

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IN GERMANY: ENSURING RELEVANCE AND MEANING IN AN INCREASINGLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY

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Abstract

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's 'open-door' policy towards the recent wave of migrants and refugees to Europe shows promise for expanding the workforce and increasing diversity, yet opens up some significant cultural and religious differences. Although the government has created programs to aid in their transition, little attention has been paid to how school curriculum, particularly education on the Holocaust, is presented to students for whom the event lacks personal, religious, or social relevance or who may have been taught that it is a fabrication. This study focuses on how classroom material presents the rise of National Socialism and the Holocaust through a document analysis of curriculum materials from a Gymnasium in Hamburg, Germany. Results show that even at the highest level of the education system, students are not being presented with the material in a way that draws relevance to the present day nor fosters meaning for recent immigrants. For the Holocaust, which is both a significant historical event and a critical lesson in the importance of universal human rights, effective education is imperative in order to combat present global trends of radicalism and intolerance.

Keywords: Holocaust Education, Refugees, Human Rights, Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Xenophobia

Introduction

Throughout human history, global migration has existed as people sought a better life or an escape from persecution. However, migration is presently at unprecedented levels. The Arab Spring, which began in 2010, precipitated conflicts throughout nations such as Syria, Libya, and Iraq. The upheaval and instability created by these civil wars led to record-

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level mass migration as individuals and families sought asylum in more stable locations, such as in Europe (Streitwieser, Brueck, Moody & Taylor, 2017). The United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, estimates that there are currently 22.5 million refugees globally, with more than half of them children (UNHCR, 2017). Managed migration has generally produced positive benefits, such as economic growth, expansion of the workforce, the addition of youth in an ageing population, and increased diversity (IMF, 2016). However, while some refugees join nations and communities with similar cultural backgrounds and religions as in their previous homes, many are finding themselves in countries with vastly different traditions, religious beliefs, and practices (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016).

To date, the main destination for recent refugees within Europe has been Germany, which has seen over one million asylum applications since 2015, when Chancellor Angela Merkel adopted an 'open-door' policy (Streitwieser, et al., 2017). Along with the rise in diversity, cultural and religious tensions have manifested themselves in a marked increase in xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and intolerance (Streitwieser, et al., 2017; Holmes & Castaneda, 2016). There is no doubt that the arrival of refugees, whether viewed as positive or negative, has made an indelible and permanent change in German society, from the classroom to the workforce.

School is often defined as a micro-level socialization agent, where political, religious, and social positions are further established (Apple, 2004; 2012; Warren & Wicks, 2011). The demographic makeup of schools worldwide has been changing due to globalization and increased student mobility (Spring, 2008). The recent refugee crisis has caused several nations, most notably Germany, to face a record number of non-native students entering the school system, especially since more than half of refugees are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2017). Given the fact that so many of these refugees are school-aged, there is an opportunity to use the classroom to advance positions of tolerance and respect between both native-born and non-native born Germans.

One subject matter that is an integral part of German education is learning about the rise of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Since 1992, the German government has required the inclusion of Holocaust education in all secondary schools (Boschki, Reichman, & Schwendemann, 2010). A challenge presented by the mandatory inclusion of the subject is that most recent immigrants and refugees come from predominantly Arabic countries, such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan (BAMF, 2017b). These students' cultural contexts need to be considered. Students from many of these countries may bring to the classroom a significantly different understanding of the facts of the Holocaust, with some having been taught that it was a conspiracy or that it was an "equal fight" in which both the Jews and the Nazis were active aggressors (Jikeli, 2015, p.186).

Given that the majority of refugees are coming from nations that have had a contentious history with Israel and the Jewish people, the subject of the Holocaust may elicit a strong response in students for whom this tension has been a part of their upbringing (Wistrich, 2012). In addition, key leaders from several source countries of these immigrants and refugees have been quoted as denying the Holocaust and expressing explicitly anti-Semitic sentiments (Porat, 2013). The increasing distance of memory for native-born German students paired with tensions from students who may have been previously educated in countries which deny the very existence of the Holocaust requires a culturally relevant, sensitive, and inclusive approach to Holocaust education that is lacking in many of Germany's schools (Proske, 2012).

Holocaust education should not only be seen as a Jewish issue, but it can also facilitate open and honest conversations about cultural and religious diversity, tolerance, non-violence,

human rights, and democracy for all students (see e.g., Shechter and Salomon, 2005 or Kelleway, Spillane and Hayden, 2013). The need for these conversations is evident as a rise in anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalism, and neo-Nazi political groups demonstrates a growing intolerance within Germany and Western Europe as a whole (Doerr, 2017; Bencek & Strasheim, 2016; Boschki, et al., 2010). This study explores how the Holocaust is being portrayed at the *Gymnasium* level in Hamburg, Germany, a city with a long history of diversity and presently the European destination with the second highest number of refugees (DeStatis, 2017). *Gymnasium* is the highest level in Germany's tripartite educational system, usually reserved for the most academically successful students. A document analysis of curriculum materials was conducted to ascertain whether the way in which the Holocaust and National Socialism is portrayed takes into account the multiple perspectives of immigrant or refugee students. While curriculum analysis on this topic has been completed before, this study expands upon previous research by reviewing documents with a focus on the relevance of the curriculum for this more diverse demographic.

