**

This study involves teachers from one New Jersey public middle school. Several factors in the selection of the middle school lent to the intrinsic case study approach. The middle school whose teachers were used for the study was selected particularly because of its location. New Jersey was the first state in the United States to mandate Holocaust education in all public schools’ curriculum. Though all school districts must include material about the Holocaust in their curriculum, as required by the mandate, each district has control over where and how the material will be taught in individual schools. This means that curriculum directors or administrators whom are deemed responsible for curriculum decisions decide if the Holocaust should be taught as part of the Social Studies curriculum, Language Arts curriculum, or both. The participating middle school was selected because the district specifically requires the Holocaust be included as an instructional topic in both the Language Arts and Social Studies. Being as many school districts integrate Holocaust instruction into Language Arts or Social
Studies respectively, the selection of this school allowed for data collection in both content areas, and thus provided for a thorough and analytic overview. The middle school was additionally selected because the school is representative of New Jersey schools in general in the sense that its demographics closely match the state average for minority enrollment, teacher to student ratio, and diversity score. The school serves approximately 325 students in grades six through eight with a minority enrollment of 58%. Currently, 24% of the student body is categorized as low-income and these students receive free or reduced meals. 86% of the teachers at this middle school have three or more years of teaching experience and the student: teacher ratio is 14:1.

The teachers selected as participants are Language Arts or Social Studies general education teachers who all have at least three years’ experience teaching in their respective content areas. The expertise of the teachers supported the notion that each teacher has experience with the teaching approaches they discussed, providing additional support for their claims. Additionally, having three years of experience suggested the participants have had opportunities to refine their teaching approaches over time, thus solidifying their perspective on how best to teach the Holocaust in their content area. At the time of this study, the middle school had eight Language Arts teachers and five Social Studies teachers in total. Twelve of the thirteen teachers in these content areas were invited to participate in the study, excluding only one teacher for having not met the minimum teaching experience criteria. Three Language Arts teachers and three Social Studies teachers participated in this study. All teacher participants had experience teaching about the Holocaust in their classrooms. The participants in this study ranged in age, gender, and ethnicity. In addition, the years of experience each participant has in teaching their content area also ranged, presenting varying longevity.
All prospective teachers were initially provided with an overview of the study, research questions and their prospected role as participants in order to gauge their interest. Participants were then selected with consideration to their experience levels and respective content areas.

Data Collection

Development of Data Collection Tools

The process of collecting my data began with interviews. The interviews consisted of questioning that allowed me to gather background information and discuss each participant’s experiences with Holocaust instruction, as well their desired approaches to instruction. The interviews additionally allowed for each participant to reflect on their preparation methods to teaching about the Holocaust and guided discussion about the relevant resources they utilize in instructional planning. All interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken during each interview. Transcripts were made for each session immediately following the interview.

Each participant was interviewed two times. In preparation for conducting interviews, I developed an interview protocol. As suggested by Creswell (1998), the guide included several components including a header, guiding questions, and ample space for note taking. The header included in the guide provided for recording relevant information about the interview, such as the date, time, and location of the interview, as well as the names of participants. The guide then included guiding questions for the interview. The space provided allowed for me to take notes on responses from participants, though all interviews were also tape-recorded.

The creation and utilization of the interview protocol guide ensured that interviews focused on the purpose of the study and maintained consistency throughout each individual
interview. The interview questions were developed as a result of information gathered in the Literature Review, my personal experiences with Holocaust education, and a review of the relevant curricula.

**Interviews**

Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) provide the basis for semi-structured interviewing, describing the procedure as one in which “the interviewer asks a series of structured questions and then probes more deeply with open-ended questions to obtain additional information” (p. 769). Despite Gall et al. (1996) describing this technique as a quantitative interviewing method, it was suitable for this study as it allowed for further discussion and elaboration about specific participant responses. This technique also provided me with the opportunity to seek clarification and allowed for deeper discussion through open-ended questioning.

Krueger (1998) suggests five categories of questions: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending. The opening questions were designed to gather some background information and to open communication between the interviewer and the participant. The last question also provided for additional background on the participant and provided relevant insight as I analyzed responses to interview questions.

The second category of questioning, the introductory questions provided for participants to reflect on their own experiences (Krueger, 1998). The transition questions were designed to begin moving the discussion toward the questions that were most relevant to the study (Krueger, 1998). These questions connected the participants to the research topic. During this category, participants began to reflect on their approaches to planning and teaching about the Holocaust.
The next category of questioning, the key questions, provided for an opportunity to ask driving questions that were most relevant to the study’s research questions. The key questions were designed to address the participant’s experiences teaching about difficult knowledge. These questions provided participants with opportunities to discuss the research topic more in depth and provided for the richest discussion surrounding the research topic. As Krueger (1998) suggested, this category of questioning required more probing than other portions of the interview, but did allow for thorough and meaningful responses.

The ending questions were meant to bring closure to the interview. These questions allowed for addressing the over-arching questions and gaining general insight about participants’ feelings regarding the research topic and allowed for them to reflect on their approaches over time. This allowed me to provide each participant with a brief summary about the topics discussed during the interview and ask them if there was any additional insight they wished to provide regarding the topic.

In order to assess the validity of the interview questions, a pilot interview was conducted with the originally designed protocol. The pilot interview provided significant insight and direction for necessary modifications. During the pilot interview, there was a significant trend regarding one aspect I had not previously considered: the participants’ religious identities. The interviewee spoke in depth to the preparation she felt was a result of her Jewish faith, and her perceptions regarding the lack of preparation her colleagues had due to their differing faith. She attributed this to their inability to relate and connect to the material. Presented with this trend, I decided I needed a way to gauge if and in what ways teachers personally connect to the content in hopes of identifying possible connections to their decision-making process as a result. I
wanted to leave this question vague, as to not suggest religion to be a factor, but provide for open interpretation on the part of the interviewee. For this reason, I added the question “Why is the Holocaust important to you?”

As a result of the responses to my interview questions as a whole, I realized the need to be more specific in some areas, while broadening the scope in other areas. For example, I originally asked about encountering students who expressed skepticism or anti-Semitic thoughts while teaching about the Holocaust with a follow-up question about how they think they would respond if faced with that situation. It was brought to my attention that this type of question could be leading, causing the data to be skewed. For this reason, I instead asked the participants how their students generally react to the lessons about the Holocaust. This allowed for a wider range of responses.

Presented with the opposite effect that the responses to other interview questions posed, it became clear that some questions elicited more of a “yes or no” type response without providing for ample opportunity for expansion. As a result, several questions were restructured to allow for a more open-ended response, while some questions were simply eliminated. Lastly, as the interviewee answered questions in the interview, I noticed that her responses mirrored some of her earlier responses. Upon analyzing the specific questions that elicited similar responses, I was able to combine the sets of similar questions into more descriptive overarching questions.

**Dilemma Analysis**

In order to better determine how teachers conceptualize their thinking regarding planning to teach about the Holocaust and to provide for additional opportunities to identify trends within
their thought processes, I used Dilemma Analysis. More specifically, the type of dilemmas I utilized for my Dilemma Analysis were hypothetical, researcher-generated dilemmas. I provided participants with standardized dilemmas and then asked questions about what they would have done and what they believed would have guided their decision making (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 190).

For the purpose of collecting a range of data to analyze teachers’ decision making through varying theoretical lenses, each of the three dilemmas designed for dilemma analysis in this study describe a different approach to teaching about the Holocaust. The teacher in each respective dilemma focused on a different aspect of the Holocaust in their instruction. Each dilemma discussed the overarching goal of the given lesson, but did not identify the content area in which the lesson was being taught. This omission was for the purpose of collecting un-biased, authentic data.

The first dilemma posed a scenario about a teacher’s emphasis on building historical context as an essential component of teaching and learning about the Holocaust and other historical events. This dilemma provided me with the opportunity to probe participants about their view on the importance of background knowledge and preceding events, as well as what considerations they make regarding the impact historical context has on student learning. Endacott and Brooks (2013) describe teachers’ references to social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation and/or knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation to be indicators of historical empathy (p. 43). Endacott and Brooks (2013) further speak to teachers’ acknowledgement of the impact that understanding another’s prior lived experience,
principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs has on teaching and learning, and as a result, how that person might have thought about the situation in question (p. 43).

The second dilemma used in the dilemma analysis provided participants with the opportunity to read about a different teacher’s approach in which her students were required to consider the roles and levels of responsibility of different people living during the given time period. Further, the teacher in this dilemma encouraged her students to openly discuss their reasoning behind the assigned level of responsibility chosen for each given stakeholder. Posing this dilemma allowed me to collect data regarding participants’ consideration of how their students may view moral obligations. This dilemma additionally allowed me to consider the role of historical empathy in participants’ thought processes by interpreting the influence they perceived students’ affective responses to have on their view of historical figures’ lived experiences, situations, or actions, as well as the degree of emphasis participants put on providing students with opportunities to make connections to their own similar yet different life experiences (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43).

The final dilemma used in my data analysis posed a scenario in which the teacher assigned her students to complete a project upon finishing a novel. This project required students to consider the position forced upon the main character when she was told she must immediately evacuate her home, leaving time to pack only a small suitcase. This dilemma provided me with an opportunity to assess participants’ perceptions regarding difficult knowledge, primarily through the emphasis they place on their consideration for the inner conflicts their students may be facing, as well as how students’ respective social trauma may impact their learning (Britzman, 1998).
Practitioner Journals and Curricula

Practitioner journals geared specifically towards Language Arts and Social Studies middle school teachers respectively were used as additional data in conjunction with the curricula. Specifically, the practitioner journals that were used for this study are Social Education, the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, and Voices from the Middle. Using ProQuest as a search engine, I searched the databases for each respective journal using the keywords Holocaust, World War II, Jewish history, and Historical Empathy and identified all articles within a five-year span of time that matched the criteria. I aimed to have no fewer than three articles per content area. Additionally, I obtained a copy of both the Social Studies and Language Arts curricula for the selected middle school. Lastly, I obtained and reviewed the relevant state standards for New Jersey. These curricula and standards were used in conjunction with the above-mentioned data collection tools for data analysis.

Krippendorf (2004) refers to these sources as “givens” in that there is no doubt as to what they are. He additionally categorizes these texts in a sense that “they are meant to be read, interpreted, and understood by people other than the analysts” and they are “not intended to be analyzed to answer specific research questions” (p. 30). This additionally increases their authenticity. Berelson (1952) lists several uses for content analysis that were relevant to this study. They include:

- To describe trends in communication content
- To measure the readability of communication materials
- To identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicators
• To reflect attitudes, interests, and values of population groups
• To reveal the focus of attention

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study included both Inductive and Deductive Analysis. Below is a table that provides the overview of my data analysis process for this study.

Table 1: Data Analysis Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 1: What approaches do Language Arts and Social Studies teachers use when planning for teaching about the Holocaust?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2: In what ways do state standards and mandated curricula guide teachers’ decision-making when teaching about the Holocaust?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 3: What recommendations do content area specific practitioner journals make for teaching about the Holocaust?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1, Continued

| teaching and learning, consideration of students’ inner conflicts and/or social trauma and its impact on learning |

**Inductive Analysis**

The overarching goal of data analysis is to define critical categories, establish relationships between them, and integrate them into elegant, credible interpretations (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Creswell (2018) speaks to the process of data analysis stating that it “involves preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion” (p. 183). This process is best outlined by Creswell’s Data Analysis Spiral, a model I used as the basis of my data analysis.

The first step was “managing and organizing the data” (Creswell, 2018, p. 186). After conducting each interview, the audiotapes created were used to transcribe the interview soon after. I transferred the notes taken during interviews into cohesive thoughts and ideas, and they were used when I analyzed the data. Further, the dilemma analysis discussions were also recorded on audiotapes and were transcribed following the conclusion of the interview. The second step outlined in Creswell’s (2018) Data Analysis Spiral is “reading and memoing emergent ideas” (p.186). Agar (1980) suggests immersing yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts (p. 103). To do this, I read through transcripts of interviews and dilemma analysis to gain a broad perspective of the collected data. Additionally, I wrote notes in the margins and transcripts, as Creswell (2018) suggests that
writing notes or memos in the margins or field notes or transcripts or under images helps in the initial process of exploring data (p. 187). Overall, Creswell suggests that this step allows for the researcher to build a sense of the data as a whole without getting caught up in the details of coding (p. 188). The third step is “describing and classifying codes into themes” (Creswell, 2018, p. 186). In this step, I described, classified, and interpreted the data. Creswell explains that the role of the researcher during this process is to “build detailed descriptions, apply codes, develop themes or dimensions, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views or the views of perspectives in the literature” (p. 189).

I used open-coding in interviews and dilemma analysis in order to uncover the approaches Social Studies and Language Arts teachers use in planning for teaching about the Holocaust. In order to do this, Creswell (2018) suggests lean coding, or beginning with five or six categories and expanding on the initial list as necessary (p. 190). As reading and re-reading of the data continued, these initial codes expanded into a larger list of codes. Finally, the expansion of codes was further categorized and reduced to final code categories. Finalizing a list of codes and creating descriptions provides the foundation for a codebook (Creswell, 2018, p. 190). The fourth step is “developing and assessing interpretations” (Creswell, 2018, p. 186). Creswell (2018) describes this as making sense of the data (p. 195). In this process, I identified themes that emerged in my data and viewed these themes more abstractly in order to make sense of the data.

**Deductive Analysis**

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) claim that the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is discovering significant *classes* of things, persons and events and the
properties which characterize them (p. 108). Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain the process for doing this, beginning with the researcher using preliminary research questions and the related literature developed earlier in the proposal as guidelines for data analysis (p. 209). They further explain that this planning can be used to suggest several categories by which the data could initially be coded for subsequent analysis (p. 209).

Analyzing the Holocaust as a form of difficult knowledge draws on the importance of identifying key aspects that categorize it as such. These aspects include a consideration of why this history is taught, where it is taught, to whom it is taught, and by whom it is taught in order to determine if the history is understood as difficult (Levy & Sheppard, 2018). In order to do this, theory-based codes were developed to deductively analyze interview transcripts, practitioner journals, curricula and state standards (see table 2).

**Table 2: Theory-based codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Abbreviated Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Contextualization</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>references the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation and/or knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other concurrent events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>references another’s prior lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Connection</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>references connections to one’s own similar yet different life experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Knowledge</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>references teaching and learning about social trauma and/or how inner conflicts impact teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Britzman, 1998; Endacott & Brooks, 2013)
The theory-based codes used for deductive analysis (as seen in table 2) were developed through Endacott and Brooks’ (2013) Theoretical and Practical Model for Promoting Historical Empathy and Britzman’s (1998) definition of difficult knowledge. These codes provided the basis for analyzing the data through the lenses of difficult knowledge and historical empathy, the theoretical frameworks that guided this study. They are:

- **Historical Contextualization**: a temporal sense of difference that includes deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that are happening concurrently (Endacott and Brooks, 2013, p. 43).

- **Perspective Taking**: understanding of another’s prior lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs in order to understand how that person might have thought about the situation in question (Endacott and Brooks, 2013, p. 43).

- **Affective Connection**: consideration for how historical figures’ lived experiences, situations, or actions may have been influenced by their affective response based on a connection made to one’s own similar yet different life experiences (Endacott and Brooks, 2013, p. 43).

- **Difficult Knowledge**: considers whether teachers are thinking about the fact that students will have inner conflicts or how respective social trauma impacts their learning. (Britzman, 1998).

**Limitations**
This study had its limitations. Common to data collected through interviews, the teacher participants in this study were self-reporting. The questions asked solicited responses from participants based on their perspectives and relevant experience. As a researcher, I presented the data as is, noted that the data is from self-reporting, and triangulated for patterns among participants. However, participants’ self-reporting does pose a limitation to the validity of the data I collected. Further, it is essential to emphasize that this study was primarily interested in teachers’ approaches, not actual practices. Thus, I made no claims as to what is happening in participants’ classrooms. Dilemma analysis posed limitations as well. Marshall and Rossman (2011) caution that people may not take the situation seriously, and the data may well reflect this (p. 191). Further, the participants in this study are representative of the Social Studies and Language Arts teachers from the participating school. Therefore, while the school’s demographics are closely related to that of New Jersey public schools as a whole, the data is not representative of all public schools and therefore cannot be generalized as such.

