

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST: A CASE STUDY AND CONTENT ANALYSIS OF
TEACHER'S CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust. Although there were numerous studies on Holocaust education, particularly on teachers' approaches and practices, there was little evidence regarding teachers' conceptualization of the event and the ways it impacted their approach to teaching it in their classrooms. In addition to examining their approach to teaching it, this study carefully reviewed the state curricula and mandates on the topic, mass marketed textbooks and other materials on the topic, and teacher-generated teaching materials, learning guides, and assessments to capture how teachers' conceptualizations of the Holocaust were transmitted to their students. Further, it provided researchers with a comprehensive empirical analysis and contributed to increasing the scholarly literature on Holocaust education. This study sought to address the following research questions: How do three in-service teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust? How do the teachers define the event and narrate and frame the rationale for teaching it and its causes, course stages, consequences, historical actors, and lessons? How did their conceptualization influence and inform their pedagogical decision-making? How did their conceptualization influence and inform their interpretation of the curriculum? This intrinsic collective case study triangulated data from interviews with teachers, reviews of their materials, and observations of their classes to provide an in-depth and detailed view of the approaches three Pennsylvania Social Studies teachers took to teach about the Holocaust in their classroom. This study additionally served as a tool for school districts and policy makers to best inform their future decision-making regarding the types of pre- and in-service trainings teachers need to fully conceptualize and teach the Holocaust, including their selection of powerful strategies and resources and assessments, to

cover the topic in a way that met all of the local and state standards while also covering the state's suggested pseudo-mandate, which hopefully led to more robust and enduring student learning.

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DEDICATION

Having read Gabriel Garcia Marquez' dedication of *Love in the Time of Cholera* to his wife over 25 years ago, the simplicity of it—imbued with so much meaning—always resonated with me deep down in my soul, but I was never really able to articulate why it had such a profound impact on me, until I finished this until now. So, with that said:

To Shari, of course.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Early in my career, I taught the Holocaust in a totally unsettling way that I now recognize was wrong because it traumatized students and teachers in unnecessary ways. Instead of simply outlining the textbook and emphasizing the traditional talking points with a pre-reading guide and post-lesson study guide to help the students focus on the most important facts, I decided to introduce the Holocaust from the perspective of a denier to provoke the students into treating it like a criminal case in need of proper adjudication. In short, I wanted to teach the topic through the lens of the Nuremberg trials and emphasized the difficulty prosecutors experienced in collecting and presenting the preponderance of credible, reliable, and valid evidence needed to convict high-ranking Nazi perpetrators of the crime of genocide. Teaching the Holocaust using this conceptualization inadvertently led to an especially heated exchange with an English language arts teacher, when a quarrelsome student brought the heuristics I used to challenge the empirical evidence of the Holocaust in a lesson she was teaching on the *Diary of Anne Frank*.

In a meeting with an assistant principal, this English language arts teacher did not agree with my approach, because she argued that it minimized or negated the emotional impact and trauma the event had on the victims and their families, including descendants like herself. She also argued that I should teach the students to empathize with the victims to create an emotional connection between the students and these historical actors, which some scholars refer to as ‘historical empathy’, while teaching them to vilify the perpetrators and, slightly problematically, bystanders. Having briefly reviewed the local curriculum and state standards, our assistant principal recognized that we were both covering the required material and admitted that he was reluctant to weigh in on how it should be taught. He did suggest that I disclose my true intentions

at the end of the first lesson to avoid the kind of traumatization and confrontation that happened in my colleague's room, while reminding both of us to be mindful and respectful of each other's framing and approaches to difficult topics, especially ones as sensitive as the Holocaust, and to discuss any disagreements in a professional manner outside of earshot—and view—of our students and parents.

Needless to say, I carefully considered their input and modified my approach to teaching the topic, but I did not necessarily agree with everything that was said. The behavior of the contrarian student reaffirmed the need for approaches to the Holocaust that took into consideration the emotional complexities of presenting difficult knowledge to an adolescent audience (Shepperd & Levy, 2019). This dramatic clash in how we differently approached the Holocaust ultimately set me on the path leading to this study. Triggered in no small part by the aforementioned incident, I was increasingly intrigued by the way teachers conceptualized and taught the Holocaust, especially knowing how it—and other difficult topics—could cause a lot of trouble both inside and outside of the classroom. Even though they were all teaching the same curriculum, I was always surprised to hear about the multitude of ways teachers in different contexts thought about and taught this difficult topic, which ultimately shaped and influenced the many different ways their students understood the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity, including genocides. The original incident, then, led to the curiosity and conversations—oftentimes initiated by the questions that inform this inquiry—that ultimately led to this study.

Rationale for Study

While acknowledging that my approach to teaching the Holocaust was inappropriate and potentially unethical, I recognized that my conceptualization and approach to teaching the

Holocaust provoke such a strong reaction in one of my colleagues? The answer is quite simple: people, social studies teachers in particular, are very interested in the Holocaust both as a uniquely horrific topic and as a universal model of the most heinous genocide or crime against humanity, which originated the vocabulary and conceptual framework currently used to identify, describe, and frame—and, in the case of similar situations evolving or unfolding in real time, stop or prevent—events both past and present. The problem, as evidenced by my story, was that teachers conceptualize and approach the topic very differently even within the same school and department, so the lessons taught to the same group of students might differ significantly from teacher to teacher, even though state standards and local curriculum require them to cover certain aspects of the event in their classes. It should also be noted that the Holocaust was a traumatic event that might evoke strong emotions in a variety of stakeholders in a school, including—as evidence by my experience with my colleague—in teachers and students alike, which is something that will be discussed more at length in the theoretical framework section of this chapter. In this study, then, I will use the term “emotion” as defined by American Psychology Association’s (APA) online dictionary website as:

A complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioral, and physiological elements, by which an individual attempts to deal with a personally significant matter or event. The specific quality of the emotion (e.g., fear, shame) is determined by the specific significance of the event. For example, if the significance involves threat, fear is likely to be generated; if the significance involves disapproval from another, shame is likely to be generated. Emotion typically involves feeling but differs from feeling in having an overt or implicit engagement with the world.

Why does it seem so urgent to teach this topic now? Well, a quick glance at news stories across the globe quickly reveal that anti-Semitism and other forms of ethnic and religious prejudice and discrimination are on the rise throughout the world, as evidenced by the targeting of Jews in Paris, Pittsburgh, and New York City by mass shooters. Moreover, stories by NBC and the Atlantic showed that younger generations know very little about the Holocaust, which includes knowledge about the prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices that led to the horrific event, and that they are ill-equipped to refute the claims of deniers (NBC News; The Atlantic). In addition, multiple incidents of escalating human rights violations by governments around the world—with clear parallels to the methods used by the Nazis against the Jews throughout the 1930s and 1940s—demonstrate that some regimes are committing crimes against humanity that might evolve into something worse, as evidenced most egregiously by the Burmese governments’ genocidal treatment of the Rohingya. Studying the Holocaust, then, gives us a vocabulary and framework to recognize and describe crimes against humanity that might escalate to genocide—and identify potential ways to prevent and deescalate them from devolving or evolving into something more heinous.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, the Holocaust and other genocides need to be taught as uniquely horrific events and universal cautionary tales because students need to bear witness to them and—as national and global citizens—to act indirectly and directly to defend human rights, make difficult moral decisions, encourage tolerance, promote civil rights, and stand up to evil wherever it may rear its ugly head.

Reflecting the widely recognized importance of this topic, there exist a number of organizations whose central mission is the teaching of the Holocaust, genocide, human rights,

and related topics. Reflecting the disparate scholarship in the field, they have a wide range of rationales, resources, and supports for teaching the Holocaust. In America, the most prominent of these organizations are the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO). Internationally, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in Berlin and Yad Vashem in Israel have played prominent roles in Holocaust education. All of these organizations have financed and supported the work of teachers and scholars working on various aspects of Holocaust education, including curricula, teaching materials, professional development opportunities, and the building of museums.

The two international organizations differ slightly in their conceptualization of the topic. The IHRA aspires to provide materials to educators to teach the Holocaust both as a unique event and as an exemplar of a genocide. Driven by that core mission, this organization has articulated seven rationales for focusing on Holocaust education that include: challenging civilizations foundations; recognizing the potential for genocide today; and valuing diverse, pluralistic societies that are sensitive to minorities. In its mission statement, this organization recognizes both the uniqueness and the universality of the Holocaust by acknowledging it was a watershed event in the entire history of humanity, but that it should be also be studied “as a means to help understand other genocides and, importantly, to seek to prevent genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia in the future.” Echoing the often-cited reason for history education, it operates from the premise that people can learn from mistakes and avoid them in the future. As a Berlin-based organization, though, it focuses very heavily on the wrongness of perpetrators and less on the suffering of victims and complexity of bystanders.

Yad Vashem in Jerusalem—formally known as the World Holocaust Remembrance Center—is founded on four pillars: communication, documentation, research, and education. As

a result, it developed a center called the International School for Holocaust Studies, which recognizes the centrality of humans and the importance of developing moral citizens. In order to do so, it argues that teachers must acquire enough information to feel emotionally equipped to teach such a difficult topic, but it offers no guidance on how to address strong emotions that may be stirred in their students. In order to prepare teachers to teach the topic, Yad Vashem provides online courses, lesson plans, ceremonies, readings, artifacts, films, and interviews with survivors.

In the United States, the USHMM and FHAO are the two most well-known organizations that focus on Holocaust education. The USHMM is the more prominent of the two with perhaps the best known and widely used compilation of recommendations, guidelines, and suggested resources for teachers. Their core mission is to provide a rationale for teaching the Holocaust and produce materials to support that effort through online resources like lesson plans, curriculum materials, readings, testimonies, artifacts, and film. Its stated goal for teaching it is to examine basic moral issues through structured inquiry, specifically how and why people acted in various stages of the Holocaust to discuss possible future actions to similar situations. Because of the emotions such encounters with the horrific stir in students, it advises teachers to choose material carefully by studying both the how and the why of the event. Basing their approach on the work of Totten and Feinberg (2001), the founders of the USHMM argued that teaching the Holocaust should rest on two pillars: first, studying the history of the Holocaust, including its causes and course stages, that evolved from discrimination to destruction of the Jews and other undesirable groups by the Nazi government from 1933 to 1944. Their second pillar is that the underlying lesson of the Holocaust is that the evils of stereotyping, scapegoating, prejudice, and oppression can lead to it and other genocides (Totten & Feinberg, 2010)

The lesser-known FHAO is headquartered in Boston and was established in the 1970s to

encourage students to study the Holocaust and other examples of genocide to make better choices as they confront moral dilemmas in their lives. In order to fill its core mission to create moral actors and citizens, the organization provides detailed curricular frameworks and resources to educators online while also offering professional development opportunities that incorporate moral and ethical elements to emotionally engage students and encourage them to prevent abuse from bullying to genocide by developing their empathy for the suffering of others. Similar to the USHMM, its founders have thought deeply about why and how teachers should approach the Holocaust, which it argues should improve the moral reasoning skills and active citizenship of students. To that end, they have developed a “Pedagogical Triangle for Historic and Civic Understanding” that strives for intellectual rigor, emotional engagement, and ethical reflection. Though it aims for teachers to emotionally engage their students with its materials, that is not always done intentionally to force students to confront suffering, which Shepherd and Levy (2018) view as a problem or shortcoming.

Definition of Conceptualization

Whereas some scholars seem to define conceptualization or approach as the way teachers *should* teach the Holocaust, I use conceptualization in this study to describe the ways teachers think about or make meaning of the historical event that shapes or frames their construction of it which, in turn, informs or drives their approach to teaching it. Crass (2020), for example, uses the term “approach” and “conceptualization” fairly interchangeably to describe the aforementioned pedagogical choices that teachers make to teach the topic. Others—most notably Goldberg (2012)—use the terms to discuss teachers’ cognitive meaning making of the process that largely determines their pedagogical approach. This forethought, then, seems to fully inform their approach which—as evidenced by the paucity of scholarship on the topic—seems to be an

understudied aspect of Holocaust education and might explain the wide variety of teachers' approaches to it. Instead of defining conceptualization or approach as the way teachers should imagine and teach the Holocaust, this study sought to examine the way teachers conceptualized—i.e., make narrative meaning out of—it, which then seemed to inform their whole approach to teaching it.

Purpose of the Study

Unlike the work of scholars who have defined “conceptualization” as the way teachers approach teaching the Holocaust, this study sought to better understand teachers' meaning making and construction of the Holocaust as a narrative event. I argue that the teachers' conceptualizations of the Holocaust underpinned and informed their pedagogical choices, classroom culture, reasons for teaching the topic, choice of materials, methodological approaches, and informal and formal assignments and assessments. To fully investigate teachers' conceptualizations of the topic, this study used a qualitative intrinsic case study approach. An intrinsic case study approach was considered most suitable for capturing and examining teachers' ideas on teaching history and making meaning (Lichtman, 2013), especially with teachers from the same high school and department. Moreover, I performed a content analysis on a variety of texts, such as state-level legislation around teaching the Holocaust, and the teachers' curricula, textbooks, and materials, to capture “the meaning, symbolic qualities and expressive content...they play in the lives of the data's sources” (Krippendorff, 36, 2004).

Knowing that the goal of qualitative research is often to ascertain the “how” and “what” of some phenomenon, the study sought to know what teachers thought about the Holocaust and how those thoughts influenced their teaching of the topic. Through careful analyses of state legislation, state and local curriculum, interviews with teachers, observations of their teaching,

and a close examination of their teaching materials, this study sought to answer the following question:

How do three in-service teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust?

Subordinate questions include:

1. How do the teachers define the event and narrate or frame the rationale for teaching it and its causes, course stages, consequences, historical actors, and lessons?
2. How does their conceptualization influence or inform their interpretation of the curriculum and pedagogical decision-making?
3. In what ways do teachers feel they are supported in teaching the Holocaust?

In this study, I found that the participants mostly conceptualized—especially the causes, course stages, consequences, characters, and historical significance—the Holocaust in similar ways that were shaped by their personal interest in the topic and their formal educations, especially their training in history in college or university. As far as their teaching of the Holocaust was concerned—in particular their selection of materials, guides, strategies, assessments, and lessons or morals they were trying to impart to or impress upon their students—they were similar in their general approaches but differed in their selection, creation, and emphasis of material, including the application of knowledge. The differences in their approaches seemed to be explained by the state- and local requirements. Even though they were supposed to guide and support the participants in their teaching of the Holocaust, they were too limited, vague, and lacking in both enforcement and incentivization to direct or guide the teachers' pedagogical decisions in any meaningful way.

Theoretical Framework: Difficult Knowledge or History

As evidenced by the vignette in the beginning of this chapter, the Holocaust can stir strong emotions in a variety of different stakeholders in schools, including students and teachers, because of the ways it unsettles and disturbs people, which often stem from teachers' conceptualization and teaching of the topic. This study is framed by the scholarship on "difficult knowledge," drawing from Levy and Sheppard's (2018) seminal review of the literature of the emerging field and Stoddard's (2022) important expansion of their work to frame and explain the ideas and practices of teachers who teach the Holocaust. In order to capture the most relevant theories and scholarship on "difficult knowledge," this section will focus on the difference between scholarly history and history education, the various definitions of the term—and related ones—proposed by scholars in the field, the theories that underpin or inform the study of it, and the various ways it influences teachers' approaches to teaching difficult topics like the Holocaust.

Since some people conflate the fields of academic history and history education, it is important to disentangle and differentiate the two to better understand the way the subject is presented and taught in primary and secondary schools, especially topics that are considered "difficult knowledge" in school settings. As evidenced by introductory texts on historiography—i.e., the study of history and philosophy of history—academic or scholarly historians acknowledge historical narratives are cultural constructs that are created, shaped, and changed by a variety of different factors that might include the author's philosophical beliefs and temporal circumstances and the reader's responses which, in turn, are also affected by the internal and external processes and forces that influence their interpretation of the construct (Stoddard, 2018). Even the act of constructing academic historical narratives using traditional methods has been

challenged by scholars in the field, which means that even the creation of knowledge is fluid and subjective, including the kind that may or may not be considered difficult (Stoddard, 2021). It should be noted that this openness and acceptance—broadly speaking—of a wide variety of meaning making in the field has led scholars to acknowledge, accept, and braid the variously sized narrative strands of dominant and non-dominant groups and individuals into every level of historical inquiry from granular local stories to grand national—and even international—narratives.

Unlike scholarly history, though, the historical narratives in curriculums and textbooks in primary and secondary schools are often “presented as static and objective” (Stoddard, 2021; VanSledright, 2010). As a result, they are often presented as the true or truthful story of the rise to power of the dominant group in a nation and the world and its—either the nation’s or the group’s, which are often conflated—positive political, economic, cultural, and social progress through time to an idealized version of the present. In so doing, though, they often ignore or minimizing the narratives on non-dominant groups. Often times, the history of these groups include collective traumatization caused by state-sanctioned violence directed intentionally or unintentionally against them by the dominant group (Stoddard, 2021). The difference between these two competing or contradictory versions of the “truth” results in potentially unsettling intellectual and emotional encounters with dissonant historical narratives—i.e., ones that seemingly contradict or confound more accepted national ones—for teachers and students in school settings. Educational scholars, therefore have termed these encounters “difficult knowledge.”

This narrative dissonance has the potential to unsettle in a variety of ways different stakeholders in an educational system, which is why it is considered difficult knowledge. Though

historical social trauma and violence often is the cause of this emotionally unsettling encounter, it should be noted that this dissonance in the narrative can also induce emotional unsettlement in both teachers and students. More specifically, it might trigger an intellectual or existential crisis while delving deeply into philosophical discussions, like ones centered on ethics, morality, and meaning. Though these discussions can sometimes appear more esoteric or theoretical, they can be applied to a variety of different real world scenarios. In particular, they can include the motivations and decision-making of Holocaust victims, perpetrators, and bystanders that might—in turn—be or not be affected by historical empathy and distance.

So, what is difficult knowledge and how is it conceptualized or theorized? In the last few years, especially since 1998, theorists have defined, refined, and expanded on the concept of “difficult knowledge,” using a variety of different approaches ranging from psychoanalysis to critical social-cultural theory and examined the ways teachers and students have encountered, reacted to, and processed it. Having become popularized in the 1980s with a re-ignition of interest in Holocaust studies, which was catalyzed by the release of movies like *Schindler’s List* and the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., theorists have been keen to define and refine or expand “difficult knowledge” using a variety of different approaches ranging from psychoanalysis to critical social-cultural theory, and scholars have designed a limited amount of empirical studies to examine the ways these theories explain how teachers and students encounter, react, and process it.

Using psychoanalytic theory, which makes evident the internal processes that shape people’s meaning making and perceptions of their reality, Britzman (1998) was the first to use the term “difficult knowledge” to describe the presentation of social trauma and the ways people encountered it in education (Pitt & Britzman, 2005). Recognizing that these encounters often

generate strong emotions, Garrett (2011) and others noted that some teachers and students might sometimes resist these emotional encounters with a traumatic past because of the potential for “affective dissonance,” which are negative emotions that result from feelings of hopelessness in encountering tragic historical events (Levy & Sheppard, 2018; Miles, 2019; Simon, 2011, 2014; Zembylas, 2014). Zembylas (2014) and others, though, argued that it could lead to an “affective turn” which is an action-oriented response in students aiming to correct—or prevent—present and future social traumas.

Recognizing that psychoanalytical theory is neither easily generalizable nor takes into account the socio-cultural context of the encounter, Wertsch (2002) argued that people create and learn knowledge within a cultural context, which means their meaning making and response to narratives of the past are influenced by their group identification, lived experiences, and power dynamics in society. Others, who have added a critical component to this theory, believe that encounters with difficult knowledge occur because narratives that deviate from the traditional ones expose asymmetrical power relationships in a society, which people are forced to recognize and negotiate (Epstein & Peck, 2018). Some, though, like Goldberg (2018), believe that a hybrid approach—i.e., one that integrates psychoanalysis and critical social-cultural theory—best captures the different reactions teachers and students have reported in a limited number of empirical studies. Using this hybrid theory, Goldberg was able to record and explain the wide variety of reactions and non-reactions of students studying the Holocaust that could be attributed to both their internal processing and identity, their temporal and physical context, and their membership in a variety of different groups that allow them to identify—or not—as victims, perpetrators, and bystanders.

The degree to which individuals or groups emotionally engage with difficult knowledge is oftentimes determined by their perceived distance to the topic or issues that do or do not induce those feelings. That distance might be influenced by a variety of different factors: Time, geographic, and socio-political context and identity (Sheppard & Levy, 2018). Because of these factors, teachers and students might either believe that they are closer to the difficult topic or more removed from it because of the time that has elapsed since it occurred, proximity or affiliation to the place it happened, or belief that it is related to a similar topic today or happened to—or because of—historical groups or individual actors that they identify with in one or multiple ways. That explains why some topics resonate with certain people: they feel close or connected to them while they do not resonate with others because they feel distant and disconnected from it (Stoddard, 2021).

Narrative dissonance, then, occurs when two stories, especially a grand narrative and minor strand, do not weave or blend into a harmonious whole because a discordant note is struck by the minor strand or chord that sometimes contradicts or criticizes the grander story, which has the potential to unsettle school-based individuals emotionally and cognitively in various ways that are considered “difficult knowledge.” Though historical social trauma and violence often is the cause of this unsettling emotional encounter, it should be noted that this dissonance in the narrative can also induce emotional unsettlement in both teachers and students. This might trigger an intellectual or existential crisis while delving deeply into philosophical discussions, like ones centered on ethics, morality, and meaning, which often arise in discussions that appear to be more esoteric or theoretical but can be applied to a variety of different real-world scenarios, including the motivations and decision-making of Holocaust victims, perpetrators, and bystanders that might, in turn, be affected by historical empathy and distance.

So, how does the scholarship on difficult knowledge inform, explain and/or influence teachers' conceptualization and teaching of the Holocaust? The theories I have reviewed here help explain the intersection between internal processing, individual and group identity, and temporal and spatial context that results in cognitive and emotional unsettlement in teachers and students when they are confronted with difficult knowledge and history, which seems to inform and influence the ways teacher's think about and teach the Holocaust in their classrooms. First and foremost, though, it should be noted that administrative and community support arguably play the biggest role in what and how teachers teach their classes, especially difficult knowledge or history, because without or with minimal support many teachers will either avoid the topic or present it in the most clinical way possible to avoid the kind of student unsettlement that might lead to complaints that result in uncomfortable explanatory or disciplinary meetings with parents and/or administrators. If they have community and administrative support—and are experienced, conscientious teachers concerned with student learning—they are able to teach these topics in ways that will presumably engage and unsettle their students intellectually and emotionally to expand and deepen their knowledge of the topic, which might even spur them to act to correct historical or current ills related to the topic (Zembylas, 2014).

When teachers are supported and have a certain degree of autonomy in instructional and curricular decision-making within their classrooms, similar to Stephen Thorton's "instructional gatekeeping" idea (1989), the scholarship suggests that a variety of different factors influence their conceptualization and pedagogy on teaching the Holocaust, including their—and, in some cases, their students'—distance to the topic, individual and group positionality, socio-political context, rationale for teaching it, preferred methodological approach, and desired outcomes. This study, heeding Stoddard's (2022) call for more empirical studies on teachers' conceptualizations

and teaching of difficult topics, contributes to refining the theoretical work on this important topic. Moreover, it will hopefully aid teachers in the ways they conceptualize and teach these topics, especially the Holocaust.

Chapter 2

Holocaust Education Literature Review

The research on Holocaust education focuses on why it is taught, when it is taught, where it is taught, what is taught, to whom it is taught, and in which context it is taught (Levy & Sheppard, 2018), which guided me in finding relevant approaches and scholarship to help me answer my main and subordinate research questions:

How do three in-service teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust?