Background to Holocaust Education in Germany

The history of Holocaust Education in Germany is fascinating and has run the gamut of methodologies and pedagogies. Immediately after the war, pressure from the allies led to the destruction of schoolbooks that presented the National Socialist version of history and a quest to find and punish the perpetrators (Boschki, et al., 2010). However, many Germans still saw themselves as victims (Wagensommer, 2009, as cited in Boschki, et al., 2010). Although the Holocaust was being addressed in textbooks, it was done so out of coercion from foreign forces, not from an internal motivation to remember.

As the Cold War began and Germany was separated into East and West, the paths of education changed for each of the two new countries. West Germany used the memory of National Socialism to strengthen its new democratic order while East Germany was focused on combatting fascism through socialism (Meseth, 2012; Monteath, 2013). While the textbooks from during the Cold War contained some information about the Holocaust, anecdotes from Pagaard's (1995) study found that the careful inclusion of Holocaust education in the curriculum is a relatively new phenomenon. He states, "it is difficult indeed to find individuals educated in the 1950s, 1960s, or early 1970s who can recall these subjects being taught at all, let alone taught with care" (Pagaard, 1995, p.544).

From the 1980s to present day, discussion on Holocaust education has seen an increasing intensity of public, scholarly, and pedagogical interest. Much of this has been inspired by actions both within and outside of Germany. An American mini-series titled "Holocaust" in 1979 inspired both public (in schools) and private (in families) debates over how best to address this time period. This eventually led to the 1986 *Historikerstreit*, which was a debate of historians and philosophers on how to historicize this dark period of history (Boschki, et al., 2010). The fall of the Berlin wall and reunification of Germany led to a convergence in the two divergent methods of addressing Holocaust education, the conversion of concentration camps into memorial sites, and the creation of laws against Holocaust denial (Monteath, 2013).

In 1996, the American political scientist Daniel Goldhagen prompted outrage in Germany with the publication of his text *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, which did not shy away from placing blame on the German people (Heil, 1998, as cited in Boschki, et al., 2010). This prompted a defensive clamor within German society which was further fueled by the *Wehrmacht* (Nazi defense force) exhibition of German army crimes under Nazi rule (Thiele, 1997, as cited in Boschki, et al., 2010). One of the most recent areas of controversy was the

opening of Berlin's Holocaust Memorial in 2005. The initial debate was between those who felt the need to create a "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe," as was its working designation, and those who felt that there were already enough authentic memorial sites within Berlin with no need to create another one (Monteath, 2013). Once it was decided that this memorial would be created, further arguments ensued as to whom it would include or exclude, such as the Roma or homosexuals. It took eighteen years from inception to opening, but it was finally opened in May 2005 (Monteath, 2013). The controversy surrounding this monument's creation, along with societal responses to the Wehrmacht exhibit and Goldhagen's text, show the intense discourse that this subject prompts, especially among younger generations. It has impacted education too, through the creation of a "pedagogy of responsibility" and a stronger focus on an active remembrance (Boschki, et al., 2010 p.136).

These days, Holocaust education is a mandatory part of the school curriculum in Germany, but the extent and depth to which it is presented varies significantly between *Länder* (federal states) and educational levels. *Gymnasium* covers the topic at greater length and with more detail, whereas at *Hauptschule*, the vocational track, students are being taught the Holocaust as a more passive remembrance of history (Proske, 2012; Ortloff, 2015). This inconsistency impacts all students, but notably immigrant and refugee children, who are most often placed in the lowest educational track (Wegman, 2012).

German Curriculum and Education Plans

The German educational system offers a substantial amount of autonomy to the sixteen different *Länder* in the creation and implementation of their curriculum. While the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) represents education at a federal level, the way in which each *Länder* approaches the targets set by the BMBF can vary. For example, education on the Holocaust is mandatory for all schools in Germany, but some *Länder* have specific guidelines that call for it to be covered in more depth than others. The *Kultusministerkonferenz* (KMK), short for 'The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany' serves to provide some consistency in school matters and defines itself as "an instrument for the coordination and development of education in the country" (KMK, 2018). Founded in 1948, this conference presently consists of 220 ministers or senators from all 16 *Länder* who are responsible for ensuring commonality between the different *Länder* on overall educational goals, so as to allow for greater educational mobility throughout the country. Within the conference are subcommittees on teacher training, the collection of statistics, and quality assurance.

Curricular development occurs at the state level and is overseen by a minister from the conference who represents his/her *Länder*. Creation or revision of primary and secondary curricula occurs through the work of appointed commissions that consist of school inspectors, teachers, department chairs, and occasionally higher education experts in the discipline. At the secondary level, the curriculum is specific to the type of school or educational level. For example, a curriculum developed for a *Gymnasium* would not be used at a *Realschule*, the middle track, or a *Hauptschule*. Some *Länder* specify the need for a trial period of implementation, while others launch right into the new curriculum. Whether it goes through a trial period or is introduced immediately, the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs for that specific *Länder* would then be responsible for teacher training on the new curriculum.