**Researcher Positionality**

It is essential to consider the researchers’ positionality. Lichtman (2013) asserts that “all information is filtered through the researcher’s eyes and ears and is influenced by his or her experience, knowledge, skill, and background” (p. 21). Throughout my schooling and then career as an educator, I have had a large presence in the Holocaust education community in New Jersey. My experiences thus far have further built on my passion and commitment to this topic. I recognize that my vast knowledge regarding this topic played into my research as it has allowed me to better interpret the content and has provided me background context. My experiences span
across many levels, including the participation in Holocaust education community events, my involvement in the “Adopt a Survivor” program, traveling to Europe on the Holocaust History Seminar, and initiating an annual school-wide initiative promoting diversity and inclusion through the events of the Holocaust. However, I am aware that with experience comes bias. I recognized that because of the personal investment I have with this topic, I was likely to consider interview and dilemma analysis responses through the lens of a passionate and experienced teacher. Additionally, because I see the immense value of this work and I am in turn such a strong proponent for Holocaust education, I tend to view differing viewpoints negatively. However, as I recognized my positionality and the potential for its impact on my interpretation of the findings, I was reminded to maintain an open mind.

**Trustworthiness**

Creswell (1998) addresses the need to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research studies and provides eight verification procedures for this process. This study utilized several of these techniques, including an external auditor and member checking.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that member checking is the most important procedure for establishing credibility. Through member checking, the researcher asks participants to review the collected data, including notes, transcripts, and drafts of the research findings, in order to verify the accuracy and analyzed interpretations. In addition to summarizing the topics of discussion at the end of each interview, I provided a copy of the transcript from the interview to each participant after the interview. After data analysis occurred, I shared the emerging themes and findings with participants and solicited their feedback. Creswell (1998) also highly suggests
using an external auditor to examine the study in order to determine accuracy and ensure the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data (p. 202). I asked a colleague of mine who has experience and background with research and middle grades education to serve as an external auditor for this research study. He was able to provide the study with additional trustworthiness.
In this chapter, I discuss the patterns and trends that emerged from the data I collected. I identify four key findings and support each with examples from the data. When I refer to the participants in the study, I use pseudonyms to share their words in illustrating the findings developed through analysis of the data. The table below provides information about each participant, as they will be referenced often throughout this chapter.

Table 3: Teacher Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Years of Experience in Content Area</th>
<th>Curricular Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Seventh and Eighth</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Teaches the Holocaust in the spring; uses external resources to build vocabulary; provides students with difficult scenarios to encourage them to consider multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Teaches the Holocaust in the spring to allow for students’ increased maturity; provides students with relevant vocabulary terms prior to instruction; utilizes maps, research, and timelines to build background and context; reads novel and shows documentary to facilitate perspective taking; invites a survivor to come speak to students every spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Sixth and Seventh</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Teaches the Holocaust in April/May to align with Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day); provides students with vocabulary packets to build background; reads novel to facilitate perspective taking; utilizes student reflection logs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3, Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nicole</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Sixth and Seventh</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>Teaches historical events in sequential order throughout the year (the Holocaust is typically covered in late spring); utilizes timelines and documentaries to build background; invites a survivor to come speak to students every spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Teaches historical events in sequential order throughout the year (the Holocaust is typically covered in late spring); elaborates on and clarifies vocabulary terms as they arise throughout the unit; utilizes maps and research to build background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Sixth and Seventh</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Teaches historical events in sequential order throughout the year (the Holocaust is typically covered in late spring); requires students to use dictionaries to define relevant vocabulary terms; utilizes research projects for increasing students’ content knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study explored how Language Arts and Social Studies teachers and policy makers conceptualize teaching of the Holocaust. The subsidiary research questions that frame this study are:

1. What approaches do Language Arts and Social Studies teachers use when planning for teaching about the Holocaust?
2. In what ways do state standards and mandated curricula guide teachers’ decision-making when teaching about the Holocaust?
3. What recommendations do content area specific practitioner journals make for teaching about the Holocaust?

The first research question formed the basis of the questions that guided participant interviews. Data for research question two was collected through obtaining copies of the New Jersey state standards for Language Arts and Social Studies, in addition to obtaining copies of the school district’s curriculum guides for Language Arts and Social Studies. These curriculum guides also included a supplemental curriculum provided by the New Jersey Commission for Holocaust Education. It is important to note that the supplemental curriculum provided to guide teachers’ instruction about the Holocaust primarily consisted of a list of book titles that were recommended for use in the classroom. Upon analyzing these book titles, I determined that only half of the books on the list related directly to the Holocaust. Of the Holocaust-related books on the list, two of the books recommended by the supplemental curriculum were historical text, seven books were first-hand accounts that focused primarily on victims, and three books were fictional stories. It is also important to note that during participant interviews, only one book title from the supplemental curriculum’s book list was referenced by teachers. Data for the third research question was obtained from practitioner journals that middle school teachers have access to in order to aid in their instructional planning. When using the criteria above to search for practitioner journal articles, ProQuest returned only three articles for Language Arts, while thirteen articles were a match for Social Studies. In order to keep the data balanced, three practitioner journal articles were selected for each content area and used as data for this study. The table below provides information about the six articles used.
The data presented four key findings regarding approaches to teaching about the Holocaust across the content areas. My first finding suggests that it is very important in both Social Studies and Language Arts that teachers build historical context before and throughout lessons about the Holocaust. Teachers and practitioner journals alike placed high importance on building background as a means for sorting misconceptions and ensuring students have an accurate portrayal of this history. My second finding is that teachers, as well as practitioner journals, think it is valuable to provide opportunities for perspective taking during lessons about the Holocaust. Data for this finding shows that teachers and practitioner journals recommend students be introduced to multiple perspectives, a variety of different perspectives, and have the opportunity
to consider the positions of those who lived during the time period. This approach allows students to connect to the history and relate the content to their own lives. My third finding draws on connecting the Holocaust to present day events and current genocides. Teachers and practitioner journal articles agree that by connecting the events of the past to events that are currently taking place around the world, most students are able to see the relevance in learning about the topic and increase their global awareness. Additionally, the data suggests relating the discrimination and acts of injustice during the Holocaust to bullying and discrimination that surrounds students every day in order to further draw on the connections between history and students’ lives. My fourth and final finding discusses the importance of teachers’ awareness with regard to themselves, their students, and the world around them. This finding states that it is essential for teachers to practice self-awareness and reflection both before and after lessons about the Holocaust. It also suggests that teachers be aware of the social constructs and climate of the classroom, school, and the world around them. All of these factors influence how students learn about difficult topics, and a lack of awareness or failure to consider these factors could have negative implications on students’ learning and overall well-being.

The findings discussed in this chapter suggest several similarities between Language Arts and Social Studies approaches to teaching about the Holocaust. It is important to note that there were no themes that emerged solely in one content area, though the specifics within some particular approaches varied somewhat based on content area. One such example suggests that while both Social Studies and Language Arts teachers and practitioner journals discussed the importance of building background and providing historical context, Social Studies practitioners focused more heavily on ensuring historical accuracy within content, while Language Arts
teachers discussed the importance of building on vocabulary terms and student understanding. Another overlap in data determined that both Social Studies and Language Arts teachers cover the Holocaust in the spring. However, the reasoning for their curricular placement varied across content area. Social Studies teachers explained that they introduce historical material in a chronological manner, and that the Holocaust naturally falls towards the end of the school year. Language Arts teachers explain their placement for the Holocaust in the spring, stating that they believe it is important to cover this material later in the year when students are more mature. One final discrepancy suggests that while Social Studies and Language Arts practitioners overlap by emphasizing documentaries as effective tools for providing students with perspective about people who lived during the Holocaust, it was exclusively Social Studies content specialists who praised them for their ability to provide students with first-hand accounts, additionally suggesting survivor visits and digital testimonies as valuable methods for further facilitating this in the classroom. In this chapter, a further discussion about these themes will include the commonalities among approaches, highlighting the vast overlap across content area, as well as the discrepancies that emerged within specific approaches.

**Finding 1: Historical Context**

The first finding indicated that both Social Studies and Language Arts teachers place high importance on building historical context before and throughout lessons about the Holocaust. Social Studies and Language Arts teachers both indicate that providing a rich historical context is a key approach to teaching about the Holocaust. Similar to teacher participants, practitioner journal articles for both Language Arts and Social Studies placed emphasis on building historical
context throughout lessons about the Holocaust. In this section, I will discuss the importance of ensuring historical accuracy, building background, providing chronological and geographical context, and suggested strategies for building historical context, as suggested by teacher participants and practitioner journals.

**Ensuring Historical Accuracy**

During interviews, teachers spoke of building historical context as an essential component of all lessons about the Holocaust. In their interviews, participants consistently noted that students enter their classrooms with misconceptions about the events of the Holocaust as a result of previous instruction or background. Included in these misconceptions are the thought that Jews were the only victimized group during the Holocaust. Joe, a seventh and eighth grade Language Arts teacher, stated that his students are always surprised to hear that Nazis targeted other subgroups as well, including Roma (gypsies), homosexuals, and people with disabilities to name a few. Another common misconception, according to Mary, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher, is that all German citizens were Nazis. She explained how it is important to correct this misconception, as students must understand that being German did not make you a Nazi. She stated that she has had students who have expressed tremendous guilt because they are of German descent and their previous misconceptions have caused them to feel that their ancestors were Nazis.

Teachers spoke to the importance of building background as a means for sorting these and other misconceptions and ensuring students have an accurate portrayal of this history. Mary, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher, stressed the notion that building background allows for “an
opportunity to clear up some stigmas.” She later stated that building background at the beginning of the unit allows for “quickly addressing as a group, the misconceptions students have.” Joe, a seventh and eighth grade Language Arts teacher, further justified the need for building background, stating that it allows for “sorting out misconceptions and really gets the kids thinking from the beginning of the unit.”

What emerged repetitively in both Language Arts and Social Studies practitioner journals was the need for historical accuracy both in resources and in instructional delivery. Considering films, both content area journals urged teachers to be weary of fictional films in order to avoid misrepresentation. Specifically, the film The Boy in the Striped Pajamas was mentioned on two occasions, once in *Voices from the Middle*, a Language Arts practitioner journal, and once in *Social Education*, a Social Studies practitioner journal (Marcus, 2017; Miller et al., 2017) as a film that can be detrimental to students’ conceptualization and understanding of the Holocaust. The film, adapted from a novel with the same title, follows the story of Bruno, a young German boy whose family has recently taken up residence near a concentration camp. Bruno, wandering around the property of his new home, finds and befriends Shmuel, a young Jewish boy who is a prisoner in the concentration camp. The two boys form a friendship through the barbed wire fence that separates them. Much of the reasoning for the recommendation against using this film to teach about the Holocaust is due to the fictional film’s misrepresentation of several aspects of the time period and context during which it is meant to be staged. Marcus (2017) states that The Boy in the Striped Pajamas is “based on a popular young adult book rather than history,” and that “it is historically inaccurate” (p. 170). The article further discusses the rationale for ensuring historical accuracy when representing the Holocaust “as not to provide Holocaust deniers any
room to support their claims” (Marcus, 2017, p. 170). Articles from Social Education make several suggestions for teachers as they consider appropriate resources to utilize. An article from Social Education titled, “Student Documentaries Based on the C3 Framework” suggests that teachers and students alike should “integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations” to ensure historical accuracy (p. 114).

**Building Background Knowledge**

Teacher participants agreed that reviewing relevant vocabulary terms prior to exposure is key for students’ understanding. In his interview, Joe suggested using Brain Pop as a resource for developing vocabulary and building background. He stated that this resource simplifies the content and presents it to students in a way they are better able to understand. Several other participants spoke to vocabulary packets as an additional method to use for reviewing vocabulary. Carrie, a sixth and seventh grade Language Arts teacher, discussed how she previews the readings that will be used during lessons and identifies any words that may be foreign to students. She specifically referenced vocabulary terms including fuhrer, crematorium, anti-Semitism, Gestapo, juden, Aryan, swastika, and Third Reich as ones that require additional context. She includes these words, and others, in vocabulary packets given to students. John, another Language Arts teacher, stated that years ago he had identified several words that he considered essential for students to know before any discussion about the Holocaust even begins. He uses the same words every year to provide vocabulary context to students prior to any reading or discussion. All three teachers that discussed specific activities or components of lessons that included providing students with relevant vocabulary prior to instruction taught Language Arts.
When asked about vocabulary, Social Studies teachers agreed that vocabulary terms must be discussed with students, but there was no mention of this discussion taking place prior to reading or discussion. Mary, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher, stated that vocabulary terms are discussed and interpreted as they come up in readings or lessons. Mark, another Social Studies teacher, stated that he requires students to use a dictionary to look up any words they do not know as they come across them in text. Overall, participants recognize that learning about the Holocaust can be complex, as it is difficult to conceptualize. Each of them stressed the importance of ensuring that students have an accurate portrayal of the events in order to work towards this conceptualization.

An article from *Voices from the Middle* titled “Mediating Emotive Empathy with Informational Text” draws on the necessity of building background, stating:

In utilizing resources that draw on emotionally laden and sensitive topics, such as the Holocaust, it is vital to provide context on the topics in order to progress through the content in a responsible manner. (Shelton & Sheffield, 2017, p. 296).

In “Teaching the Holocaust Through Film”, an article from *Social Education*, Marcus (2017) makes similar suggestions while discussing the importance of students’ knowledge prior to viewing films about the Holocaust. He asserts that “students who view films with little or no prior knowledge will learn nothing about the suffering, resistance, or diversity within these various groups” (p. 173). He identifies students’ prior knowledge as a key consideration for selecting resources to use. Acknowledging the complexity of the topic, the first factor to consider when selecting resources, according to Marcus (2017), is whether or not “the representations of historical figures complicate our understanding of the past” (p. 169). As facilitating opportunities
for students to conceptualize these events is a primary goal of teaching about the Holocaust, it is essential to ensure the resources selected do not overcomplicate our understanding. Further, the author suggests that the time period during which the film was made is another key consideration. When selecting resources to use, particularly films, he urges teachers to ask themselves:

In what ways does the time period in which a film was made influence the narrative or perspectives? At what point do the political or social influences, or ideological influences on a film distort the past so it is unusable? (Marcus, 2017, p. 169).

Marcus (2017) goes on to advise that it is the responsibility of the teacher to determine whether or not the political, social, and ideological values reflected in the film overly distort the historical narrative and/or can be effectively used as part of the activities with the film (p. 169).

Expanding on this concept, the article encourages teachers to question resources even further, considering not only what “political or social values are reflected by the film,” but also “which are disparaged or ignored?” (p. 169). This consideration relates to the suggestions made by teacher participants when they stated the importance of ensuring students are exposed to multiple stories and points of view. Selecting instructional resources to use is not a simple task. Several articles, specifically two from Social Education and one from Voices from the Middle, (Haas, Berson & Berson, 2015; Marcus, 2017; Miller et al., 2017) referenced the difficulty in selecting materials that are appropriate for the purpose of teaching about the Holocaust. In “Teaching the Holocaust Through Film”, an article from Social Education, Marcus (2017) states that “the difficult task is to find films that are historically appropriate based on the perspectives presented or questions raised” (p. 169).
Chronological and Geographical Context

Another trend that emerged repetitively was the notion of presenting the Holocaust as a series of events. All teacher participants agreed that in order for students to conceptualize the history behind the Holocaust, it must be presented as a series of events and not one isolated event. This includes discussing how Hitler came to power, the events leading up to his dictatorship, and how the Holocaust progressed throughout the years. Participants agree that this is essential in having students understand that the progression of events was systematic and the tactics behind Hitler’s ability to gain control over so many people. Joe, a seventh and eighth grade Language Arts teacher, spoke to the need for this. He stated:

We need to look at the events that impacted or led to the Holocaust because everyone thinks about the Holocaust as one event, but they don't think about what events led up to it and how people could have changed things.