1. How do the teachers define the event and narrate or frame the rationale for teaching it and its causes, course stages, consequences, historical actors, and lessons?
2. How does their conceptualization influence or inform their interpretation of the curriculum and pedagogical decision-making?
3. In what ways do teachers feel they are supported in teaching the Holocaust?

According to Fallace (2006), the teaching of the subject started in earnest between 1973 and 1975 with a few teachers—influenced by a rising tide of Holocaust consciousness in academic circles and in popular culture—who introduced it in their classrooms and seemed to shape the three most influential curriculums on the topic today. As an event that is taught because of its unique and unprecedented features, as well as its universal appeal, the Holocaust is taught very differently in different contexts (Bauer, 2001; Feinberg, 2010). Quite frequently, it is taught as an example of difficult knowledge to imbue students with lessons about empathy and morality. Due to contextual differences, though, it is often taught differently because different national, state, and local authorities disagree on curricular designs, supporting theories and appropriate analogies, materials and methods, and rationales for teaching it, which creates tremendous variation in why and how it is taught from place to place (Levy & Sheppard, 2018, p.

365). In most places, though, there is agreement that there are valid reasons for teaching it and equally valid lessons that can be drawn from studying it. The problem or challenge, according to scholars, is determining the most compelling reason why it is taught, how it is taught, and the key lessons that should be learned from studying it (Levy & Sheppard, 2018). As a result, scholars have focused heavily on the rationale for teaching and lessons that can be learned from studying the Holocaust as a significant subtopic of a difficult knowledge curriculum (Levy & Sheppard, 2018)

Rationale for Teaching the Holocaust

Thought it might seem like an obvious topic to teach in school—even though it is a difficult one (Britzmann, 1998; Pitt & Britzmann, 2009; Simon, 2011)—scholars argue that it should be taught for a variety of reasons that might vary teacher-to-teacher and across contexts. In an early and influential study, the Holocaust survivor and scholar Friedlander (1979) cautioned teachers to carefully consider their reasons for teaching such an emotionally fraught topic. After his early caution, other scholars have generated a number of reasons for teaching it, which Levy and Sheppard (2018) believe should drive the study of it; however, they do acknowledge that, as the reasons have become more difficult and complex, fierce scholarly debates have raged over the most valid rationales for teaching it.

To justify its prominent place in social studies curricula, scholars have articulated a variety of different rationales for teaching it. Dawidowisz (1998) and Totten (2008) argued that it should be taught to prevent similar events from happening in the future by recognizing and eliminating its known antecedents of intolerance and racism. Others, meanwhile, argue that there are compelling cognitive and affective reasons for teaching it. As a controversial topic, Cowan and Maitles (2016) contend that it represents an opportunity to teach critical thinking skills and

multiperspectivity; as a difficult topic, Baum (1996) claimed that it is an opportunity to teach and develop student empathy for persecuted groups.

One of the leading voices in this debate is Samuel Totten. Having contributed several significant works on the topic both by himself and in collaboration with others, most notably Parsons and Feinberg, he and his colleagues have identified multiple reasons for teaching the Holocaust. The most commonly articulated reasons are to teach students to identify and discuss the use and abuse of power, especially civil and human rights abuses; to recognize that genocidal acts are predictable and preventable; to be a rescuer instead of a bystander is imperative to stop the human rights abuses of other humans (Totten, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001; Totten & Feinberg, 1999; Totten & Parson, 1991). In the end, though, he believes that teachers should choose just one of the reasons to guide their design and delivery of Holocaust instruction, including their choice of materials, instructional strategies, and assessments (Totten, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001; Totten & Feinberg, 1999; Totten & Parson, 1991). In narrowing their choice down to one reason, Totten argues that they should consciously choose one rationale over others and should be able to convincingly defend their choice in a clear, cogent, and concise manner (Totten & Feinberg, 2016).

In short, a good rationale should capture both the unique place of the Holocaust in history while also recognizing its universal application as a model to teach students about past suffering. It should also guide their cognitive and emotional decisions to act now and in the future to combat all immoral acts, especially ones that lead to structural and institutional suffering and injustice. More specifically, the lessons are supposed to make them ethical and moral agents who, having learned from the suffering of others, will prevent present and future abuse of power that lead to human rights abuses and genocide (Britzman, 2000; Fine, 1995; Lundqvist, 2011;

Schweber, 2004; Totten & Feinberg, 2016). McKnight (2004) goes further in arguing teachers should teach difficult histories like the Holocaust to “transform students into actors because they [will] be moved from emotional response to critical analysis... to... assume responsibility... and propagate more universal expression of human freedom through their actions” (p. 334). In other words, he wants students to apply the lesson they learn from the Holocaust to eliminate all forms of prejudice and discrimination to prevent it from escalating into something more sinister. Feldman (1992) cautions, though, through teaching shocking testimony to her college-level students—she taught a unit on *The Diary of Ann Frank*—induced existential crises in her students. This clearly troubled them and her, but it led them to truly “recognize the horrific” and learned to put that knowledge to good use “because they were shocked [and] moved” to action (pg.53). Other scholars also urge caution in encouraging agency in students and advocate for “responsible pedagogy” that recognizes and clarifies the reasons for non-action on the part of vilified historical bystanders because the circumstances might have made it very difficult to confront perpetrators and rescue victims (Garrett, 2012). In his influential work, LaCapra argues that “emphatic unsettlement” should transform their conceptions and understanding of being human living in the world (p. 78). But, he cautions, this emphasis on the horrific might not lead to “humanizing or uplifting accounts—6 million people were brutally murdered in the camps—which might not lead to ‘reassurances or...benefits’” (p. 41) and could negate some of the reasons for teaching it.

Holocaust Curricula and Textbooks in America and Abroad

Though scholars vigorously discuss the variety of reasons for teaching the Holocaust in schools, they all agree it should be taught. As a result, organizations have emerged to shape the way it is taught through teaching materials and curriculums, professional development

opportunities, exhibits, site visits, and databases that greatly influences the scholarship and delivery of Holocaust education by scholars and classroom teachers alike.

Bromley and Russell (2010) have written the definitive study on Holocaust textbooks by analyzing 465 texts from 69 countries to identify the broad trends and themes in Holocaust educational from 1970 through 2008. They found that two major narrative constructions emerged. First and foremost, they discovered that most educators recognize its unique position as one of the most singularly horrific events in world history. Second, they also discovered that most educators recognize its universality because it can be used to highlight globally unacceptable behavior, which is important for teaching universally relevant lessons on tolerance and peace that links to human rights. As such, the moral components of the Holocaust triggers emotional responses in students that form attitudes and principles leading to acceptable narratives of good and evil and right and wrong which, in time, should lead to good moral and ethical behavior. In other words, they claim there has been a shift over time from an emphasis on peace, tolerance, and the uniqueness of the event to a more relevant one that emphasizes the human rights narrative. This shift aspires to create active, engaged, and morally upstanding global citizens who will act in the face of injustice in the future.

Some political leaders, though, included it in their national curricula for other reasons; some do it to teach European Union values for entry into the organization while others advocate for its inclusion in the curriculum to deflect attention away from their own human rights records (Levy & Sheppard, 2018). Writing in support of Bromley and Russell's research, though, Eckman (2015) argues explicitly that it should be a tool for human rights education. The context—or country—in which it is taught seems to matter. A country's perception of itself as a perpetrator, bystander or victim of the Nazis, then, greatly seems to impact why and how it is

studied. In their comprehensive study of Holocaust education in Germany from 2010, Boscheki and colleagues (2010) found the German education system focused very heavily on their country's perpetrator status from the 1960s through the 1970s with a heavy emphasis placed on the role high-ranking Nazis and ordinary Germans played in planning and execution of the genocide. Then, after 1980, the focus shifted away from the perpetrators – i.e., the Nazis – to focusing on the victims, specifically the oppression, suffering and murder of the thriving Jewish community in Germany by the Nazis, which was taught through classes in school, memorial days, sites, adult education classes, and visits to Auschwitz and other camps through a variety of different mediums, including stand-up instruction, films, and the internet. In short, the students focused more on the lives of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and less on the actions of the Nazi perpetrators.

In Ukraine, Deich (2006) analyzed post-independence textbooks and found that they—similar to the Polish scholarship—emphasized that Jews and non-Jews were equally oppressed by the Nazis, even though there is ample evidence to demonstrate that the Jews were eradicated in much large numbers than other groups by the Einsatzgruppen, who were greatly aided by Ukrainian collaborators in 1941. According to Rosengarten (2015), Poland and Ukraine and other countries with complicated Holocaust histories need to “experience a reckoning with a revision that will turn the official histories inside out and upside down to reflect the twisted, torn, bent, reconstituted or admitted truths” of the real story (p. 372).

In the homeland of the victims of the Holocaust, Israel's evolving contexts – especially space, place, time and identity – have influence the changing nature of the Holocaust narrative in its curriculum (Gross, 2015). The authoritative voice in Israel on this topic is Dina Porat (2004), whose influential work traced this evolving view of the event over time in textbooks and the

national curriculum. According to her, the Holocaust was largely absent from the curriculum after World War II because the founders of the new state of Israel chose to deemphasize the victimization of Jews, which they viewed as a weakness. Instead, they decided to emphasize the Warsaw Uprising rather than the murder in the camps until the 1960s. Then, in the wake of the 1961 trial of Adolph Eichman, one of the infamous architects of the Holocaust who was captured in Argentina after the war and transported to Israel to answer for his crimes, it was elevated in importance the Israeli national curriculum and given equal status to other identity-defining events in Israel history like the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to Porat, the Holocaust was raised to the single most defining event in Jewish identify formation from the 1980s through today. Still, she struggles with this centrality because she wonders how it is transmitted, received, and fully comprehended by young Israeli students.

Teaching about the Holocaust

Though there are numerous studies on how teachers teach the Holocaust, this section will specifically focus on their approaches, which includes the following considerations: age-appropriateness; context, content and themes; materials and activities; and other curricular decisions. Considered a defining event in modern history today, it is important to note that its rise to prominence in American social studies classrooms and centrality in contemporary curricula did not start until the 1970s. The rising tide of Holocaust consciousness in scholarly circles and popular culture led a few teachers to include it in their curricula between 1973 and 1975 (Fallace, 2008). This initial movement strongly influenced the three major Holocaust curricula taught in America today, which have contributed to making it a central historical topic in many school curricula that should be studied for its uniqueness and universality to teach students to recognize and prevent human rights abuses, including genocide.

Because it is an intellectually and emotionally challenging topic, scholars have debated the appropriate grade-level to introduce and teach it. Whereas Sippenwall (1999) argued that primary school teachers should introduce it to their students, most scholars contend that younger students are not prepared to study such a difficult topic, but they disagree on whether or not it should be introduced to middle schoolers. They all, though, seemed to agree that it should be taught more in-depth to high school students because they are best equipped emotionally and mentally to study such a difficult topic (Donvite, 2003; Kochan, 1989; Maitles & Cowan, 2007; Short, 2005).

Recognizing the difficulty of teaching arguably the most horrific event in modern history, scholars also argue that teachers must carefully consider their approach to teaching it. Linquist (2008) argued that teachers must pay special attention to historical accuracy, topics covered, and material selection—especially since some of it can be graphic—because of the emotional turmoil students might experience in encountering the horrific. As a result, Bergen (2005) cautioned teachers to carefully contextualize the event to accurately identify its causes before exploring the “whys, hows, whens, and wheres” (Totten & Feinberg, 1992). This approach is recommended to highlight the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its usefulness as a template to study—and compare—other crimes against humanity, including genocides. Short’s (2005) study of 14- to 16-year olds comparing the Holocaust and genocide in Rwanda highlighted the importance of this approach, because the students were unable to make meaning out of the two events and compare them due to their teacher’s failure to properly contextualize them. This conclusion is supported by the findings of Gates-Duffield (2008) in a similar study using an intervention and control group.

A closer examination of the teachers' approaches, though, reveals that, in addition to context, they made meaning of the genocides in different ways—i.e., articulating causes, course stages, and consequences—which resulted in different student learning. In other words, their understanding of the historical theory to make meaning out of the two events, and construct a framework to compare them, seemed to seriously impact their students' ability to gain and retain basic knowledge about the two genocides and compare them. This is what British scholars of history education define as “second-order thinking” because it allows teachers and students to make meaning, frame or conceptualize “first-order thinking”—i.e., facts or content like names, dates, and places—into the narrative constructs of causes, course stages, consequences, and characters that give structure and meaning to historical events and stories (Lee & Ashby, 2000).

In addition to proper contextualization, scholars suggest that teachers should use primary sources and emphasize a variety of different themes, especially morality, in their approach to the Holocaust. Some stress the need to teach the following themes: multifaceted human behavior; human rights abuses; multiperspectivity and positionality; and decision-making (Banks, 1993; Baum, 1996; Berkowitz, 1987; Endacott & Sturtz; Shawn, 2001).

The often-cited research team of Feinberg and Totten (1995) argued that teachers should also use first-person memoirs because it will humanize the victims of the genocide and develop empathy in students while also using secondary sources to examine the why, how, what, when, and where of the Holocaust. They also argued that both the uniqueness and universality of the event should be taught with a special emphasis on themes of exclusion: less about crimes and more about the lives of the victims; less about death camps and more about the prejudice and discrimination that lead to the camps; less about the herding of Jews into ghettos, camps and chambers and more about Nazi deceit and power; less about rescuers and more about the policies

that lead to the genocide; less about perpetrators and more about the roles of bystanders and victim; less about passivity and victimization of Jews and more about resistance and blaming the perpetrators; and less about obedience to power and more about the terror tactics of the Nazis. According to them, the absence or de-emphasis of these themes explain students' lack of understanding of different aspects of the event and the actions of decision-making which, in turn, influences teachers' choice of materials, activities and instructional strategies.

Schweber (1998) is another influential scholar who has written extensively and persuasively about the themes that teachers should emphasize in their approach to teaching the Holocaust. She argued that the following core themes should be taught: the racial prejudice that led to state-sanctioned discrimination; the dangers of silence and non-action that emboldens and escalates the actions of the perpetrators; the bureaucratization and industrialization of genocide; and the danger signs in language, action, and policies that lead to mass extermination. Though morality seems to be a fairly important, and rather obvious, theme that should be taught in a Holocaust unit, Schweber (1998) found that it is rarely explicitly taught and, therefore, learned. This is problematic because students might know the facts of the event but not whether it was right or wrong. Interestingly enough, Tuiberg and Weisberg (2003) found that some teachers who attempted to teach their students about morality in the context of the Holocaust their students often excused the behavior of bystanders, and often absolved them of any complicity in the genocide, because they believed that the context or consequences of their actions made it impossible for them to prevent the genocide. This suggests that they were taught moral relativism and ambiguity, which does not align with the moral philosophy of human rights that value saving all life because it is equally valuable.

Even though contextualization, multiperspectivity, and the inclusion of various themes collectively contributed to teaching approaches that lead to positive student outcomes (Crass, 2020), they demand a lot of content and pedagogical knowledge on the part of the teacher. Unfortunately, some scholars have argued that teachers are deterred from teaching the Holocaust because they do not believe that they are not academically or emotionally prepared to teach such a difficult topic in an effective way (Donnelly, 2006; Lundquist, 2007). Shawn (1995) confirmed that teachers must have a firm grasp of content knowledge to teach it effectively. A study by Holt (2001) found that 80% of teachers in Indiana were not familiar with key aspects of the Holocaust because they were unfamiliar with it from their pre-service social studies education programs—and, apparently, in-service programs—so they had to teach themselves about it before teaching it to their students, which resulted in ineffective teaching. Schweber (1994) asserted that most teachers use a content or fact-based approach to teaching Holocaust that is often riddled with errors and lacks the teaching of concepts for comparative analysis, moral reasoning, and historical empathy. Totten and Riley (2002) largely agreed with Schweber and argued that the absence of teaching higher order thinking skills prevented students from recognizing the unique features of the event itself and comparing it, or applying lessons from it, to the study of related events involving human rights abuses and crimes against humanity.

Learning About the Holocaust

Though student learning is an understudied area in Holocaust education, there are three influential studies on the topic that should be noted. In Germany, the work of two teams of researchers are particularly instructive; in America, Simone Schweber has contributed to this emerging area of research.

In an influential study, Boschki and his team conducted a number of qualitative and quantitative studies focused on student learning about the Holocaust in Germany. They concluded that students know quite a bit about the event, but they conceive of it in different ways that might be misinformed and superficial (Boschki et al., 2010). In their study, they found that the curriculum and instruction was geared towards cognitive content and rational analysis of the event. They also noted that the students took a field trip to an infamous camp named Nazweiler in Alsace, France, which, based on the observations of the researchers, led to some emotionally charged and difficult student discussions amongst themselves that was not acknowledged by the teacher nor explored in class (Boschki et al., 2010). As a result, the students' main lessons from the unit were that Hitler and the Nazis were primarily responsible for the war crimes, which largely absolved ordinary Germans of any of those crimes, including the Holocaust, because it was committed by Hitler and his followers (Boschki, et al., 2010). Jews were simply victims of his crimes along with other foreigners, which seems to play into the Nazi narrative of Jews as the 'other' in German society.

In another study, Meseth and Protske (2010) conducted an in-depth study of four classrooms covering units on the Nazis and the Holocaust in Germany. They argued that in the land of perpetrators teachers must transmit moral positions such as "identification with victims, empathy for persecuted people, and rejection of violence and discrimination" (p. 206-207) to imbue in the students a sense of righteousness and action that they will prevent such events in the future.

In the first case study, they examined a teacher's attempt to teach moral duty through a documentary on a Jewish man confronting his former friend who refused to defend him against members of the *Hitler Jungen*, a youth organization established to indoctrinate Nazi ideology in

young Germans. While the students wanted to deconstruct the interaction to discuss the uncomfortable issues it raised—the nature of friendship, responsibility, etc. —the teacher simply wanted to focus on the topics he wanted the students to take away from the film. The students, then, were unable to process their thoughts and feelings on the topic (Meseth & Protske, 2010).

In the second case study, the teacher assigned a passage from *Mein Kampf* and expected the students to express moral outrage while summarizing the content of the passage (Meseth & Protske, 2010). When, instead, they simply summarized the content with no editorial comments or expressed thoughts or feelings that did not conform to the teacher's expectations, he accused them of being stupid and immoral (Meseth & Protske, 2010). In other words, when the curriculum material did not elicit the teacher's expected response, largely because of his inadequate directions, students failed to live up to his expectations for emotional engagement (Meseth & Protske, 2010). In the third case, the students' prior knowledge of the Holocaust influenced the discourse in the classroom because they groaned to indicate their displeasure when their teacher, who curiously ignored their reactions, told them that they would be spending a semester on the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, which might be attributable to "Holocaust fatigue" (Schweber, 2006).

In the fourth case, the researchers argued that the teacher succeeded pedagogically by creating openness in the classroom. They characterized this openness as an environment where students were encouraged to speak frankly and honestly about the horrors of the Nazi regime with sufficient time for discussing open-ended questions with which historians traditionally struggled. This was successful because the students were allowed to reflect on their own morality during a discussion on whether Hitler was a demagogue and why people decided to follow him (Meseth & Protske, 2010). In general, German teachers failed to properly communicate

important cognitive and affective lessons about empathy, remembrance, and future vigilance to their students.

Having probably conducted the most thoughtful and thorough study on Holocaust education in America, Schweber has demonstrated that there is a great deal of complexity in the ways teachers teach it and the ways students learn about it (Schweber, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Schweber & Irwin 2003). Since her work primarily focuses on the moral messages that students are supposed to learn from studying the topic, she argues that students are learning those lessons in more complex ways than their teachers or curriculum designers had thought. In her most influential book, she argues that some teachers instill valuable moral lessons in their students without teaching them accurate information about the Holocaust itself, even though they were trained by FHAO and designed a class on the topic based on their curriculum (Schweber, 2006b).

In another study of the FHAO approach, a team of researchers led by Barr (2005) conducted a randomized controlled trial on participants attending a weeklong professional development training arranged by the organization. They found that the teachers seemed to create more open classrooms, civic learning, and democratic participation when using FHOA's approach. This outcome was evidenced by their students' increased abilities to analyze historical evidence, causation, human agency, civic efficacy, and tolerance (Barr et al., 2005). More importantly, their research seems to demonstrate that students both understand historical events and draw lessons applicable to their own lives from the study of it (Barr et al., 2005). Even though the findings are intriguing, the study does have problems with invalidated measures of historical thinking, no student responses or teacher contextualization, and no evidence of student emotional engagement (Levy & Shepperd, 2018).

In a study commissioned by the USHMM, Donnelly (2006) revealed that 88% of teachers in the United States teach the Holocaust from a human rights perspective, which means that they believe it is an unusual historical event with valuable lessons to teach students about prejudice, discrimination and oppression. Interestingly enough, the study does not explicitly describe the human rights perspective. This highlights a problem that Schweber and other scholars raise with the human rights approach because it often fails to recognize the human rights issues in students' own ethnic backgrounds, which might limit what students learn from and do with it. More specifically, if students do not identify with an ethnic group that has experienced human rights violations in the past, then they are less likely to empathize with others who have been violated (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Schweber, 2006a).

Educational Leadership on the Holocaust

Even though there is a dearth of information on the role that educational leaders play in Holocaust education in school, Stoddard (2021) argues that the community and school administrators' support for teaching this difficult topic has the greatest influence on if and how it is taught in schools. Without their support for teachers' approaches, choice of materials, and strategies, and particularly for engaging their students in difficult discussions, the teacher, even though they might conceptualize the topic in unsettling and nuanced ways, is more likely to use a more traditional approach to teaching the topic to avoid trouble. In particular, they will teach it using non-controversial facts-based reading- and study guides wrapped around a lecture rather than readings, projects, and discussions that might stimulate debate and unsettlement. Due to the paucity of empirical research on educational leadership's role in and support for Holocaust education, many of the aforementioned theories are based on anecdotal information and suppositional in nature.

The Future of Holocaust Education

Moving forward, teachers and Holocaust education researchers need to focus on some areas of the field that are understudied and poorly understood. Even though some research suggests Holocaust education might increase moral reasoning, ethical thinking, social justice, and civic engagement, the study of the topic does not necessarily—despite educators’ best efforts—improve students’ understanding of human rights and empathy (Barr et al., 2015; Fine, 1995; Schweber, 2004). Even when teachers have well-crafted lessons, clear rationales, often ones that support and elicit a moral response and action, with accurate and engaging resources, they might not produce the desired response from students because they are suffering from emotional breakdowns trying to process the extreme suffering of others, which seems to bother both students and teachers alike (Britzman, 1998; Felman, 1992; Garrett, 2014; LaCapra, 2001; Simon & Eppert, 1997; Tarc 2011). Some argue that this problem can be solved by creating communities of learning that will allow students to process encounters with suffering (Simon & Eppert, 1997; LaCapra, 2011; Zembylas, 2006). Others, though, believe that this can be achieved by involving students in creating and re-creating historical narratives by reconciling individual and collective histories, which allows them to view and shape the Holocaust narrative through the prism of their own identities and contexts (Garrett, 2012; Gaudelli et al, 2012; Tarc, 2011).

Recognizing that most of the scholarship on the future direction of Holocaust education focuses on students’ emotional preparedness and response to studying the suffering of others, Schweber has argued that more research should focus on how teachers are teaching the topic in their classrooms to better understand how students are learning it, including their emotional responses to it and the lessons they should draw from it (Schweber, 2011). Even though some

have studied the teachers' approaches, including the materials and methods they employ and their students' responses, there is limited research on teachers' conceptualization of the topic.