At present, none of the *Länder* requires courses that address Holocaust education in order to become a certified teacher, nor is there mandated professional development within schools on the topic (Nägel, Kahle, & Miller, 2018). While the issue may be embedded within

another course, the unique challenges that this subject entails, both the historical memory and the emotional responses it may elicit from the students, requires a more focused and in-depth pedagogical framework for young teachers. Without this, many teachers are entering their classrooms pedagogically and methodologically unprepared to educate students about this complex topic in an inclusive way with a direction towards tolerance. Recent research (see Meseth and Proske, 2010; Proske, 2012; and Pettigrew, Foster, Howson, & Salmons, 2010) highlights the challenges teachers face when attempting to present the subject and respond to students without adequate preparation or guidance. Without comprehensive and consistent training, teachers lack the skills and confidence to approach the Holocaust as something other than a dark event from the past, thereby reducing it to a historical event rather than a manifestation of radical sentiments that are still very much alive in the present (Short & Reed, 2017; Macgilchrist & Christophe, 2011).

Curriculum and Diversity

Germany has faced record immigration numbers in recent years, which has led to increased diversity within both the community and the classroom (BAMF, 2017). The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) have sponsored numerous programs, such as language classes, social events, leisure and sport programs, and courses specifically for women to support and integrate these immigrants and refugees into German society (DAAD, 2017). However, little research has been done into how the background knowledge, religious beliefs, or previous schooling of these students may impact their understanding of certain subjects and historical events. The Holocaust is a mandated part of the German curriculum within high schools, yet is seen by some nations as irrelevant, unimportant, or even a fabrication (Porat, 2013; Wistrich, 2012).

Indeed, a number of studies (see, e.g., Jikeli, 2015; Rutland, 2010; Ortloff, 2015) have described anti-Semitism among Muslim high school aged immigrant students in several nations, including Germany, as well as frequent misinformation among Muslim youth about the Holocaust. Rutland (2010) found teachers trying to counter negative attitudes in school while finding many being perpetuated within the home, such as a children's board game with a goal of conquering Jerusalem. Jikeli (2015) interviewed several Muslim youth in Berlin who thought the Jews were all infected with Typhus and therefore Hitler should be revered for preventing it from spreading. At the same time, an analysis of a 2010 UNESCO study on Holocaust education around the world demonstrated that Islamophobia has been steadily growing across Europe (Gross, 2013).

Recently, Germany has seen a precipitous rise in anti-refugee violence coming in the forms of xenophobic demonstrations, inflammatory graffiti, arson attacks, and assault (Benček & Strasheim, 2016). While Angela Merkel's Open-Door policy was well-received by many, it stirred a counter response that has been prominent in German politics. This is clearly demonstrated in the rise of the anti-immigrant Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party which saw its greatest percentage of votes in the 2017 election at 13% (Troianovski & Wilkes, 2017). Jikeli's (2015) study shed light on an unexpected yet growing allegiance that has formed between some Muslim students and the neo-Nazis over their common adversary. One participant shared that "Palestine" was a code word used by both groups to share that they were in a safe space and could explicitly share anti-Semitic views (Jikeli, 2015, p.210).

Alternatively, Holocaust education speaks to universal themes of human rights, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity with a very specific and powerful example of what happens when these fail. Done effectively, it has the potential to deepen awareness and promote understanding across and between cultural and religious groups and to combat this

troubling trajectory of anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, and xenophobic behaviors (Eckmann, 2010). It can benefit the immigrant who may come to the classroom misinformed about what happened during the Holocaust and can also benefit the native German student who is in a position of hegemony that can be used for acceptance and inclusion. All of this highlights the value of exploring Holocaust education curriculum, as undertaken in this study.

Conceptual Framework and Methods

Curriculum scholars view curriculum as constructed knowledge, and as such, it reflects, reinforces, and legitimizes the values of the dominant groups in society, while ignoring those of minorities (Apple, 1993; Chu, 2017). As Chu (2015) notes, school curriculum is comprised of lesson plans, textbooks, supplementary reading, and teaching activities. Textbooks and other curriculum materials are good sources for research because teachers depend on these to teach content and organize teaching activities. Therefore, an examination of textbooks and other curriculum materials elicits an understanding of the dominant values of society and how these are being conveyed to students (Apple, 1993; Chu, 2017).

It is within this context that this study used document analysis of curriculum materials to address the question: In what ways does the presentation of Holocaust and National Socialism in German textbooks and curricular materials at the *Gymnasium* level reflect the changing student demographic?

Our methodological approach follows that of other curriculum research, such as that conducted by Bromley and Russell (2010) and Chu (2015; 2017). Specifically, this study used the curriculum materials of a selected *Gymnasium* in Hamburg, Germany as a qualitative case study of the curriculum of Holocaust education within the highest educational track of the German school system. As curriculum materials are consistent within a *Länder* and within an educational level, these documents can serve as a representation of all *Gymnasium* schools within the *Länder* of Hamburg.