He explained that students need to see how the actions or inactions of people throughout the years not only contributed to Hitler’s rise to power, but also the injustices towards millions of people that followed.

As neither the Social Studies or Language Arts curricula provide teachers with a suggested placement for the Holocaust within the school year, each teacher must decide where he/she deems it appropriate. When discussing the importance of building background, John mentioned that he always leaves his unit on the Holocaust for the spring, as he feels that students are not ready for such complex material earlier in the year. Carrie, another Language Arts teacher, stated that she always teaches her students about the Holocaust around Yom HaShoah,
or Holocaust Remembrance Day, that typically occurs in early May. Mary and Mark, two Social Studies teachers who teach sixth and seventh grade, stated that they like to introduce content as a progression of history throughout the year. This means that their units about the Holocaust typically occur in the spring as well, as they begin the year with ancient civilization. Even with presenting content as a progression through time, Social Studies participants still spoke to the importance of building specific historical context around the Holocaust. Several teachers recommended constructing timelines as a strategy for further developing the chronological context of the events of the Holocaust. Nicole, a sixth and seventh grade Social Studies teacher, stated that timelines also “allow for students to know when in history this took place.” John, Mary, and Carrie also agreed that timelines are a valuable resource for providing this context.

In addition to building chronological context, teacher participants spoke to the importance of providing geographical context as well. John, a Language Arts teacher, and Mary, a Social Studies teacher, both stated that maps are a key resource for pointing out geographically where specific events took place. Nicole additionally stated that she utilizes maps in order to show students how much of Europe was invaded by Nazis over time. She also stated that using a map to show students where the United States is located in relation to Germany and other Nazi occupied territories is helpful for them when discussing the United States’ involvement. When asked to elaborate about the use of maps, Mary and Nicole both spoke of the instruction students get on how to read and understand maps early in the school year. Mary stated that her students are required to learn each continent’s location and label them on a map. Both teachers discussed that the instruction about maps takes place early in the year so that students are better equipped to read and comprehend them as different places are referenced throughout the year. John, a
Language Arts teacher, said that he does not provide specific instruction about understanding maps. He stated that his students have always had the knowledge of how to read and interpret maps, and he attributed this understanding to teaching that he said likely takes place in their Social Studies classes.

**Strategies for Building Historical Context**

Given teacher participants’ emphasis on the importance of building historical context before and throughout lessons about the Holocaust, it was essential for me to inquire about strategies for doing so. All teacher participants referenced research as the primary approach for helping students build historical context. Mary, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher, stated that research let’s “students become an expert on particular events.” When asked about activities that students do in class to build background, John, a Language Arts teacher, immediately stated “research,” further following it up by stating that “students research what happened, what led up to the events, and research of World War II.” Mark, a sixth and seventh grade Social Studies teacher, answered the question about what activities students engage in to build background by stating that his classes do a research project every year. In addition to research, several participants also spoke to films and documentaries as resources for building historical context. Three participants, one Social Studies and two Language Arts, identified the documentary “Paperclips” as one they show to their students. Paperclips is a documentary about students in a rural, predominantly Christian town in Tennessee, who learn about the Holocaust for the first time. Throughout this documentary, the students devise a class project in which they aim to collect six million paperclips to represent the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust. The
documentary shows the transformation of these rural students as they learn of the atrocities done to the Jews and other victims of the Holocaust. Nicole, a Social Studies teacher, spoke to the ability of her students to connect with this documentary. She attributed this connection to the similarities between her students and the students in the documentary.

Though the documentary takes place in a rural town in Tennessee, very far and vastly different from the population of her New Jersey middle school, Nicole stated that almost all of her students are of Christian faith and that many do not even know any individuals who are Jewish. She stated that discussions with her students after watching this documentary have shown her that they had not truly conceptualized how badly people were treated just because of their religion, and that students have expressed that watching the students in Tennessee make those connections felt a lot like they themselves were there making the connections first-hand as well. She also stated that after watching the documentary, there seems to be a light that has been ignited within her students, and they express feelings of inspiration and motivation to brainstorm ways that they too can increase cultural awareness. John also stated that he has also showed this documentary when teaching his students about the Holocaust. However, he referenced the documentary as a rich resource for teaching students about the Holocaust in an age-appropriate way. He stated that the documentary gives a general overview of important components of the Holocaust as the small-town students learn about it. Being as the content is explained to these students who are of similar age to his own students, he views the documentary as an opportunity for his students to get the same exposure. He also stated that there are several other films he has shown throughout the years, including The Devil’s Arithmetic and the Book Thief. John stated that films can be an effective resource for creating a visual for students, which leads to greater
conceptualization. He does, however, urge teachers to put consideration into selecting films to show to students. He stated, “You need to be careful with fictional type movies, as they sometimes portray the history inaccurately.” There will be further discussion later in this chapter about this and other considerations for material selection.

Marcus’s (2017) article, “Teaching the Holocaust Through Film,” further suggests using “historical evidence and scholarship- primary sources, historian’s expertise- to support the narrative character development and visual recreation of the past” (p. 171). A third article from Social Education, “With Their Voice: Constructing Meaning with Digital Testimony,” draws on a similar connection, stating that students “best construct meaning as they investigate topics” (Haas, Berson & Berson, 2015, p. 106). Practitioner journal articles urge teachers to consider resources that accurately represent these historical events and to avoid any that may have the opposite effect. Given their recommendation for utilizing multiple sources and gathering evidence to support the historical context, Hass, Berson and Berson (2015) offer teachers several thematic topics that are supported by rich resources both online and in print. These include:

- Propaganda, resistance and rescue, life in the ghetto, concentration camps, post-war responses, the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich, the early stages of persecution and the first concentration camps, World War II in Europe, the expansion of concentration camp system and killing centers, liberation, and post-war trials. (p. 109).

By utilizing one or more of these topics in their lessons about the Holocaust, teachers can ensure that their students will have access to multiple resources that further support students in their understanding of the material.
Finding 2: Perspective Taking

My first finding suggests that building historical context and providing students with accurate and relevant background about the historical time period is crucial in building their understanding. The second finding builds on this theme by exploring the notion of perspective taking. My analysis of the data determined that providing opportunities for perspective taking, or considering another’s prior lived experiences, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs, positively contributes to students’ learning. Study participants agreed that it is crucial to facilitate opportunities for students to consider the perspectives of others when learning about the Holocaust. Mary, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher, emphasized the importance for this as it relates directly to students’ abilities to connect the people from the past to the people living around them today, thus increasing cultural awareness. She stated, “We have learned post 9/11 that we can no longer think nothing is going to happen here. Students must realize that what happened to so many people in the past continues to happen to so many people in the present.” John, a Language Arts teacher, supported making these connections with students, and stated that teaching about the Holocaust “teaches about other cultures and it teaches about tolerance, too.” He continued to explain that “students need to know that not everyone looks and feels the same that they do.” Carrie, providing her input as a fellow Language Arts teacher, agreed, stating that it is important to “show that all people aren’t the same just because they belong to one group.”

The articles that I sampled from all six practitioner journals emphasized that providing students with opportunities to consider the perspectives of others is a valuable approach when teaching about the Holocaust. “Mediating Emotive Empathy with Informational Text”, an article from the Language Arts Practitioner Journal *Voices from the Middle*, discusses Multimodal
Social Semiotic Theory, defined as being “concerned with how human beings make meaning in the world through using and making different signs, always in interaction with someone” (p. 292). The authors draw on the importance of facilitating opportunities for students to make meaning of the history through considering the perspectives and viewpoints of those who lived during the time. In the article, Chisholm, Shelton, and Sheffield (2017) further discuss this being a critical component to students making meaning of controversial historical topics. An article in *Social Education*, a Social Studies practitioner journal, titled “With Their Voice: Constructing Meaning with Digital Testimony” asserts that developing historical empathy, defined as “the emotional connections that students may make in their study of the past,” is the “starting point for understanding historical narratives” (p. 106). Throughout their article, the authors continue to build the case for facilitating opportunities for students to develop historical empathy and connections to content, particularly through the use of digital testimony. A discussion about the content of these and other articles and how they further draw on the importance of facilitating opportunities for perspective taking will be discussed in this section.

**Fostering Empathy**

Every study participant said that teaching about the Holocaust provides an opportunity to relate events of the past to the discrimination many people face today. Nicole, a Social Studies teacher, further connected discrimination and how it typically stems from stereotypes, communicating that her biggest fear is that stereotypes her students believe to be true could lead to discrimination of others. She stated, “we have these stereotypes and the last thing I would want is for a kid to turn around and say ‘look, that kid looks like a terrorist’ and I can see it
happening.” Nicole explained how it is essential for students to make the connections between their actions and the implications they have on other people. She claimed that a critical component of this is to allow for students to consider what it would be like to be “on the other side” of situations. When students are given the opportunity to consider the perspectives of others, they gain a sense for how it would feel if they were put in that situation. This leads to their ability to empathize with others and make the connections between their actions and the feelings those actions often cause. As Nicole spoke often to the Holocaust being a tool for teaching students about tolerance and inclusion, she stated that perspective taking has a key role in facilitating this learning.

Overall, teachers believed that they must work to foster empathy in their lessons in order to ensure their students connect the events of the past to the importance of tolerance and inclusion. An essential component of doing this involves students considering the perspectives and feelings of others. When asked about why the Holocaust is an important topic to teach to students, all three Language Arts teachers and two Social Studies teachers spoke to the need for their students to develop empathy. Mary responded to this question by stating that many of her students “lack the empathy and the personal connection as a human race.” She went on to state that teaching about the Holocaust provides students with “the overwhelming sense of what really happened.” John agreed with the need for fostering empathy, stating that all lessons should connect to empathizing. Nicole discussed the rationale for fostering empathy and why it is so crucial for students at this age. She suggested that middle school students often struggle to realize that “doing nothing” is just as bad as being the one at fault. As she teaches about the Holocaust in her Social Studies classroom, she stated that she puts a lot of emphasis on the
“bystander effect” and how the actions or inactions of all of the “people in the middle” largely contribute to the outcome. She reported that she tells her students that “when you turn your back on a group of kids that are being mean to an individual, you’re just as bad as the kid who’s doing it.” Mark, another Social Studies teacher, suggested similar concerns for students’ inability to draw connections to bystanders. He questioned, “You’ve got the people in the middle—where do they stand?” and later, “What about the others who were there—where do they fit?” He communicated that he encourages his students to really consider these questions. He later stated that he also probes his students to further consider “Why did we do nothing?” referring to the United States. He explained how facilitating the opportunity for his students to consider the points of view or perspectives of these “ordinary people” allows them to realize that everyone plays a critical role in determining what happens to us and those around us. He stressed the high importance in doing this, claiming that it is “utterly sad that people could be so devoid of human compassion.” All teacher participants agreed that fostering empathy and teaching of the effects of discrimination are key components to students learning to practice tolerance and inclusion.

The events of the Holocaust serve as a tool for developing the practice of empathy within students, and while several other themes are often addressed throughout the unit, Nicole reflected on her practice in Social Studies and stated, “acceptance and tolerance are the themes I want to have carried all the way through.” In addition to Nicole, Mary and Carrie also communicated this to be their overall goal. However, all of the other participants also referenced empathy, tolerance, and inclusion in some capacity when asked about their goals for teaching their students about the Holocaust.
First-Hand Accounts

A suggestion made explicitly by Social Studies practitioner journal articles states that the most powerful way to facilitate students’ humanization of the Holocaust, leading to the development of empathy, is to expose them to first person accounts. In “Student Documentaries Based on the C3 Framework,” an article in Social Education, Manfra and Brown (2015) state that “a very effective approach to helping students develop historical empathy and confront relevant moral issues is to analyze first-hand accounts of children and teenagers who lived during the Holocaust” (p. 111). These first-hand accounts allow for students to make connections to their own lives and consider others’ experiences through the lens of their own experiences. Haas, Berson and Berson (2015) describe in their Social Education article, “With Their Voice: Constructing Meaning with Digital Testimony,” that this experience is as an opportunity for “students to make connections between their contemporary experiences and the stories of witnesses and survivors” (p. 109). The authors agree that hearing a survivor speak is an experience that is unmatched. They assert, “We have learned a great deal from these survivors who have overcome great adversity and who now share their stories to help us make meaning of such an unthinkable act of genocide” (p. 106). They recall a recent visit with a Holocaust survivor during which students were “captivated” by her account of being a child growing up in Poland. The authors claim, “We listened with rapt attention to the tales of her childhood and daily life, and we rejoiced as she detailed the successful reunification with her parents” (p. 106). They feel that experiences like this “empower students to inquire about difficult questions related to identity and choice,” (p.106) specifically recalling how students “inquired how [the survivor] managed lingering anger and intense emotions from an event that consumed her early life” (p.
and how it was through these considerations that students were able to develop empathy. They further assert that "having first person accounts provides a window into the experience of those who lived the historical events that now fill the pages of the text" (p. 106). Among the many other connections that are fostered through visiting with survivors, the authors speak to the impact this experience has on students’ view of their own roles in today’s society. They recall the most recent visit with a survivor concluding with a discussion of future generations and how the survivor “acknowledged the responsibility of future generations in her lineage to continue sharing her story long after the last survivors and witnesses are gone” (p. 106). This, they believe, was a profound message to students.

Throughout interviews, teachers in both Social Studies and Language Arts referenced the importance of teaching their students to be people who do the right thing. Social Studies teachers, Nicole and Mary, as well as Language Arts teacher, John, all attributed their drive for ensuring their students are taught moral lessons to the fact that they had not been taught these lessons in their own educational experience. All three teachers reflected back on their schooling experiences with some degree of disappointment that there was not an emphasis put on learning about the Holocaust. Mary stated that she feels that teaching about the Holocaust is an opportunity to show students the effects of discrimination. She said that as she continues to witness the actions of her students, she is constantly reminded of the need for this education. John specifically referenced his religion, and how he identifies with the content so strongly because he is Jewish. He explained that so many of his students know very little about other cultures and religions, and that he feels this needs to change. He connected this to the point that Mary drew on, stating that students often do not consider the impact of their actions or words...
because they are not the ones being targeted. He elaborated, stating that the majority of the students see their own ideals, values, and religious views reflected all around them. This contributes to their inability to understand how it feels to be different or to be targeted based on your differences. John explained that it is essential for students to build empathy and compassion for others simply because they need to know that other people have feelings just like them. He stated that he feels that if his students are able to truly empathize with others who are more often targets of discrimination or bullying, that they may be more aware of their own actions and refrain from being active participants in the future.

**Connecting with the Content**

Endacott and Brooks (2013) speak to the impact that understanding another’s prior lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs has on teaching and learning, and as a result, how that person might have thought about the situation in question (p. 43). Therefore, in order to foster empathy, students must be provided with opportunities to connect to the content. These connections allow for students to consider other perspectives, as well as to make connections to their own lived experiences. John spoke to the role that novels have played in his Language Arts classroom in building these connections for students. He stated that his students develop “feelings towards the characters” and that it has helped to further their emotional investment in the topic. He stated that he encourages students to consider the question “If this really happened, what would I really do?” and communicated that the discussion surrounding that question often provides many opportunities for students to consider other perspectives. Joe supported the notion that novels have a positive impact on students. While discussing the
connections his students make to characters in The Devil’s Arithmetic, he stated that he knows that “the kids are going to make a connection with their life and not just with the novel.” He attributes this connection to providing opportunities for his students to connect with the characters as they consider ways in which the experiences of the characters are similar and different to their own lives. Carrie agreed that students cannot develop empathy and emotional connections without considering others’ perspectives. She further spoke to the need to encourage students to consider what they would do if faced with some of the same challenges. She stated that she seeks out opportunities to “really have them put themselves in the place of the characters,” especially when reading Parallel Journeys in sixth grade Language Arts. Parallel Journeys tells the story of two young children, one Jewish and one German, living in Germany prior to the Holocaust. While they were friends before the Nazis came to power, their lives were both drastically changed in very different ways upon Hitler’s rise to power. After the war, the two reunite. This novel allows for ample opportunities for students to consider different perspectives and consider what they would do if they found themselves in faced with the challenges that were presented to both characters.