Whereas some scholars seem to define conceptualization or approach as the way teachers should teach the Holocaust, conceptualization in this study is used to describe the ways teachers think about or make meaning of the historical event that shapes or frames their construction of it which, in turn, informs or drives their approach to teaching it. Crass (2020), for example, seems to use the term "approach" and "conceptualization" fairly interchangeably to describe the aforementioned pedagogical choices that teachers make to teach the topic. Others, most notably Goldberg (2012), use the terms to discuss teachers' cognitive meaning making of the process that largely determines their pedagogical approach. This forethought, then, seems to fully inform their approach which, as evidenced by the paucity of scholarship on the topic, seems to be an understudied aspect of Holocaust education and might explain the wide variety of teachers' approaches to it. Instead of defining conceptualization or approach as the way teachers should imagine and teach the Holocaust, this study sought to examine the way teachers conceptualized the Holocaust, that is, make narrative meaning out of it, which informed their whole approach to teaching it.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Unlike the work of scholars who have defined “conceptualization” as the way teachers approach teaching the Holocaust, this study seeks to better understand teachers’ meaning making and construction of the Holocaust as a narrative event. Such constructions underpin and inform their pedagogical choices, their classroom culture, their reasons for teaching a topic, their choice of materials, their methodological approaches, and their informal and formal assignments and assessments. As evidenced by the lack of scholarship on this specific topic, this study clarified the ways teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust.

It should be noted that the purpose of this study was not to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher practices, but to carefully collect and thoroughly analyze information. This study should serve as a springboard for scholars who are interested in how teachers conceptualize historical topics, especially difficult ones, and transmit their conceptualizations to their students through their instructional strategies and materials. This hopefully helps educational scholars better understand the ways teachers understand and decode concepts in curriculum guides in order to encode and transmit that understanding to their students. This research also helps explain the different ways teachers interpreted and taught the same curriculum to their students.

Moreover, the findings in this study will hopefully help educational leaders at the state- and local levels make better informed decisions about pre-service course requirements for aspiring social studies teachers, in-service professional development for practicing teachers, and curriculum design and material selection, including textbooks. Since the leaders are now able to make better and more informed decisions, teachers and teacher educators will also benefit from this study because concepts and terms can now be better articulated in curriculum guides, pre-

service and in-services trainings can now be developed, and better or more appropriate materials and resources can now be selected. Moreover, teachers and teacher educators will benefit from this study by comparing and contrasting their own conceptualizations and approaches to teaching of important topics with those of the participants. Recognizing that researchers learn from examining a topic in depth, I learned a lot during this process and believe it served as a foundation for my continued scholarship on this topic. The purpose of this chapter was to outline the methodology in the study, which was subdivided into the following sections: rationale, participants, data collection, data analysis, limitations, positionality, and trustworthiness.

Rationale for Case Studies and Content Analysis

According to Lichtmen (2013), case studies are suitable for capturing and examining teachers' ideas on teaching history because it helps make meaning using a qualitative approach and methodology. Creswell (1998) asserts that a case study approach allows researchers to deeply explore people, processes, and events. Some also argue that the flexible nature of the case study approach allows researchers to tailor this design to better fit their case and answer their specific research questions (Stake, 1995). Moreover, applying the case study approach to raw data makes it easier for researchers to develop themes when analyzing the data. More specifically, this case study used an intrinsic and content analysis approach for a variety of different reasons (Stake, 1995). Because of the uniqueness and worthiness of this study, an intrinsic case study approach, which the SAGE (2010) website defines as "the study of a case (e.g., person, specific group, occupation, department, organization) where the case itself is the primary interest in the explanation," was chosen because I endeavor to better understand how secondary social studies teachers in one Pennsylvania high school conceptualized and taught a topic that the state has strongly encouraged them to integrate into their curriculum through

legislation. In addition, a collective approach was selected to gain a more general understanding of teachers' thinking and pedagogy. Following the advice of Yin (1999), I identified multiple themes across cases—i.e., a cross case analysis—because I used multiple approaches.

I also used a content analysis, which Hiseh and Shannon (2005) defined as “a widely used qualitative research technique... used to interpret meaning from the content of text data,” on a variety of different texts. Since content analysis is used to capture “the meaning, symbolic qualities and expressive content... they play in the lives of the data's sources” (Krippendorf, 2004), I used it to analyze the legislation and curricula that conditioned and contextualized the participants' teaching, and the textbooks and materials that informed their conceptualization and teaching of the Holocaust.

Knowing that the goal of qualitative research is often to ascertain the “how” and “what” of some phenomenon, the study sought to know what teachers thought about the Holocaust and how those thoughts influenced their teaching of the topic. Through careful analyses of state legislation, state and local curriculum, interviews with teachers, observations of their teaching, and a close examination of their teaching materials, this study sought to answer the following questions:

How do three in-service teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust?

Subordinate questions:

1. Conceptually, how do the teachers define the event and narrate or frame the rationale for teaching it and its causes, course stages, consequences, historical actors, and lessons?
2. How does their conceptualization influence or inform their interpretation of the curriculum and pedagogical decision-making?
3. In what ways do teachers feel they are supported in teaching the Holocaust?

Research Context

This study, for a variety of different reasons, involved teachers from one Pennsylvania public high school. The school was selected because it was fairly representative of most PA schools demographically with a 40% working class minority population and 60% professional non-minority population. The high school served 1250 students in grades 9 through 12 with 30% of students on free or reduced lunch and 70% of teachers with five years of experience or more. The teacher-student ratio was approximately 1 to 16.

The school was chosen more specifically for a number of different reasons: First, Pennsylvania requires that the Holocaust be taught in all public districts throughout the Commonwealth, so it was important to pick a school in a state that required teaching of the topic to ensure it was actually included in the school's curriculum and taught by its teachers. Equally important, because this requirement was recently passed in the Commonwealth with limited recommendations for how and when it should be taught, Pennsylvania's districts were given a great deal of latitude by the state over where, when, and how it should be taught to students. The high school in this study was chosen because the Holocaust is taught directly and indirectly in three mandatory and sequenced courses grades 9 through 11. In addition, it was also taught in two elective classes, which produced copious amounts of data leading to a thorough and analytic overview of the topic.

More specifically, the ninth-grade class entitled "World Studies" was a fairly traditional Western Civilization course focused heavily on European history from the Renaissance through contemporary times. As a culminating activity, the Holocaust project at the end of the course expected the students to exhibit all of the social studies skills and concepts that they learned

throughout the year, including weaving primary, secondary, and statistical information into their research.

In the tenth grade, the teachers used the Holocaust as a template for teaching about other genocides perpetrated by various groups around the world in the 20th century. Students began by studying the legal definition of a genocide developed in the wake of World War II. Then, their teachers used examples from the Holocaust to introduce Stanton's Ten Stages of Genocide theory (2001), which they used as a template to analyze the causes, course stages, consequences, and characters of various large-scale crimes against humanity to determine if those events would be considered genocides.

In the 11th grade, the teachers wove the Holocaust into their study of America's participation of the World War II and touched on the causes, course stages, consequences, and characters of the event. In this class, though, the teachers taught the Holocaust from an American perspective that emphasized America's role as observer and bystander of the event until 1945. Then, once the country invaded Germany and liberated multiple camps, they discovered the extent of the Nazi atrocities, which resulted in prosecuting high-level Nazis and their collaborators for crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg Trials.

Lastly, the department also offered an elective to all students entitled "World War II." which included a unit on the Holocaust at the end of the course. Again, the students had to identify the causes, events, consequences, and characters in the event, but the instructor—because it was a half year course with limited instructional time—only delivered a brief presentation of the facts of the event and then showed the film "Schindler's List."

Participants

Even though Pennsylvania encourages the teaching of the topic in English classes, I

focused on secondary social studies teachers because the state's social studies advisor was tasked with encouraging and implementing the teaching of the topic throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, I selected only high school teachers for this study who were certified to teach social studies grades 9 through 12 in Pennsylvania with five years of experience teaching in their content area. The certification and years of experience suggested they were expert teachers who had reflected on the topic and refined their approach to teaching it. Of the nine social studies teachers in the department, three were included in the study because they agreed to participate and taught the Holocaust in their courses. The three who agreed to participate were interviewed three times, had their teaching materials closely examined, and were observed teaching lessons to their students, which enabled me to better understand their conceptualization and teaching of the Holocaust. The ones participated in the study represent a cross-section of social studies educators because they differ in age, experience, ethnicity, education, and area of origin. All of the eligible department members were given an overview of the study, the research questions, and a clear set of expectations as participants in the study.

Data Collection

I collected the data in a systematic and verifiable way, as recommended by Kruger (1998), with each participant representing a single case. The collection process began with interviews designed to gather information about the participant's backgrounds, conceptualizations of the Holocaust, and approaches to teaching it, which included an exploration of the literature that influenced their thinking and the materials they used to deliver instruction. All interviews were recorded in order to capture the participants' verbal responses to questions while the interviewer took extensive notes. The interviews were also transcribed as quickly as possible and stored in a secure place.

The participants were interviewed three times using a protocol recommended by Creswell (1998), which included a header, guiding questions, and space for notetaking. Whereas the header included basic information about the interview—i.e., date, time, location, participant name, etc. —the guiding questions focused on the teachers’ conceptualizations and pedagogy related to the Holocaust. A significant amount of space was also designated for notetaking, even though the interviews were recorded. It should be noted that closely following the interview protocol ensured consistency across interviews. The questions in the protocol were based on a review of scholarly work in the fields of history and Holocaust studies, textbooks, and my own personal experience with Holocaust education. (See Appendix)

Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured because a conversational approach afforded the interviewer enough latitude to investigate participant responses by allowing him to seek clarification and delve more deeply into discussions through open-ended questions. Kruger (1998) suggested that semi-structured interviews should include five types of questions: opening, introductory, transitions, key, and ending. Though this represented an excellent structure to frame the interview, it should be noted that there was some fluidity between these types to capture the anticipated iterative process of the interviews. I conducted three separate interviews with each participant that focused on their background and introduction to the Holocaust, their conceptualization of the topic, and their approach to teaching it.

The opening questions in each interview were designed to open the lines communication between the interlocutors and provided background information about the interviewee, which informed some of their response later in the interview. According to Krueger (1998), the introductory questions allowed the interviewees to reflect on their own experiences with the

topic. Next, the transition questions moved the conversation to the relevant study. Then, the key questions were designed to prompt the participants to discuss the research topic more directly and, according to Krueger (1998), led to the richest discussions and that require the interviewer to “probe and pause” (Crass, 2020) to allow for thoughtful and meaningful responses, which also prompted the participants to reflect on their conceptualizations and pedagogy. Lastly, the ending questions in each interview were overarching determined the interviewees’ feelings about the topic and also served to summarize and close the interviews.

In order to validate the interview protocols in this study, I interviewed a recently retired social studies teacher with experience teaching in a variety of different context, including a Pennsylvania public school. Based on that experience—and excepting a few adjustments in the recording and delivery of the interview—the protocol seemed well-suited to capture the data I needed for the dissertation.

There were some practical considerations that a seasoned interviewer might have corrected before piloting the questions. First, I learned to number the questions to make the interview process more efficient by avoiding interruptions in the flow of it. Second, I recorded it using a device and software that transcribed it for me, so I could focus more fully on my commentary—i.e., observations, questions, etc.—and the flow of the emerging conversation. It also caused me to reflect on my interview technique: when I assumed a more reserved and detached demeanor in the first the interview, the participant seemed—and later articulated—that it made him uncomfortable and defensive. As a result, I made a conscious decision to engage him more actively in the subsequent interviews by smiling and nodding, which seemed to put him at ease and elicited more substantial responses.

It also became evident during the interview process that I had to be careful about the leading nature and pointedness of some of my questions. Some, especially the follow-up questions, seemed too leading, so it seemed wise to simply ask the general question and allow the participant to answer it as he saw fit, though it necessitated some follow-up questions when he needed to elaborate or clarify his answers. Other questions made him uncomfortable and defensive because they seemed too pointed by suggesting that he was not aware of his own curriculum, recent scholarship on the topic, or recommended instructional strategies. As a result, I decided to re-phrase them slightly—and deliver them in a softer tone—to sound more inquisitive and less interrogational or accusatory.

The pilot demonstrated that the protocols were good with some minor tweaking to improve it for my actual dissertation research, which enabled me to collect richer verbal data that better validated my findings.

It must be noted that I was the main author of the teacher's stories or narratives created from these interviews. Because I wrote their stories, I presented their narratives through my interpretive lens, which was shaped by my understating and bounded by the context of this study. Cognizant of these issues, I asked the participants to comment on my telling of their stories. As someone who also conceptualized and taught the topic, I strove to build a good rapport with my fellow teachers as a participant observer and collaborator in this study, which hopefully led to a "We" rather than "I-Thou" relationship (Seidman, 2006). Interacting closely with them throughout the work day—including chatting in the halls, collaborating on lessons, and eating lunch with them—hopefully made the teachers feel more at ease and comfortable throughout the interviews, artifact collection process, and observations. Lastly, the interviews were recorded

using Apple software because allowed me to capture the participants' verbal and non-verbal language during the interview.

Content Analysis

In this case study I also analyzed the content of a number of documents. To better understand the broader contextual factors that shaped the participants' conceptualization of and approach to teaching the Holocaust, I examined state requirements and curriculum related to teaching it. I also analyzed the materials that the participants chose to use when they taught the topic, as well as their lesson plans, assignments, and materials they authored to teach it.

The external documents that I studied were Act 70, the state curriculum standards and materials, and the local curriculum maps that teacher were encouraged or required to follow to teach the Holocaust. I closely examined Act 70, the piece of legislation that strongly encouraged the teaching of the Holocaust in Pennsylvania schools, to better understand what the state wanted its educators to teach students about the topic. In addition, I closely studied the state curriculum standards, frameworks, resource guides, and in-service training programs that were supposed to support the implementation of Act 70. At the local level, I also analyzed the curriculum guides that teachers were required to follow in all of their courses.

Next, I analyzed the teaching materials that the teachers selected or created to teach the topic to their students. These documents revealed the ways the participants transmitted their conceptions of the Holocaust to their students—and uncovered their “values and beliefs” about the event (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). First, I read the textbook passages—and other pre-lesson readings— they assigned to their students to examine how they narrated or framed the topic for their students. Second, I reviewed the reading- and study guides they shared with their students to determine what they believed the main learning objectives should be from the readings. Next,

I reviewed their notes to determine what they emphasized in their lessons on the event. Then, I examined their projects to determine which topics they prioritize. Also, I analyzed the audio-visual materials—i.e., documentaries, movies, etc.—and websites they showed or recommend to their students to determine how those related to their conceptions of the event. Lastly, I examined their summative assessments of their Holocaust units to determine the main lessons they wanted their students to learn from studying the topic.

The examination of the external artifacts was to determine how, and if, they impacted the teachers' conceptualization and teaching of the Holocaust, whereas the analysis of the self-selected and created teaching materials was to ascertain the ways in which their conceptualizations of the topic were manifest in their practice.

Observations

I observed the participants in their classrooms as they delivered Holocaust lessons to their students. In an attempt to capture Reissman's (2008) dialogic approach to meaning-making, I observed how the teachers performed their lessons to their classes to capture how they communicated their conceptions of it to their students. I wrote thick descriptions and took copious notes to try to capture how the teachers' conceptualizations of the Holocaust manifest themselves in their choice of lesson materials and delivery with a special emphasis on the inclusion and exclusion of information, emphasis and de-emphasis of certain topics, and instructional strategies and materials.

Recognizing that the participants taught different courses that cover the Holocaust in a variety of different ways, the observations varied from teacher to teacher. In some classes, the teacher covered it as a known example of a genocide, so they only spent a class period or two reviewing and shoring up the students' already acquired knowledge of the topic. In such cases,

the observation of one period was often enough collect the necessary data. In other classes, it was introduced as a new unit of study that required multiple lessons—potentially more—because the teacher had to teach the entirety of the event using a variety of different instructional strategies. In those cases, I observed the lesson that was most relevant to this study, and I captured the rest of data through teacher interviews and reviews of materials to ensure that all of the relevant data was collected.

Data Analysis

This study used Yin's (2018) intrinsic data analysis approach because it did not include the use of any previously established theory or codes, which is commonly done in deductive analysis.

Inductive Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), data analysis is supposed to identify important categories of information, recognize common themes or trends between and within them, and convert them into interpretations and/or well-substantiated claims. More specifically, the process includes collecting and arranging the data into usable information, coding, and compression into recognizable trends and themes, and presenting it visually using a graphic organizer or discussing it, as evidenced by Creswell's analysis spiral (2018).

First and foremost, the data needed to be collected and organized. After each interview, the audio material was transcribed in a timely fashion, and my notes were fleshed out into fully developed text that was used in the study. Next, I read all the transcripts carefully in order to fully "immerse [myself] in the details" (Agar, 1980) and began the process of "memoing" (Creswell, 2018) ideas that surface by acquiring a better overview of the whole process. These memos took the form of notes in the margins and represented emerging codes. Finally, I

converted emerging codes into broad trends and themes, a process Creswell (2018) asserted was essential to building “detailed descriptions, apply codes, develop themes and dimensions, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views of perspectives in literature” while also situating the study in the context of current scholarship on the topic.

I then open coded the interviews, observations, and documents. First, I lean-code the information into 5 or 6 categories. Then, after reviewing the data and the initial categories, I created a more expansive list of codes. Next, after another review of the data and new categories, I compressed and condensed the codes down into a final codebook with descriptions of each listed code in order to make sense or meaning out of the data, as recommended by Cresswell (2018). Lastly, I converted my findings into graphic organizers in order to convert the aforementioned process into a visual display for potential viewers that hopefully made it easier to be understood and consumed for would-be readers, especially the emergence of themes.

Researcher Positionality

It is important to recognize and acknowledge my positionality in the study, specifically the ways my point of view and biases impacted my conceptualization and approach to the study, especially—as Lichtman states (2013)—how my “experience, knowledge, skills, and background” informed my research.

As someone who was born and raised by American academics in Norway, it should be noted that my early experiences were informed by individuals whose lives were touched by the Holocaust. For example, my surrogate grandmother during my formative years was a Jewish New Yorker who cultivated my earliest intellectual interests. My pediatrician was an Auschwitz survivor, which my parents realized when he rolled up his sleeve to reveal a numbered tattoo during my first visit. Additionally, I spent countless hours with my friends in old World War II

bunkers in Norway fighting imaginary German soldiers, and I spent a considerable amount of time in public libraries devouring history books on World War II while watching a number of documentaries on the war at night on Norwegian public television with my brother, which also included one about the Holocaust that I remember very vividly.

Then, after moving to America as a teenager, most of my work as a history major both as an undergraduate and graduate student centered on the Holocaust, and I seriously considered pursuing a Ph.D. in the history of the event with a specialization in the Norwegian Holocaust. I had developed my proposed inquiry into a project that would focus on the narrative themes in the memoirs of Norwegian camp survivors, including Robert Savosnik's book about his journey through the Nazi camp system and eventual release by the Allied forces. It should also be noted that my wife is Jewish and that we have two girls who identify as half-Jewish.

Because of my close, personal relationships with Jewish people and a deep, enduring academic interest in the Holocaust, the topic has featured prominently in my teaching for the last 25 years. It should also be noted that, from the very beginning of my career, I have always taught it in at least one of my classes. As the year-end culminating project for my students, they have to demonstrate all of the critical thinking, reading, and writing skills learned throughout the year in a project involving a hypothetical encounter with a Holocaust denier, which contributes to making it one of the most emotionally difficult topics taught all year.

It should also be noted that during the course of writing this proposal, I was elevated to Department Chair of the Social Studies Department I am examining in this study. As such, even though I do not hold a supervisory position—i.e., I am not responsible for evaluating any of the teachers I interviewed and observed during my study—it should be noted that, as a senior member of the department, younger and older colleagues do come to me for advice on how to

teach certain content, concepts, and skills because of my wealth of experience teaching almost of all of our course offerings in the department during my tenure in the school and district. It should also be noted that some of my younger colleagues were students in the school—and even had me as their teacher—during the early part of my career.

I should also disclose that I have collaborated with my colleagues in writing curriculum and selecting materials, including textbooks, to align with local, state and national standards, especially in Honors and Advanced World History. Moreover, I have aided my colleagues in aligning their curricula and materials more closely with a variety of different standards. It should be noted, though, that all of this work was done before I assumed my new position.

Having acknowledged all of my personal, academic, and professional connections to the topic, I know that all of my knowledge and experience with the Holocaust positioned me to collect, analyze, and contextualize the information I gathered as an expert. With that said, I was mindful of the fact that others do not have my background knowledge and interest in the topic, so their thoughts and approaches differed from mine. In particular, I was willing to acknowledge—and not judge—other teachers’ conceptualizations and approaches to teaching the Holocaust.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure the findings of this study were trustworthy, I applied eight verification procedures. In order to establish credibility, member checking was absolutely essential (Lincoln and Grub, 1985). In member checking, the participants were invited to check the veracity of their claims by reviewing all of the notes, transcription, and drafts involving their participation. It should be noted, though, that they did not view any of the identifying information provided by other participants throughout the research process. It was also incumbent on me to provide copies of the transcriptions while also sharing my findings with them to solicit their feedback. In

addition, I also used an external auditor—i.e., an expert in the field—to ensure that the findings were properly supported by the collected evidence (Creswell, 1998). Lastly, I collected data from multiple sources—i.e., interviews, teacher materials, classroom observations, state documents, and local curriculum guides—to triangulate it through the application of rigorous data analysis techniques that were consistent with the best practices in qualitative research.

Human Subjects in Research IRB

This study followed Temple University's strict guidelines for human subjects, which was review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). As such, it protected the well-being of individuals through informed consent, protection of confidentiality, and assessing risks and rewards. I was constantly mindful of "the moral principles of respect for the person, beneficence, and justice" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). After this study was approved by Temple University's IRB committee, I informed my participants that their involvement was voluntary, the purpose of the study, and the potential risks. I was also cognizant that the consent process was constantly evolving.

Limitations

Like most studies, this one also had several limitations. According to Fritchett, (2010), the secondary social studies field is "predominantly...male-dominated", as evidenced by 67% of practitioners being men, which makes the participants in this study a 33% minority in their field because they were all female. This, of course, represents a limitation of the study because the findings might not be transferable or generalizable to male teachers in the same profession. It should be noted, though, that the three participants were chosen mainly because they were willing to participate in the study whereas most of their male colleagues did not want to be interviewed and/or observed.

Also, because much of the data was collected through interviews, the teachers participating in the study were self-reporting their conceptualizations and approaches to teaching the Holocaust, which meant that they controlled the information they shared with me. Even though I attempted to triangulate the teachers' claims about their teaching practices through close examinations of their materials and observations of their classes, I could only make limited claims about what they actually taught based on the materials they shared with me and the classes they allowed me to observe, so I can only confirm that their retellings of their teaching were accurate to their actual practice based on what I read, saw, and heard.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that this study simply examined teachers' conceptualizations and approaches to teaching the Holocaust, so it made no claims about teacher effectiveness or student learning. It should also be noted that all of the participants were members of the same social studies department in the same school which, even though the school profile seemed to be representative of other suburban schools in Pennsylvania, represented a limited sample that cannot be generalized to represent the rest of the Commonwealth.

Chapter 4

Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from three case studies of social studies teachers' conceptualizations of the Holocaust. These cases are contextualized by a content analysis of the standards and textbooks that are meant to guide these teachers' approach to the content. The cases are composed of three interviews focused on the participants' backgrounds, conceptualization of the Holocaust, and their approach to teaching the event. I also observed each teacher at least once. This study sought to answer the following questions:

How do three in-service teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust?

My subordinate questions were:

4. Conceptually, how do the teachers define the event and narrate or frame the rationale for teaching it and its causes, course stages, consequences, historical actors, and lessons?
5. How does their conceptualization influence or inform their interpretation of the curriculum and pedagogical decision-making?