Methods of Data Collection

Sample Setting

For this study a review was conducted of classroom documents used in *Gymnasium Farmsen* located in Hamburg, Germany. Hamburg was selected because it has a long history with immigration, given its history of trade as one of the largest harbors in Europe (Seukwa, 2013). It is the second most populous city in Germany, behind only Berlin, with over 1.8 million inhabitants, 27.5% of whom are first- or second-generation immigrants (Raphael, 2016). In a 2001 study, it was found that 28.4% of 9th graders in Hamburg spoke a language other than German at home; in Primary School, the number is closer to 35% (Lehmann, 2001, as cited in Duarte, 2011). In 2015, the time of publication for the documents in this study, non-native German students made up fewer than 10% of the *Gymnasium* student population in Hamburg. That this percentage differs from the demographic makeup of the city reflects the imbalance between native and non-native Germans entering the *Gymnasium* level. Given the recent arrivals of refugees, it is expected that present-day percentages are significantly higher, although no current statistics on this particular area are available yet. Approximately 6.1% of Germans currently identify as Muslim, an increase from 4.1% in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Data Collection

This study used non-random purposive sampling in which over one hundred documents were analyzed for classes that specifically included some form of Holocaust and National Socialism education. The bulk of documents (88 total) came from the history and PGW (*Politik, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft*) [En: Politics, Society, Economy] classes as this is where the topic is covered in greatest depth. In addition, classroom handouts that addressed the topic in religion, art, and science classes were also analyzed. As this particular school uses English as a medium for instruction, most of the documents did not need to be translated.

Government documents were also collected and downloaded from ministry websites. Curricular guides and notes were provided over email by faculty members at other Hamburg schools. Titles of texts were provided in an email from a *Gymnasium Farmsen* alumna and purchased online by the researcher. Finally, PDF and word documents of assignments, as well as handouts were sent over email from an alumna of *Gymnasium Farmsen*. All government and school documents that were originally in German were translated into English by a native German speaker.

Materials Used for Analysis

There were several different types of documents used in this study. The first included federal and state government documents that spoke to expected learning outcomes at the *Gymnasium* level, specifically their expectation for understanding of the Holocaust. This included Hamburg's *Bildungsplan Gymnasium*. This provided insight into the expectations placed on the teachers and demonstrated continuity between the schools.

Finally 88 classroom assignments, photocopied textbook pages, lecture notes, and worksheets from the history and PGW classes of *Gymnasium Farmsen* were analyzed along with a smaller number of documents from religion, language, art, and science classes. These included discussion questions, excerpts from biographies, homework assignments, and examples of artistic responses to the Holocaust. In addition, department chairs from two other *Gymnasium* schools in Hamburg offered comprehensive notes on how and how much the Holocaust was taught in each grade. Comparing the three schools and the federal documents showed the consistent approach designed by the KMK for the *Länder*.

Data Analysis

The collected classroom documents were coded in several ways. First, following the approach of other curriculum research (see e.g., Bromley and Russell, 2010; Chu, 2017) a content analysis of each page was conducted to ascertain the extent to which it includes information on the background of the rise of National Socialism and the details on the Holocaust. The prevalence of specific terms was evaluated both for the frequency with which they came up in the documents and also the approach in which they were addressed. In addition, the extent to which the text drew parallels to the present day or mentioned human rights in relation to the Holocaust was noted. The texts were evaluated for their inclusion of non-German perspectives both on the Holocaust itself and on the aftermath. Finally, these documents were analyzed for the level to which they referred to the Holocaust as a German-Jewish incident and their inclusion of non-native German perspectives and non-Jewish victims. Specific attention was paid to find references to Holocaust denial or how the materials addressed present-day prejudice, intolerance, and anti-Semitism.

Using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory approach, the data analysis began with open coding of the text to generate themes, which were then grouped into broader concepts. These were then categorized through selective coding. Constant comparison

between categories and the application of theoretical sampling was used to ensure saturation of themes within the data (Kolb, 2012). Once categories had been identified, the relationship between them was considered and concepts emerged, enabling an understanding of the ways in which Holocaust education is presented in Germany at the *Gymnasium* level amidst the country's changing demographics.

Of the documents that were analyzed, detailed records were kept that highlighted and counted terms, identified overarching themes, and explored approaches used. Each page was numbered and categorized both chronologically and thematically, with short summaries written for each in a notebook. Final analysis involved looking at themes, summaries, and the original texts to corroborate findings.

Findings

The Holocaust in German Language classes

In Hamburg's schools, students are first exposed to the Holocaust through short novels, both fiction and semi-autobiographical. In 6th grade German language classes of all three educational levels, *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*, students read "When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit" by Judith Kerr. The focus of this text is the experience of a young Jewish girl in Berlin. While poignant, the language is simple and graphic imagery is not covered. This book covers the most basic understanding of the Holocaust: that Hitler 'took away' the Jews from Berlin.

In the German language classes in later grades in *Gymnasium*, students read "Alan and Naomi" by Myron Levoy. This text expands the scope of coverage to look at a Jewish refugee child who escaped Nazi-occupied Paris and is now living in New York. It addresses the death of the protagonist's father at the hands of the Nazis and the emotional aftermath of this experience, including a discussion on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). More graphic in nature, this also shows that the Holocaust and destruction of the Jews was not limited only to within German borders.

Finally, the students read "Youth Without God" by Odon Von Horvath. It takes place shortly before World War II. While the prior two novels specifically portray Jews as the victims and Nazis as the perpetrators, this text is unique in that it never explicitly mentions the ethnicity of the narrator, a classroom teacher. Rather, it focuses on the role of propaganda and the government in perpetuating racism and extremism in young students. This broader perspective allows it to be more relatable to non-German and contemporary students as it confronts issues still present today and addresses the challenges of holding to one's convictions.