During the second participant interview, teachers engaged in Dilemma Analysis, which allowed for them to read about several teachers’ approaches to lessons about the Holocaust. The teachers were asked questions after reading about the hypothetical lessons in order to gauge their thoughts on various teaching practices. During the third Dilemma Analysis scenario, teachers read about a teacher who followed up her novel unit with an activity that required students to imagine that they were told they had just one hour to fill a suitcase and leave home. This assignment was connected to the novel the class had just finished reading, The Devil’s
Arithmetic. In the novel, this difficult task was forced upon the main character. Several teachers spoke about this scenario as it relates to perspective taking and encouraging students to put themselves in the position of others. Carrie, a Language Arts teacher, highlighted the fact that the activity required students to “physically put themselves in someone else’s shoes.” Mary, a Social Studies teacher, agreed, stating that it “forced the students to put themselves in the position of someone who was living during this time” and “makes them think about what it would be like.” Nicole, another Social Studies teacher, liked that the activity “touched on a really important piece of what all of the victims of the Holocaust would have had to go through.” All teacher participants agreed that this activity was a positive way to encourage perspective taking and that it would foster empathy within students.

Chisholm, Shelton and Sheffield (2017) discuss meaningful connections students make as they view history as a “series of human events.” Their *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* article, “Mediating Emotive Empathy with Informational Text,” focuses on students’ experiences with learning about Gettysburg, but references other difficult historical topics as well. It is through other historical events, the authors suggest, that students are able to make meaningful connections. These connections allow students to view history as a series of human experiences, allowing them to see the individuals involved as relatable and real people. The authors further assert that students should perceive history as “an account of human events, narrated by an author with a point of view” (p. 292). They go on to report that their experiences have shown that giving students opportunities to connect with informational texts has helped to facilitate this connection. Reflecting on their own practice, they offer that, “Connecting with individuals in an informational text through emotions and prior experience helped students humanize historical
figures and acknowledge varied perspectives” (p. 296). Overall, teachers and practitioner journal articles agreed that facilitating opportunities for students to connect with the content is a meaningful and crucial component of Holocaust instruction. Data supporting this theme was highly representative of Language Arts, both in teacher interviews and practitioner journal articles. While Social Studies teachers agreed that it is beneficial for students to consider what others had to go through, especially with regard to difficult decisions and ultimatums, Language Arts teachers explicitly spoke to the importance of facilitating opportunities for students to do this throughout lessons and the meaningful experiences students have when they connect to the characters and content they are studying.

Providing Multiple Perspectives

Two participants contributed specific input with regard to perspective taking that I found to be especially interesting. Carrie mentioned, similarly to the data that emerged relating to historical context as discussed above, that it is essential to “give them a couple different perspectives on the topic.” She went on to explain that providing just the point of view of the victim does not create a clear image of the events or lived experiences of all who were involved. She referenced the novel, Parallel Journeys, as discussed above as a way for student to consider multiple perspectives. As the novel follows a Jewish girl and a German boy, and documents their reunion after the war, students are able to consider the experiences not only of the Jewish girl, the victim, which is the primary perspective presented in novels, but also the experiences of the German boy, who was forced to join the Hitler Youth at a young age. This novel creates a rich opportunity for students to consider the viewpoints and perspectives of children their age on a
variety of levels. While teachers must exercise caution when exposing students to particular perspectives, in an attempt to avoid humanizing perpetrators, Carrie pointed out that she likes this novel because it presents from the German boy’s point of view, but also ends with his awareness and compassion regarding what he had become associated with. When considering the events of the Holocaust as they relate to smaller acts of discrimination, most students would likely identify more with German citizens than with victims because in most regards, they identify with the majority population. This is another reason as to why it is crucial that students have the opportunity to view multiple perspectives when facilitating opportunities for them to perspective take and empathize.

Miller, Sharp, Minnich, and Sokolowski (2017) remind teachers in their *Voices from the Middle* article, “What’s Next in Reading,” that considering the perspectives presented is key when selecting a resource for teaching about the Holocaust. The authors caution teachers that providing only a single perspective can have negative implications on students’ perceptions and understanding of the events. In addition to ensuring students are provided with appropriate perspectives and accurate historical information, they stress the importance of ensuring multiple perspectives are presented as well. They acknowledge that it is common to utilize resources that narrate from a victim’s point of view. However, they urge the consideration of including others as well. They remind readers that the “absence of certain stories or perspectives is itself a judgement” (p. 16). In another article from *Voices from the Middle* titled “Read Aloud Often and Well,” Laminack (2017) supports the assertion that multiple perspectives should be included in materials selected for instruction. However, the author cautions teachers to consider the difference between a change in point of view versus a shift in perspective. She suggests a
significant difference in “the impact a shift in point of view (first person, second person, third person) would have upon the meaning of the text versus a shift in perspective” (p. 34).

There are a variety of ways in which teachers can provide students with multiple perspectives. Marcus (2017) reminds readers in his *Social Education* article, “Teaching the Holocaust Through Film,” that in addition to meeting survivors first-hand, teachers can expose students to the lived experiences of surviving victims. The author claims that, “While meeting, listening, and interacting with a survivor in person is an unmatched experience, using video testimony can provide students with a different, yet equally meaningful and potentially sustaining, educational experience” (p. 173). He goes on to state that the key consideration, whether in-person speeches, written accounts or video testimony, is to ensure that students are provided with multiple viewpoints and perspectives. He supports the use of video testimony in doing this, stating that “The visual archives provide access to multiple representations that add depth and rigor to the learning experience and require students to grapple with the myriad complexities reflected in stories of individuals from around the world who survived and witnessed the Holocaust” (p. 169). He claims that allowing for students’ exposure to multiple perspectives allows them to develop their own true feelings about the events. Providing students with opportunities for considering multiple perspectives does not only apply to the stories being told, but those of other resources as well. The author suggests that students be encouraged to evaluate the ways in which the film depicts alternative perspectives on history in contrast to what students might otherwise see in their textbooks or regular lessons (p. 169).

**Religious Connections**
John, the only Jewish participant in this study, brought up religion several times throughout the interview as it related to the questions being asked. He voiced that his experiences and personal connections to the content stemmed greatly from his religion, and he attributes his motivation to teach students about the Holocaust largely to his religious connection. Further, he identified this as a challenge that he perceives most teachers and students to face when attempting to relate to the characters or victims. As discussed above, he spoke especially to the small Jewish population at the school and how he feels the lack of Jewish representation makes it even more difficult for students to relate. When I asked him about how he meets these challenges, he shared some of the cultural connections he introduces to his students. For example, he explained one way he helps students better understand the culture while reading the novel, A Devil’s Arithmetic. He stated:

The book takes place over Passover. This school has very few if any Jewish students and some of them knew about Passover from going to Sunday school and they didn’t know any of the whys or details about the holiday and so since the book started out at Passover dinner, I felt that I needed to explain what that was. And so, we did a little background on Passover and tasted some of the foods of Passover and I shared props that are used during the holiday and it engaged them to want to learn more.

Faced with these challenges, among others, teachers utilize a variety of different resources and activities to facilitate perspective taking and building empathy during lessons about the Holocaust.

Pedagogical Strategies for Facilitating Perspective Taking
Language Arts teachers listed novels, films, and research as the resources they primarily use in their classroom to teach about the Holocaust. As discussed in this section, Language Arts teachers reported several ways in which each of these resources promotes empathy and perspective taking. Social Studies teachers discussed the use of films as well, and how films have the ability to build empathy and allow students to perspective take, as they are seeing characters’ lives play out in front of their eyes. However, teachers in both content areas explained that the discussion that follows films, novels, or any other resource or activity is the key component in fostering empathy. Joe recommended two activities that he has found to be successful, both evoking discussion among students. He communicated that he provides his students with scenarios and that it allows for a lot of student discussion. These scenarios describe difficult decisions individuals had to make during this time. For example, he referenced one scenario in which a family has the opportunity to take in and hide another family. However, if they are caught, both families will be killed. He challenges his students to consider if they would be willing to risk their lives and the lives of their family members in order to save others. Other scenario Joe presents to his students involves a family who had the opportunity to keep their two children safe by sending them into hiding, but it would force the family to split apart. Students are encouraged to consider if they would be willing to separate from the rest of their family in order to improve the chances of survival for some. He stated that he will often hear his students say things like, “I never thought about it that way” and that tells him that they are considering other viewpoints. Joe also spoke to a “what would you do?” activity that he said sparks a lot of conversation within his students as well. He stated that when posing questions that do not necessarily have a black or white answer, students have the opportunity to defend their
reasoning. He did, however, communicate that there are considerations teachers must make when utilizing these types of activities or facilitating open discussion about events as complex as the Holocaust. He said that while most of his experiences with this activity have resulted in “healthy debates,” he has experienced students arguing and fighting. He communicated that when planning to utilize an activity like this the teacher “takes that risk.” Another activity, suggested by Carrie, is the utilization of reflection journals. She communicated that students have the opportunity to think about all they’ve learned and reflect on their own. She stated that in her experience students have been more honest and open about their feelings when they have had the opportunity to reflect on their own. The last activity that was discussed by two separate teacher participants, one Social Studies and one Language Arts, was inviting a Holocaust survivor to come and speak with students as a culminating activity. Both teachers communicated that this has been a meaningful experience for students each year they have been able to coordinate it.

Further discussion surrounding the experiences of students who participate in survivor visits will be discussed later in this chapter.

Marcus’s (2017) *Social Education* article titled “Teaching the Holocaust Through Film” offers additional strategies for providing students with opportunities for perspective taking. He explains that films can have a profound positive impact on students when utilized to teach about the Holocaust. However, he cautions teachers to consider multiple factors when selecting films to utilize. Further, he discusses these considerations teachers should make when selecting films and other materials to use for instruction. Marcus (2017) supports the use of films, stating “Films can make the past come alive, develop historical empathy, reflect a time period in which they were created, and stimulate student interest in learning” (p. 173). However, teachers need to
practice awareness when selecting films to show students. Marcus (2017) additionally recommends teachers consider questions about the film before showing it to students. These questions include, “Does the film appropriately develop historical empathy? Does it show multiple perspectives?” (p. 169). Films can be a powerful tool for providing students with perspectives of those who lived during the time period, but they can also be harmful if not selected appropriately. The same goes for novels and other material that students will be exposed to. The author goes on to discuss other considerations for teachers as they select materials to use for instruction. She recommends resources that are “less violent” and films which are “easier for students to watch and/or that a primary character is a child” in that they allow for students to “relate to the film more easily” (p.34). Teachers communicated that they consistently seek out materials that are age-appropriate and easier for students to view and read. This is a key consideration that was discussed in teacher interviews as well. A further discussion about these considerations that teachers make when selecting resources to use for instruction will be discussed in the final section.

Additional considerations for teachers as they plan for lessons about the Holocaust included strategies for facilitating perspective taking throughout the lesson. Social Studies practitioner journals suggest teachers create lessons that are inquiry-based so that students are given opportunities to view the Holocaust as a complex series of events and consider “why” these events occurred. Manfra and Brown (2015) state in their Social Education article titled “Student Documentaries Based on the C3 Framework” that approaching the Holocaust through inquiry “ensures that teachers and students avoid simple answers to complex questions” (p. 111). Haas, Berson, and Berson (2015) further suggests that “the nature of inquiry allows students to
critically construct meaning as they investigate topics” (p. 109). This theme emerged solely in Social Studies journal articles. Manfra and Brown (2015) explain this, stating that “central to a rich social studies experience is the capability for developing questions that can frame and advance an inquiry” (p. 111). Inquiry-based lessons are approaches that encourage students to ask questions and explore theories. However, Manfra and Brown (2015) remind teachers that it is essential to inquiry-based lessons that students are given opportunities for open discussion with their peers. The authors draw on this importance, stating that “in addition to crafting compelling questions, identifying sources and evidence, and synthesizing accounts, students must be able to communicate their understandings” (p.111). It is only with opportunities for inquiry, thought-provoking questioning, and communication with peers that students will develop a deep understanding and conceptualization of the Holocaust.

Finding 3: Present Day Connections

The next finding is that stakeholders in both social studies and language arts believe it is important to connect the Holocaust to present day events. These connections are meant to serve as a preventative measure for present and future discrimination, intolerance, and other genocides. Data from teacher interviews strongly supported this finding. While the connection to present day events was mentioned in Social Studies practitioner journal articles, the discussion was minimal, and Language Arts practitioner journals did not draw on this connection at all. The discussion that did take place in Social Studies practitioner journals encouraged teachers to facilitate discussion about the similarities between children during the Holocaust and children living in war zones or impacted by genocide in present day (Manfra & Brown, 2015; Haas,
Berson & Berson, 2015). Haas, Berson and Berson (2015) also briefly discussed prevention as a rationale for teaching about the Holocaust. They drew on their experiences visiting with survivors and reflected on the overarching message that survivors sought to teach students as well. They recalled that their most recent Holocaust survivor ended her speech by “acknowledged the responsibility of future generations in her lineage to continue sharing her story long after the last survivors and witnesses are gone (p. 106). The theme of prevention, primarily through connections to present day events was heavily discussed throughout teacher interviews as well. This will be discussed in the next section.

Connections to Present Day

A heavily discussed topic among teachers during interviews was the connection between the Holocaust and present day. Much of this conversation related to what is currently taking place in various places around the world. Both Language Arts and Social Studies teachers placed high importance on exposing students to current events and providing opportunities for them to research and discuss genocides and wars that are currently taking place and/or have taken place in the recent past. They discussed the rationale for doing this in that their experiences have shown that students view the Holocaust as an isolated event in history; something that could never happen again. They communicated that students’ lack of global awareness prevents them from realizing that such atrocities continue to take place all over the world. Nicole, a Social Studies teacher, stated, “We have genocide happening all of the time, around us right now and nobody’s talking about it. We need to be talking about it.” Carrie, a Language Arts teacher, expressed similar concerns about the important and relevant discussions that need to be taking
place more often. She stated that when teaching students about the Holocaust, “you need to connect those events to present day and more recent genocides.” Mary also stated that teachers must “teach kids to make connections between things that happen in the past and what’s happening now.” This notion was expressed early on in several interviews when teachers were asked why it is important to teach about the Holocaust. Upon being asked this question, Mark’s immediate response was, “It is happening across the world as we speak.” Joe answered this question by suggesting that it is a perfect opportunity to create “a link to modern day things that are going on.”

Connections to Modern Day Genocides

Through discussions about present day events, teachers reported that they can more easily facilitate students’ conceptualization of the Holocaust, as historical events from the past can be difficult to comprehend. Several teachers also discussed the link between current genocides and the Holocaust as a way to teach about the actions and behaviors that lead to such extraordinary events. By discussing and analyzing the events leading up to the Holocaust, teachers claimed that they can use genocides occurring in the world today as examples of what continues to happen when and if people’s actions mirror those of the Nazis and/or even bystanders living during that time. Carrie claimed that it is essential to “discuss how the behavior are linked and discuss ways to prevent that.” John agreed, stating that “was a huge genocide that can be repeated if people are not cognizant of the world around them.” Rationalizing the teaching of the Holocaust as a preventative measure was a common trend that emerged from teacher interviews. Mary stated simply that the Holocaust must be taught to students because “you don’t want history to repeat
itself,” so “we need to now so that this doesn’t happen again.” Mark explained that he communicates the urgency to his students when teaching about the Holocaust. He stated that he tells his students rather bluntly that “it can happen anytime, anywhere” and “if you don’t learn from it, you’re doomed to repeat it.” He stated that this usually has an impact on his students and helps them understand that actions have consequences. Aside from the global connections to other genocides and wars, Nicole additionally spoke to the connections between the discrimination leading up to the Holocaust and the present political climate in the United States. She claimed, “I live in fear of the world that we are currently living in.” She went on to say, “It’s happening in our country right now and it scares me to death.” She explained that teaching about the Holocaust is more important than ever because students need to see that their actions have implications on others and on the world around them.