The first participant subsection focuses on various aspects of the teachers' backgrounds like their upbringing and self-identifying characteristics, pre-service study and experience, early service placements and current teaching context—including descriptions of courses and students—and general thoughts on the Holocaust and Holocaust education. The focus of the second participant subsection is on the teachers' conceptualization of the Holocaust. More specifically, it focuses on the ways in which they thought about the causes, course, consequences, characters, and historiography of the event. As far as characters were concerned, I was interested in both the groups of people involved in the event—i.e., perpetrators, victims, bystanders, rescuers, and laborers—and individuals like Adolf Hitler and Anne Frank.

The third participant subsection focuses on the teachers' approach to teaching of the Holocaust with a special emphasis on their choice of materials and texts, instructional strategies, formative and summative assessments, and metacognitive thoughts on the impact their participation in the study has had on them and their students as participating teacher-scholar.

Content Analysis

The content analysis focuses on the following documents: Act 70, which was the state's attempt at ensuring that the Holocaust and other topics are taught in the Commonwealth, though it is not a mandate but a strong recommendation; the Act 70 follow-up survey, which was a survey and commissioned by the Pennsylvania's General Assembly to ascertain how many public school entities taught the Holocaust and related topics in their school; state standards, which was uncovered the state's recommendations for teaching the Holocaust in its schools beyond Act 70; local curriculum guides, which determined what the participants' were required to teach about the Holocaust in their school district; textbooks, which revealed the basic Holocaust information content the participants' students had access to in their classes

Act 70

On June 26, 2014, the General Assembly of Pennsylvania passed Act 70, which "strongly encouraged school entities" to offer instruction in "Holocaust, genocide, and other human rights violations" with the goal of teaching students the "importance of the protection of human rights and the potential consequences of unchecked ignorance, discrimination and persecution." To that end, the Assembly wrote that school entities may offer instruction on those topics through an integrated approach "within social studies and language arts courses," but it also allowed for its "integration into other appropriate courses of study." More specifically, it stated that the instruction had to be "age appropriate," "sequential in method of study," and establish or

articulate “the connection between national, ethnic, racial or religious intolerance” that leads, or has led in the past, to human rights violations and genocidal acts, including the Holocaust. Act 70 also placed a special emphasis on the roles “personal responsibility, civic engagement, and societal response” might play in preventing or stopping those violation or acts from happening.

To teach these difficult topics, and the proper responses to them, the Assembly empowered school entities in Commonwealth to use a variety of different resources to teach their students, and it required the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to support this effort with materials and within 12 months curriculum guidelines to appropriately integrate the topics into school curriculums across the state. In the next section of the Act, the General Assembly detailed the specific curriculum or content that needed to be taught throughout the Commonwealth. As far as the Holocaust was concerned, schools were strongly encouraged to teach “the breath of the history of the Holocaust, including the Third Reich dictatorship, concentration camp system, persecution of Jews and non-Jews, Jewish and non-Jewish resistance and post-war trials.” It is important to note that the document neither offered any definitions of the terms nor narration of the events, but the listed or identified terms strongly suggested that authors of the subsection sequenced them in a specific order that seems to imply that they subscribed to traditional cause-course-consequences narrative historical structure.

In the next subsection, the authors of the Act encouraged the teaching of the “definition, history, response and actions taken in the face of genocide, including the Holocaust,” and other human rights violations, “including Anti-Semitism, racism and the abridgement of civil rights.” Again, though, it did not identify or narrate any specific events or actions to demonstrate or model the meaning of the text or intentions of its authors. In other words, it did not define the Holocaust or Anti-Semitism and identify its narrative structure—i.e., its causes, course stages,

and consequences—including responses and actions taken in reaction to it. The authors of the Act did, however, insist that PDE work with a variety of different organizations to develop minimum guidelines for teachers of these topics, which public schools could use to follow the strong recommendation that all schools offer professional development (PD) opportunities to all teachers who teach these topics.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of Act 70—or simply ensure that the Holocaust, other genocides, and human rights violation were taught in the Commonwealth’s schools—the Assembly also required that the State Board of Education (SBOE) commission a study on the teaching of Holocaust, genocide, and human rights instruction throughout the state, which was to be published no later than November 30, 2017. The study had to identify the “number of schools” that offered instruction on the topics, used the PDE curriculum guides, and availed themselves of the in-service training programs created and endorsed by PDE. Moreover, the study also had to describe the manner of instruction, including identifying the number of hours, grade levels, and courses within such instruction is integrated in schools throughout the state. In addition, the study should offer “recommendations for improvements to the offerings of instruction” on the topics.

Most importantly, if the study found that less than 90% of schools with the Commonwealth provided Holocaust, genocide, and human rights instruction to their students, then all schools would be mandated to teach this subject or face serious consequences for non-compliance, including the withdrawal of state-funding for schools in found in violation of the law.

Follow-up Study

As required by Act 70, a committee of experts was tasked with conducting a study and reporting their findings on the state of Holocaust, genocide, and human rights education in the state of Pennsylvania. The study was commissioned by the Pennsylvania General Assembly and sent the survey forms to educational leadership of every public-school entity in the Commonwealth. It was not mandatory for school leaders to respond to the survey and submit their responses, as evidenced by the fact that the leadership in school district that employed all of the participants in this project did not complete the survey.

The published report of November 2017 found that over 90% of Pennsylvania's schools did teach these topics, so the committee did not recommend that the General Assembly require or mandate that all public schools in Commonwealth teach them. In the report, though, the committee seemed to recognize some of the limitations with Act 70 and was written with an eye to fix or correct them. It appeared, for example, to recognize that the absence of definitions was problematic because school entities could answer survey prompts using self-generated definitions or broad, generic ones, which would be easier to comply than more narrowly articulated and specific ones. On the very first page of the survey, then, the committee used the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's (USHMM) definition of the Holocaust:

The systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived "racial inferiority": Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic people (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and

behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals.

Even though the committee defined the Holocaust—and, incidentally, also “Human rights” and “Genocide”—seemingly to improve the teaching of the Holocaust, it did not offer any other definitions or narrative structural suggestions or guidance to schools on teaching the difficult topics, which seems to be due to those terms and histories not being on the survey.

The report did, however, appear to recognize some of these problematic issues throughout the Commonwealth, because it suggested that PDE both increase and improve its offerings of materials, curriculum guides, and trainings on the topics, though the recommendations are so vague that it is very difficult to discern the following: Who, in addition the state's social studies curriculum supervisor, should be tasked with creating all of these resources and opportunities; what, beyond the limited list of terms in the Act, should actually be taught in schools; how it should be taught or learned, presumably guided by research and best practices and assessed, both by the state and local districts.

It should be noted, though, that the participants in this project work in a district that did not respond to the study, so it is technically considered one of the few public school entities in the state that does not follow the General Assembly's recommendations in Act 70. If the rest of the respondents to the survey had not exceeded the threshold of 90%, then it would have contributed to the state mandating that the topics be taught in schools, even though the district—as evidenced by its curriculum, textbooks, and teacher statements—does teach all of those topics.

State Standards

After combing through multiple online and hard copies of the state's social studies standards for information about the teaching of the Holocaust within the Commonwealth, I came

across this sentence prefacing the state’s history standards “Pennsylvania relies on the locally elected school board to make decisions concerning the content of Social Studies to be taught in the classroom,” which means that the state does not specifically mandate that the Holocaust—or any other content, for that matter —be taught in Pennsylvania schools. Instead, the PDE’s Standards Aligned System (SAS) were designed to “meld historical thinking... with historical understanding... to describe what students should know and be able to do.” Instead of focusing on basic facts and recall, the students are supposed “to develop historical comprehension, to evaluate historical interpretation and to understand and conduct historical research.” As a result, the standards do not contain detailed content on any specific topic, including the Holocaust, because it is the intention of the standards to “merely be a starting point for the study of history.” The standards, therefore, are general and do not “represent a course or even a portion thereof,” which explains the absence of the Holocaust in the state’s “8.4 World History (1450-Present)” standards. Public school entities within the Commonwealth are, as long as they teaching the aforementioned historical skills, ultimately, tasked with developing their own social studies programs, including the courses within those programs, with very little guidance or input from the state.

Even though SAS did not directly mention the Holocaust in its own standards, it did recommend 49 outside sources for schools and teachers interested in teaching the topic. First and foremost, it recommended mostly web-based content sites, like the USHMM and other remembrance organization pages, for educators to find a wide variety of different resources, including reading material and videos. Next, it also identified Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) sites that encouraged students to write a variety of different types of essays on topics related to the Holocaust, like writing a persuasive letter to the United Nations on preventing

genocide. Lastly, it recommended a site with a unit plan on World War II, which included a lesson on the Holocaust, and a document on the creation of the state of Israel.

It should be mentioned, though, that there were two documents that focused on specific non-fictional reading and writing skills that students in Pennsylvania are required to learn in social studies, but they are not always written into local curriculum guides, including the district in which all of the participants in this study were employed. Lastly, it should also be noted that social studies is not a tested subject in Pennsylvania. Therefore, unlike states where it is tested, like Virginia, there is very little incentive for public school entities to follow the PDE's standards and recommendations. In other words, because state accountability money—i.e., state funding that is distributed or withheld based on, among other measures, student performance on state test—and educator effectiveness scores are tied to school scores in tested subjects like language arts, math, and science, PDE and school entities do not seem to be as concerned about the teaching of social studies standards and curriculum as they do with tested subjects. This was evidenced by the former director of curriculum and instruction in my school district telling me that there would be no consequences for the district or teachers for not teaching state standards.

Local Curriculum Guides

Unlike the state standards, the local curriculum guides do require that the Holocaust be taught within the context of the World War II, but they do not mention much beyond that requirement. In the Honors, Advanced, and Regular 9th grade World Studies I courses, the curriculum maps list that the Holocaust should be covered as an effect of World War II. Curiously, it recommends that excerpts from the *Diary of a Young Girl*—which is the second part of the title *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*—and an affidavit given at Nuremburg be used as resources during that Honors course lesson or lessons, only that the affidavit be used in

the Advanced courses, and that neither be used in the Regular classes. In the 10th grade Honors, Advanced, and Regular World Studies II courses, though, the maps listed the Rwandan genocide under a unit on African history, but it did not mention Stanton's Ten Stages of Genocide—or any references to the Holocaust—and did not mention or suggest a genocide project, which was a theory most of the participants in this study seemed to believe was in the curriculum and project they spent weeks in their classrooms. The Holocaust was not mentioned at all in the 11th and 12th grade curriculum maps, which included all levels of American history.

In short, none of the recommendations from Act 70 are in this districts' curriculum maps, which means the district is not following the recommendations of the state in emphasizing the Holocaust, even though, as evidenced by the participants responses, they are clearly covering the topic in-depth and exceeding the state standards and recommendations.

Textbooks

The primary textbook used by most of the participants in their World Studies I classes *Modern World History: Patterns of Interaction* written by Roger Beck, Linda Black, Larry S. Kreiger, Phillip S. Taylor, and Dahia Ibo Shabaka and published by Holt McDougal. Even though most of the participants claimed that the book did not cover the Holocaust very well, an analysis of its subsection on the topic suggests that it actually covered the topic well. In particular, it did a good job narrating the causes, course stages, consequences, and characters involved in the event and supporting some of its claims with maps, statistics, and artifacts, while also highlighting some of the responses and reactions to it.

In the book, the Holocaust is covered in a subsection within a larger chapter on World War II. In the beginning of the section on the topic, the authors claim that “Hitler and the Nazis killed six million Jews and five million other “non-Aryans” in the Third Reich,” (Beck, et al., p.

504) which they claim led to the founding of Israel after the war. As far as important terms and names were concerned, the authors encouraged the readers to identify or define “Aryan,” “Holocaust,” “Kristallnacht,” “ghetto,” “Final Solution,” and “Genocide,” which are all terms covered in Act 70. With that said, it is notable that some important people and places are not mentioned in this list, including Auschwitz and the SS/Gestapo, even though they are mentioned or referenced in some of the sources and activities embedded in the text.

In the beginning of the text entitled “Setting the Stage,” the authors briefly explain that the Nazis wanted to create a new racial order with Aryans—their ideal blue-eyed and blonde master race—in charge of inferior races, like the Jews, which eventually evolved from simple domination into the “Holocaust, the systematic slaughter of Jews and 5 million others.” (Beck, et al., p. 504). With that brief overview linking the causes and consequences of the event, the authors detail the causes and initial prejudices and discriminatory practices that evolved over time in the “Final Solution” or attempted destruction of European Jewry. According to the authors, Hitler tapped into a history of antisemitism in Germany to explain its defeat in World War I and subsequent economic troubles in the interwar period, which pre-dated his time in office.

Then, once he became the country’s leader and the Nazi’s controlled the government, they enacted policies that discriminated against the Jews by depriving them of their citizenship rights through the Nuremburg Laws passed in 1935; later, in 1938, they launched “Kristall Nacht,” also known as the “Night of Broken Glass,” in which they destroyed Jewish business and houses of worship while also killing approximately 100 Jews in Germany and newly annexed Austria.

As the situation deteriorated and discrimination escalated into more violence directed at Jews, the authors argued that Hitler unsuccessfully tried to expel the Jews from the Reich, which eventually led their removal from public life and herding them into segregated ghettos in urban areas while forcing them to wear the “Star of David” chevrons to signal to others that they belonged to an undesirable group. With the conquest of large populations of Jews in the East, the Nazis started to build concentration camps to both incarcerate and exploit them as slave labor to contribute to the production of German military material while simultaneously killing surplus Jewish populations in conquered Soviet territories using death squads called Einsatzgruppen. In 1942, the Nazi hierarchy organized the Wannsee Conference to plan a “Final Solution” to deal with the Jewish problem. Based on this plan, the Nazis built a series of camps newly occupied eastern territories to exploit and exterminate the Jews and others.

Once at the camps, the Jews and others were sorted into laborers, who were required to create materials for the Reich’s war effort, and non-laborers, who were ushered into gas chamber to be killed and later cremated to eliminate evidence of the mass murder. Even though this was a process that was systematized and replicated throughout the Third Reich, Beck and his co-authors focused on the process at Auschwitz presumably because it was the most infamous and largest camp complex with multiple types of camps, including labor and extermination camps.

As describing the evolution from prejudice to extermination, the authors shift focus to the consequences of the event and reiterate that six million European Jews died in massacres and camps. The textbook offers maps (Beck et al., p. 519) and statistics (Beck et al., p. 505) while humanizing the experience of survivors through stories. In a brief extract from Elie Wiesel’s semi-autobiographical book, *Night*, about his experiences as a teenager in Auschwitz, he describes in vivid detail the horrors of camp life. In another subsection, the authors present a

statistic showing the pre-war Jewish populations in select countries, and contrast those with the number of Jews killed in those areas by the Nazis. Also, a map at the end of the chapter shows that more camps were found in the East—i.e., Poland and Soviet Union—than in the West, which presumably happened because the Jewish population in those areas were larger. The authors do note that there was Jewish resistance in some camps like Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz, and also name some famous female resisters, who were ultimately captured and killed by the Nazis.

At the end of the section, the authors summarize the most important information from the Holocaust and encourage students to apply their knowledge to explain the decisions, actions, and motivations of the Nazis, and to ask if others could have done more to prevent, delay, or stop it. As in the beginning of the section, the authors ask the students to define the key terms. Then, they ask students to explain the main causes, course stages, and consequences of the event, which amounts to a basic reading or lesson comprehension exercise. Next, they encourage students to make inferences about why the German people went along with the Nazis. Then, they ask students to explore the effects the Holocaust had on the Jewish people of Europe. Next, they ask students to suggest ways in which scientists, engineers, and technicians could have opposed Hitler and his plans. Lastly, they ask students to reflect on why majority populations often blame minority populations for their woes.

All in all, the textbook seemed to be covering the topic well and did not seem to differ on too many subtopics, although the textbook intended for more advanced students did have an additional section entitled “Response form the Allies.” According to the authors of that book, the Allies received reports as early as 1942 about the deportation and execution of mass number of Jews in Nazi-occupied territories, so they promised to punish the perpetrators at the conclusion

of the war. However, the authors note the Allies claimed they did not know the extent of the Nazi atrocities, which might explain why no military action to disrupt the transport or killing machines were ever attempted by the Allied Powers. This book also mentioned that, in 1944, the U.S.-based War Refugee Board (WRB) rescued 200,000 Jews from Nazi-occupied territory. There is also a brief section on the targeting of other non-Jews groups like the Roma, Poles, Slavs, homosexuals, and the disabled, but here is no mention of treatment of political prisoners, especially leftists.

In the American textbook entitled *America: Pathways to the Present* by Andrew Clayton, Elisabeth Israels Perry, Linda Reed, and Allan M Winkler, which was partially used by Finn, all of the aforementioned causes, course stages, consequences, and characters are detailed in a lengthy section describing the Holocaust, and most of the prompts are similar to the aforementioned text. However, its authors added an unusual subsection on the Danish rescue of its Jewish population, which seemed to serve as an exemplar of how a population should respond in similar situations. It should be noted though, that this section offers limited context that would help students understand the uniqueness of the Danish case as compared to other occupied nations.

Leadership Interviews

The instructional leaders in the district who sat down for interviews were actually able to articulate the basic causes, course stages, consequences, and characters of the Holocaust, which means they were able to conceptualize it reasonably well. They were not, even though some of them had researched SAS, Act 70, and local curriculum guides in anticipation of being interviewed about the Holocaust, were not able to explain what and how it was taught in the

district; moreover, they erroneously believed that Act 70 was a mandate and that the topic was written directly into the state, which it is not.

Anne: An Aspiring Instructional Leader

Background

Anne was born in a southern state but raised and educated in the outer suburbs of a large city in the Northeast. Having attended a highly regarded K-12 public school system, she graduated from one of her state's flagship universities with an undergraduate degree in History and a graduate degree in education. She is white and female cisgender social studies teacher with eight years of experience in the classroom. Having previously taught in a medium-sized, religiously-affiliated suburban middle school with a homogeneous population, she described her current school as a much larger public high school with a more heterogeneous population, which she explained was due to a sizeable Hispanic student population.

In her most recent teaching assignment, she taught a wide variety of different courses. She described her students as "academically strong," and she teaches elective AP European History and AP Comparative Government & Politics classes to higher performing lower- and upper classmen. She also taught an elective Current Events class and a mandatory World Studies II class, which she described as a geography class, to students she described as low-achieving.

As far as teaching Holocaust is concerned, she emphasized that it did not seem to be an integral part of the curriculum in the classes in which she taught the topic, which meant AP European History and World Studies II. In her AP European History class, for example, she assigned the section on the topic over spring break and did not mention it in class this year

because of time constraints, which she was not thrilled about doing, but acknowledged that it was not something that was emphasized on the exam.

Similarly, the Holocaust is not emphasized in her World Studies II class because the students are supposed to cover it in-depth in ninth grade, but she uses it as an exemplar to introduce The Ten Stages of Genocide (Stanton, 2012). The Ten Stages of Genocide is the model genocidal process that the US Department of State and the United Nations use to predict and prevent genocide. After she shows her student the model, then they are supposed to pick a recognized genocide and complete a student-centered project on it using the ten stages approach. She mentioned that her previous school spent a great deal of time on the Holocaust in an American history course as part of a unit on World War II with a special focus on America's role in the event. However, this is something teachers in her current school are reluctant to spend time in a similar course for a variety of different reasons, including time constraints.

When asked about her level of comfort with the material and its importance in the curriculum, Anne said she was very comfortable teaching about the Holocaust and believed it was an extremely important topic to teach to high school students, and that it deserved to be more emphasized in the local curriculum, which was an interesting comment because she acknowledged de-emphasizing it in her own classes due to time constraints. When asked why she felt so comfortable with the material and so strongly about elevating its place in the curriculum, she stated "I was always fascinated by the Holocaust growing up.... I don't know if it was because it was so emphasized in school or I just had a personal interest in it because I read a lot on the topic" at an early age, including Eli Wiesel's *Night*. In recent years, though, she believed that her knowledge of the Holocaust was eroding because she had not studied it since

college, though that was not evident from later interviews that focused on her content knowledge.

As far as her own exposure to and study of the Holocaust was concerned—essentially a series questions centering on her historiographic understanding of the topic—Anne recalled that she first learned about it in the fourth grade reading Lois Lowry’s *Number the Stars*, and that she remembered studying it in her Language Arts and Social Studies classes, but she could not recall any specifics beyond reading some books in a literature circle and, at some point, Elie Wiesel’s *Night*. Because of her interest in the topic, though, she did read historic fiction books on the topic on her own time. In college, she believed it was covered but could not recall when or how. As far as assignments were concerned, she vaguely remembered writing something about it in a fifth-grade reading circle, but she could not remember any other assignments in high school or college, though she believed she studied it at both levels.

As far as professional development was concerned, she did elaborate on one experience that seemed to resonate with her. On a school trip to a Holocaust conference, students and teachers were split into two groups with the teachers spending the day in a professional development session, which she thought was very helpful insightful and helpful because it introduced her to survivor and exposed her useful resources on the topic.

Even though she had articulated some concerns about the teaching of other genocides in an earlier response, Anne believed that the Holocaust has been appropriately emphasized in American schools. And, even though she had difficulty recalling her own formal educational on the topic, she believed her research on Holocaust as an in-service teacher, especially resources

she had read or accessed on from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s website, had profoundly influenced her understanding of the event.

Even though she thought she needed to brush up on her knowledge of the topic, she was absolutely convinced that the Holocaust needed a more prominent role in the curriculum because, in her opinion, students were missing a full understanding of it, specifically the historical context in which it occurred and the steps that led to the genocide, which resulted in the murder of millions of Jews and others. In particular, she believed that more emphasis should be placed on Stanton’s Ten Stages theory, especially the stages that directly precede genocidal acts, so students can learn “what are preventive measures that should be taken to prevent future genocides,” though she did not elaborate on any specific preventative measures. Unfortunately, she emphasized that is not the current focus of the unit she teaches. Because of the overwhelming amount of content that needs to be covered, with no seeming prioritization of content built into the course, it is difficult to spend too much time on one event.

When asked about her academic and professional content knowledge, she demonstrated mastery of both. When asked to define the Holocaust, she stated that it was the deliberate murder of six million Jews and six million others by the Nazis during World War II. On the topic of antisemitism, she flawlessly defined it as “the hatred of Jews” and traced its origins to the Middle Ages, which she stated was covered in the first chapter of her AP European History textbook. Then, she fast forwarded to the interwar period and Hitler’s—and the Nazi party’s—propaganda that blamed the Jews for all of Germany’s problems after World War I. As an aside, she believed that she did a better job covering the interwar period in past because she had more time to cover it more in-depth. On the topic of using Jewish sources and writers in her lessons,

she mentioned that she used Theodore Hertzl on a unit on antisemitism, Zionism, and immigration to Palestine. Having never visited camp, she admitted that her first encounters with the Holocaust happened through books, films, and webpages.

Conceptualization

While elaborating on her conceptualization of the Holocaust—and her rationale for teaching it—she gave a text-book quality definition of it: “The deliberate murder of 6 million Jews and 6 million others who were targeted by the Nazi regime.” When I asked why the Holocaust should be taught in schools, she offered a fairly nuanced response about the context of the persecution and “the extreme consequences of targeting minorities,” and the measures to prevent it from happening again, which “is often the disconnect for people” because they often know the end result but not the steps that led there. More specifically she believed the Holocaust has a justifiably elevated place among genocides because it was “the first” and “biggest” and should, therefore, be used as the standard for all others or by which all others are measured. My observations evidenced a consistent application of this conceptualization in her teaching. For instance, in the lesson I witnessed, she used examples from the Holocaust to demonstrate all of the Stanton’s stages and then had her students find evidence of the stages in Rwandan genocide, which was an application activity that clearly linked the two events.