The Holocaust in Religious Education classes

In Religious Education classes, the Holocaust is covered from two different angles. First, the way in which it impacted the Jews during that time period is explored, with timelines of events in the rising of anti-Semitism in Germany from 1920-1945. Interestingly, the much longer history of anti-Semitism within greater Europe is not discussed. Rather, the focus is solely on the experience of Jewish people under the Third Reich. There are examples of the Nuremberg Laws with images of signs in shop windows and the Star of David on clothing. Although concentration camps are mentioned and the estimated number of those killed each year is listed, there is no discussion of the experience of Jews in Germany after the war. It is presented in a very historical, date-based manner.

The second way in which the Holocaust is presented in Religious Education classes is through the theological question of how God could let this happen. Selections from Elie Wiesel are shared and discussion centers on the question, *Wo ist Gott?* (Where is God?). This question is addressed from both a philosophical viewpoint and a Catholic one. For the philosophical viewpoint, the writings of Epicurius (341-270 BCE) are analyzed, with specific focus on his Epicurean Paradox on the problem of evil. The Catholic perspective uses the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE) and his perspective on the nature and existence of God, including the fact that everything comes from God. No other theological perspectives are presented; however, students are asked to discuss as a class, *“Ist ein Gott ohne Allmacht und Allgüte überhaupt noch ein Gott, an den es sich zu glauben lohnt?”* (En: Is a God without omnipotence and all-benevolence still a God, and one worth believing in?).

There is no mention of Holocaust denial, the present state of Germany’s Jews, or the changing religious landscape within the country. In addition, neither present day anti-Semitism nor religious intolerance is addressed within this context.

The Holocaust in History and PGW classes

An analysis of individual classroom documents from *Gymnasium Farmsen* in Hamburg, Germany demonstrated how high school students are taught about the rise of National Socialism, Hitler’s role in World War II, the Holocaust, and the aftermath of World War II through both their History and PGW classes. The material did not identify in which of the two classes the material was given, so the analysis is presented here under both subjects together. Many of these handouts came from a bilingual textbook “Invitation to History, Volume 2.” The text cites the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in their acknowledgements page, but otherwise draws their information and materials from other German sources. Of the documents analyzed, several topics/themes came out as dominant in the way in which this time period is portrayed.

Table 1: Reflection of themes within the documents.

Focus	Number of documents in which the theme appeared (n=88)
Non-Jewish Holocaust Victims	1
Anti-Semitism	3
Concentration Camps	4
Jews	9
Allies	10
Nazis	13
Hitler	21
Politics	27

Table 1 shows the prevalence of themes and the main focus of the 88 classroom documents analyzed within the History/PGW classes in ascending order. These specific

documents were selected as they made up the unit on World War II. These numbers were determined by highlighting the dominant term/theme on each document.

What becomes evident is not only the dominance of politics as a main theme, but also the comparatively small amount of time spent on anti-Semitism and concentration camps. For instance, there are more documents detailing the Treaty of Versailles than there are on the Holocaust itself. Furthermore, only one document out of the 88 explicitly lists all the non-Jewish groups of people targeted in the Holocaust. One other document references non-Jewish victims of Nazi aggression, such as church leaders, trade unionists, and political opponents, but describes how they were persecuted or imprisoned, not exterminated.

Political Movements

As reflected in Table 1, almost a third of the documents focused on discussion over political movements, parties, and developments surrounding the wars in some manner. These were presented in different ways: graphs, timelines, and charts, which illustrate major events, members, and ideologies. One handout tasks the students with analyzing election propaganda by asking them to “compare these election posters to posters of today.” This is one of very few documents that draw comparisons to modern times. In several documents, students are asked to read selections of text and determine whether the language used was nationalistic or socialistic. Hitler’s evocative language paired with the devastating conditions of Germany after WWI is attributed for the surge in popularity of the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*/National Socialist German Workers’ Party). The term “Nazis” is not used to describe the NSDAP until documents on World War II.

Hitler and Nazis

The term “Hitler” is used more than the term “Nazis,” and in several instances Hitler appears to be seen as the sole perpetrator of many of the crimes. For example, questions on one assignment on Hitler’s ideology read, “What was his lifestyle? How did WWII begin? Why did *he* start such a bad war?” [emphasis added]. There are several articles that draw quotations from *Mein Kampf*. Although some touch on Hitler’s thoughts on Jews, these quotations are largely statements about strengthening Germany, such as promoting *Lebensraum* and condemning the Treaty of Versailles. Taken out of context from the author of the statements, they are rousing and empowering comments, which may present the risk of encouraging students to read more of *Mein Kampf*. Interestingly, a discussion question on one handout of *Mein Kampf* quotations simply states, “Analyze Hitler’s thinking.” There is no explicit discussion over the dangerous power of his rhetoric.

In the *Mein Kampf* selections that do cover Hitler’s anti-Semitic ideology, the language used is laden with religious references and connotations. For example, one worksheet includes the quotation: “With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood.” Other statements refer to the “holiest obligation” of keeping German blood pure. In one document, parallels are drawn between how Jews are portrayed as the devil while images of God are predominantly presented as Aryan.

Of the documents analyzed which cover the years 1920-1948, about one quarter focus primarily on Hitler’s ideologies and influence in Germany. Only two articles touch on opposition towards Hitler and only one provides biographies of other leading Nazis, such as Heinrich Himmler and Paul Joseph Goebbels. The language used to describe these other Nazis is strong, with Himmler being described as “the sadist of the Nazi party” and Hermann Goering’s biography including the statement that his extensive art collection was “created

from the spoils of Jewish confiscations.” In another document, the Nazis are referred to as “Hitler’s people.” Two assignments discuss the Nuremberg Trials, both use the term of crimes against humanity, but neither specifically mentions the concentration camps. Human rights are not discussed in any of the assignments.