**Connections to Everyday Life**

Secondary to the discussions about linking the Holocaust to present day genocides, teachers also discussed facilitating connections between the Holocaust and students’ everyday lives and the lives of those around them. Several teachers mentioned that their hope is that students take away meaningful lessons from this instruction about the importance of tolerance and inclusion. They expressed the need for an increase in cultural awareness, and how students today lack the ability to empathize and consider the implications of their actions. Nicole discussed how students rarely make the connections about the discrimination that led to the events of the Holocaust and the discrimination that they experience and/or partake in on a daily basis. She stated that these connections must be made because students must realize that the
Holocaust began with simple discrimination, and students have the power to prevent such behaviors from occurring. She stated that it is important for students to simply be aware of the people who are living around them. This increase in cultural awareness can help students to discriminate less and practice more tolerance. Mary specifically drew on the connections between discrimination and the United States post 9/11. She claims that prior to 9/11, “everybody was living a more naïve life thinking nothing’s going to happen here.” She explained that if students have more awareness to social constructs and the diversity that is all around them, they will be less naïve and more likely to play an active role in practicing and promoting inclusion.

Mary also spoke to the need for this education, linking social media and all that students are exposed to in present day. Social media has become an outlet for students to witness and practice discrimination, and she explained that if they are not taught about the possible implications for these behaviors, they are likely to increase. Another common theme that emerged throughout interviews was the discussion of bullying in schools and online. Teachers felt that students do not see the connections between bullying and discrimination, and that they need to be aware that participating in such behavior can have dangerous implications. Five different teachers, three Language Arts and two Social Studies, referenced bullying as an issue in today’s society and one that could be positively impacted by learning about the Holocaust. Carrie claimed that in today’s society we tend to “make a lot of excuses for behavior.” She felt that teaching students about the Holocaust, especially the aftermath, can show them that there are consequences for behaviors. Mary went as far as to reference school violence and how bullying and discrimination have led to school shootings and other acts of violence. She claimed that in a
small way, these examples show students what happens when bullying and discrimination escalates to the next level. While these events are very different from the Holocaust, she felt that making this connection for students helps them to see one example of how everyday behaviors and actions of school-aged children can lead to atrocity. She explained how she uses this to facilitate a discussion comparing bullying leading to school violence and discrimination leading to the Holocaust. Carrie referenced this comparison as well, claiming that she tells her students that “this is the result when people stand by and let things get out of control.” She spoke to the reactions of her students during this discussion each year and how it seems to really resonate with them. Overall, the goal is to show students that the events of the Holocaust stemmed from discrimination and that discrimination continues in the present. Through making these connections for students, Nicole stated simply that, “we can learn from it now and hopefully do better than we’ve done.” She claimed that her hope is that “if they are ever faced with making decisions or making choices, that perhaps they might be someone who can make a better choice than they otherwise might have.”

**Finding 4: Teachers’ Awareness**

The fourth and final finding that emerged from the data is that it is critical for teachers to practice awareness when it comes to planning and teaching about the Holocaust. This awareness was suggested on a variety of levels and includes the need for self-awareness and reflection, awareness with regard to pedagogical decision-making, and awareness of students, their developmental levels, and their backgrounds. Each of these will be discussed in this section.
This theme emerged in both Social Studies and Language Arts teacher interviews. Practitioner journal articles from both subject areas touched briefly on the necessity for teacher awareness, but it was not a heavily discussed theme. The Language Arts practitioner journal, *Voices from the Middle*, acknowledged teachers’ biases and the importance in ensuring biases are not projected onto students. The authors claim, “While we accept our personal preferences and perspectives, we cannot allow our identities to foster biases limited our students’ access to information or communicate to students that we value some voices over others” (Miller et al., 2017, p.17). Teacher bias was curiously a topic that was not discussed among teachers during interviews. Another consideration that arose during teacher interviews that was also discussed in practitioner journals dealt with gauging students’ conceptual understanding, and designing and delivering instruction that best meets their developmental needs. In their *Social Education* article, “Student Documentaries Based on the C3 Framework,” Manfra and Brown (2015) offer that “Determining how best to measure student inquiry and the extent of students’ conceptual understanding depends on the developmental level of the students as well as the complexity of the topic” (p. 111). This consideration, in addition to several others with regard to planning developmentally appropriate instruction, will be discussed in the next section.

**Self-Awareness and Reflection**

Practicing self-awareness is key for any teacher. Effective teaching requires a great deal of reflection and a desire for growth. In fact, to be an effective teacher, it is not enough to be able to recognize what happens in the classroom. Rather, it is imperative to understand the “whys” “hows,” and “what if’s” as well. McKnight (2002) explains that this understanding comes
through the consistent practice of reflective thinking (p. 1). This reflective thinking is especially key when it comes to teaching about the Holocaust. When planning and presenting content on such a complex topic, it is essential that teachers are aware of their own actions, behaviors, and feelings. During interviews, some teachers admitted that they struggle with teaching about the Holocaust because it is even a difficult concept for them to comprehend. Mary, a Social Studies teacher, stated that the Holocaust “really hits home to me” and Joe, a Language Arts teacher, admitted that he has to spend time taking it in and absorbing it before he can teach it to his students. It is important that teachers allow themselves the time and space to reflect and cope with the material before beginning instruction, as they need to be level-headed and emotionally stable in order to best support their students. Of the teachers who were interviewed for this study, there is one who is Jewish. He suggested several connections to his religion as it relates to his self-awareness. He stated, “I am Jewish and I can relate more to the events that happen with the anti-Semitism.” He stated that this sometimes makes it difficult for him to explain or teach about anti-Semitism because it is something that directly impacts him. Having very few, if any, Jewish students, he communicated that this is often a challenge. He explained that he takes the time before beginning his Holocaust unit each year to really “sit with” the material and take it in. He “mentally prepares” beforehand so he feels he is ready to facilitate controversial conversations with his students.

**Knowledge of One’s Students**

Second to self-awareness is the awareness of students, and the external and internal factors that impact their learning experiences. This is especially key when teaching about the
Holocaust. Teachers spoke to the importance of really knowing your students before beginning lessons in order to best gauge what they can handle and plan appropriately. These considerations take place with regard to both planning and teaching. Nicole reminds teachers that especially in middle school, students are “so impressionable.” Four other teachers agreed that before planning lessons about the Holocaust, teachers must consider the specific group of students they have. They acknowledged that each class and each group of students is different. These teachers communicated that they do not teach their unit about the Holocaust the same each year. After getting to know their students, they gauge the best way to go about delivering this instruction. John stated that there are several factors to consider when gauging how much and how soon students can handle this content. He claimed, “Each class is different. Sometimes the honors classes can handle more because they are more knowledgeable.” He goes on to explain that while that may be the case, other years his honors classes can handle less because they’re more emotionally developed and the lessons are often difficult for them. Nicole agreed that “every class is certainly different” and Mark further supported this notion stating that “it depends on the group of kids” and “not everybody can handle it in the same way.” Acknowledging it is sometimes a difficult task to “judge how much they can handle, especially since it varies from person to person,” Carrie explains that this is one reason that she typically saves her unit about the Holocaust for the spring, as it allows her the time to get to know her students. She stated that by the time she is ready to teach this unit, she feels confident that she knows her students well enough to plan lessons appropriately.

There are several other considerations teachers must take into account when planning lessons about the Holocaust. One consideration that often presents as a challenge according to
teachers, is knowledge of students’ educational backgrounds. Mark discussed this in great depth, as he communicated that it is often one of the biggest challenges with planning. With regard to other classes, he stated, “I’m not sure who’s doing what, where they’re doing it and how much they’re doing.” He communicated that this is a challenge because he does not want “two groups of students doing the same thing at the same time.” He stated that he needs to know “who’s taught what, when and how so that I’m not being repetitive.” However, this information is often not communicated. Nicole agreed, adding that “if there is any stress with the teaching, it is not knowing what they’ve had before and having kids coming from different classes.” Additionally, Mark claimed that the best way to teach about the Holocaust is to build on students’ prior knowledge. However, he communicated that it is a challenge to build on what was taught before when he does not have that knowledge. According to Mark, not only is this a challenge, but it could have a negative impact on students’ learning experience. He claimed that if multiple classes are teaching the same content or if the same content is being taught year after year that it would be “Holocaust overload” for students and could potentially deter them from investing in lessons. Several teachers agreed that the lack of awareness with regard to students’ educational background can be harmful to their learning experience. While some teachers reported that typically students do have some background about the Holocaust, it is difficult when teachers do not know what this background is. Carrie stated that you must make the assumption that they are coming to you with minimal background in order to ensure you provide adequate background information. She claimed teachers should “consider students may not have the background or know what a lot of this means.” She considers this to be essential, stating, “It would be
Irresponsible of me to throw them into literature on the topic without knowing if they have any background.”

Teacher participants referenced their students often, especially with regard to their reactions to learning about the Holocaust and the considerations they make in preparation for these reactions. Carrie mentioned that she needs to constantly remain alert to what is going on in her classroom and how students are responding to lessons. She claimed that “there may be one student that has a bigger reaction than you anticipated” and that you must be prepared to handle that and offer support as needed. Several teachers reported that students are typically excited to learn about this topic and are eager to learn and discuss when told they will be learning about the Holocaust. Nicole explained that “there is an enigma about it and they are at the age where death and horror are intriguing to them and that they want the drama.” Mary agreed, stating that she finds “they are interested and they do like to partake in the conversations.” However, while Mary, who teaches sixth grade Social Studies, stated that her students have been “overall very respectful,” other teachers reported that this has not been the case. John, who teaches seventh grade Language Arts, communicated that he is often disappointed with the reactions of his students, stating that “a lot of them don't have the enthusiasm that you would hope that they would have.” Because of the vast difference in student reactions to the content, it is essential that teachers are aware of what is going on with their students throughout the unit. Teachers communicated that it is key to anticipate a variety of different reactions from students and to be prepared to support students accordingly. Nicole reported that her students “have a really hard time understanding hatred” while Carrie and Mary both reported that they have had students who claimed the Holocaust never happened. Joe also shared that he had a previous student who “felt
guilty that they are of German descent.” All teachers reflected on different experiences with students and how different classes reacted. They communicated that it has helped them become better prepared in the years to follow, in that they have had a variety of experiences behind them. These experiences help to better inform their decision-making and make them more aware throughout the course of the unit.

External Factors

There are several factors that teachers acknowledged they may not have any control over, but still need to take into consideration when planning lessons. One of these considerations is parental concern. Carrie communicated that she is always hesitant to divulge too much information about the Holocaust to her students, as she never knows “how their parents are going to feel about it and if they feel you said too much.” Mary supported this concern, stating that throughout the years she has become more conscious because of what parents might say.” Both teachers consider this to be an additional challenge. Additionally, teachers spoke to the need to be aware of the external factors that impact student learning. When discussing the third dilemma in the dilemma analysis portion of the interview, teachers were asked about a lesson in which a teacher assigned students to go home and fill a suitcase of belongings that they would take if they were told they had just a short time to pack and leave their homes. Upon being asked about this lesson, several teachers communicated concerns due to students’ home lives and family situations. John communicated that he would be concerned that students may not have a suitcase at home. He also communicated that parents may not want students taking valuables to school, as they are too precious to risk losing. Carrie spoke about the level of homelessness at the school
and how an assignment like this could trigger an emotional reaction from particular students based on the security of their home lives. She also referenced students who are separated from parents and/or similarly have had to pack all belongings and leave their homes. Nicole also communicated concern about this type of assignment, acknowledging that students may “be embarrassed because they don’t have a suitcase or of the kind of suitcase they have.” Language Arts and Social Studies teachers alike agreed that being aware of students and their backgrounds is essential in designing and selecting lessons and activities, and that keeping in mind the best interests of the students must remain the top priority.

**Selecting Appropriate Materials**

Having awareness of the students in respective classes helps teachers select the most appropriate approaches to take to teach about the Holocaust. When selecting materials to use for instruction, Nicole recommends “finding sensitive, age appropriate materials to use.” Mark stated that “there’s only so much their age level can handle” and according to Carrie, “there are a lot of pictures that some students find especially disturbing.” All of this should be taken into consideration when choosing resources to utilize. Carrie recommended Scholastic magazine for Language Arts classes, reporting that they have a lot of resources. John and Joe, also Language Arts teachers, and Nicole, a Social Studies teacher, also recommended Scholastic magazine for this reason. John additionally added that, “Scholastic can provide something with their magazine series from different perspectives,” which is a key component to students’ success as discussed in the previous section. John additionally suggested the National Holocaust Museum as a resource, as well as the Jewish Community Center. Nicole also spoke of how she utilizes the
Jewish Community Center for resources as well. Mark suggested the Southern Poverty Law Center as a valid external resource as well. Any and all of these resources provide adequate material for both Social Studies and Language Arts teachers to use in planning lessons about the Holocaust. However, in addition to selecting materials, teachers must be aware of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a lesson. Even with a variety of rich resources, teachers must be aware of the constructs within their classrooms and make pedagogical decisions accordingly.

Nicole explained that it is her job to “carefully select materials that I am using and to monitor what they are looking at on the internet.” However, she claimed that that selecting materials to use is just the first step towards ensuring her students meet success. Instructional delivery is a key component of teaching about the Holocaust, and the ways in which teachers present the material impacts the outcome. Carrie and John, both Language Arts teachers, discussed how introducing content about the Holocaust should be gradual. Carrie suggested gradually explaining the events and then “letting it unfold.” John also explained that teaching about the Holocaust is a gradual process. He claimed, “I do not bring in anything violent or disturbing in the beginning until the background has been taught.” This decision-making comes from prior experience and the ability to gauge students throughout lessons. Carrie recalled that each year she is a bit afraid she will terrorize her students. Nicole communicated a similar fear, and stated that there is a particular sensitivity to a specific group being studied, most often children. She keeps this in mind while focusing on children during the unit in order to best prepare herself for students’ reactions. When students do have emotional reactions to content, Carrie said that teachers should be aware of the resources and support that is available to them. She claimed that teachers should “try to be aware of how your students are reacting and hopefully a guidance
counselor or family member can offer additional support.” As discussed earlier, Mark additionally recommended reflection journals as an outlet for students to express themselves emotionally and process the content being taught.

**Communication with Students**

Teachers claim that in addition to considerations for planning and teaching about the Holocaust, the way in which teachers communicate with their students is key. Anticipating that students may have emotional reactions to the content, teachers should plan accordingly and actively prepare their students for the content in which they are about to engage. Nicole claimed that it is essential to build enough trust both before and during these lessons. She reported, “I let them know as a class in advance that it’s okay to get choked up.” Mark also spoke to the importance of reassuring students that it is okay to express their feelings. He recalled a movie that he shows his students that has graphic scenes and stated, “I do let the students know ahead of time.” Carrie agreed as well, communicating that she tells her students that the content in this chapter will be difficult to see and hear. She tells them she’s “not trying to frighten or distress” them, but she cannot sugarcoat what happened. All three teachers that suggested the importance in reassuring and forewarning students about potentially disturbing content teach sixth grade, the youngest students in the middle school. However, all teachers communicated that positive encouragement and open conversation help to facilitate this trust. Mark believed that providing students with choice is really important as well, as some students may be more comfortable speaking and discussing than others. He stated that for particular assignments he tells students “you don’t have to share this with the class unless you want to.” He reported that students seem
to appreciate this option, as some do not feel comfortable sharing. Carrie communicated that for her, it is all about reading her students and reacting accordingly. She stated that if she sees a student who appears to be upset, she makes sure to “reach out and make sure they’re okay.” She said that students have really appreciated this gesture in the past. For teachers, practicing self-awareness, awareness of student development and background, and awareness of the specific students in the classroom paired with the ability to gauge reactions and emotions throughout the lesson itself is a critical contributor to students’ success and well-being with regard to learning about the Holocaust.