Causes

Next, she detailed her thoughts and understanding of the long-, medium-, and short-term causes of the Holocaust, which fit neatly into the Ten Stages of Genocide (Stanton, 2012). Anne traced the long-term causes to antisemitism in the Middle Ages that persisted into the 20th Century. Then, in the medium-term, a virulent form of nationalism emerged in the aftermath of

World War I that resulted in the Jews being blamed for all of the ills that befell Germany in the interwar period. Promoting and using this antisemitic prejudice to propel themselves to power, once in power Hitler and the Nazis converted this hatred articulated in *Mein Kampf* and other propaganda publications into discriminatory policies and practices, which culminated with “Night of Broken Glass” in 1938 that signaled the beginning of the Holocaust. It should be noted, though, that she believed Hitler initially wanted the Jews to simply leave Germany, but that the policy escalated or evolved over time into the Final Solution or extermination of European Jewry.

Course

Anne’s timeline of events confirmed that she believed the Holocaust escalated through multiple stages into a genocide. According to her, “The Night of Broken Glass,” for example, led to the deprivation of civil rights. During the next stage, she continued, the Jews were herded into ghettos before being deported to a variety of different camps, including concentration and labor camps. Finally, they were systematically exterminated by different means, including being gassed to death. When I asked about the specific details of the Holocaust, she believed Hitler and the Nazis started it in Germany in 1938 with the complicity of the German people, who were influenced by deep-rooted antisemitism, as evidenced by the fact that it required an extensive cadre of people in a bureaucracy to carry out the rounding up, ghettoization, transportation, camp organization, and gassing or extermination of millions of people.

Anne did not necessarily believe these stages were linear and causal but asserted that they sometimes happened simultaneously and continuously. According to her, it evolved from prejudice to discrimination, which included the symbolic use of stars and herding people into

ghettos with accompanying dehumanizing propaganda that, in turn, led to polarization and organized destruction.

Consequences

Anne gave a fairly concise answer about the immediate consequences of the Holocaust, but her response about survivors was more nuanced than anticipated. According to her, the Nuremberg trial justly adjudicated the cases of high-ranking Nazis. Liberation and news of the atrocities against the Jews of Europe led to large-scale Jewish immigration to the British mandate of Palestine, which was converted by the United Nations into the states of Israel and Palestine. Then, once the British left, a war between the newly formed states with the Palestinians receiving supported from their Arab-neighbors, which led to an enduring conflict between two sides that persists to this day and is a point of emphasis in the World Studies II curriculum.

Characters

Recognizing that there were quite a few individuals and groups who are often categorized into perpetrators, victims, bystanders, liberators, and rescuers, Anne articulated some discerning and carefully considered views on the often blurred and indistinct lines that are used to categorize them.

Perpetrators

She argued that the main perpetrators of Holocaust were Hitler and the Nazis, specifically emphasizing the role Goebbels' propaganda machine played in the process. Interestingly, though, as she considered the complicity of others, she mentioned that it was sometimes difficult to

assign blame because of questions like “Who was really responsible? And who was really complicit? Versus, who didn’t really didn’t know? or Who claimed they didn’t know?” which might implicate ordinary Germans and even Allied leaders, especially those who did not act on the information they received about the Holocaust. In the end though, she said she would go “with the top leaders of the Nazi party, specifically Hitler, and those who organized or... gave the order of the killings and of the Holocaust.”

Victims

As far as victims were concerned, she identified the Jews as the largest targeted group, but she also mentioned the disabled, the Roma, and Eastern Europeans because they were all discriminated against, subjected to medical experiments, and exterminated.

Bystanders

On the topic of bystanders, Anne admitted that this was a difficult category to discuss. Though arguing that many German citizens were bystanders and, as such, considered complicit in the Holocaust, she posed some provocative questions about their complicity: What could they have done? What were the consequences for acting on the Jews’ behalf? As far as non-Germans were concerned, she posed another set of questions: What did other countries know? How complicit were they? She articulated or believed that these were excellent discussion questions that would—and should—be asked in class to provoke student thought and encourage discussion. Though these questions were not raised during the lesson I observed, I noted that she had clearly thought very deeply about them, which might suggest that they have influenced her approach to teaching the topic, especially the roles people and groups played in the event. Anne

identified rescuers as people within Nazi-occupied Europe who hid or aided persecuted people in a variety of different ways whereas liberators were simply Allied soldiers who liberated the Nazi camps at the end of the war.

Survivors

On the topic of survivors, her response was deeply considered and reflective. Though she readily admitted that in the past a survivor in her mind—and, apparently, in the minds of her former students—was specifically a camp survivor, she amended or modified her definition after a survivor who hid during the war spoke at her previous school. While her students were steadfast in their belief that a survivor was a camp survivor, preferably from a well-known camp like Auschwitz, she realized during a class discussion after the speaker had left that a survivor was anyone who survived being targeted by the Nazis. At this point, she believes that a survivor is a self-referential term defined by the survivors themselves regardless of their place of survival— including in hiding, neutral countries, ex-patriot camps, or in Allied countries— because they were displaced and separated from their home, family, and friends by the Nazi-regime.

She listed the Holocaust, genocide, Ten Stages, perpetrator, and victim as the essential vocabulary words that students should be associated with the topic. She presumably believed that other vocabulary words closely associate with the event—i.e., Hitler, Nazis, etc.—should be covered in a larger unit on World War II, but it is noteworthy that she did not specifically mention them as examples in the lesson I observed her teach.

Lessons or Morals

Anne believed that there were quite a few morals or lessons that students should take away from studying the Holocaust. In the earliest grades, she said, young students should learn to not discriminate against people based on their ethnicities, religions, or other characteristics. Later, in upper elementary and middle school, she emphasized the need to teach preventative measures to prevent or stop large-scale discrimination. Then, once they reach high school, she argued that they were old enough to grapple with questions like “How do we know that the Holocaust has happened?” and “Why do genocides continue to happen again and again?” In other words, “Why have we not stop them from happening again?” which obviously begs the question: “What should we should be done about that?” Since these are open-ended questions that require a deep knowledge of the history of genocides, especially the Holocaust and international law and diplomacy since 1945, to stimulate or encourage or provoke exactly the types of moral dilemmas high school students should wrestle with as they become contributors to a democratic society.

As the largest and most studied genocide in history, she argued that it should be studied to discourage, resist or disrupt, and prevent future ones. When asked about how the Holocaust had influenced the study of other genocides, though, Anne believed that students knew or learned a lot a lot about it. She did not, though, think they learned enough about other genocides, which is why she advocated for spending a whole class or semester on breaking down or analyzing another genocide into the different stages. In other words, she did not think that her school—or, for that matter, other schools—dived deeply enough into different genocides. When asked why she advocated so strongly for the study of other genocides, she said she had read an article about

a class that, having studied in-depth the ten stages and carefully monitored escalating human rights abuses in hotspots around the globe, rightly predicted the genocide in Rwanda before it happened. This, she argued, was the whole point of teaching about genocide: to know and apply the knowledge ones learned to prevent or de-escalate future genocides.

Standards and Curriculum

Anne's understanding of the national, state, and local mandates and standards varied greatly. On the national level, she acknowledged that there were no mandates or standards, but she closely aligned her AP curriculum with College Board recommended standards to both in compliance with their requirements and to properly prepare her students for the exam.

On the state level, she vaguely remembered that a former department chair mentioned something about Act 70 a few years ago, which prompted her to read it, though she believed that using documents and mentioning it probably covered the state requirements. She also thought that certain types of activities, specifically simulations, was discouraged in the scholarly literature on the topic because it was "not an empathetic or good way of teaching it." Since Anne thought her school was in compliance with state standards, she believed that the local standards covered the necessary content, especially knowing that it was heavily emphasized in multiple courses in her curriculum. Anne expressed that both the school leaders and community supported the teaching of the Holocaust because she had never experienced any pushback from either group while teaching the topic.

Because she covered the topic differently in different classes, she used a variety of different textbooks and materials to cover it. In the past, while teaching the 9th grade Eurocentric World Studies I course, she used an unknown picture book and research material from the United

States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s website, as well as material from another website with “a blue background.”

In her AP European History class, she had the students read and outline the section in the textbook dealing with the Holocaust, which seemed to feature a fairly standard narrative structure of causes leading to course stages that unfolded much like she described an earlier response. She did, however, mention that a subsection of the text did a fairly good job of discussing the responsibility or complicity various groups and individuals had in perpetrating or failing to intercede in the event, including Allied leaders, which was not found in other textbook section on the topic.

When I observed Anne, she was teaching a lesson in her 10th grade World Studies II, in which she delivered a lecture on the 10 stages of genocide with examples from the Holocaust to serve as a template for the students to research and complete a project on a variety of different genocides around the world. It should also be noted she simultaneously guided them through the stages of the Rwandan genocide, because they had just watched “Hotel Rwanda,” so they had a fresh model or exemplar to reference in their own research and reporting.

Anne used different pedagogical approaches or strategies in different classes. Choosing to focus on her approach to teaching her AP European History students about the Holocaust, she introduced antisemitism early in the year and traced it throughout the course, especially its most virulent nationalist strains preceding and succeeding World War I, before engaging her students in a discussion on its unfortunate end product—the Holocaust—in a lesson on the aftermath of World War II. Because of the time constraints caused by the recent pandemic and a newly implemented bloc schedule, though, she was not able to teach that lesson this year, which is why I was not able to observe and comment on this approach.

Even though she was not using many audiovisual aids this year because of time constraints, she did mention that she had used the scene from “Band of Brothers” in which the soldiers liberated a camp in Germany to show students what camp life was like. She also mentioned using the United States Holocaust Museum’s website, especially their collection on survivors—which really seemed to capture her interest—because she emphasized that she found it particularly helpful.

As far as assessments were concerned, she used a variety of different formative and summative checks for understanding. While presenting the event in class, which I observed in her classroom, she used a variety of different questions to ensure that the students learned the relevant content to understand and study the Holocaust and other genocides. More specifically, she asked them to remember back to their study of the Holocaust the previous year and recall the content they learned, including Nazi prejudicial propaganda and discriminatory practices like loss of right, which she then fit into a category chart with the escalating stages of a genocide on it. Then, in the case of the AP European students, she gave them a multiple-choice test on the first half of the 20th century, which included Holocaust-related prompts to check for understanding, and occasionally document-based questions that they had to write an essay to answer. In the past, she also mentioned that she had ninth graders complete a project on the topic.

In the class I observed, she was preparing students for a project on a genocide of their choosing using exemplars from the Holocaust. As far materials were concerned, she stated that she used materials, including tests and essay prompts, created by others in her AP course, but that she—in collaboration with her grade-level team—created the projects in World Studies I and II.

The last part of our conversation focused on her metacognitive thoughts on having participated in the study. In response to questions about the study's impact on her, she acknowledged that it had impacted her in a variety of different ways. First, she realized during the course of the interviews that she does not talk about the Holocaust as much as she had previously believed, though she did not know how much she would change her approach to teaching it until next year, but she believed she would compress the 10 stages into a smaller number that was more easily digestible and remembered by the students. As far as changing her interaction with her students and changing her characteristics as a teacher, she did not believe it changed her interactions with her students or her characteristics as a teacher, beyond or aside making her more reflective on her conceptualization and teaching of the topic. Staying consistent with her answers from the first interview, she still felt comfortable teaching the topic and believed it was important to teach it—or a related genocide—every year, because American students need to know that genocides still happen, so they need to learn about the escalating stages to know how to recognize and prevent future genocides.

Summary

As an aspiring instructional leader, Anne gave very thoughtful and considered answers to questions about her understanding of and approach to teaching the Holocaust. Using Stanton's Ten Stage Genocide theory to frame the event into steps that evolved or escalated over time, she not only demonstrated an impressive command of the details of the Holocaust, but she was also able to liken it to similar events using very advanced historical methodology. In addition, she was able to describe and demonstrate a variety of different educational strategies to ensure that the topic was taught and learned while also making sure that her students could apply that

knowledge to study similar events. In short, Anne demonstrated an impressive knowledge of both historical theory and educational practice.

Eloise: A Granddaughter's Quest for Redemption

Background

Eloise was born, raised, and educated in a small town within commuting distance of a medium sized city in the Northeast. She described herself as female, White, and Protestant with mainly British ancestors, though it should be noted that her grandmother was born and raised in Nazi Germany before immigrating to the U.S. with her American G.I. husband, which has greatly influenced Eloise's interest in the Holocaust. This theme would recur in the interviews.

After graduating from the high school in which she currently teaches, Eloise attended and graduated from a local public university with a degree in social studies education. Upon graduation, she worked in a cyber charter school in Pennsylvania for a few years before being hired to teach American history to eight graders in the middle school she attended. After teaching both social studies and library sciences at the middle school level, she transferred to her current school, which is a high school, to focus on teaching only social studies, which she has done the last few years. In total, she has been in the classroom for 16 years.

When asked to describe her current school, Eloise shared that it is a fairly large and diverse high school with a "hometown feel," but noted that it lacked "community involvement." Then, unprompted, Eloise casually mentioned that the "Hispanic students adversely impact state scores," without elaborating any further on that comment. Last year, she taught Regular and Advanced World Studies—which are the lowest and middle tracks, respectively, of the school's tiered grouping system for 9th graders—and an elective sociology class that she really enjoyed teaching. She remarked that she liked teaching the Advanced level students, but absolutely

dreaded teaching the “Regulars” because they were the worst students she had ever taught in her entire career, both in terms of their behavior and performance. She admitted that the school year in which this conversation took place was the most challenging year of her career.

Importance of Teaching the Holocaust

As far as teaching Holocaust was concerned, Eloise admitted that it was her “favorite thing to teach.” Even though she believed that it was an extremely important topic to teach, she lamented that her students did not enter her classes with an appropriate amount of knowledge about the event because their only exposure to it came through a language arts unit in eighth grade on *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank. Even though the teachers of that unit “talked up” the Holocaust, the students, according to her, learned no historical background knowledge about the event, which she thought was odd because it seemed like the diary was taught absent any historical context.

Because she placed so much value on teaching the topic, Eloise integrated it into a six week unit on World War II and dedicated several days within that unit to specifically studying the Holocaust, which some colleagues have allegedly told her is too much time on it. In her opinion, it was one of most important things to teach because students have become increasingly disconnected from it, which makes it harder to capture their attention, even though they need to know “how not to treat humanity sadistically.”

Even though she expressed that she was “100%” comfortable with teaching the Holocaust, Eloise acknowledged that she was concerned about becoming “desensitized” to teaching it. Even though she spent a considerable amount of time researching and studying the event, she recognized that aspects of the topic that might have “horrified” her “10 years ago” would not shock her as much today because of her continued exposure to the brutality of the

events. She tried to constantly remind herself of her desensitization to ensure that she did not become too complacent or unempathetic about teaching the topic, especially knowing that it is often her students' first encounter with the Holocaust and its horrors.

Lessons for American Students

Eloise firmly believed that American students need to study the Holocaust because, in addition to simply having a greater “appreciation for history,” too many “people don’t even believe the Holocaust happened” because it was “too unbelievable,” which is a problem in and by itself, but—even more problematically—because genocides are still occurring today. Returning to the topic of ignorance or lack of knowledge, Eloise believed that students need to learn “what it is, why respect it, people survived” and voiced concern that some “kids would laugh” about it, which she thought was a totally inappropriate response but could not ascribe or identify a reason or motivation for it, though she did not exclude antisemitism. It should be noted, though, that they might have reacted in that way because they were uncomfortable or lacked the social skills to empathize in public ways. In particular, she wanted her students to understand “how easily a hateful person can come to power” and target “anyone of us” without “doing anything about it,” which is why she wanted her students “vote and get involved” to prevent similar events, such as genocides, from happening in the future.

According to Eloise, there were three key lessons or morals to be learned from studying the Holocaust. First, she believed that it was important not to “let history repeat itself,” which in this context seems to mean that people should learn about the Holocaust to prevent other genocides from happening in the future. Second, she thought that people should learn “to treat others the way they wanted to be treated,” by which she meant that one should not target or mistreat other people for any reason. Third, she argued that people should learn about tolerance

to combat intolerance, which she believed led to the Holocaust.

As far as studying the event to better understand other genocides, Eloise argued that “the Holocaust was the... model genocide” and should serve as the exemplar or “foundation for anyone looking at genocides because it was so big and encompassing... and clear-cut,” which makes it ideal for studying “all of the stages” of Stanton’s model of genocides that form the basis for the “the study of other genocides.” In her mind, then, other genocides, though smaller in scale, exhibited the same stages and characteristics of the Holocaust with a “dominant group” and “victim groups” with “no one...to help” them.

When asked to define “antisemitism,” Eloise revealed that she had a personal connection to the topic that helped explain her passion and enthusiasm for the topic. According to her, which was something she reiterated in the lesson I observed, antisemitism was “the hatred of Jew.” After defining the term in her lesson, she showed a cartoon called “The Poisonous Mushroom” to illustrate to her students how the Nazis indoctrinated German children through propaganda to hate certain groups of people, like the Jews, who they claimed undermined the German nation. After the showing the clip, Eloise then went on to explain the evolution of antisemitism from Hitler’s derogatory comments in his autobiography *Mein Kampf* to the burning of synagogues and “beating...up Jews” during *Krystal Nacht* to herding them into ghettos and, eventually, gas chambers to exterminate them.

At this point in the conversation, she said that “personal stories from my grandmother,” who was born and raised in Nazi Germany before emigrating to America in the 1950s, demonstrated how antisemitic and “brainwashed” the German population was by Hitler and his propagandists. According to Eloise, which she was “embarrassed to say,” her grandmother believed that the “Holocaust was not as bad as they say,” even though she claimed to remember

concentration camps and people disappearing. However, her grandmother believed that “Jews were to blame” for the ills of German society, which seemed to justify the Nazis’ treatment of them. Eloise suspected that many members of her family were Nazis because they were forced to enlist in the party for professional and other reasons, and that at least one family member volunteered for the *Schutzstaffel*, which is commonly known as the SS, and recruited the most ardently committed Nazis. This family secret was never confirmed by her grandmother.

Even though her family history was connected to the Third Reich and the Holocaust, Eloise has never visited a concentration camp, even though she admitted that it was on her “bucket list.” Also, even though she used personal stories and primary sources to cover the topic, she did not knowingly use any sources created by Jewish authors. In addition to the uncomfortable conversations she had with her grandmother, Eloise also mentioned that her parents and several members of her faith community sparked her earliest interests in the topic. Beyond hearing about it from her mother and father at a young age, she remembered a professor at a local college talk to her congregation about it. Then, in a later conversation, she also remembered another congregant who recounted his experiences as a concentration camp liberator and as a guard at the Nuremberg trials.

Though she could not recall any specific lessons from middle school or high school, she vividly recalled studying it in college with a Holocaust scholar—and director of a local Holocaust and Genocide program—which she described as “the best class ever.” Because of her continuing interest in the topic, she mentioned that she had taken several professional development courses on it beyond college, including multiple webinars offered online by the Florida Holocaust Museum and a study trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), which was sponsored by a local Jewish organization and hosted by a professor from

a local college who built a book study into the experience for the bus ride to and from Washington, D.C.

Conceptualization

Definition and Significance

According to Eloise, the Holocaust was “the mass slaughter of anybody... Hitler thought was the enemy, primarily the Jewish people” that resulted in over 6 million deaths. Even though she argued that “other leaders have murdered as many,” it was “not as systematic” as the Holocaust which, she argued, means that no other historical event “has really been like it,” which is why it must be studied and remembered because “we don’t want to see it happen again.”

Causes

When I asked her to identify the causes of the Holocaust, Eloise asserted that “ordinary people” who were “motivated by deep-rooted antisemitism and blind allegiance and devotion willingness to follow Hitler’s orders” let it happen, even though they knew it “wasn’t great.” The long-term causes of it, Eloise argued, was antisemitism, which led to the scapegoating and blaming of Jews for all the problems that plagued Germany in the aftermath of World War I, including the debt and financial collapse at the end of the Weimar Republic that ushered in the Nazi-era. Interestingly enough, she speculated—in a counterfactual way—whether the Holocaust could have been avoided if the economic problems had not happened. Without getting into specific details or narrating a detailed story about the medium- and short-term or immediate causes of the event, Eloise simply believed it was caused by “individuals’ ignorance” and “lack of education” that led to “people being horrible to other people.”

Course

Like Anne, Eloise was inspired by the Stanton’s theory. When asked about the timeframe

of the Holocaust, she asserted that it unfolded or evolved through the stages and culminated in the systematic killing of innocent people by Hitler and the Nazis. In the beginning, they targeted specific groups of people because of their common characteristics, including their “religion and sexual orientation,” that “resulted in them being isolated and discriminated” against; then, they were rounded up and herded into ghettos, which represented a form of segregation; next, they were “taken off in cattle cars to camps” to be “killed, tortured, beaten, worked to death, and starved” and “cremated or buried in mass graves,” which was a clear attempt to annihilate them; lastly, at the end of the war, the Nazis—realizing that cause was lost—attempted to cover up and deny the Holocaust, which represents the last stage in Stanton’s process.

When I asked about the timeframe of the Holocaust, Eloise offered that the persecution of the Jews started in the 1930s and evolved into genocide in the early 1940s. When asked when it started, she believed that it “was a loaded question... [because]... high-ranking Nazis...masterminded the plan to systematically kill people...regular citizens...allowed it to happen by building camps... [and]... carrying out the killings.” She acknowledged, though, that it was difficult for ordinary people to resist or prevent the event from happening because of the grave consequences—more specifically, she said, “it was kill or be killed”—for anyone who did, but she still argued that they should have spoken up against it by saying no because it was “not all right.” Interestingly enough, she seemed to believe that they should have had the moral fortitude to face the grave consequences, though she seemed to suggest that—had a large enough majority of people objected to the treatment of the Jews—the Nazi regime would have modified or curbed their persecution of them, which was something that happened in Denmark and few other countries during the war.

Characters

When discussing the various individuals and groups associated with the Holocaust, Eloise categorized them in some obvious and less obvious ways. As far as victims were concerned she mentioned the “Jews, Gypsies [Roma], Slavs, and the handicapped” and, in an earlier part of the conversation, also included various groups targeted based on their “religion and sexual orientation” and other unexplained forms of “dissent,” which presumably meant political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

The perpetrators, Eloise asserted, were “Hitler and his right hand men,” which she had previously named as Goebbels and Goering, “the SS, Gestapo [the Nazis’ secret policy], and the Nazi Party.” But, in a slightly surprising statement, she again named regular citizens “who, even though they were forced to go along with it,” were also complicit in not only allowing it to happen, but also actively perpetrating or contributing to the crime by taking an active role in rounding victims up, building and transporting them to concentration and death camps, and participating in their mass murder. In another surprising statement, she blamed “the United Nations” (UN) —apparently meaning the rest of the world, since the UN was not established until after the war—because “the world didn’t step in” to prevent the Holocaust, though she did not elaborate on what they could have done to avert or stop the event or crime.

In her identification of bystanders, Eloise also included the German people, which means she believed they were both perpetrators and silent witnesses to the Holocaust, and the rest of the world. Seemingly contradicting her earlier statements, she asserted that “German citizens generally didn’t know” the extent of the Holocaust, even though she believed that they “knew something was wrong” but “didn’t ask questions.” She added that this was in part because the Nazi “documented but did not publish” this “hell on Earth,” which was possible to conceal

because of the lack of technology—presumably she was referencing the ubiquitous presence of recording devices in today’s world—until they were made “aware after liberation” of the Nazi atrocities. She also theorized or speculated that other “governments probably knew about” it—and chose not to do anything—but that ordinary “people in other countries didn’t know,” which she admitted was the case with her American grandparents. This ignorance, she claimed, was partly due to “non-victims” not “listening to victims.” Trying to make a comparison to current events, she claimed that the situation was similar to disinformation or misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic that could only be refuted by doing one’s “own research to know what is reliable information versus what is not,” which seemed to be another lesson she wanted to impart to her students during her lessons on the Holocaust.