Jews and Concentration Camps

The first mention of Jews comes in a handout introducing Hitler’s 25 Point Programme in 1920, where the fourth point is, “None but those of German blood may be a member of Germany; no Jew, therefore may be a German.” The term anti-Semitism and its definition is included for the students here as being simply “against Jews.” In a later handout that discusses Hitler’s ideology, biography, and personality, a discussion question is included that asks, “Why did Hitler hate Jews?” However, there is little in the handout that could answer this question, leaving discussion on the topic largely open to interpretation.

The first document that mentions the Holocaust uses the strong title: “From Boycott to Destruction” and offers a timeline of events beginning with the Nuremberg Laws and culminating in liberation from the concentration camps. It is presented as very Jewish-centric and Hitler appears as the driver of the Holocaust. Many of his words and phrases are used and included in quotation marks, such as his argument that Jews were being sent to concentration camps “for their own protection.” Students are asked to interpret his choice of words. *Kristallnacht* is introduced and several other terms that have been used to describe that event are listed. Students are then asked, “Imagine you were talking to an Israeli about the events. Which term would you use and why?” This is the only mention of Israel out of all the history documents and the only one that reflects on how to address this topic with non-Germans. There is no information provided on the present-day relationship between Germany and Israel nor on modern day anti-Semitism.

Only one handout includes imagery of the camps. In a text that describes the end of the war, a grainy photograph of a pile of corpses is included with the caption: “Buchenwald, 56,000 died.” Another handout includes the question: “In their chapter on death camps, the authors of the British history book, GSC Modern World History show a picture of wedding rings rather than pictures of dead bodies or gas chambers. Give possible reasons why they did this.” This same handout is the only one which specifically mentions other groups of people destroyed during the Holocaust, including gypsies, political prisoners, Jehovah’s witnesses, homosexuals, and Russian and Polish prisoners of war. All other documents on the Holocaust only reference the Jews, thus creating a sense that this is predominantly a German-Jewish incident. Contrary to most of the other documents, which are very dry and objective in language used, this one is more emotive, using the terms “the whole dreadful process” to describe the final solution and speaking about the “appalling medical experiments” conducted on death camp inmates. The aftermath of the war for Holocaust survivors is not discussed. However, two articles discuss the vast quantity of World War II *Flüchtlinge* (refugees). Inherent in this group would be the Holocaust survivors who have lost everything, but they are not mentioned specifically, nor is there any discussion on reparations payments.

The Allies

In mentions of allied involvement, one assignment on the conclusion of the war includes a section which describes how American soldiers “forced” civilians in a nearby town to walk through Buchenwald concentration camp to look at what had been found there. Fear of the rise of communism is given as the reason behind much of America’s goodwill after the war. One of the aims of The Marshall Plan for the US is listed as “political benefit,” as

improved conditions would prevent Western Europe from voting for communist parties. Even the care packages distributed by the US and Canada are attributed to both pity for the suffering of Europeans and fear that their suffering would lead them towards communism.

Two primary sources are included that strengthen the division between the United States and Germany. The first is an excerpt from the Pocket Guide to Germany, a booklet given to military personnel by the US government in 1944-1947:

These people are not our allies or our friends...However friendly and repentant, however sick of the Nazi party, the Germans have sinned against the laws of humanity and cannot come back into the civilized fold by merely sticking out their hands and saying – “I’m sorry”... Don’t forget that eleven years ago, a majority of the German people voted the Nazi Party into power. The German people had all read Hitler’s “*Mein Kampf*.” They knew what Hitler meant to do to the minorities and the world.

This passage uses passionate rhetoric and blames all Germans for the crimes of Hitler. In addition, it does not specifically mention Jew, but rather refers to “minorities.” Another primary source, a directive given to the Commander in Chief of the US Forces of Occupation in April 1945 states, “Germans cannot escape responsibility for what they have brought upon themselves.” This calls to mind Goldhagen’s (1996) aforementioned text, which as noted placed the blame for the Holocaust squarely on the Germans. Similar to previous handouts, these passages, too, open themselves up for discussion on persecution, generalization, guilt, and blame, yet none of those themes are pushed forward in the questions. Rather, students are simply asked to describe how Germany is perceived by the Allies.

A selection of Stephen Spender’s “European Witness” is included, which describes war-torn Germany through the eyes of an English poet who travelled there in the fall of 1945. This is one of the few non-German perspectives included in the documents that does not judge or place blame on the Germans. Spender’s language has religious undertones as he reflects on the desolation of the Germans under Allied rule. When exploring Cologne, he states, “the sermons in the stones of Germany preach nihilism.” While the Allies are placing blame on all Germans for what happened, Spender reflects on the physical and spiritual state of the nation in the aftermath of the war.

The Holocaust in Art and Science classes

The Holocaust is briefly addressed in other classes. In art class, it is covered through a study on the artwork of Käthe Kollwitz, an expressionist artist who lost her son in World War I and used this suffering to infuse pacifist and anti-war paintings and sculptures. The subject matter of her art is discussed, including a series on death and the depravity of war, as is her personal life, as she was threatened by the Gestapo on several occasions for being a suspected communist.