Conclusion

By collecting data from teacher interviews, Social Studies and Language Arts practitioner journals articles, New Jersey state standards, and district curricula, I addressed the three research questions. Research questions were related to Social Studies and Language Arts teachers’ approaches to planning and teaching about the Holocaust, recommendations of practitioner journals for teachers with regard to their planning and teaching, and guidance provided to teachers by state standards and district curricula. In this section, I examined several data sources and identified four key findings based on analysis of the data. These findings suggest several similarities between Language Arts and Social Studies approaches to teaching about the Holocaust. The four findings highlight the importance of building historical context, allowing for opportunities for students to perspective-take, connecting the events of the past to present day events, and practicing teacher awareness. It is important to note that there were no themes that emerged solely in one content area. While some themes were supported with rich data from
teacher interviews and practitioner journals, other themes were heavily supported by teacher interview data, but minimally by practitioner journal data. A further discussion about particular data sources and the lack of representation of data will be included in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapter, I highlighted the findings that emerged from the data I collected for this study. In this chapter, I seek to enrich the findings through analysis and address each of the three research questions. This final chapter will (a) provide a summary of the study’s findings, (b) address the research questions driving the study, (c) provide the implications for teachers, teacher educators, policy makers, and museum educators, and (d) suggest direction for future research.

Summary of Findings

In the previous chapter, I discussed the data that was collected from teacher interviews, state standards, curricula, and articles from practitioner journals. The data sources used in this study included sources from both Language Arts and Social Studies. The data suggests four key findings with regards to approaches to teaching about the Holocaust across the content areas. In my first finding, I argue that it is very important in both Social Studies and Language Arts that teachers build historical context before and throughout lessons about the Holocaust. Teachers and practitioner journals alike placed high importance on building background as a means for sorting misconceptions and ensuring students have an accurate portrayal of this history. In my second finding, I argue that teachers prioritize providing students with opportunities for perspective taking during lessons about the Holocaust. This includes providing multiple perspectives, a variety of different perspectives, and opportunities to consider the positions of those who lived during the time period. The third finding draws on the importance of connecting the Holocaust to present day events and current genocides. Teachers and practitioner journal
articles agree that by connecting the events of the past to events that are currently taking place around the world, students are able to see the relevance in learning about this topic and increase their global awareness. The fourth and final finding discusses the importance of teachers’ awareness with regard to themselves, their students, and the world around them. This finding states that it is essential for teachers to practice self-awareness and reflection both before and after lessons about the Holocaust, as well as having an awareness of the social constructs and climate of the classroom, school, and the world around them. All of these factors influence how students learn about difficult knowledge, and each plays a key role in teachers’ approaches to planning to teach about the Holocaust.

**Approaches to Planning to Teach About the Holocaust**

It is essential to recognize the Holocaust’s complexity and position in history. Totten, Feinberg, and Fernekes (2001) acknowledge the uniqueness in teaching about complex topics such as the Holocaust, claiming that the complexity of the subject matter of the Holocaust is daunting for teachers (p. 11). Baum (1996) adds, “Holocaust education' is almost perverse in contradiction. 'Holocaust' and 'education' seem to pull in different directions, one pointing to the utter devastation of human values, the other insisting on their possibility” (p. 46). Given the complexity of the Holocaust, it is essential to consider that this instructional topic poses unique challenges for teachers with regard to planning and teaching. Presented with the difficult task of grasping the enormity of a phenomenon like the Holocaust, teachers face the inevitability that all who study it will be faced with the realization of their inability to entirely empathize with those who were directly impacted. Further, it is essential to acknowledge that topics that are “difficult”
in nature appear foreign or inconceivable, ultimately revealing the capacity to which learners are able and willing to understand (Simon, 2011, p. 433). This poses an arduous task for teachers, as they must develop ways to facilitate opportunities for students to make meaning of the content.

While the complexity of the Holocaust appeared to be clear to teachers, there was no direct acknowledgement of the Holocaust as a complex topic or the unique challenges that teaching about the Holocaust presents. However, teachers did reference considerations that are necessary given the nature of the content, and they all communicated that they deem it essential to teach their students about the Holocaust. The data from this study shows that teachers utilize the Holocaust as a tool for preventing future genocides and discrimination. Articles on the approaches Language Arts and Social Studies teachers take with regard to planning to teach about the Holocaust suggest a similar rationale (Baum, 1996; Cowan & Maitles, 2016; Dawidowicz, 1990; Totten, 2002). In order to provide meaningful and effective instruction on the Holocaust, materials must be selected carefully and appropriately. Teachers placed high emphasis on the use of first-person accounts and multiple perspectives in achieving this goal. Carrie explained that providing just the point of view of the victim does not create a clear image of the events or lived experiences of all who were involved. She referenced the novel, Parallel Journeys, as previously discussed as a way for students to consider multiple perspectives. As the novel follows a Jewish girl and a German boy, and documents their reunion after the war, students are able to consider the experiences not only of the Jewish girl, the victim, which is the primary perspective presented in novels, but also the experiences of the German boy, who was forced to join the Hitler Youth at a young age. She claims that this novel creates a rich opportunity for students to consider the viewpoints and perspectives of children their age on a
variety of levels. Teachers did, however, speak to the challenges in providing students with multiple perspectives, more specifically considering particular perspectives they may be exposed to. This is in an attempt to avoid humanizing perpetrators. Teachers stressed the need to practice caution with regard to selecting materials that present the Holocaust through particular perspectives, but agree that it can be done. For example, Carrie pointed out that she likes this novel because it presents from the German boy’s point of view, but also ends with his awareness and compassion regarding what he had become associated with. Similarly, Miller, Sharp, Minnich, and Sokolowski (2017) remind teachers in their *Voices from the Middle* article, “What’s Next in Reading,” that considering the perspectives presented is key when selecting a resource for teaching about the Holocaust. They also stress the importance of ensuring multiple perspectives are presented. The authors further caution teachers that providing only a single perspective can have negative implications on students’ perceptions and understanding of the events. They further acknowledge that it is common to utilize resources that narrate from a victim’s point of view. However, they urge the consideration of including others as well, reminding readers that the “absence of certain stories or perspectives is itself a judgement” (p. 16). Another article from *Voices from the Middle* titled “Read Aloud Often and Well” supports the assertion that multiple perspectives should be included in materials selected for instruction. Considering the inclusion of multiple perspectives through a different lens, the author cautions teachers to consider the difference between a change in point of view versus a shift in perspective. She suggests a significant difference in “the impact a shift in point of view (first person, second person, third person) would have upon the meaning of the text versus a shift in perspective” (Laminack, 2017, p. 34).
There are a variety of ways in which teachers can provide students with multiple perspectives. Marcus (2017) reminds readers in his *Social Education* article, “Teaching the Holocaust Through Film,” that in addition to meeting survivors first-hand, teachers can expose students to the lived experiences of surviving victims. He states that the key consideration, whether in-person speeches, written accounts or video testimony, is to ensure that students are provided with multiple viewpoints and perspectives. He claims that allowing for students’ exposure to multiple perspectives allows them to develop their own true feelings about the events. Providing students with opportunities for considering multiple perspectives does not only apply to the stories being told, but those of other resources as well. The author suggests that students be encouraged to evaluate the ways in which the resource depicts alternative perspectives on history in contrast to what students might otherwise see in their textbooks or regular lessons (p. 169). Similar to the teachers in this study, Schweber (1998) suggests that teachers must carefully select materials that provide students with first-person accounts and multiple perspectives. Totten and Feinberg (1995) support this assertion as well, stating that first-person accounts provide students with a way of “making meaning” of collecting numbers (p.11). Two Language Arts teachers in this sample stated a belief that literature and memoirs are the best resources for facilitating this. This recommendation is further supported by existing research (Freidlander, 1979).

Teacher participants discussed the importance of fostering empathy within students during lessons about the Holocaust. Teachers believe that they must work to foster empathy in their lessons in order to ensure their students connect the events of the past to the importance of tolerance and inclusion. Nicole, a Social Studies teacher, explained the rationale for doing this, in
that it allows students to make the connections between their actions and the implications they have on other people. Research has shown that developing historical empathy within students has been a successful engagement tool in teaching students about history (Brooks, 2008; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Doppen, 2000; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Yeager, Foster, Maley, Anderson, and Morris (1998) further support the fostering of historical empathy, stating that it provides students the opportunity to fill gaps created between pieces of historical evidence, resulting in students’ understanding of events, words, and actions of the past” (p. 32). Scholars have further suggested that repeated engagement in historical empathy can promote complex ideas and decision-making (Doppen, 2000), moral judgement (Barton & Levstik, 2004), and a dispositional appreciation for the complexity of situations faced by people in the past (Endacott and Sturtz, 2015). This approach ties back to utilizing the Holocaust as a preventative measure against future genocide and discrimination and allows students to make connections between the events of the past and their own lives. Equally as important is the facilitation of connections between genocides in the past and those occurring in present day. Teachers in this study put value in connecting the Holocaust to present day genocides, as it exposes students to the reality of injustice that continues to occur all over the world. The findings in this study support existing research (Short, 2005) in providing further data that teachers place value in using the Holocaust as a tool for teaching students about the effects of discrimination and the importance of tolerance and inclusion. Fostering empathy, providing first-hand accounts, exposing students to multiple perspectives, and making connections to present day genocides are effective strategies for facilitating these lessons. It is through these approaches that teachers feel they are able to frame the Holocaust as a preventative measure against future genocides and discrimination.
It is no wonder that commonalities present between research that has been conducted over the last forty years and research conducted in present day. The Holocaust, after all, is a profound and unique example of the effects of discrimination and intolerance. The injustices done to a marginalized group of people during this time period have yet to be matched. With the comprehension of the Holocaust being a systematic mass execution in an attempt to create a perfect race of human-beings, it is no surprise that teachers in this study view this historical event as an opportunity to teach students the importance of acceptance. Viewing the Holocaust as a means in which to deliver this education to students has also been a consistent theme throughout years of research. It is, however, essential to consider the effectiveness of Holocaust education in doing so. Some of the literature reviewed is significantly dated, showing that suggestions for fostering empathy, facilitating connections to students’ lives, and providing multiple perspectives, among other approaches, have been common practice for several years. According to the research, it is through these suggested approaches that teachers will be able to provide their students with meaningful instruction about the Holocaust, and in turn, help to prevent future acts of discrimination. However, Pitt and Britzman (2003) present a challenge with this task, reminding educators that students’ inner conflicts often disrupt learning histories of hatred, aggression and suffering, and can impact students’ learning experience. Current research shows a lack of longitudinal studies that investigate the degree to which this is actually happening. This gap in the literature will be further discussed later in this chapter as a possible future direction for research.
With regard to the findings that emerged from the data in this study, it is additionally important to note the significant overlap between Language Arts and Social Studies teachers with regard to the approaches they take in planning to teach about the Holocaust, specifically in the high emphasis placed on using the Holocaust as a means for teaching about discrimination, tolerance, and inclusion. The findings in this study indicate that Language Arts and Social Studies teachers reference the Holocaust’s value in promoting inclusion, tolerance, and acceptance. According to the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, the 1994 legislature that voted unanimously in favor of the mandate requiring Holocaust and genocide education be included for all K-12 students in New Jersey was informed by issues of bias, prejudice, bigotry, and bullying. The mandate additionally references English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies as frameworks for developing Holocaust/genocide programs of study. The mandate’s rationale for the inclusion of Holocaust education and its recommendation for placement in Language Arts and Social Studies classrooms closely mirrors the findings presented in this study. This could possibly explain the overlap in approaches between Language Arts and Social Studies teachers as suggested by the data. An additional consideration for the overlap between content areas with regard to this rationale could be attributed to the population in which the teachers work. Several teachers from both content areas spent time discussing the discrimination and acts of bullying they witness from their students on a daily basis, and as such, they attributed this as a key rationale for Holocaust education. Being as the teachers witness similar behaviors, as they work with the same population of students, this could also explain the common trend with regard to this theme across content areas.
While several findings in this study support existing research as discussed above, this study additionally offers several nuances. Teachers placed heavy emphasis on ensuring historical accuracy in lessons about the Holocaust. The bulk of the discussion surrounding the importance of historical accuracy centers on building historical context, specifically chronological and geographical context. Several teachers referenced their Holocaust units taking place in the spring, as that it where it falls as they cover historical events chronologically. Further, a common theme that emerged from the data in this study focuses directly on the importance of correcting misconceptions. Participants consistently noted that students enter their classrooms with misconceptions about the events of the Holocaust as a result of previous instruction or background. Among these misconceptions, both Language Arts and Social Studies teachers discussed students perceiving Jews to be the only victimized group during the Holocaust and a belief that all German citizens were Nazis. However, while existing research similarly confirm the importance of ensuring historical accuracy in lessons about the Holocaust (Schweber, 1998; Shawn, 2001; Totten & Feinberg, 1992), there is no mention of correcting previous misconceptions. This nuance shows that the data in this study provides further insight regarding the importance of building historical context, as existing literature does not provide a rationale for doing so. Being as the teachers who expressed concern about student misconceptions due to previous instruction work at the same school and in the same grade level, this may warrant a further look into the content knowledge of the lower middle grades’ teachers.

The literature further suggests morality as a common goal for Holocaust education (Schweber, 1998; Tinberg and Weisberger, 2013). Schweber (1998) noted an interesting observation in her study of morality as a theme in teachers’ implementation of Holocaust units.
Schweber’s interviews with teachers uncovered a common fallacy within teachers’ perceptions, leading to the conclusion that teachers assume that lessons about the Holocaust naturally encompass morality; therefore it is often not intentionally addressed. In contrast, it is interesting to note that the findings in this study presented morality as a key theme and approach for teaching about the Holocaust. All teachers interviewed included the teaching of morality in the list of key components of their Holocaust units. Teachers in Language Arts and Social Studies spoke to the necessity of teaching students to be good people who do the right thing and referenced active efforts to teach their students about morality. It should be noted that Schweber’s participants consisted of four public high school teachers who had each been teaching history for at least ten years and whom all came highly recommended. In this study, I collected data from middle school teachers and included not only History/Social Studies teachers, but also Language Arts teachers as well. This could be a possible reason for this discrepancy.

However, teachers did highlight in their interviews the challenges that present in doing this. As Pitt and Britzman (2003) suggest, teaching about the Holocaust, as with other difficult knowledge, requires teachers to be aware that the reactions of their students are based on a variety of factors including background, prior knowledge, and positionality. Teachers acknowledged the need for this awareness, but left one key component out when discussing the factors impacting student learning: positionality. However, while the consideration of teacher positionality emerged as an approach in several current research studies, there is no mention of positionality or bias in my data. Interestingly, however, a consideration for planning to teach about the Holocaust that does present frequently in this study is the need for teacher self-
awareness and reflection. Teachers who participated in this study acknowledge and stress the importance of self-reflection and awareness. However, it is essential to note that this discussion primarily focused on the mere presence of self-reflection, and not the components of or what the reflection itself encompasses. They also discussed a knowledge of students’ background and social constructs that impact student learning as necessary approaches to planning to teach about this difficult content. However, teachers did not reflect on the impact that positionality or biases play in the way they view and teach the content or the way in which students learn and comprehend the content. In addition to being an integral part of the theoretical framework that drives this study, positionality was also explicitly highlighted in existing literature, (Banks, 1993; Berkovits, 1987; Endacott & Sturtz, 2015) and suggested the significant role that positionality plays in teachers’ approaches to teaching about the Holocaust. Britzman (1998) points out that difficult knowledge “requires educators to think carefully about their own theories of learning and how the stuff of such difficult knowledge becomes pedagogical” (p. 117). Allison and Rehm (2006) remind educators that teachers who are positioned with openness, interest, and flexibility regarding cultural differences are likely to respond to individual students and continually grow in their ability to create dynamic learning situations (p. 260). Being as positionality and bias are two significant factors to consider when self-reflecting, especially with regard to teaching about a controversial topic as suggested by the data, it is then warranted to question the effectiveness of the self-reflection taking place. This curiosity suggests an interesting topic to explore in future research and will be further discussed later in this chapter.