As far as survivors were concerned, Eloise’s definition had evolved over time since working with the researcher or interviewer or me. Like her students, she originally considered a survivor to be “someone who was in a concentration camp and came back to tell their stories.” Now, though, she believed that it was anyone “who survived the period, especially the Jews, because they were hunted,” including “people in hiding” and—surprisingly—her grandmother who “made it out of Nazi Germany,” which presumably meant she survived the Nazi-era, including the bombing of her home during an Allied air raid.

When I asked her about the most essential vocabulary words that students should associate with the Holocaust, Eloise listed most the words that were recommended by the state in Act 70. In particular, she named “Holocaust,” “liberation,” “survivors,” “antisemitism,” “Aryan,” “propaganda,” “concentration camp,” “gas chamber,” “SS,” “Gestapo,” “*Mein Kampf*,” and “appeasement.” Though it is a fairly extensive list, it is notable that she excluded a commonly included name like “Auschwitz.”

Lessons or Morals

According to Eloise, there were three key lessons or morals to be learned from studying the Holocaust. First, she believed that it was important not to “let history repeat itself,” which, in this context, seems to mean that people should learn about the Holocaust to prevent other genocides from happening in the future. Second, she thought that people should learn “to treat others the way they wanted to be treated,” by which she meant that one should not target or mistreat other people for any reason. Third, she argued that people should learn about tolerance to combat intolerance, which she believed led to the Holocaust.

As far as studying the event to better understand other genocides, Eloise argued that “the Holocaust was the... model genocide” and should serve as the exemplar or “foundation for anyone looking at genocides because it was so big and encompassing... and clear-cut,” which makes it ideal for studying “all of the stages” of Stanton’s model of genocides that form the basis for the “the study of other genocides.” In her mind, then, other genocides, though smaller in scale, exhibited the same stages and characteristics of the Holocaust.

Having articulated the main reasons why it should be taught to all students around the world, which was to know the most horrific event in history in order to prevent or avoid similar events from happening in the future, she honed in on some reasons why it should be taught to specifically to American students. Because most the remaining survivors are passing away from age-related causes, the students are no longer hearing about it from individuals who experienced it first hand, so the students of today are increasingly removed from the actual events because they are receding into the past. For that reason, they need to be reminded of what can happen in a democracy if the majority of the population accepts a demagogue who spews nationalist

propaganda that vilifies and scapegoats certain groups of people, because that behavior can easily escalate into a genocide similar to the Holocaust in Nazi-Germany.

Emphasis or Importance

Even though she believed that the Holocaust should feature prominently in the US curriculum, she acknowledged that the way it was actually taught in Commonwealth schools really depended on the interest and commitment of the individual teacher. She mentioned anecdotally that some teachers she knew “buzzed” through it as quickly as possible teaching the bare minimum about the topic because, as a non-tested subject the standards were fairly “loosey-goosey.” In her opinion, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) did not offer much oversight or require it to be taught in-depth.

Having said that, Eloise still believed that it should be “one of the most important things you learn” in school, which meant “if you can’t tell me about the Holocaust when you graduate that’s a huge problem.” She acknowledged, though, that it was often difficult to increase its importance in the curriculum because of timing. She remarked that it is often taught late in the year with a little time to explore and elaborate on it, and it is also difficult to spend more time on it because that would mean sacrificing the teaching of other important topics to fit it into a time constrained course. At this point in the conversation, Eloise articulated two problems she had with the social studies curriculums in general: First, they are often bloated with general content information spanning longer time periods and myriad of topics, which makes it difficult to cover topics with the appropriate level of depth. Second, they often do not prioritize topics to ensure that more important ones are covered more at length and in-depth than others, like the Holocaust.

Teaching of the Holocaust

Eloise had very mixed opinions about the courses she taught last year. When talking about her sociology elective, she spoke glowingly about how it had been “great” and that she enjoyed it. Likewise with her Advanced World Studies classes, she praised them for being “excellent.” Those two courses, though, contrasted starkly to her Regular World Studies classes, which she admitted were “the most challenging” she “may ever have had after teaching for 16 years” in the classroom, because their motivation to learn and good behaviors were “non-existent.”

Standards and Leadership

As far as mandates and standards were concerned, Eloise stated that “I don’t know state-wise what we’re exactly supposed to hit,” though she believed that teachers were “supposed to teach the Holocaust and, to some degree, that there are stages of genocide.” Because she covered the topic thoroughly with her “encompassing unit on the Holocaust,” she believed she met all state standards and requirements, even though she readily admitted that she did not know for sure. On the local level, she vaguely remembered receiving “a document from the district office that we were required to do a culminating project on the Holocaust,” which is exactly what she does with her students.

Eloise admitted that she “never felt unsupported... but did not really... think the administration or community” really cared about what social studies teachers taught about the Holocaust. This, she reasoned, was evidenced by “nobody asking about ‘what’ or ‘how’” she taught the topic, though she did still believe that she was doing a good job “because kids are learning about it.” In the end, though, she did not think anyone really cared about the Holocaust—or, for that matter, social studies instruction in the school or district—because they

never “checked up on what we’re doing” in the classroom.

Textbooks and Materials

Even though she used the textbook for basic information, Eloise also admitted to using a myriad of other materials, including websites and video clips found online, to cover various aspects of the Holocaust that she deemed important. In the class that I observed, for example, she used a Nazi-era cartoon called “The Poisonous Mushroom” that she found on the internet.

In addition, she also used the stories of survivors to humanize different parts of the experience for students. In one of those survivor stories, she emphasized that the speaker talked about “surviving Hitler’s invasion of Austria” and warning that “the same thing could easily happen” in America, which seemed to mean that something similar—i.e., a demagogue being elected and annexing neighboring territory—could happen in today’s America. She recalled showing “video clips interviews with... people who live through it,” especially “the Gerda Weissmann survivor story that was made for education,” which she assumed was commonly used by American educators.

Eloise also stated that her students used a variety of different sources in the library to research the topic for an independent project that they were required to complete in her class on an aspect of the Holocaust that she did not “cover in-depth in class, like experiments” on inmates in camps. When asked if she believed the textbook did a good job narrating the event, Eloise argued that it “watered down the Holocaust” and only gave the students a “general sense of it,” which required teachers to “really expand in their notes or in the class learning lesson” to ensure that their students have a more “detailed view of the” or understanding of the topic.

As far as learning guides were concerned, Eloise admitted to using both textbook and self-generated ones. To guide the students in reading the textbook in preparation for the first

lesson on the topic, she used the reading guide “that accompanies the text.” During and after the lesson, though, she generated “five questions” to check for student learning, which underpinned her informal questions to guide classroom discussions and formal prompts on “multiple choice questions... on computer-generated tests” and study guides or essays requiring responses “on paper.” Eloise reiterated and expanded on some of the technology that she mentioned using during her lessons. As she stated in an earlier conversation, she used the “Path to Nazi Genocide” to introduce the topic, the Gerda Weissman story of dehumanization and survival posted on the internet, and a webcast from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to demonstrate how difficult it was for a German-Jewish refugee emigrate to another country, as evidenced by the Americans turning away of the *St. Louis* ocean liner that was trying to ferry German-Jews to safety in other countries. Since the webcast was about refugees and migration, she digressed slightly and revealed that her students believed that immigration simply involves crossing a border—which is something, as some of them are migrants from Latin America, they can relate to because they have done it themselves—it was revealing to them to learn how difficult the process can be for people coming from other countries, especially those who are being discriminated against in their home countries and facing prejudice in their adopted ones.

Eloise used those resources because she believed they are powerful enough to engage the students and impart invaluable lessons to them. Beyond the power of the opening video with its horrific and terrifying images of everything from dehumanization to degradation and destruction, she thought the personal stories resonated with her students because they could empathize with the elderly people recounting how their teenage years and families were completely ruined and destroyed by the Nazis. Even though she believed that her approach seemed to work, she was increasingly concerned that there were some kids who “don’t care and that’s very disturbing,”

but I did not ask her what she does to get them to care or engage in the material.

Pedagogical Approaches

In the past, Eloise used to “dive right into“ the Holocaust with a quote by Hitler describing “Jews as vermin“ that she admitted was very upsetting to her students. In recent years, though, she described using a video called “The Path to Nazi Genocide,” which was created by the USHMM, that summarizes the Holocaust “from start to finish” in “30 minutes.”

After the introductory video, Eloise has her students take notes while she delivers a “traditional lecture” because “lots of kids know nothing about the Holocaust,” so she feels compelled to imbue them with some “basic understanding of it” before diving deeper into the topic. This approach is consistent with my observation of her teaching a lesson on the causes of the event. Once her students have some foundational knowledge about the topic, which she ensures through informal checks for understanding using the previously mentioned five questions, she then engages them in a discussion and requires them to complete readings and view clips or sometimes whole videos that highlight or emphasize some aspect of the topic that she has not lectured on or discussed in class. After leading them through the discussion and in-depth studies of teacher-directed topics, she then assigns them a “culminating research project” on an aspect of the Holocaust that she has not directly covered in class, like Nazi medical experimentation” in concentration and death camps, which requires the students to do independent research in the library.

Recognizing that this approach requires a lot of time and effort, Eloise asserted that “I do all those things because I believe it’s the best way for kids to learn.” “Everyone gets a taste of something” while “they are inquiring themselves but I am also directing” them, by which she means that she is trying to differentiate to accommodate a variety of different learning styles in her

classroom.

Eloise mentioned that she used a combination of formative and summative assessments, including pre-lesson reading guides, in-lesson verbal prompts, post-lesson study guides and research projects, and objective and subjective test prompts. With the exception of the reading guide, all of the other guides, questions, and prompts were created by her to ensure that the most important material was processed and learned by her students, which meant that they could adequately respond to her self-generated five essential questions.

Summary

Because of her unique family connection to the Nazi-era and Holocaust through her grandmother's lived experiences growing up in the Third Reich during the war, Eloise felt strongly connected to the event. The connection seemed to influence her conceptualization of it and approach to teaching it. In her mind, the Holocaust should have an elevated place in the curriculum to teach students how to recognize, prevent, and stop a similar event from happening in the future. As a result, students need to know Stanton's Ten Stages that lead genocide—especially the causes, course, consequences, and characters—to recognize how it evolves and who is complicit in its execution, particularly ordinary people, like her grandmother, who should have done more to prevent or stop it. This seems to be the role she envisions her students playing as citizens of America and the World. Because of the importance she places on the teaching of the Holocaust, she spends an exceptionally long time teaching it using a variety of different approaches to ensure that her students learn it and can apply the lessons she imparts to them to avoid its repetition in their lifetime.

Finn: A Mindful Quest for Truth

Background

Finn was born and raised in a small town in Pennsylvania, and she teaches in the high school she attended as a student, which means many of her colleagues taught her. After high school, she enrolled at one of the state's flagship universities as a history major, where she was well-trained in field methodologies and content, before transferring and graduating from a public university closer to home with degrees in history and secondary social studies education. Upon graduation, she was hired as a long-term substitute teacher in a number of local schools before accepting a fulltime job at a cyber charter school. After teaching there for a few years, she moved to the South to support her husband's professional ambitions and accepted a teaching job in a rural school district. While in the South, she earned a master's degree from one of the most prestigious schools of education in the country before moving back to the Northeast to accept a high school teaching position at her alma mater, where she has been working the last three years.

Finn identifies as a White, cis gender woman who has taught social studies for 15 years. She described her current school as having "1500 students" and "not terribly diverse" because there are mainly White and Hispanic students in the school, even though an examination of the student population reveals that there are students from a wide variety backgrounds, including Indigenous Central Americans, Europeans, Asians, and West Africans, though it should be noted that the number of these students are relatively small in comparison to the two dominant groups. When describing her classes this year, she mentioned that she had a lower tracked 11th grade American Studies Class, a lower tracked 9th grade World Studies I class, and a few elective sections of Psychology. With a wry smile, she noted that "class sizes are big" and "the students'

academic levels and motivations are extremely low,” by which she meant that her students were low achieving and disinterested in the content.

Finn believes that her first encounter with the Holocaust occurred when she read *The Number of the Stars*, which is a fictional account written for young readers of a Jewish girl’s experiences during the Holocaust, that as an avid reader she read on her own in elementary school. Having no memory of studying the topic in middle school—a statement she would later amend—she vaguely recalled studying it in ninth grade because her teacher insisted that her class apply the knowledge and skills they had learned throughout the course to disprove the claims of a Holocaust denier.¹ Though I did not ask her directly about if our former teacher-student relationship made her more or less open to talk with me, it seemed to have made her more open to talking to me because we have had good rapport since her student days.

The university which Finn attended had a program specializing in the Holocaust and Genocide studies, which inspired her to take a class on the topic taught by renown scholar in the field that she described as “thoroughly enjoyable.” Beyond college, she admitted that she had not done any additional professional development on the topic, but she had been to the USHMM. At this point in the conversation, she recalled that some of her classmates took a field trip to aforementioned museum after reading *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank in a Language Arts, though she could not remember whether or not she went on the trip. Because of her interest in the topic, though, she mentioned that she had visited the Dachau concentration camp on a business trip with her husband, an experience she described as being on her “bucket list.”

When I asked how comfortable she was teaching the Holocaust and how important it was to her students, she was very adamant in her responses. Finn said it was “super important”

¹ It should be noted that Finn is referencing a lesson I taught.

because “if it isn’t taught, it will repeat itself, which is kind of happening now,” by which she meant that genocidal acts were currently being perpetrated across the globe, naming specific conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, and Sudan. She also believed that students needed to learn that “absolute power corrupts” and can lead to terrible outcomes, while students need to be taught more tolerance in school because “being different is not bad.” Because she believed so strongly in teaching it—and increasing the amount of time devoted to teaching it—she became increasingly “comfortable teaching it over time” and less “appalled” by “what she encounters,” but she was increasingly “cautious about showing things to avoid upsetting the administration and... students and parents,” which she explained was to ensure that the graphic details were age appropriate to avoid traumatizing the students.

When I asked Finn if she uses Jewish sources in her classes, she said that she did not really consider that ethnicity of authors or creators. According to her, the reading level of the documents, books, and websites matter more due to the wide-range of student skill-sets in here heterogeneously grouped classes, which included some who could barely read on a primary school level because they are limited English Language Learners (ELL) with limited or disrupted formal education.

Conceptualization

According to Finn, Holocaust was the “systematic killing and attempted annihilation of all specific groups of people for no other reason than blatant racism.” She argued that students need to learn about the event because they “need to know it happened” to ensure that it is not “forgot” because “it could happen again” due to the “hate in the world.” Finn explained that her students need to “adjust their mindsets and learn to be better,” by which she seemingly meant that they need be more tolerant and pro-active in stopping and preventing current and future

genocides. Moreover, she believed that people—meaning the Nazis—should not be allowed to get away with “the mass murder of 12 million people.” Students, therefore, should learn “what happened,... why it happened,... how it was allowed to happen,” and the “steppingstones” or escalating events or stages that led to the mass murderer of 12 million people on that scale, because it can happen again “if students or citizens do not vote for better like the officials.”

Causes

Finn asserted that the Holocaust was a combination of deep-rooted antisemitism, economic problems in post-World War I Germany, and scapegoating of certain groups of marginalized that shifted responsibility for Germany’s problems away from “ordinary” Germans and on to “others” in German society which, in this case, were primarily the Jews. First and foremost, she argued that the main cause of the event was Germany’s defeat in World War I and the various financial calamities that “annihilated the economy” and individuals during the interwar period, especially the effects of the Great Depression because, she asserted, “when things get bad got so quickly... ordinary people want someone to blame and you don’t want it to be you” which, due to deep-seated antisemitism, resulted in the scapegoating of Jews.

That, in turn, led to the election of Hitler who gave “voice to that hatred and prejudice,” while also absolving ordinary people of any blame or complicity in their own misery. Once in charge, he created an official narrative that confirmed the Nazi interpretation of its history, which led the German people to not think and just do what they were told. That, in turn, lead to them compliantly following the orders of their Fuhrer during all of the stages of Holocaust that led to the destruction of most of European Jewry.

According to Finn, antisemitism was the root cause of the Holocaust. Having been allowed to fester in Western civilization and Germany for “thousands of years,” it enabled Hitler

and the Nazis to convert those ingrained prejudices into discriminatory practices with “no checks” on their power. Because Hitler and his Nazi henchmen completely controlled “the mass media,” they were able to manipulate people into thinking, feeling, and acting in a way that benefited them, which curtailed or discourage any “independent or free thought... through incredible means” that allowed them to “silence the opposition and elevate the hate” with disastrous consequences for the Jews and other targeted groups. Interestingly enough, she identified fairly traditional short-term causes with motivations and events that are commonly associated with the Holocaust itself. According to her, it started with the “need for work” and the establishment of labor camps in order to “get the German military mobilized” before it escalated into a campaign to exterminate excess labor from specific populations, including the Jews.

Course

According to Finn, the Holocaust started with the implementation of discriminatory laws in the 1930s after the Nazis assumed power in Germany, and it escalated through stages that eventually led to the systematic annihilation of millions of the 1940s. According to her, it all started in earnest with the passage and execution of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, which stripped German Jews of all citizenship rights within the Third Reich, which eventually escalated in violence against Jews and destruction of the property on *Kristallnacht*, including the burning of synagogues in 1938. These discriminatory acts quickly morphed into official policies that resulted in Jews being forced to wear the Star of David. Then they were herded into ghettos and segregated from the general population, packed into cattle cars, and shipped to concentration camps where they were used as slaves to create Germany’s war machinery.

Finn continued, that in 1941, Hitler and other top-level Nazis met at the Wannsee Conference outside of Berlin to plan and enacted the Final Solution, which involved shipping

people to concentration camps in cattle cars “where some were selected to work” while others stripped of their belonging and led into fake showers to be “systematically exterminated” using lethal doses of Zyklon B. Then, to eliminate the evidence and prevent the spread of illnesses often associated with decaying bodies, the Nazi’s cremated the bodies in industrial-sized crematoria and scattered the resulting ashes in a variety of different places.

At this point in the conversation, Finn identified those who were complicit in perpetrating this heinous act. According to her, Hitler and his high-ranking officials obviously masterminded and orchestrated the Holocaust, but she also believed that the SS and Gestapo—even ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers and policemen—were “used to track down,... round up,... transport, and supervise the camps,” which they might have done due to indoctrination or fear. She still, though, asserted that it made them “100% complicit” in the atrocities because they often enthusiastically participated in all of the stages of Holocaust, even though she did offer any evidence to substantiate that claim.

Though there are scholars who assert that the Holocaust was a premeditated from the beginning—within the field of Holocaust studies this is often referred to as the intentionalist (Mason, 1981) school of thought—Finn, at this point in the conversation, seemed to admit that she subscribed to the opposite theory known as the functionalist school (Mason, 1981) because, she argued, that “Hitler worked his way through the steps to see what he could get away with.” In other words, she believed “that the Holocaust evolved over time from prejudice to discrimination to annihilation,” which does seem to agree with the functionalists’ explanation of the chain of events that led to the attempted destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis. According to Finn, when Hitler realized he could get away with what he wanted, he escalated his discriminatory practices into a policy of extermination in the 1940s, as evidenced by the building

of gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz and other camps. At this point in the conversation, she lamented the fact that no one stood up to Hitler and his henchmen to stop, delay or de-escalate the process, which she seemed to “believe could’ve made a difference, especially if the Allied Powers had stepped up to, for example, bomb Auschwitz.”

Consequences

The immediate consequences, according to Finn, was the “loss of 12 million people... or maybe double,” which represented “20% of the worldwide Jewish population,” in addition to further “dispersing the Jews during their diaspora” to the far-flung corners of the world as displaced people (DP) after the war. Though the creation of Israel seemed to be a positive consequence of the Holocaust, it led to serious problems in the Middle East, specifically the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has destabilized the region and caused multiple conflicts from 1947 to present. Even though Finn also believed that the Holocaust had kept “antisemitism quiet for a while,” it has returned in full force the last few years, though she did not provide any evidence to support that assertion and I did not ask her any follow up or clarifying questions.

Characters

When asked about the various groups and individuals who are most often associated with different aspects of the Holocaust, Finn offered very nuanced—and, potentially, ambiguous—views on them. In particular, her identification of and comments on “perpetrators” and “bystanders” blurred line and overlapped in multiple ways, especially in the roles ordinary soldiers and citizens played in the event.

Perpetrators

As far as perpetrators were concerned, she differentiated between the high-level masterminds in the Nazi hierarchy and the low-level soldiers and bureaucrats—and, in some

cases, ordinary citizens—who carried out their superiors’ orders. At the very top, Finn reasoned, that “Hitler masterminded” the plan while Goering, Goebbels, Himmler, and Heydrich worked out the details of The Final Solution at the Wannsee Conference in 1941, where the physical and human infrastructure necessary to enact or carry out the most destructive phase of Holocaust was created.

In order to execute this grand vision, though, Finn asserted that the Nazi hierarchy needed “soldiers and SS to track people down and round them up,” which definitely made them complicit in the actions or stages escalating to genocide. Then, whether they acted through fear, indoctrination or “a better them than me” attitude, she believed that ordinary people were “100% complicit” in the atrocities because they allowed them to escalate from prejudice to discrimination to genocide, including “collaborators” in Nazi-occupied countries and places like “France, North Africa, Italy, [and] Poland.”

Victims

According to Finn, Jewish people were the main victims due, in large part, to deeply ingrained antisemitism in German society. In addition, though, there were many other people Hitler “did not consider to be picture perfect Aryans,” such as “political prisoners, homosexuals, gypsies [Romani, and] anyone who didn’t fall in line.” Their persecution of these people resulted in an additional 6 million deaths during the Holocaust.

Bystanders

Finn asserted that bystanders’ inaction made them complicit in the crimes of the Nazis. Though she understood that “millions did nothing [because] they could end up” in camps or worse, which created “understandable moral” dilemma for ordinary folks, she still argued that “to not do anything” for “all those people” was not acceptable. Though she did not “know what

individual people could've done," she still thought that inactivity or inaction made them complicit in the crime because they saw it site but still did nothing to stop it.

Rather than absolve of foreign governments of wrongdoing, Finn believed that they were also culpable because they should have "flexed their muscles and done better" or "anything" rather than nothing. She speculated, though, that they did not help the Jews because "most of the people in power were also antisemitic," which was the claim she had gotten from a "good book" written by Chris Browning, a well-known Holocaust scholar who argued in *Ordinary Men* (1992) that bystanders committed atrocities due to peer pressure and obedience to authority. That does capture the point Browning makes in his book, but it does not capture the point she thought he was making, which is why I included this comment in the bystander rather than the perpetrator subsection. Knowing that she misunderstood or misrepresented his thesis, should I simply remove this comment from the paper?

Rescuers

On the one hand, Finn described rescuers as "people who helped quietly" to hide and ferry Jews from occupied countries to neutral ones, which often was done under the threat of grave consequences. Liberators, on the other hand, were the Western Allied soldiers who primarily liberated camps Italy, France, and Germany. After giving it some thought, she reluctantly admitted that Soviet troops had also liberated camps on the Eastern Front, like Auschwitz and Sobibor, which are often associated the worst atrocities of the Holocaust.

Survivors

Finn, interestingly enough, had a very broad and inclusive definition of survivor. In her mind, survivors are "anyone who lived through it and survived," whether you were targeted or not, "if you lived in that environment, you are a survivor" with the "degree you were

traumatized” seeming to matter in determining how to assess the individual’s experience relative other survivors. In other words, it seems like she meant that someone who simply survived as a non-target citizen of an occupied country should or would not be held in as high regard—or regarded as sympathetically—as someone, like a Jew, who survived Auschwitz.