In science class, World War II comes up in a lesson on population growth, with a discussion on its impact on Germany’s birth and death rate. Graphs are used to analyze how Germany’s birth rate has been steadily decreasing since 1815. Within these line graphs, two outliers are evident – the decrease in birth rate and increase in death rate during both World Wars. Students are asked to expand upon the cause of this, such as the obvious deaths within the war, but also the resulting famine, malnourishment, lack of medical treatment, and disease. There is no mention of how the deaths of millions within the Holocaust added to this number; rather, the death rate is attributed to soldiers and civilians.

Discussion

The classroom documents analyzed are notable not only for what they included and how these themes are addressed, but also for what is not included in the curriculum. The volume of texts spent on studying political movements before, during, and after the war far surpassed that of those that discussed or reflected on the Holocaust. Other research shows that teachers confront the German sense of responsibility and guilt for these atrocities (Ortloff, 2015). However, these documents rarely pushed students to explore this or respond to it. In addition, no other genocides were mentioned, nor were parallels drawn between the Holocaust and other similar (in intention if not scope) recent events.

Except for the one question that addressed broaching this topic with Israelis, there were no assignments that involved non-German perspectives on the Holocaust. These German-centric assignments, such as examining the negative impact of the Treaty of Versailles on German citizens, were designed to be given to native-born German students, not the diverse population presently found within the classroom. Perhaps most troubling is that these documents and requirements are representative of the highest level of Germany's educational system, *Gymnasium*. With *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* addressing this topic in reduced time, with fewer requirements, and with a larger population of immigrants and refugees, more comprehensive, contemporary, relevant, and inclusive education on this topic is needed. In addition, at the *Gymnasium* level, a reduction of time on the subject is currently occurring due to it being excluded from the *Abitur* in 2018, the most recent school year's final examination at the time this research was conducted. The teachers who shared this decision by the KMK were not aware of the reason for the change. While much of this study has focused on the need for improved Holocaust education for non-native Germans, native-born German students would equally benefit from effective Holocaust education as it may promote a more inclusive multi-cultural society that embraces Germany's increasing diversity. Given the present global situation of intolerance and extremism, this should not be the time to reduce classroom coverage of one of the most poignant examples of these issues, the Holocaust, but should rather be a time to examine how to teach it more effectively and with greater relevance to students of all cultural backgrounds.

The Holocaust in classes other than history and PGW

The novels read within the German language classes show progression from the basic concepts of the Holocaust to the more advanced and thought-provoking exploration of extremism. However, at the *Hauptschule* level, only the most basic novel is read. Therefore, students who do not make it to the upper levels of *Gymnasium* do not have the opportunity to analyze and discuss the more complex texts, which provide a far more holistic view of the impact of the Holocaust into the present day. A short novel on another genocide, such as the Armenian or Rwandan, perhaps would not fit as clearly into the German language class, but would serve the purpose of reminding students that the Holocaust may have been the worst, but it is sadly not the only example of large-scale destruction of a racial or ethnic group.

Although some scholars argue that the Holocaust is too unique and appalling to ever be compared to other genocides, recent research (see Kelleway, Spillane, and Haydn, 2013) has shown how including other genocides when teaching about the Holocaust helps students understand genocidal patterns and prevention. Gregory Stanton's (1996) *Eight Stages of a Genocide* encourages students to see that genocides evolve out of several key stages and societal behaviors and are not random aberrations. Using other genocides and exploring common patterns helps students find relevance to the modern day and, ultimately, may set

them on a path of greater social awareness (ibid). Another possibility would be the inclusion of a text on modern-day extremism as a means of drawing comparisons between language usage, rhetoric, promises, and fervor. Engaging students in a way that enables them to see the Holocaust both as a specific historical event as well as an example of issues still faced today brings new meaning and urgency to this important subject.

In the religious education classes, there were only two perspectives used to explore the question over God's omnipotence and omniscience: an ancient Greek philosopher and a 13th century Catholic theologian. While they each offered an interesting interpretation, looking at the Holocaust through the perspective of religious teaching would benefit from exploring more angles, such as sharing an Islamic response to the question of God's power and goodness. Interfaith dialogue and reflection on the Holocaust could allow for the exploration of common moral values inherent in the three major monotheistic religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism (Rutland, 2010). In addition, religious education classes could provide a suitable opportunity to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict, including how the tension between the two groups impacts the understanding of why and how the Holocaust happened (Schechter and Salomon, 2005; Porat, 2013).

The Holocaust in history and PGW classes

The history and PGW classes carefully craft the seeds of discontent present in Germany after World War I, which allowed for the rise of Hitler and the Nazis. In discussing the Holocaust, Hitler seems to emerge as the sole perpetrator of the crimes despite the fact that thousands more were involved. This runs in contrast to the primary sources from the Allies, such as the directive to the Commander in Chief of the US Forces or the US Government's Pocket Guide to Germany, which collectively brand the German people as our "enemies" who have destroyed humanity. This shift in perspective is interesting to note and presents the question of blame, something that has been an ongoing element of the history of Holocaust education within Germany. Another way in which this could have been done would be to include information on the resistance movements both within and outside of Germany. This would allow for Germans to see that not all of their people can fairly be blamed for the atrocities of World War II. On the contrary, several did risk everything to stand up to Nazism, saving many lives in the process (Tec, 2013). Including their stories and biographies could empower students in the present time period to recognize and resist similar forms of oppression and marginalization (Pollefeyt, 2007). In addition, exploring how non-Jews and those outside of Germany got involved to aid in the defeat of Hitler and the liberation of concentration camps could help encourage students to look beyond their own national and religious identities at global issues that require attention.