**Guidance Provided by State Standards and Mandated Curricula**
New Jersey State Standards for both Language Arts and Social Studies had no specific mention of the Holocaust. This is curious, as the Holocaust is a mandated topic in the state of New Jersey. Further, New Jersey was the first state to mandate Holocaust education, causing further question as to why it is not included in the state standards. The absence of the Holocaust in state standards places the responsibility of its instructional inclusion on the curricula guides for each respective county or district. While examining the curricula for the district in this study, I noticed that the district utilizes supplemental curriculum provided by the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education. This guide provides a general overview of recommended topics to include when instructing about the Holocaust, as well as a series of book titles for suggested use. It is important to note that the supplemental Holocaust curriculum is one guide that is provided for both Social Studies and Language Arts teachers. Existing literature suggests that History courses are the primary setting for Holocaust studies (Ellison, 2002; Donoho, 1999; Fischman, 1996). However, it is essential to note that the curriculum guide provided by the state of New Jersey primarily consisted of a list of novels to utilize in the classroom. In his research, Donoho (1999) found English teachers were more likely to utilize literature, among other resources, in their instruction. This suggests that if the curriculum guide provides primarily novels for teachers, the guide is most useful to Language Arts teachers, as they are more likely to utilize novels and literature in their classrooms. If this is the case, it could be argued that curricula of this nature are minimally beneficial for Social Studies teachers, and thus does not guide their instruction, as this study presented no evidence to suggest that Social Studies teachers utilize novels in their instruction.
However, it is crucial to note that the articles that make these suggestions are significantly dated, and the nature of Social Studies education in recent years has shifted due to the Common Core State Standards, as there has been a noticeable integration of Social Studies into Language Arts. This integration is largely attributed to the standards including a translation for literacy standards in History and Social Studies and its expectation that students will develop literacy skills specific to these subject areas in addition to what they learn in their Language Arts classes (Conley, 2011, p.17). This could explain the reasoning behind a singular curriculum guide provided by the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, and why it is meant to guide both Language Arts and Social Studies teachers. It could also explain the nature of the curriculum guide itself, as its primary content is a list of recommended literature for teachers. However, Evans and Clark (2015) remind us that the Grade 6-8 CCSS English Language Arts Standards should be incorporated into the Social Studies curriculum, but “they are not the Social Studies curriculum” (p. 2). According to the authors, while Language Arts is not meant to encompass the Social Studies curriculum, the integration of Language Arts into Social Studies is essential and provides value. They rationalize the CCSS’s integration, asserting that students need “a certain level of reading and writing skills to become discerning consumers of the vast amount of information available to them and to be able to use that information to make educated decisions as citizens” (p. 8).

Lee and Swan (2013) further support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in recent years as it pertains to Social Studies education. They rationalize this shift, providing benefits that the CCSS provide for Social Studies education. The authors argue that the Common Core State Standards are fewer, higher, and clearer, and thus push social studies to be
similarly well defined in describing the skills and practices that are essential to the field (p. 329). They also compliment the Common Core State Standards in their ability to specifically encourage depth of knowledge and higher order thinking, which is sorely needed in Social Studies, in contrast to the current tendency to favor breadth over depth, or facts over understanding (p. 329). While the implementation of the Common Core State Standards is beneficial to Social Studies education in some regard, it warrants further exploration into the preparation and training Social Studies teachers are given in making this shift. If proper training has not been provided to teachers, then even with the increase in literacy, the supplemental curricula will still not be an effective resource in guiding Social Studies teachers in planning their instruction about the Holocaust. This inquiry is driven by the data in this study. Social Studies and Language Arts teachers’ approaches to planning to teach about the Holocaust overlap significantly, but one aspect of their approaches that does not overlap is the use of literature as a resource for teaching. Thus, even with the integration of literacy standards into Social Studies, the supplemental curriculum is not useful to teachers if it supports literacy solely through the use of novels.

Considering the nature of the supplemental Holocaust curricula and the degree to which it actually guides teachers in their planning, the book titles that were provided for suggested implementation were analyzed. Of the resources provided, only half of the books related directly to the Holocaust. Further, participant interviews revealed that only one book title from the supplemental curriculum’s book list is utilized by teachers. Teachers revealed that they are not supplied with any resources by the curriculum office, and that the majority of the resources they utilize in their instruction are self-sought. One teacher did state that the district is willing to
provide her with a class set of novels at her request. However, the suggested book list is all that
teachers are provided, and it is their responsibility to select book titles and request copies for
their students. One reason for the significant discrepancy between the book titles that are
suggested in the curricula and the book titles teachers are actually using in their classroom might
be due to the fact that teachers have no knowledge of these books or their content. If they are
only provided with a list of suggestions, it can be assumed that teachers would need to obtain a
copy of each book and read it themselves in order to determine whether or not they want to
utilize it in the classroom. Without further guidance or direction provided by the district, the
range is simply too large and thus the suggested book titles have not been a consideration for
teachers. Discussion in teacher interviews revealed that teachers did not even know this
supplemental curriculum existed, and upon being shown a copy, every teacher participant
claimed they had never seen the document before.

Practitioner Journal Recommendations

Practitioner journals are meant to aid teachers in their instructional planning. For this
study, articles from Social Studies and Language Arts practitioner journals were used in order to
determine what recommendations they make for teaching about the Holocaust. It is essential to
first note that when obtaining the articles for the study, ProQuest returned only three articles for
Language Arts, yet thirteen articles were a match for Social Studies. This provides additional
context, as it is evident that more Holocaust related content is published in Social Studies
practitioner journals than in Language Arts. Just as previous research had suggested that history
courses are the primary setting for Holocaust studies, (Donoho, 1999; Ellison, 2002; Fischman,
recent research on Holocaust education confirms that this is still the case (Endacott & Brooks, 2018). However, despite the Holocaust’s minimal exposure in Language Arts practitioner journals, the data from teacher interviews in this study suggests that students receive instruction about the Holocaust in Language Arts classes all throughout their middle school careers. Additionally, while practitioner journals were not among the list, Language Arts teachers reported having access to an abundance of resources to aid in their planning. Such resources included Scholastic magazine, Newsela, Brain Pop, and The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

While several themes emerged in both content area practitioner journals, specific recommendations were made by respective content areas and provided further insight about suggested practices unique to each content area. It was recommended to both Language Arts and Social Studies teachers to ensure historical accuracy. However, this was merely mentioned by Language Arts practitioner journals as a consideration for teachers when selecting materials to utilize, while Social Studies practitioner journals led a much more in-depth conversation surrounding this. Social Studies practitioner journals provided teachers with specific strategies for building historical context, including the use of first-hand accounts and digital testimony. The push for historical context in Social Studies is likely attributed to the fact that the focus of Social Studies is on the history, while Language Arts utilizes the Holocaust to allow for students to perspective take and make connections to their own lives. Further, while both content areas emphasized the importance in students connecting with the content, Language Arts practitioner journals discussed the importance of facilitating opportunities for these connections primarily through literature. Authors in Social Studies journals widely discussed the use of documentaries
in allowing for these connections to be made, stating the importance of exposing students to first-hand accounts. Interestingly, while practitioner journal discussions about documentaries took place exclusively in Social Studies, their discussion in interviews was exclusively led by Language Arts teachers.

There was discussion earlier in this chapter about Social Studies and Language Arts teachers’ lack of acknowledgement regarding their positionality or biases. While this was not something that was discussed by teachers, it was a consideration made by Language Arts practitioner journals. Authors urged Language Arts teachers to consider their own biases prior to teaching about the Holocaust. They further stressed the importance in ensuring that their biases are not projected onto their students through their instruction. While self-reflection was a theme that emerged in teacher interviews, positionality and bias were not among the considerations that teachers discussed despite their heavy emphasis in existing literature. Interestingly, personal bias was solely mentioned in Language Arts practitioner journals as a key consideration for planning to teach about the Holocaust. These discrepancies between what was recommended in practitioner journals but absent in teachers’ practice is likely due to the simple fact that the teachers are not reading practitioner journals. When asked about the utilization of practitioner journals during interviews, not a single teacher acknowledged the use of this resource. Further, several teachers responded by asking what a practitioner journal even is or stating that he/she had never heard the term before. This data warrants further consideration of the intended use of practitioner journals versus their actual availability and visibility in the educational community.

**Implications for the Literature**
This study seeks to fill an existing gap in the literature by examining in greater depth the approaches Language Arts and Social Studies teachers take in planning to teach about the Holocaust by investigating the teachers themselves and focusing on the guidance that state standards, curriculum guides, and practitioner journals provide. In addition to the suggested approaches existing literature already provides, the goal is to inform teachers, policymakers, and teacher and museum educators on ways to best prepare teachers to teach about the Holocaust in the twenty-first century. The current body of literature on teachers’ approaches to teaching about the Holocaust almost exclusively focuses on one respective content area, whether it be Language Arts or Social Studies. With the implementation of Common Core State Standards in recent years, content area focuses have shifted, and this has had significant implications for education. One shift caused by the implementation of CCSS is the greater focus on disciplinary literacy in Social Studies. McConachie (2010) explains that disciplinary literacy was built around the belief that the definitions of literacy at the secondary level must be anchored in the specifics of individual disciplines (p. 15). She further references Social Studies as a primary target for literacy integration, as it is essential for students to understand content knowledge more deeply (p. 17). Expanding on this shift caused by the implementation of the CCSS, Lee and Swan (2013) explain that the 32 anchor standards in the Common Core provide a foundation for literacy in social studies (p. 327). Further, the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework, commonly referenced as C3, argues that 21 of these anchor standards “are uniquely supportive of social studies inquiry, and three anchor standards are absolutely vital to literacy in social studies” (Lee & Swan, 2013). With the high emphasis placed on literacy in Social Studies since the Common Core State Standards, in addition to Social Studies and Language Arts being conjoined
in many respects, it is essential to update the existing literature on Holocaust education with new findings representative of present day. Further, in addition to other resources provided for teachers to aid in their planning to teach about the Holocaust, practitioner journals offer useful recommendations and provide valuable insight for teachers, yet existing research has largely neglected this as a focus of study. This study provides insight on the approaches Social Studies and Language Arts teachers use to plan to teach about the Holocaust since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, and examines the alignment and nuances to previous research on this topic. Additionally, this study presents an analysis of the commonalities and discrepancies across content areas, and highlights the various aspects of overlap between the two. Lastly, this study offers recommendations the Social Studies and Language Arts practitioner journals make for teachers, which is a topic new to the scholarly research on Holocaust education.

**Action Plan for Improving Holocaust Education**

In the state of New Jersey, Holocaust education is a mandated instructional topic. However, the findings in this study draw on a number of nuances surrounding Holocaust education in the educational system. These nuances include the availability of resources versus their utilization, teachers’ lack of awareness with regard to curriculum guides and other recommended resources, and the lack of collaboration taking place among teachers. Given the importance of this topic, it is essential to consider the various stakeholders and how they are informing their decision-making with regard to planning, preparing, and implementing Holocaust education.
Recommendations for Teachers

Prior research has highlighted that positionality can unknowingly influence teachers’ perceptions about topics and additionally influence the approaches in which they present information. As a result, it is possible that teachers also can stereotype, accentuate limited aspects of culture, or overlook individuality within cultural groups (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Silvers, 1999). That said, the findings of this study suggest that while teachers discussed the importance of self-reflection and self-awareness, positionality and bias were absent from those discussions. Whether it was because they felt that it was an assumed component of self-awareness, or because they did not perceive positionality to be a crucial consideration, all teachers failed to mention their own biases when discussing self-awareness. Berkovitz (1987) acknowledges the major differences in teachers’ perceptions based on positionality, and further suggests that this is a determinant of the type of instruction students are given. Ensuring teachers are considering their positionality and biases as part of their self-reflection is critical for those who teach about the Holocaust. Further, Language Arts practitioner journal, Voices from the Middle, acknowledged teachers’ biases and the importance in ensuring biases are not projected onto students. The authors claim that while we accept our personal preferences and perspectives, we cannot allow our identities to foster biases limited our students’ access to information or communicate to students that we value some voices over others (Miller et al., 2017, p.17).

Teachers reported in interviews that they did not read practitioner journals, and further, most stated that they had no knowledge of practitioner journals in general. If practitioner journals are making valuable recommendations for teachers, it is essential that teachers are aware of these resources.
While there were a variety of recommended resources also provided to teachers in the supplemental Holocaust curriculum guide, teachers’ utilization of the guide was minimal. Considering a topic as complex as the Holocaust, teachers must seek out the available resources and communicate with their curriculum office if they feel no such resources exist. Additionally, the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education has a very cohesive and informative website that provides teachers with a variety of additional resources. Teachers are encouraged to take advantage of the vast resources provided by the commission.

Lastly, it is highly recommended that collaboration among teachers takes place across grade levels and content areas. Teachers reported that when learning about the Holocaust students often do not have the reactions teachers had hoped for, which leads to disappointment. Schweber (2006) explains one cause for this, stating that a powerful explanation for a shift in attitudes towards the Holocaust is rooted in its exposure (p. 44). One key player in this shift in attitudes can be attributed to Holocaust Fatigue, a condition often referenced to explain individuals’ lack of emotion or reaction while discussing the events of the Holocaust. She further suggests the difficulties Holocaust Fatigue presents for teachers, as the buildup of the topic often decreases students’ views on the importance of the event. In order to avoid Holocaust Fatigue, teachers must ensure that this topic is not “overloaded” onto students. This can be accomplished through collaboration with colleagues. Schweber (1994) stresses the need for teachers to collaborate with one another. She claims that this strategy is an essential tool in the successful implementation of Holocaust instruction. Teachers reported that they are unaware of what is taking place in other classrooms, and thus have no knowledge about the amount of exposure to the content their students have been given. Without this knowledge, it is difficult for teachers to
avoid repetition in content and activities, possibly leading to Holocaust Fatigue. This lack of collaboration is curious, and while no existing literature draws on the level of collaboration among teachers with regard to the Holocaust in relation to other content, research (Schweber, 1994) is insistent on this collaboration taking place, especially given the complexity of the Holocaust as an instructional topic. The findings in this study further develop the need for content area and grade level collaboration among teachers.

**Recommendations for Policy Makers**

Donnelly (2006) reported that teachers lack the confidence needed to develop a Holocaust unit since they feel that they do not have the subject matter knowledge necessary to teach the event successfully (p. 27). The interviews and analysis of curricula revealed the disconnect between the resources available to teachers and teachers’ utilization of those resources. These resources include the supplemental Holocaust curriculum, practitioner journals, and resources developed by cultural institutes such as the National Museum of American Jewish History and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, among others. While the district has the Holocaust curriculum available for teachers, the findings suggest that these documents are not being used by teachers. This may be attributed to teachers not knowing such documents exist or the overwhelming nature of selecting a book title from a long list that does not provide book summaries or themes to be used in conjunction. Additionally, any mention of the Holocaust is absent from the state standards for both Language Arts and Social Studies. Being as this education is mandated in the state of New Jersey, the topic should be reflected in the state standards, as they are the driving force behind instructional decisions.
Considering the Holocaust curricula itself, the guide provides general suggestions for resources to be used in the classroom. However, the guide is a singular document and meant to be utilized by both Language Arts and Social Studies teachers. Policy makers will want to ensure that the supplemental Holocaust curriculum provided is cohesive and that it is differentiated for both Social Studies and Language Arts classrooms. Further, policy makers at the district and/or county level should ensure the teachers who are teaching about the Holocaust have knowledge and access to the curriculum. Further, as Donoho (1999) previously reported, English teachers are more likely to utilize literature, among other resources, in their instruction. Teachers confirmed this in the interviews that took place for this study. Being as Language Arts teachers reported novels and literature being their primary sources for teaching about the Holocaust, they may find a more cohesive and complete version of this curriculum to be useful. However, Social Studies teachers did not report the use of novels in instruction, and thus do not benefit from a curriculum guide that consists solely of a list of recommended books. Policy makers should reconsider the guidance provided to Social Studies teachers who are expected to teach about the Holocaust.

**Recommendations for Those who Train Teachers and Museum Educators**

As Holt (2001) found in his study of Indiana’s implementation of Holocaust education, most teachers report that self-study is their primary method of preparation for teaching about the Holocaust. Teachers in this study similarly expressed that most materials they use to teach about the Holocaust are self-sought and that they create their own curricular maps to guide their placement of the Holocaust. Those who train teachers will want to ensure that they spend time
educating teachers about the resources that should be made available to them. This education should consist of ensuring teachers have relevant curricular contact information for local personnel.