Course Stages

Like the other participants in this study, Finn believed the Holocaust happened in stages, but she was more focused on describing the escalation of steps—and lack of opposition to them—then articulating the actual stages themselves, as her department members had done in earlier interviews. According to her, Hitler had clearly organized and thought through the plans, but he carefully “worked through the steps [i.e., escalating stages of genocide] to see what he could get away with” from stripping rights to extermination camps. As she articulated Hitler’s steps to genocide, she again openly speculated what would have happened “if someone had stood up” to him and his henchmen. In her view, she believed that, if it had not stopped it, then it would surely have “curtailed it significantly.” However, in her opinion, since “no one said or did anything at all,” it was simply allowed to evolve into the horrific event that it became. At very tail end of her comments on the stages of the event, she also speculated that there were “plenty of things countries around the world” that could have stood up and done something, but she did not specify what they could have done to prevent, stop, or reduce the slaughter and I did not ask her any follow up questions about it.

Morals or Lessons

In comparison to other genocides, she argued that the Holocaust: “gets more play...[in] mass media...[as] white-on-white crime...[It is difficult for students]... to understand why Jewish people were targeted because they did not look different from the Nazi

perpetrators...[which is why the students can] wrap their heads...[around] racism more easily than ethnocentrism.”

When I asked Finn about the comparative value of the Holocaust to other genocides, she offered a very nuanced and insightful answer that involved othering and, potentially, racism. She argued that it was more well-known or infamous than other genocides, in part, because “it gets more play” in the “mass media.” When trying to explain why it was emphasized more than other genocides, she theorized that it was because it was “white-on-white crime,” which is why it received more attention from scholars and ordinary people. She mentioned that her students struggled to understand why Jewish people were targeted because they did “not look different” from the Nazi perpetrators. She then claimed that they had an easier time understanding the “othering” of African Americans, especially when it came to civil rights, because they could “wrap their heads” around “racism more easily than ethnocentrism.” Even though they seem to be able to understand the horrors that were perpetrated against the Jews by the Nazis, her students have trouble comprehending the reasons why due to the degree of their assimilation into German society. However, Finn reported her students do seem to better understand the violence directed at unassimilated Jews in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union because they looked different. In short, her students seemed to struggle with all forms of “othering” that involved groups of people who looked like them or with whom they identified.

Finn thought the Holocaust was very useful in teaching students about the stages of genocides. Because it was “systematic and planned...the students ...look for it in the future...[by].. diagram[ing] the steps” to, hopefully, identify and prevent other genocides from happening in the future. Though she alluded to the stages described in detail by other participants

in this study, she did not articulate them or give examples from the Holocaust as proof that it evolved systematically through all of the stages.

Emphasis

Though she believed that the Holocaust is “definitely not” emphasized enough in American schools, she struggled to identify how to fit it into a constantly expanding curriculum. Recognizing that she had a better understanding of it when she was in school, Finn noted that “history continues to move forward,” which means that teachers constantly need to cover more and more material that necessitates the reduction of material that was covered more in-depth in the past, like the Holocaust. As a result, she almost did not teach it at all in her American Studies class, with the exception of a brief mention of the fate of the refugees on the *St. Louis* ocean liner who were sent back to Germany to perish in concentration camps. However, she did describe her students’ dismay to hear about President Roosevelt’s failure to take them in and do more to prevent the Holocaust.

Finn stated that she would continue to read and learn about the topic and mentioned that, even though it was “overwhelming,” she loves taking students to the USHMM, because it was the best museum she had ever “been to.” At the end of the conversation, she mentioned that the students should be familiar with the following words after studying the topic: Holocaust, genocide, antisemitism, Nuremberg laws, ghettos, and concentration camps. Like her colleagues, the list did include many of the terms recommended in Act 70, but it also excludes some that are inextricably linked to the event, like Auschwitz. It should also be noted that she might have presumed that some of the other words that she excluded—but the act included—might be more appropriately associated and covered in a more all-encompassing unit on World War II, like “Hitler” and “Nazi.”

Teaching

Finn teaches three different classes to very different groups of students. She teaches an elective Psychology course that is heterogeneous mixed in terms of grades, abilities, and interests; she teaches two Regular American Studies classes that are also heterogeneously mixed, but students are generally lower achieving because “Regular” is the lowest tracked class offered in the 11th grade; and, she teaches Regular World Studies I, which is the lowest level course offered to ninth graders who are not recently arrived immigrants from non-English speaking countries, that is also heterogeneously mixed and was her lowest achieving class.

Mandates, Standards, and Curriculum

Finn found the official standards lacking and under-developed both at the state- and local levels. At the local level, she claimed that there was nothing about the Holocaust in the curriculum guides, and that they—i.e., the guides—were “really not developed,” especially “in comparison to the Math, Science, and Language Arts ones” because Social Studies is not a tested subject or tied to state funding formulas. So, even though her and her departmental colleagues have “been told that their district... [is] updating,... revising,... and changing them,... they never seem to get around to doing it,” which, based on the available evidence, seems to be a fairly accurate assessment and valid criticism.

According to Finn, the state-wide standards are similarly flawed. Since all of “our standards are incredibly broad,” she asserted, teachers are only required to teach “important topics,... people,... documents,... [and] change-over-time,” which are so vague that no specifics are really taught “at all.” Finn’s previous teaching assignment was in stark contrast to her current position. That state has a clearly prescribed scope and sequence of content: “the state provides you with a curriculum... to keep everything standardized, including the skills the kids are

supposed to know.” The department of education in that state took it upon itself to “develop lesson plans,... unit plans,... and tests to guide instruction.” Pennsylvania, in her opinion, provides “none of that” material, which she seemed to believe was a disservice to teachers across the Commonwealth.

Leadership

When I asked about leadership and community support in teaching the Holocaust, Finn paused for quite a long time and, with many qualifiers, said that, if she “carefully selected... resources...and [her] use of language,” then she felt “supported” by her administration. When asked to elaborate on her response, she admitted that it was a and difficult topic, so she did her “best to avoid as much graphic detail as possible, despite the fact that it was the Holocaust.” She explained that decision by acknowledging that she was teaching young and impressionable students who could be traumatized by what they read and viewed about the event. She also emphasized that she was particularly careful last year, because her students seemed to be exceptionally immature for their ages, which could be attributable to them being out of school for long stretches of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, though, she admitted that she did not get much pushback from parents or her principal on the Holocaust unit, especially in comparison to units on Slavery, Reconstruction, the Progressive-era, and Civil Rights.

Textbooks, Materials, and Guides

Finn expressed some concerns about using the textbooks associated with her classes. Because of the various reading levels in her classes, she was hesitant to assign readings in the textbook because many of her students were unable to comprehend the text; instead, she assigned supplemental reading materials that were easier for her students to comprehend. Beyond her reading level concerns, she also articulated that the textbooks presented the topic in a “very

basic... bare bones” way by only devoting a few pages to it, which she believed barely scratched the surface of the Holocaust. However, she did admit that “because of where it falls in the curriculum and chronologically”—i.e., it is often taught at the end of the year—there is not enough time to cover it properly, especially in her school’s newly adopted AB block schedule.

With that said, Finn did assign her students “online sources and interactive websites,” which is what she did during the lesson I observed. The students had to navigate reading and study guides, and she specifically mentioned the USHM’s site, though she admitted that it could be somewhat challenging for students because some of the readings were “hard, long [and] super in the weeds,” or unnecessarily detailed and convoluted. Recently, she also mentioned using the British Imperial War Museum’s site, which she thought was superb for teaching about Nazi propaganda and “hotspots”—i.e., emerging genocides— around the world. Even though she used some guides that were generated by others, like remembrance organization websites, to shepherd her students through some of the material, Finn preferred to create all of the review guides herself to prepare them for the tests she created on the topic, which was also material that she shared with me.

Pedagogy

Finn admitted to using a fairly conventional, teacher-led approach to teaching the Holocaust, because of her students lack of exposure to—and the graphic nature of—the topic, which was the strategy she used during the lesson I observed her teach. As I noted, she started her lessons by asking the students “what they know” and “have heard about it” to determine “what... their background” knowledge was on the topic. In her experience, very few students knew anything about it—maybe “4 or 5” out of a class of “30 kids”—beyond maybe having heard the word “Holocaust.” At this point in the in the conversation, she noted that she was

continuously surprised by that response rate, because she believed they studied it in 8th grade Language Arts and visited the USHMM. Finn thought USHMM was a “heavy museum”—unsettling to experience and process—“without any context” or background knowledge as a middle schooler.

After establishing what her students already know about the Holocaust, she admitted that “it is a very teacher-led lesson because it’s a very heavy subject, especially when you [the students] have absolutely no context going into it,” which is why she prefers to lecture with a slide presentation—something I witnessed during my observation-filled with poignant pictures to demonstrate the graphic nature of the topic, including an aerial photo of Auschwitz. To reveal how unsettling it was to her students, she shared an anecdotal story of one of her male students who “sat and cried” while she recounted the horrors of the Holocaust without showing a lot of graphic pictures, which was not an incident that occurred while I observed her lesson.

After her lecture, Finn then engaged her students in a discussion on the topic, which often revealed a great deal of incredulity in her students with comments or questions like “I can’t believe someone would do” or “How can that happen?” or “How does someone get to do that?” which seemed to suggest her students cannot quite comprehend the horrific motivations and actions of the Nazis and their accomplices. It should be noted that the students did appear unsettled and disturbed by lesson I observed her teach, and they did ask a few of the questions that she mentioned earlier in this section, which seemed to support her assertion that they struggled to process and understand the inhumanity of the Nazi’s treatment of the Jews.

Finn had already mentioned using websites to teach about the Holocaust, but she also noted that she used a variety of different videoclips, including one on *Kristallnacht*. At this point in the conversation, though, she admitted that it was difficult to find appropriate materials for

her students due to their limited English proficiency, not necessarily their maturity or understanding. According to her, then, it was difficult to find suitable readings because the topic is not considered appropriate for younger students who traditionally read at those lower levels. There is, therefore, clearly a need for readings for those readers with grade-level content that is appropriate for them. Acknowledging that constraint, she tried to find visual material that might capture and communicate the horrors of the event beyond words. While discussing these linguistic limitations of teaching the material to these students, she also acknowledged that there were also some cultural challenges because, unlike their peers who identified as European-American, some of her students with Mexican or Mayan backgrounds, did not necessarily “care” or “connect” with European history, which included the Holocaust.

For assessing students’ learning, Finn required her students to complete a web quest after her lecture on the topic, which she seemed to grade as a formative assessment. At the end of the lesson or unit of study, she also administered a summative test that was “vocabulary-based” to ensure that they learned the basic facts about the event, which was created by her to ensure that it was “properly aligned” and a product of backwards design or planning.

Meta

When asked a series of questions about the impact the study had on her and her students, Finn did not think that her participation in the project had really changed anything in her classroom, though she allowed that it might next year after having some time to reflect on her contribution. However, she did admit that she had reflected quite a bit on the topic over the years and shared the following thoughts. First, she acknowledged that she needs to spend more time on the topic, as it is a “tough topic to end the year on.” Second, she recognized that she had to be cognizant of her “word choice” with her students because it is “heavy stuff.” Lastly, she believed

she had to be “more empathetic” because she was concerned that she might become “a little callous” from repeated exposure to the topic and might need to be reminded that her students don’t know anything about it, which means she has to be mindful about teaching “it through their lens.”

Summary

Because of her strong educational background, Finn’s understanding of the Holocaust was very scholarly, especially her knowledge of the event’s key structural elements, characters, and historiography. Armed with this scholarly knowledge, she was able to teach her students powerful lessons about the context and details of the Holocaust itself while also imbedding more generalizable—and, potentially, useable—lessons about the evolution of genocides so that they might prevent or stop similar event from occurring in the future. Equally notable was her ability to identify the different ability levels in her classroom and tailor her lessons, including her curation of materials, to the academic levels of her students. Most remarkable, though, was her main reason for teaching it to American students because it “upsets their vision of what race is” because it is not always about the color of peoples’ skin, but it can also be about their ethnicity or religion which, according to her, broadens “their horizons about what race is and what it means” to “see that different people have been targeted” for simply being the other. For Finn, this means that everyone—including her own students—can be similarly persecuted in an intolerant society.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

In this chapter, I discuss the content analysis and three case studies, as well as my experiences completing this study, in answering the research questions that guide this dissertation. In particular, I am attempting to analyze the conceptualizations three social studies teachers articulated of their teaching of the Holocaust. I also offer an analysis of the state and local documents that are supposed to shape and guide their approach to the topic. This study sought to answer the following main question:

How do three in-service teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust?

And the subordinate questions:

1. How do the teachers define the event and narrate or frame the rationale for teaching it and its causes, course stages, consequences, historical actors, and lessons?
2. How does their conceptualization influence or inform their interpretation of the curriculum and pedagogical decision-making?
3. In what ways do teachers feel they are supported in teaching the Holocaust?

In order to answer these questions, then, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section considers the ways the participants conceptualized the Holocaust, especially focusing on their thoughts on its causes, course, consequences, characters, and historical significance, which seemed to be shaped by their personal interest in the topic and educations. The second section discusses their teaching of the Holocaust, in particular their selection of materials, guides, strategies, assessments, and lessons or morals they are trying to their students, including the application of that knowledge. The third section examines the state and local guidelines that are supposed to direct the participants in their teaching of the Holocaust,

specifically the roles Act 70, SAS and local curriculum maps play in shape teachers approaches to the topic, which also includes the textbooks that are thought to anchor their instruction.

Finally, this chapter concludes with an explanation of the implication of this study for the pre-service and in-service teacher education, the development of state and local social studies curriculum, the drafting of legislation or policies designed to emphasize the teaching of specific social studies content in schools and, lastly, recommendations for future research inspired by this project. However, the implications of this study points towards several potential areas for improving the delivery of Holocaust education—and related content—in K-12 classrooms.

Participants' Conceptualization of the Holocaust

Background

Predictably, the participants' backgrounds, which were recorded during the introductory interviews, seemed to profoundly influence various aspects of their thoughts on the teaching of the Holocaust. Given the challenges of teaching difficult histories, Shawn (1995) argues that teachers must be very knowledgeable in the Holocaust to teach it effectively. However, research has found that, unlike these three participants, most teachers do not have a strong grasp for the content (Holt 2001; Schweber, 1994).

Eloise's personal history of having a grandmother who was born and raised in the Third Reich with pro-Nazi sympathies deeply affected her interest in the history of World War II, especially her interest and enduring curiosity about the Holocaust, which was evidenced in her knowledge and teaching of the topic. It should also be noted that the other participants. Finn and Anne, also expressed early interests in the topic that led both of these avid readers to read *The Number of the Stars* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* on their own, which led to their enduring interest in the topic.

It is also important to note that all three participants acknowledged that the topic was covered quite extensively in their middle- and high schools, though Anne and Eloise struggled to remember the exact lessons they were taught by their teachers. Though Anne did not recall the specifics of her college course work on the topic, both Finn and Eloise—who, not coincidentally, attended the same university that specialized in Holocaust and Genocide studies—emphasized that they were profoundly influenced by their university coursework on the Holocaust, especially the efforts of one professor in particular who fueled their passion for the topic.

Causes

All three identified deep-seated antisemitism in German society and culture as the ultimate long-term cause of the Holocaust. They also argued that post-World War I problems in Germany, especially the economic issues that crushed the country's economy in the mid-1920s and again during the Great Depression, were blamed on the Jews by Hitler and his Nazi acolytes, which eventually contributed to propelling them to power in 1932. These were the causes that Feinberg and Totten (1995), and later Schweber (1998), thought teachers should emphasize in their classrooms.

Seemingly subscribing to the functionalist school of thought articulated by Raoul Hilberg (1985) in *The Destruction of European Jews* and Christopher Browning's (1992) *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* that both argue the event evolved over time driven by high- and low level bureaucrats within the Nazi state, the three participants believed that the Holocaust escalated or unfolded in stages that ultimately culminated in the murder of 6 million Jews and millions of others deemed unfit to live in the Third Reich,² which

² The term "Third Reich" or "Reich" is used throughout this section to denote the areas that the Nazis conquered and incorporated into their empire from 1939 to 1945, including their home

was a definition of the event that they all articulated in similar ways. They all seemed to draw from Stanton's Ten Stages of Genocide Theory in varying ways to frame the event. Anne and Eloise, then, directly mentioned that they used Stanton's Ten Stages of Genocide theory to frame the event whereas Finn—in order to make it more manageable for her students—alluded to it but truncated or compressed the ten into four or five.

Course

In general, though, they seem to agree that it evolved through stages or events, consistent with the recommendations of Schweber (1998). Though Feinberg and Totten (1995) argued against emphasizing particular developments, like the establishment and operations at Auschwitz, the participants' points of emphasis were broadly in line with Schweber's (1998) recommendations. Their conceptualizations of the course of events once the Holocaust began were not in uniform alignment. Eloise, for example, presented the course of events in the most traditional way, closely following Stanton's Ten Stages. Finn, though, pointed out that, while this system was being established, the Nazis simultaneously established killing squads or *Einsatzgruppen* to liquidate whole populations of Jews in the newly conquered territories of the former Soviet Union. Anne, unlike the other two, mentioned that all the stages, rather than happening in succession, often overlapped and happened simultaneously, by which she meant that they happened concurrently after the process had evolved or escalated to a higher or more advanced stage. Finn, unlike the other two, articulated that before "The Final Solution" Hitler and the Nazis explored other options to rid the Third Reich of Jews, including encouraging them

country of Germany. This was done to acknowledge that Nazi policies towards Jews—and civilian reactions to those policies—happened throughout the Reich.

to emigrate or shipping them to other places, but they soon abandoned those plans once they realized that no one would take them.

Consequences

All three participants also had very similar claims or assertions about the consequences of the Holocaust. The immediate consequence for all of them was the eradication of millions of European Jews, and the repatriation or immigration of survivors to a country willing to take them. They all mentioned the establishment in the state of Israel as a positive outcome or result of the mass murder, but they all also acknowledged that it also led to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that continues to fester or rage to this day along with its destabilizing effect on other countries in the region. Another consequence they all mentioned was it led to the study of other similarly horrific events known as genocides. More specifically, it contributed to the identification, analysis, and study of genocides to prevent similar events from happening again. As evidenced by the Rwandan and other genocides, though, it has not entirely succeeded in eliminating the occurrence of genocides, but it might have contributed to mitigating or reducing the scale of the destruction of other groups. This is evidenced by other genocides never having come close to matching the scale of the Nazis atrocities, which is one of the reasons why scholars like Schweber (2005) and Totten (2008) believe it should be taught in American schools.

Characters

Beyond the structural elements of the event, the participants also spoke about the various groups of people and individuals who were directly or indirectly involved in the Holocaust. Even though they largely identified the same types of groupings and the individual contributions, their

comments were very nuanced and differentiated based on the emphasis or attribution of innocence, guilt, or heroics they assigned to various people.

Perpetrators

In general, the participants all believed that Hitler and high-ranking Nazis were largely to blame for the Holocaust. To varying degrees, though all of them also claimed that lower-level bureaucrats and civilians were complicit in the crime in a variety of different ways. More specifically, they argued that these “ordinary people” (Browning, 1992) helped to build and manage the instruments that enabled the killings, including maintaining trains and running camps as civil servants or bureaucrats who turned a seeming blind eye to all of the discrimination, segregation, incarceration, forced labor, torture, and liquidation that occurred in and around the camps.

Victims

All the three participants were again in agreement on who the victims of the Holocaust were. They stated that 6 million Jews were eradicated along with millions of others, including the Roma, disabled, Slavs, homosexuals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. None of them, though, mentioned the targeting of people for their political beliefs, specifically socialists and trade unionists, but that persecution also seemed largely absent from the high school textbooks I reviewed. Moreover, it seemed to be minimized in most of the American scholarly work on the topic, which might be a result of Americans’ antipathy—and, in some sense, hostility—toward leftists, especially during and after the Cold War.

Bystanders

In general, they believed that ordinary Germans and citizens of the expanded Third Reich who failed to speak out against treatment of the Jews—or aided them in anyway—were all

bystanders to the atrocity and, through their silence and the acquiescence, signaled that they not only ignored it. But, according to the three participants, these bystanders at best condoned the treatment and were potentially complicit in allowing the treatment to continue. Consequently, they all agreed that bystanders should have done more to speak out against the atrocities, though they struggled to articulate what bystanders should have said and to whom. Finn mentioned that bystanders should have done more to prevent the killings, but she did not mention any concrete steps to either stop the killings or rescue the Jews by, for example, ferrying them to safety or hiding them and I did not ask her to elaborate on her answer. They all also mentioned that the Allied Powers knew about the treatment of Jews and even the mass killings at Auschwitz, but did nothing to prevent or stop it from. Finn in particular believed that the inaction and inattention to the problem was the result of deep-seated antisemitism within the American bureaucracy, which might plausibly have included FDR, which she unequivocally claimed lead to inexcusable inaction.

Not articulating or identifying the types of opposition or resistance and active aide that bystanders could offer in support to prevent or to rescue the Jews is potentially problematic, because all three believed that one of the main reasons for teaching the topic was or is to prevent it from happening again. Of course, the prevention of future genocides is a prominent theme in rationales for teaching the Holocaust (Feinberg & Totten, 1995). Their inability to articulate how to condemn or resist similar efforts signals a disconnect between their goals in teaching about the Holocaust and how they put those goals into practice.

Liberators

When I asked about liberators and rescuers, they gave similar answers with some slight but notable differences. They all identified Allied troops as liberators at the end of World War II.

Unlike Eloise and Anne, though, Finn argued at first that only the Western Allies should be considered liberators, which meant that she did not consider the advancing Soviet troops the same way. When it was pointed out to her that the most infamous camps, including Auschwitz, were on the Eastern front, she very reluctantly conceded that Red Army soldiers also liberated camps. As someone born during the Cold War and a self-professed Americanist, she seemed hesitant to praise the Soviet Union for any of its efforts in World War II, including the liberation of the most infamous camps like Auschwitz. Again, though, I did not ask her elaborate her views or opinions of the Red Army.

Rescuers

They generally agreed that the rescuers operated within the Third Reich to warn, hide, and ferry Jews to safety in neutral countries. Though scholars like McNight (2004) have argued students should study the rescuers in order to inspire them to act in similar circumstances, none of the participants mentioned that these were actions that should be emphasized to students.

Survivors

In general, they all agreed that people who were rescued from camps at the end of the war should be considered survivors. Also, after some reflection, they also seemed to acknowledge in separate interviews that anyone who was persecuted by the Nazis and survived the war should also be considered a survivor. However, the participants seemed less convinced about it, which suggested they reluctantly believed it because they did not believe these people suffered as much as camp survivors. Surprisingly, Eloise thought that anyone who survived the Nazi-era in the Third Reich should also be consider a survivor, which was the most expansive and inclusive view of the three. This might be owed to her grandmother, who grew up in Nazi-Germany and sympathized with the Nazis. It should be noted that this is not the commonly accepted view of

scholars, because they generally believe that the actual survivors were targeted by Nazis for their group-affiliation or individual words or actions. Whereas ordinary citizens, with no direct affiliation to target groups, were bystanders who, as long as they did not oppose the authorities in anyway, were not targeted. Finn and Anne, though, seemed to subscribe to the position of most scholars on survivors and did not share Eloise's more inclusive view. However, they seemed to suggest that the degree of persecution and punishment almost created a hierarchy of survivors with camp survivors elevated to the very top because of the amount of suffering they endured while others were ranked beneath them because they allegedly suffered less.

Historical Significance

Consistent with the literature on Holocaust education (Shepperd & Levy, 2018), all three agreed that the Holocaust was deserving of study both as a unique and a universal event that could be used to study the horrific and, potentially, prevent similar genocides. Moreover, they also believe that it should be studied or analyzed to better understand the escalation of human rights of abuses that evolve into crimes against humanity and, ultimately, genocide or mass murder. Though Eloise and Anne both believed that it was the perfect exemplar to demonstrate and teach Stanton's Ten Stages of Genocide and the mechanisms escalation, Finn believed that the stages should be compressed into a more manageable four or five, and more emphasis should be placed on naming various groups to determine culpability, including the role and responsibility of external actors in de-escalating events, including the role the United States in response to genocides.