In the texts, Jews are seen very clearly as the dominant victims of the Holocaust, but little is presented which speaks to how anti-Semitism within Europe came to this point, nor is there discussion of the life for Jews in Germany or in the diaspora after World War II. In addition, there are no primary sources, reports, or journal entries shared from the Jewish perspective within the history classes. This does not allow for a full humanization of these victims, thus perpetuating the distance between this nameless group of many millions of dead bodies and the people reading the texts in the present day. Although Jews were the predominant group targeted, the fact that only once are the other groups mentioned is also problematic as it creates a false sense of an event which was largely Hitler versus the Jews, rather than allowing for an understanding that it was far more complex than that. Rutland (2010) documents the anti-Semitic sentiment held by many Muslim students in an Australian school when addressing the Holocaust. By continuing to make it just a Jewish event, these

students will continue to find ways to justify or reject it. Opening up the study to explore the broad range of victims, including political prisoners, homosexuals, Jehovah's witnesses, or simply those who did not fit a specific racial profile, reminds students that no one was really safe. In addition, it would allow for a fuller discussion on prejudice and intolerance.

Finally, discussion on Holocaust denial is absent from all of the documents addressing this time period. Given the fact that there is still an active group of deniers throughout the world, this is a topic that is important to include in the texts. Reflecting on Jikeli (2015) and Rutland's (2010) studies on the misinformation and widely held denial sentiment of many students of Arabic descent, including some presently living in Germany, this is an area of Holocaust education that requires attention. Without directly and honestly addressing the causes and arguments of Holocaust denial, along with providing clear refutations, students will not be challenged to explore whether what they have previously been told is the truth. Covering this in a formal setting would also help provide all students with an educated response when they face Holocaust denial outside of the classroom.

Conclusion

As this study has shown, current curriculum materials for the *Gymnasium* in Hamburg portray the Holocaust from the perspective of native-born German citizens, despite a changing and diversifying population, and a student body that may reflect different needs, perspectives, and understandings of historical events. This finding is consistent with other curriculum research, which proposes that the curriculum reflects the values of the dominant population, while not including other voices (Apple, 1993; Chu, 2015). However, this is particularly relevant given that Hamburg's immigrant population has increased to more than a quarter of the total population in recent years, and xenophobia is also on the rise. The curricular materials analyzed for this study date from 2015, the year in which this surge in immigration began. Therefore, now is the time to assess the curriculum to be more inclusive of this new demographic. On the other hand, the document analysis of this study consisted of the assignments and texts of only the *Gymnasium* level in one of Germany's sixteen *Länder*. With the autonomy granted to the federal states in curricular development, there may be significant differences in other locations. Further research on this topic in other areas of Germany would be beneficial.

Furthermore, curriculum materials are only one aspect that affects student learning. We do not know how the teachers implemented the curriculum, nor how students interpreted it (Bromley and Russell, 2010). As noted above, previous research has shown that sometimes there is a disconnect between what is taught in the classroom and what is learned at home (Rutland, 2010). In addition, teachers are not receiving adequate and consistent training in how to effectively and sensitively present this subject (Nägel, et al., 2018). However, as also discussed, if taught well, Holocaust education could provide a potential platform from which to facilitate critical thinking about historical events.

Given the extreme nature of the Holocaust, there is an ongoing debate on how best to memorialize it, with some seeing it as an incomparable event that should stand alone and others seeing it as a universal lesson in human rights (Pollefeyt, 2007; Meseth, 2005). Viewing the uniqueness of the Holocaust as only an isolated, abnormal event risks removing its relevance to the present society whereas seeing it only through the lens of human rights diminishes the magnitude of the impact it had on the Jewish people. It needs to be taught as both a watershed historical event, forever shaping the history of Western civilization, and as a cautionary example of unchecked extremism.

The nation of Germany is vastly different today than it was during World War II.

However, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and radicalism are still present and, in some cases, increasing. These seeds that grew into the largest human rights violation in documented history can only be eradicated through effective and powerful education. With the Holocaust as the epitome of calculated human destruction, this event needs to be taught to an increasingly culturally and religiously diverse student population with relevance, sensitivity, and reflection. Doing so requires comprehensive teacher training, opportunities for continued professional development, materials that take into account the rising cultural pluralism of the classroom, and a consistent message across all educational tracks. The Holocaust is not only a Jewish issue, nor can it be seen as an isolated incident. While it deserves to be recognized as an integral part of the history of Jewish people, it is also a tangible example of the dangers of racism and intolerance and is thus a part of the story of all cultures and religious groups. Striking the balance between respecting its role in the history of one particular religious and ethnic group while also ensuring its universal relevance is a challenging yet critical task for all educators. As Adorno (1966/1998) powerfully stated, “Every debate about the ideals of education is trivial and inconsequential compared to this single idea: never again Auschwitz. It was the barbarism all education strives against” (p.1).

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