As discussed above, teacher educators should be aware of the prior research that has highlighted the importance of teacher positionality and its ability to influence teachers’ perceptions about topics. I am seeing from the data collected in this study that teachers are reporting self-awareness and self-reflection, but not considering positionality or bias as integral components. As Berkovitz (1987) has acknowledged the major differences in instructional delivery based on teacher positionality, it is essential that teacher educators facilitate constant self-reflection among teachers, and that this self-reflection include consideration of one’s own positionality and biases.

Further, Lindquist (2007) claims that many educators who consider teaching the Holocaust feel deterred from doing so (p. 27). This is likely attributed to the daunting and complex nature of the content. Teachers in this study reported several difficulties with teaching about the Holocaust, including an absence of resources and guidance, lack of awareness to what their colleagues are covering in other classrooms, the maturity level of their students, and the difficult nature of the content. Lindquist, (2007) suggested that the most significant reason teachers feel discouraged about teaching the Holocaust is their worry about whether or not they can present such an emotionally charged subject in a way that does justice to the topic (p. 27). Given this reality, teacher educators will want to mentally prepare teachers to teach about complex content by encouraging personal reflection, open discussion and seeking support as needed.
The data also have implications for museum educators. As Anderson, Cosson, and McIntosh (2015) state, museums are increasingly in need of information about the audiences they serve and their own professional practice as they strive to achieve their educational missions. The data in this study provide museum educators with the approaches teachers use in planning to teach about the Holocaust including considerations for material selection, age-appropriateness of the content presented, building historical context, and facilitating opportunities for students to perspective take. The data also provide a comprehensive overview of the resources they seek, activities they utilize, and discussions they facilitate. This information is valuable to museum educators as they develop resources for teachers in that they can ensure the resources align with the approaches that data shows teachers take. Several teachers in this study said they utilize resources offered by cultural institutes such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Further, given the realization that teachers feel they are not provided with adequate preparation and training, museum educators have the opportunity to supplement the professional support teachers are desperately seeking. Additionally, data from this study provide museum educators with the challenges teachers face when instructing about a complex topic such as the Holocaust. These challenges include selecting developmentally appropriate material, ensuring accuracy in selected resources and instructional delivery, and gaining access to resources to aid in their planning. This is valuable for museum educators, as it provides insight regarding the challenges they may face when designing exhibits or hosting students for academic trips. The suggested approaches that teachers provide can be utilized by museum educators as well when facilitating learning experiences for students centered on complex and difficult content.
Future Directions

Additional research is necessary in order to further explore several unanswered questions that emerged from the data. Teachers discussed in their interviews the significant role they feel self-reflection and self-awareness play in preparing to teach about the Holocaust. While existing literature (Berkovitz, 1987) agrees that these are essential components of teacher preparation, positionality and bias are highlighted as primary considerations to be included in this self-reflection, and teachers gave no indication that they felt the same. As Berkovits (1987) discusses the significant impact teacher positionality has on instruction, yet it is not a component of teacher’s self-reflection practice, further exploration is warranted into the actual components of teacher self-reflection and how effective this practice is with regard to preparing teachers to teach about the Holocaust. Considering positionality further, future research might also explore the impact that a teacher’s religion has on his or her preparation for and instruction about the Holocaust. John, a Language Arts teacher, spoke specifically to his strong connection to the content as a result of his Jewish faith. John’s ambitions and connection to lessons about the Holocaust stem from who he identifies as, not from being a Language Arts teacher. He spoke to the background he is able to provide for his students, as well as the nature of his instruction based on his religious connection. When asked, John stated that he felt that other teachers are not able to connect with the content in the same ways. Future research might explore the impact religion has on teachers’ ability to connect with the Holocaust as an instructional topic. Further, an exploration into the similarities and differences in instructional methods among teachers who
are Jewish and teachers who are not might address the question: How much of an impact does religion have on teaching and learning about the Holocaust?

Previous research (Short, 2005) suggests that the Holocaust is an effective instructional tool for teaching students about discrimination and preventing future discrimination and genocides. The findings in this study, however, draw on the reality that students continue to display discriminatory behaviors and further that teachers view these behaviors to be a rationale for teaching about the Holocaust. This appears to be a repeating cycle and raises the questions: Does learning about the Holocaust present any long-term effects on students? Is there a decrease in discriminatory behavior among students who receive lessons about the Holocaust? While research has explored the Holocaust’s effects on students (Maitles & Cowan, 2007), the literature lacks longitudinal studies that confirm or deny the actual impact that learning about the Holocaust has on students and discriminatory behaviors long term.

An analysis of the supplemental Holocaust curriculum guide provided as a guiding tool for teachers who teach about the Holocaust revealed that its nature is not inclusive of both Social Studies and Language Arts teachers, as it solely provides a series of book titles for suggested use. Donoho (1999) previously argued that English teachers are more likely to utilize literature, among other resources, in their instruction than are Social Studies teachers. If this remains the case, then the curriculum guide providing primarily novel titles for teachers is clearly most useful to Language Arts teachers, as they are more likely to utilize novels and literature in their classrooms. However, in recent years the Common Core State Standards have greatly shifted the focus of Social Studies classrooms, placing a greater emphasis on literacy. Lee and Swan (2013) rationalize the implementation of literacy in Social Studies standards by highlighting the
importance of disciplinary literacies, especially as they pertain to history. The authors explain that disciplinary literacies include all the skills that are needed to understand, create, and communicate academic knowledge (p. 327). In the years since the Common Core State Standards were adapted, teachers in all content areas were likely provided with professional development to prepare them for the upcoming changes. However, with specific regard to teaching complex histories, further exploration is warranted into the preparation and training Social Studies teachers are given in making this shift. Have Social Studies teachers been trained on how to integrate literacy and use various forms of literature to teach about the Holocaust? How prepared do Social Studies teachers feel to teach about the Holocaust since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in 2010? Future research might link Social Studies teachers’ perceived levels of preparation with regard to teaching about the Holocaust and the effectiveness of those teachers in doing so in order to determine what actions are needed in furthering this development.

Lastly, acknowledging that teachers self-reported the data pertaining to their approaches to planning to teach about the Holocaust, future research might include classroom observations to further analyze these approaches as they are carried out through classroom instruction. Classroom observations and the potential inclusion of an analysis of lesson plans, student work samples, and student interviews might better inform how these reported approaches manifest in actual practice and if there are further nuances between Language Arts and Social Studies teachers.

**Conclusion**
Selecting Holocaust education as a topic for my doctoral research was more a matter of it selecting me. Since the day I arrived in Berlin, Germany on the Holocaust Summer Seminar in 2016, and every day since, having an active role in Holocaust education has become my life’s work. This study shed light on so many aspects of Holocaust education that I was unaware of, and discredited many assumptions I had previously made. Further, it has opened the door to prospective research on this topic, and provided me with a platform for future exploration. I agree with Totten’s (2002) assertion that it is essential to maintain a balance approach when viewing the Holocaust, acknowledging its exclusivity while continuing to reinforce its connection to past and present prejudice and discrimination. I view this approach to be very valuable, and I was relieved to discover that teachers and practitioner journal authors also recommend this balanced approach. As an educator, I found it exciting to engage with teachers about the approaches they take in preparing for this important work. I found it especially interesting to consider the positionality of the teachers, and I found myself comparing their perspectives to my own on many occasions. It especially resonated with me when one teacher discussed his Jewish faith and the connection he feels he has to the content as a result. This assertion stuck with me, as I knew that my passion and connection to the Holocaust was greater than most of my colleagues, but I had solely attributed this to my previous experiences. I failed to consider that this may simply be a result of my identification as a member of the Jewish faith. This awareness has prompted me to further consider what impact religion has on teachers’ instruction about the Holocaust, and as such I have deemed this as a focus for future research.

Totten (2002) places value on the Holocaust as a tool for teaching students to develop an understanding of human rights issues, become aware of the results of extreme racism and
intolerance, and encourage them to consider their own personal biases. Baum (1996) highlights the Holocaust’s ability to teach students about developing empathy with others who are different from them. Faced with the explicit awareness that these valuable lessons are more relevant and necessary now than ever, I feel hopeful to know that teachers continue to value Holocaust education and that they view it as an opportunity to teach morality, empathy, and compassion, as confirmed through the various trends that emerged in this study. It is through the lens of the Holocaust that we, as educators, have the ability to teach students of the lasting effects of hate, discrimination, and intolerance. After all, as Miriam Oster proclaims, “Education and remembrance are the only cures for hatred and bigotry”.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: INITIAL INTERVIEW

1) What subject and grade level do you currently teach? How many years have you been teaching in your current position? Do you have any previous experience teaching in a different content area or grade level?

2) Do you remember being taught about the Holocaust in school? What content area (LA, SS, etc.) did your learning mostly take place? What, if anything, do you remember being your biggest take-away from learning about the Holocaust?

3) How did you initially feel upon discovering that the Holocaust was part of your required curriculum?

4) How prepared did you initially feel to instruct about the Holocaust? How prepared do you currently feel to instruct about the Holocaust? To what do you attribute your level of preparedness and the change over time?

5) Why is the Holocaust important to you?

6) While planning and teaching your unit on the Holocaust, what is the overarching theme/message you seek to teach your students?

7) Which of the following themes do you mostly seek to address in your lessons? Historical context, timeline of events, the role of bystanders, the effects of discrimination, empathizing with the victims, the connection to future/present events, dictatorship and the role of Hitler, tolerance/inclusion, morality
8) What types of activities, assignments and presentations do you use?
9) What resources, if any, have you been provided with to guide your instructional planning and delivery? Which resources/materials have been the most helpful?
10) Do you or have you use(d) Practitioner Journals as a resource for planning? (Which ones? How helpful have they been? In what ways?)

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

1) How do your students generally react to lessons about the Holocaust?
2) Do you mediate shocking or brutal content for the classroom? How do you assess what your students “can handle”?
3) What do you perceive to be the biggest challenges in planning and teaching about these events?
4) Has your instructional approach to teaching about the Holocaust changed over time? In what ways? What do you believe has attributed to these changes? Can you provide an example?

Dilemma Analysis to follow.
Dilemma 1: Building Background: Constructing a Historical Timeline
Mr. Alvarez has been teaching seventh grade for twenty years. When teaching about historical events, he is a firm believer that students must be able to immerse themselves in the cultural, social, and political norms of the time period being discussed in order to build a deep understanding. He also believes in constructing a timeline in order to help students conceptualize history as a series of events. For this reason, Mr. Alvarez feels it is very important to introduce his unit on the Holocaust by having his students learn the background and circumstances that led to Hitler’s rise to power and the eventual deaths of over six million people. Mr. Alvarez begins by identifying ten significant events that led up to the Holocaust:

- 1918- Germany loses World War I and signs the Versailles Treaty
- 1920- The creation of the National Socialist German Workers (Nazi) Party
- 1923- Hitler is sentenced to 5 years in prison for treason (but only serves 9 months)
- 1923- Hitler writes “Mein Kampf” or “My Struggle” while in prison
- 1931- Hitler challenges Paul von Hindenburg for the presidency and loses
- 1932- Hitler becomes a German citizen
- 1933- Hitler is named Chancellor of Germany
- 1933- Fire is set to the Reichstag building in Berlin
- 1933- Hitler withdraws from the League of Nations
- 1934- Death of President Hindenburg- Hitler becomes Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor
Mr. Alvarez then splits his students into small groups and has each group research a different historical event or context. The groups present their research and “teach” their classmates about the significant event, providing them with the relevant background and details.

At the end of this assignment, Mr. Alvarez has students consider each event and its implications on the Holocaust. He then facilitates a group discussion about each event and its impact on history. Throughout the entire Holocaust unit, Mr. Alvarez continues to reference the significant events discussed and encourages his students to continue to consider what factors caused what outcomes.

1. What do you think about Mr. Alvarez’s approach to introducing the Holocaust?
2. What would you identify as positive components of his lesson?
3. What would you identify as negative components of his lesson?

Dilemma 2: Student Perspectives: Opposing Points of View
Ms. Harris is a third-year teacher who is getting ready to begin her unit on the Holocaust. In the past two years, she has met challenges in teaching about the Holocaust primarily because she feels that her students have viewed the Holocaust as rather black and white- Hitler and the Nazi Party are the “bad guys” and they are the only historical figures at fault for the deaths of over six million people.

This year, Ms. Harris decides to take a new approach to her Holocaust unit. She begins by asking her students if they feel all German citizens are to blame for what happened in the Holocaust. After sensing some confusion, she clarifies for her students that not all German citizens were Nazis, as she quickly realizes that several students have that misconception. After a class discussion, Ms. Harris is surprised to discover that the majority of her students take the approach that if people are German citizens but not a Nazis that those people are not to blame for what happened.

Following the discussion, Ms. Harris passes out the worksheet (attached) and has her students spend twenty minutes working through it independently. When the time is up, Ms. Harris goes through each individual/group of individuals and has students raise their hands if they rated as a one (not responsible), two (minimally responsible), three (responsible), or four (very responsible). She encourages students who selected ones and students who selected fours for each to share their thoughts and reasons for rating it as such. She allows her students to engage in a healthy debate about each individual/group of individuals.

1. What do you think about Ms. Harris’ approach to introducing the Holocaust?
2. Why do you think she selected that activity given the challenges she had previously faced?
3. What would you identify as positive components of her lesson?
4. What would you identify as negative components of her lesson?

Dilemma 3: Facilitating Empathy: Imagine it Was You
Mrs. Noriega has been teaching for ten years. Mrs. Noriega’s students just finished reading the book “The Devil’s Arithmetic” and she has planned for a follow-up project. After reading the story, Mrs. Noriega asks her students to think about one particular scene in the novel where the main character and her family were forced to pack their belongings and evacuate their home in ten minutes. Mrs. Noriega asks students, “Can you imagine?” and lets the silence linger for several minutes.

Mrs. Noriega then introduced the project and explains the components. She reads the prompt: It is 1942, and you are ordered to leave your house on a moment’s notice. You only have time and space to fill one medium-sized suitcase. Over the next week, students are asked to fill a suitcase with the belongings they would pack if they had ten minutes, one suitcase, and no idea when or if they would return home. Mrs. Noriega encourages students to consider the items most valuable to them. The following week, the suitcases are all brought to school with students’ chosen belongings. The suitcases are opened and showcased for the class as they walk around and view the contents. Each student is asked to present to the class their chosen items and their most valuable item: the one they could not part with. Students are encouraged to tell the class why the items are so important to them and the meaning they hold.

1. What do you think about the Mrs. Noriega’s used to conclude her unit about the Holocaust?
2. Why do you think this activity may be difficult for some students?
3. What would you identify as positive components of her lesson?
4. What would you identify as negative components of her lesson?
APPENDIX D
ASSESSING AND DEFINING RESPONSIBILITY WORKSHEET (to be used with Dilemma 2)
TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST
Assessing and Defining Responsibility

If you were a judge, how would you assess the "responsibility" of these people for what happened in the world between 1933 and 1945? Indicate one of the following:

1 — Not responsible
2 — Minimally responsible
3 — Responsible
4 — Very responsible

1. One of Hitler’s direct subordinates, such as Heinrich Himmler or Joseph Goebbels
2. A German who voluntarily joined Hitler’s special elite, the SS
3. A German industrialist who financially supported Hitler’s rise to power and continued to support him verbally
4. A judge who carried out Hitler’s decrees for sterilization of the “mentally incompetent” and internment of “traitors”
5. A doctor who participated in sterilization of Jews
6. A worker in a plant making Zyklon B gas
7. The Pope, who made no public statement against Nazi policy
8. An industrialist who made enormous profits by producing Zyklon B gas
9. A manufacturer who used concentration camp inmates as slave labor in his plants
10. An American industrialist who helped arm Hitler in the 1930s
11. A person who voluntarily joined the Nazis in the 1930s
12. A person who agreed to publicly take the Civil Servant Loyalty Oath (swearing eternal allegiance to Adolf Hitler in 1934)
13. A person who complied with the law excluding Jews from economic and social life
14. A person who regularly, enthusiastically attended Hitler rallies