Participants' Teaching of the Holocaust

Though their basic approach was the same, their choice of video clips, points of emphases in their lectures, learning guide prompts, test questions, and extensions beyond the

Holocaust all seemed to differ slightly. Unlike their fairly uniform or similar conceptualizations of the event, the three participants approach the teaching of the Holocaust differently, in part, due to the age, abilities, and levels of interest of their students. It also seems the high degree of autonomy and lack of guidance from the state education association (SEA) and or local education association (LEA) play some role in these variances.

Pre-service training

All three focused on their history education as influential on their teaching of the Holocaust, without mentioning anything about their pedagogical or teacher preparation. They all seemed to downplay the importance of the approved course textbook, because it seemed to only cover the topic in a cursory way that did not cover it with the appropriate depth and breadth that it deserved. Consistent with the research on textbooks and the Holocaust (Bromley & Russell, 2010), my analysis of their textbook, though, revealed that it did cover all of the recommended content in a narrative way that contained the causes, course stages, consequences, and characters that all three of them mentioned in their interviews.

Materials

The participants relied on materials found on the internet to cover the Holocaust in a way they felt was appropriate. In particular, they focused heavily on resources published on the USHMM website, which they also used to find video clips, study guides, survivor accounts, and other resources. Even though they all mentioned using that site in particular, they often used different resources embedded or located on it to emphasize or highlight different aspects of the Holocaust, which meant that they rarely used the same resources. Also, they use a wide variety of other sites, including—in Finn’s case—the British Imperial War Museum’s site, to discuss the evolution of Nazi cruelty towards the Jews. Because they pulled information from different sites,

the narrative they created was often cobbled together from different pieces of text, which led them to create their own study guides for their students—both pre-and post-lesson—that often deviated from the other teachers guides in the department with an emphasis on different content and concepts. In general, the participants still outlined coherent narratives of the Holocaust. Though this degree of teacher autonomy might provide challenges to teachers who are less knowledgeable about the Holocaust (Holt, 2001; Schweber, 2004, this was not the case for these three teachers likely due to their deep historical knowledge of the Holocaust (Shawn, 1995).

Strategies

Even though the texts and materials were pulled from different sites, which was clearly influenced by their conceptualization of the event, it influenced their differing instructional strategies. All three taught the topic in roughly the same way with different materials and emphases: first, they showed a movie clip or picture to introduce the topic; second, they had their students complete some guided reading to give them some background knowledge; third, they delivered lectures accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation and study guide to ensure that their students learned the information they deemed necessary for them to learn; fourth, they initiated a question-and-answer session or discussion to encourage their students to reflect more deeply on the topic; fifth, they had their students pick a topic barely covered in class to do an independent research-based project on the topic; finally, they administered objective and, occasionally, subjective tests to check for student understanding.

These approaches did differ in some significant ways. Eloise followed the aforementioned approach with no significant qualifications or deviations. Anne, though, grounded her lecture and discussion explicitly in Stanton's Ten Stages of Genocide theory to encourage her students to extend their learning beyond the Holocaust to other genocides. Finn,

who recognized that students represented a wide range of academic skills, introduced the topic nonverbally through pictures of Auschwitz and—depending of the ability level of her students—would not include the independent study project because she believed it might be beyond her students’ capabilities. It should also be noted that, because of the negative impact of the COVID pandemic and a recent switch to a block schedule, the three participants had cut out various parts of their approach, especially the independent project, due to time constraints.

Mandates, Standards, and Curriculum

The participants differed widely in their understanding of state and local mandates and curriculum. Eloise, as honest as ever, admitted that she was not aware of any state standards or mandates or, for that matter, any local requirements. She did recall that a few years ago some local administrators had required her to assign a project on the Holocaust—which she already did—that would fulfill all of the state and local requirements. Anne, armed with her knowledge of curriculum development, realized that there were no national standards or mandates, though she believed that the College Board’s recommendations to prepare students for Advanced Placement exams was probably the closest thing the United States had to national curriculum for a select group of students. She also knew, mainly because she was directed by local administrators to read Act 70, that her district encouraged its teachers to cover the Holocaust because it was mandated by the state, which she believed she covered beyond the requirements in her classes.

Finn was the only one who definitively knew that there were no national standards, and that the state and local standards were rather lackluster or poorly articulated. Unlike the other two, though, she taught in another state and received an advanced degree in education from one of its flagship universities with a highly rated school of education, so she had the advantage of

having compared the two states' curriculums and resources. She concluded that other state's material and guides were far superior to Pennsylvania's because they included detailed unit and lesson plans, recommended activities and materials, and suggested non-textual documents. She did not consider, though, that the greater degree standardization in the other state—which is rank below Pennsylvania in every measurable way from student achievement to teacher effectiveness—might have been the result of concerns about educator quality and a required social studies assessment, which seemed to explain why it tried to limit teacher autonomy and choice in curricular and instructional matters. It should also be noted, that the state has recently been embroiled in the current culture war being waged across nation over content taught in the social studies classrooms.

Recommendations

In the following section I offer recommendations for various educational stakeholders, drawing from the findings of this study and the extant literature.

Classroom

Teachers should have detailed and accurate knowledge about the Holocaust as a unique and universal event to teach it effectively to students, especially its cause, course, consequences, characters, and lessons or morals (Schweber, 2008; Totten & Feinberg, 2011). In this study, it was very clear that all three participants were content-area experts who proficiently framed the event for their students through their choice of secondary and primary sources, online and offline materials, instructional strategies, reading- and study guides, and assessments. Unfortunately, though, according to Holt (1995) and Schweber (2004), most teachers are not as knowledgeable and skilled as these three individuals, so it incumbent on teacher preparation programs to ensure that pre-service teachers are properly prepared to teach difficult topics by making sure that they

have strong enough content-area and pedagogical knowledge to coherently conceptualize the Holocaust.

If learning about the Holocaust is meant to inspire action on the parts of students, as all three participants indicated in this study, the “affective turn” could serve as useful guide for translating historical knowledge into difference-making action (Zembylas, 2014). More specifically, the affective turn in the classroom might look like an action plan that the students develop in classroom to prevent the escalation of human rights violation into acts of genocide, for example researching and writing legislation that bans hate speech in country to combat prejudice.

At least one scholar has cautioned against qualifying or justifying bystanders’ actions too much in difficult contexts because they are concerned that it might lead to future inaction by students facing similar circumstances (Garrett, 2012). Thus, if the reason for teaching this topic is to encourage civic actions on the parts of students, as it so clearly was for Finn, Eloise, and Anne, then students need to recognize the context to understand the consequences of their actions within that context. A deep knowledge of the context should determine their decision to speak out, rescue, witness, or hide target victims of genocide. If, however, they are witnessing the genocide from afar, they also need to learn what the most effective measures are to prevent or stop a potential or actual genocide from escalating into a full-blown genocide like the Holocaust.

During their lectures, rescuers could be used as case studies of mentalities and behaviors that could be emulated by people facing similar circumstances in different contexts. Scholars have noted that difficult knowledge can be trauma-inducing from students (Levy & Sheppard, 2018; Stoddard, 2021), as evidenced by a student crying in Finn’s class, so that is why participants in this study preferred a teacher-centered approach with carefully curated materials

on the topic to minimize such strong student reactions. In the future, though, a scaffolded approach to teaching the Holocaust might allow them to use a more student-centered approach by carefully increasing their exposure to the horrific.

More specifically, a teacher could create a document-based question (DBQ) project for individuals or groups by curating a limited number of less graphic materials for students to introduce them to the types of antisemitism Jews faced in the aftermath of World War I, which could be expanded to include more overtly graphic material or allow the students to research the topic on their own once they have been appropriately exposed and prepared, including through whole group discussions and writing exercises, to the material they will encounter. This student-centered approach could be used for every stage of the Holocaust which, if scaffolded effectively, should prepare the students for the horrific material they will encounter while researching the camps like Auschwitz.

School District Curriculum

The LEA curriculum guide was very vague and limited or lacking in breadth and depth. It only listed the Holocaust with no supporting vocabulary or suggested narrative framework. It only offered a handful of resources. Having analyzed the curricular documents on the topic in the district, the only mention of the Holocaust was in the subsection of the ninth grade World Studies curriculum map that simply listed the Holocaust as a consequence of World War II.

Beyond that one mention, school leaders scrambled to learn more about the topic and the district's teaching of it along with any state standards or legislation, because I alarmed them during my preliminary research on topic by asking them a series of questions about teaching it that they could not answer. They could not, for example, tell when or how it was taught in our school system, even though they did believe that it was taught at various levels. So, after my

informal inquiry, they launched an inquest into when and how it was taught; and, after finding out about Act 70, required all for the secondary social studies teachers at the high school to familiarize themselves with the document, though it is unclear whether all of them complied with the administrative team's directive.

Even after reading that piece of legislation, though, administrators in the district erroneously believed that it was a mandate and, realizing that they had not known about or completed the aforementioned survey, they required or directed their teachers to cover everything in the act which, unbeknownst to the leaders, they already did in the relevant classes or courses. Even though that was a revealing or troubling piece of knowledge, the current school leaders in the district did, in response to a brief email survey, define the Holocaust in general terms. They struggled, though, to articulate when and how it was taught to students, and they were not aware of any state legislation or standards requiring that it be taught in school. This seemed to demonstrate a clear disconnect between teachers' and administrators' knowledge of the state and local standards.

Previous research has suggested that teachers benefit from having a strong background in content-knowledge when teaching the Holocaust (Schweber, 2004; Shawn, 1995), the same recommendations should apply to curriculum writers and district-level administrators, especially social studies coordinators, to ensure that the Holocaust is properly contextualized and framed to ensure that students are taught the appropriate content and lessons to recognize, prevent or stop other genocides from occurring in the future. More specifically, school leaders should write narrative frameworks—i.e., the causes, course stages, and consequences—into the curriculum that teachers and students conceptualize the Holocaust and similar events in meaningful ways that allow them to understand it as a unique and universal, which would also enable them to

compare it to other genocides and escalating events. In addition, they should also explicitly write all of the necessary content into the curriculum, including key characters and events, because scholars like Schweber (2004) and Shawn (1995) agree that accurate, detailed information is crucial to properly framing and learning key lessons about the Holocaust. Next, recognizing that all teachers are not as knowledgeable about the event as the three participants in this study, school leaders should carefully curate a list of resources for teachers and students alike to ensure that they are accessing high-quality materials that makes sure that they are teaching and learning the most important concepts, content, and lessons about the Holocaust. Lastly, if they would prefer a more student-centered approach to the teacher-led ones articulated by the participants in this study, school leaders could recommend or direct teachers to use the DBQ-based, scaffolded approach recommended earlier in this section. All of these recommendations could be written into a curriculum map as separate categories for school leaders and teachers to easily read and implement. Though it is not normally be written into the curriculum guides or maps, it is absolutely crucial that school leaders support their teachers in teaching the Holocaust to ensure that students learn the key concepts, content, and lessons about the event (Stoddard, 2021).

State Standards

After carefully analyzing all of the state standards and the state's largely unenforced mandate, as well as the materials that are supposed to guide and support Commonwealth educators in their teaching of the Holocaust, it became abundantly clear that all of those requirements and guides are so vague that they were practically useless in guiding or supporting teachers and administrators in any significant way.

Pennsylvania's Standards Alignment System (SAS), for example, does not even explicitly mention the Holocaust because specific content is reserved for LEAs to determine.

Instead, it focused on concepts and skills that may or may not be relevant to the study of the Holocaust. That vagueness or absence seems to have contributed to the creation of a pseudo-mandate, which is a piece of legislation that looks and reads like a mandate but lacks any enforcement. So, even though it looks like a document with solid content and concepts, a closer reading of it reveals that the authors were not explicit or knowledgeable enough about historiography to include or suggest a field-based narrative structures that would have framed or given meaning to the specific study of the Holocaust. As a result, they could not, by extension, provide a framework for the study of other genocides in a rigorous comparative way to prevent or stop current or future ones. In the absence of such as framework or meaning making structure, it simply insisted that the history of the Holocaust be taught using a list of vocabulary words, which makes the topic difficult or confusing to study of itself compared to similar events in the past, present, and future.

The creators of the follow-up study recognized the problem that the absence of definitions posed so they wrote them in to the survey. The purpose of the study was to capture and measure the teaching of the topic in Pennsylvania, which was written into Act 70 to determine if it needed to be elevated to a mandate to ensure or enforce the teaching of the topic in Pennsylvania schools. To ensure that everyone was on the same page, then, they defined the Holocaust using the USHMM definition because schools seemingly needed to know what they were supposed to report back to the state. Because the survey had a drop-down menu option, though, they did not offer a suggested narrative structure for school leaders and teachers to use in their courses, so it was difficult to determine how the topic was taught, or if it was presented in a meaningful, transferable way to the students in the state.

The survey creators, though, did recommend that the Commonwealth improve its teaching of the Holocaust. In particular, they encouraged or directed the state social studies coordinator to offer more professional development opportunities for teachers on the topic. Moreover, they encouraged memorial and educational organizations throughout the state to offer more professional development training on it. This might have contributed to the recent expansion or proliferation of those types of offerings within the state, like the recently created Holocaust Center at Penn State that offers teacher trainings and materials. On the state's official SAS site, though, it simply directed students to a page that listed 49 sites for teachers possibly use to teach the Holocaust, including the USHMM site.

This study shows that SEAs need to be more explicit about the content and concepts to be taught if the objective is to ensure that students in the state graduate with specific historical knowledge and an understanding with the ability to frame, make meaning, and apply it as local, state, national, and international citizens or actors. Relatedly, if lawmakers would like to enshrine in law that students learn specific historical content or concepts, then they should also explicitly articulate a conceptual narrative framework for teachers and students to make meaning out of the content—and carefully craft definitions or terms—they would like them to teach and learn. Moreover, state and other organizations—including educational and memorial ones—should also create or recommend professional development training and materials for teachers. In particular, teachers should have easy access to lesson- and unit plans that can better guide them to ensure their students are taught using pedagogical approaches that are grounded in the best practices of the profession, especially for the teaching difficult topics like the Holocaust.

Teacher Preparation

The teachers' conceptualization of the Holocaust seemed to be informed by rigorous study of the topic using traditional historiographical methodologies learned from professors who were well-trained in the field of history. However, they seemed less sure of their pedagogical approaches or choices, which revealed itself in the lack of uniformity in their approaches and certainty about the students learning the necessary information—and lessons—about the Holocaust. In the future, then, teacher preparation programs ought to focus more on preparing pre-service social studies teachers for teaching difficult topics. One approach is to present pre-service social studies teachers with the best practices for ensuring that students are learning the most essential—and applicable—content and concepts. For example, as Totten and Feinberg (2011) recommend teachers focus on one reason for teaching the Holocaust to ensure their students fully understand and can articulate their rationale, which should make it easier for them to comprehend the topic and use it inform their future decision-making, like how to respond to similar event in the future.

Future Research

Because this study was done with participants in the same school who were all women, demographic outliers in the profession of social studies teachers (Fitchett, 2010), it is important to see if researchers in other school settings with a different set of participants yielded similar or different results. The participants in this study were also outliers in terms of their deep knowledge of the Holocaust (Feinberg & Totten, 2008). I encourage future researchers to cast a wider net in terms of the gendered identities and depth of content knowledge of participants to gain a broader understanding of the conceptualizations of the Holocaust held by social studies teachers. It is also necessary to conduct a study in different states—maybe even different

countries—with different teacher trainings, credentialing, standards, and mandates to see if future studies produce similar or different results. If the results differed, researchers will want to explore the reasons for those differences.

Having focused very heavily on the way teachers conceptualize and teach the Holocaust in this study, it is important to conduct a study measuring how those concepts were received by students, and, in turn, how those students conceptualized the content and articulated it in both passive and active ways through objective and constructed-response or essay tests. Those studies could be expanded by describing and measuring the ways students attempt to apply that knowledge—and lessons—to real-world scenarios to prevent, de-escalate or stop human rights violations escalating into genocidal acts or a genocide itself from the inside and outside, which could be achieved or accomplished through action-oriented research projects. On a related note, it was fascinating to hear teachers talk about using the Holocaust to teach students how to identify, prevent, de-escalate, or stop genocide using the knowledge gained from studying the Holocaust. The problem, though, was that they did not explicitly talk to their students about what they should or could do to achieve those objectives. The literature on best practices in Holocaust education would be enriched by cataloguing the best the practices for teaching students to respond to a Holocaust as real-world actors.

Conclusion

As I reflect back on the way I used to teach the Holocaust, by attempting to challenge students' preconceived or previous or received knowledge of the topic, I realize that it was the wrong approach because of the ways it unsettled students and fellow teachers alike. Even though my conceptualization of the topic or event was similar other social studies teachers' understanding of it, my approach to teaching differed so significantly—and radically—from

theirs that it largely explains strong and negative reaction to it. I now recognize that we conceptualized it similarly by using intellectual or historical frameworks to identify causes, course stages, and consequences with content and characters that are woven into the narrative. Moreover, I learned during the course of conducting this study that teachers' approaches to teaching it differs in the types of anticipatory audio-visual materials they use, the background readings and learning guides they require their students to complete, the lectures and discussion they present and lead, the independent research project topics that they create and select, and the objective and constructed assessments they administer to capture student learning.

Also, unlike my approach or rationale that was trying or motivated to re-adjudicate the Holocaust to force the students to apply the knowledge they had learned during the year to identify and punish future perpetrators for crimes against humanity, the participants in this study were more concerned with students learning about the topic in the hopes that they would be able to prevent or de-escalate or stop future genocidal acts. However, this goal was not explicitly taught to their students but articulated by them in their interviews and implied in their lessons. Though I suspect the approach of the participants probably produced more positive student outcomes than mine, as measured by their understanding of the topic and application of that knowledge studying other genocides, it is difficult to compare the effectiveness of those strategies, because not enough research has been conducted on the many ways students learn the Holocaust.

So, how were these similar conceptions and different approaches possible in almost identical educational environments in Pennsylvania? That answer is that, even though Pennsylvania social studies teachers appear to be well-versed and similar in their historical thinking, the state standards and legislation on the topic, were so vague and lacking in guidance

that the teachers are required to interpret what and how it should be taught. This results in widely divergent choices of audio-visual material, anticipatory videos and photos, different individual research projects, and markedly different tests. Moving forward, pre-service teacher educators in certification programs, curriculum writers and policy makers, and local educational leaders should really agree on how to teach the Holocaust in social studies classrooms throughout the Commonwealth. First, they should agree on common narrative structures, definitions, strategies, projects, and assessments that capture the causes, course, and consequences with all of its characters woven into the story by using best practices in the field to ensure that it imprints on students. Equally important, they should also teach their students the necessary actions to take to prevent crimes of humanity from happening again—or, at least, lessen their deadlines.

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APPENDIX A: FIRST INTERVIEW

A. Background

- 1) Where are you from?
- 2) How would you identify yourself (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.)?
- 3) How long have you taught? What subjects?
- 4) Describe the school in which you teach. Have you always taught there? If not, where else have you taught?

B. Teaching the Holocaust

- 1) Talk about your teaching of the Holocaust? Is it an integral part of your curriculum?
- 2) How comfortable are you teaching the Holocaust?
- 3) How important is teaching the Holocaust to you? Why do you believe Holocaust should be taught to American students?
- 4) What do you want your students to learn about the Holocaust?
- 5) When I say “antisemitism”, what comes to mind? Describe your presentation of “antisemitism”.

C. Learning about the Holocaust

- 1) How often do your students read sources created by Jewish writers and historians?
- 2) Have you visited a concentration camp? If yes, under what circumstances?
- 3) Describe your first encounter with the Holocaust.
- 4) Did you study the Holocaust in high school and/or college? If so, please speak about those experiences.

D. Professional Development, Standards, and Expectations

- 1) Have you participated in any professional development programs on the Holocaust? If so, please speak about those.
- 2) According to the state and local curriculum, what are you supposed to teach about the Holocaust this year? Are you aware of any state mandates about the teaching of the Holocaust? If so, what are you supposed to teach your students? (Careful)
- 3) What are your thoughts about participating in this study OR do you expect to learn anything from participating in this study?

APPENDIX B: SECOND INTERVIEW

A. Definition: What was the Holocaust?

B. Rationale:

- 1) Why do you think that the Holocaust is considered a significant event in history?
- 2) Why is (should) it (be) taught in school?
- 3) Can you think of any other reasons why it is considered significant and should be taught in schools?

C. Causes

- 1) Why did the Holocaust happen?
- 2) What were the long-term causes—if any—that led to the Holocaust?
- 3) What were the medium-term causes—if any—that led to the Holocaust?
- 4) What were the short-term causes—if any—that led to the Holocaust?

D. Course

- 1) What happened during the Holocaust?
- 2) When did it start?
- 3) Where did it start?
- 4) Who started it?
- 5) How was it carried out?
- 6) Did it happen in stages? If so, what were the stages?

E. Characters and groups

- 1) Who do you associate with the Holocaust? Why do you associate them with the Holocaust?
- 2) Perpetrators: Who was responsible for carrying it out?

- 3) Victims: Who were targeted during the Holocaust? What happened to them?
- 4) Bystanders: Who else witnessed it?

F. Consequences

- 1) What were the consequences of the Holocaust?
- 2) Who would you consider to be a Holocaust survivor?
- 3) What is the moral or lesson—if any—that can be learned from studying the Holocaust?
- 4) How does the Holocaust compare to other genocides?
- 5) How has it shaped the study of other genocides?

G. Historiography and Scholarship

- 1) Who taught you about the Holocaust?
- 2) Did you read about it? If so, what? Did you write about it? If so, what?
- 3) Is the Holocaust appropriately emphasized in America? Please explain.
- 4) What has influenced your understanding of the Holocaust?

APPENDIX C: THIRD INTERVIEW

A. School Year and Courses

- 1) Which courses are you teaching this year?
- 2) What are your classes like this year? What are your students like?

B. Standards and Mandates

- 1) According to the state and local curriculum, what are you supposed to teach about the Holocaust this year?
- 2) Are you aware of any state mandates about the teaching of the Holocaust? If so, what are you supposed to teach your students?

C. Leadership

Do you feel supported by your school and District administration while teaching the Holocaust? Do you feel the community supports you?

D. Textbooks and other materials

- 1) What textbook or supplemental reading material do you use to teach the Holocaust?
- 2) What do you think about the way the event is narrated in the text(s)?

E. Reading and Study Guides

- 1) Do your students use a reading guide while reading about the Holocaust? If so, do you use one that accompanies the text you use or do you create it?
- 2) Do your students use study guide to check for understanding after your lesson on the Holocaust? If so, do you use one that was created for you or do you create it yourself?

F. Pedagogy

- 1) How do you introduce the Holocaust?
- 2) What instructional strategies do you use? Why do you use those strategies?

G. Audio-Visual Materials

- 1) Do you use any audio-visual or web-based resources to teach the Holocaust? If so, what do you use?
- 2) Why did you choose to use those resources?

H. Assessments

- 1) How do you assess your students' understanding of the Holocaust?
- 2) Do you use an assessment that you created or one that was created for you? (Why?)

I. Meta

- 1) Has your participation in this study changed your conceptualization of the event? If so, how? If not, why?
- 2) Was your participation in this study changed the way you teach the topic? If so, how? If not, why?
- 3) Has it affect your interactions with your students?
- 4) Has it affected your characteristics as a teacher?
- 5) How comfortable are you teaching the Holocaust?
- 6) How important is teaching the Holocaust to you?
- 7) Why do you believe the Holocaust should be taught to American students?