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HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AND THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:
TOWARD A GROUNDED THEORY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
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HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AND THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:
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Abstract

Too often students perceive history as boring with no relevance to their lives. Although students describe history as boring, this does not seem to be the case with one aspect of social studies education – Holocaust studies. Courses about the Holocaust have grown in number in recent years; and classes are routinely full. Why do students choose to study about the Holocaust, but choose social studies in general as a subject they would least like to study?

One problem for social studies education is engaging students in social studies content in a way such that they choose to learn more. Research on social studies education indicates that students often do not choose to learn more; that instead, they are passive rather than active learners (Hootstein, 1995; White, 1997). The challenge for social studies education is to identify factors that will encourage students to choose to learn more about social studies.

Focusing on the question “What factors influence students’ choice to learn more about the Holocaust?,” this qualitative study of one high school history classroom examines the factors which influence students’ choice to learn about the Holocaust, in particular, and social studies, in general. Students in an Advanced Placement European History class in a large metropolitan high school in the southeastern United States were asked a number of interview questions to ascertain their perceptions of Holocaust education in the United States and to determine the factors which contributed to their choice to learn about the Holocaust. Students were asked what the Holocaust was, why

people are interested in learning about it, if American schools should teach about the Holocaust, and how it should be taught. Students were also asked how they had learned about the Holocaust, the most effective ways to teach about it, and why they chose to learn about it.

Findings indicated that students were aware of the Holocaust, believed that distance from the event allowed people to view the Holocaust as history, that the Holocaust should be taught since it is an important event in history, and that it can effectively be taught using Holocaust literature. When data were analyzed, four themes emerged as factors that influenced students' choice to learn. Those factors included: 1) interest, 2) desire for good grades, 3) perceived expectations of others, and 4) obligation to society. Students chose to learn because they were interested in the topic, found the topic relative to their lives, enjoyed the presentation of the topic, or were influenced by the teacher's interest in the topic. Students also chose to learn because they wanted to get good grades. The perceived expectations of others, including friends, family, and teachers, influenced students' choice to learn. As members of society, students felt an obligation to learn the history of their country as well as the history of "other people."

Findings from this study suggest implications for history classrooms, in particular, and social studies education, in general. An understanding of the influences on students' choice to learn could provide direction in the continued development of instructional strategies for social studies classrooms. Instructional strategies which could, perhaps, lead to changes in student perceptions of social studies from dull and boring to exciting and interesting.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Too often students perceive history as a boring subject that consists of useless facts, dull details, and uninteresting events that have no relevance to the students' lives. Many students find social studies content to be uninteresting because the information is too far removed from their own experiences, is not perceived as relevant to their future goals, is too detailed for clear understanding, or repeats information they have previously learned (Haladyna, Shaughnessy & Redsun, 1982; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985). While social studies is not perceived as being a particularly enjoyable subject and is rarely chosen as a favorite subject, it is not frequently mentioned as a least favorite subject (Schick, 1991; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984). Students do not feel strongly one way or the other about social studies. Their attitude could more accurately be described as indifferent (Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984). Studies have shown that student attitudes toward social studies become increasingly negative with grade level (Crawley, 1988; Fraser, 1981; Haladyna, Shaughnessy & Redsun, 1982), and there has been a steady decline in the popularity of the subject (Bath, Spencer & Shepherd, 1993; Crinnion, 1987).

When asked how social studies could be improved, students express a desire for greater variety in instructional methods (Hootstein, 1995; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984). Lecture and discussion are the most frequently used strategies in social studies classrooms, with teacher talk dominating, and conventional textbooks as the primary instructional tool (Armento, 1986; Hootstein, 1995). Research suggests that students' attitudes toward social studies can be improved if social studies teachers use greater

variety and more active approaches in teaching social studies (Fines, 1987; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984), and relate social studies content to students' own experiences (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Hootstein, 1995; Hope, 1996; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Smallbone, 1987).

Although students describe social studies as “boring,” this does not seem to be the case with one aspect of social studies education - Holocaust studies. Courses about the Holocaust have grown in number, and classes are routinely full. Littell and Eliach offered the first courses about the Holocaust to college students in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Fallace, 2008; Libowitz, 1993). Since that time, the number of courses involving Holocaust-related topics has grown, with courses now offered in two and four year institutions, on the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in public and private schools (Fallace, 2008; Libowitz, 1993). Introductory courses, broad in scope and intended to provide an overview of events have been well-attended by students (Libowitz, 1993), and intellectual interest in the Holocaust has become more specialized at the university level (Fallace, 2008). What makes students choose to study about the Holocaust, but choose social studies in general as a subject they would least like to study? In brief, student interest in Holocaust studies suggests that student interest in social studies in general is a complex and varied phenomenon, raising questions about how social studies education might be conducted in a way that is of interest to students and that promotes student learning.

Research Problem

One problem for social studies education is engaging students in social studies content in a way such that they choose to learn more. Research on social studies education

indicates that students often do not choose to learn more; that instead, they are passive rather than active learners (Hootstein, 1995; Hope, 1996; White, 1997). The challenge for research on social studies education is to identify factors that will encourage students to choose to learn more about social studies. Formally stated, the research problem addressed in this dissertation study is to identify the factors that influence students' choice to learn "more" about social studies content, where "more" is defined as engagement and active participation with the subject matter.

Research Question

In order to address the research problem, this dissertation will focus on the question: "What factors influence students' choice to learn more about the Holocaust?" In part, the choice of this question derives from the research literature indicating increased interest in Holocaust education in the United States and Europe, and from a pilot study I conducted indicating students choose to learn about the Holocaust. This study will provide insight about how academic learning might be repositioned beyond the implied "performance-grade" contract discussed by Doyle (1983).

As noted earlier, the pilot study suggested that students choose to learn more about the Holocaust. Students in this study chose to read the Holocaust literature assigned by their teacher and to take part in class discussions about the Holocaust. Students also chose to learn more about the Holocaust outside of the history classroom. Students read books about the Holocaust, watched television programs and movies produced about the Holocaust, and visited Holocaust museums. The pilot study

suggested that the factors that influence students to learn more in a Holocaust unit might be different than those used in other social studies units.

A research study examining the factors that influence students' choice to learn more about the Holocaust is an opportunity to understand at least part of the problem of engaging students in learning about social studies in general.

Generating Grounded Hypotheses

Unlike traditional research studies that seek to confirm a hypothesis, the purpose of this study will be to generate grounded hypotheses about those factors that influence students' choice to learn more about the Holocaust and more broadly, social studies.

Grounded hypotheses are generated by the systematic gathering and analysis of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). They emerge and evolve during the course of the research study. As themes and sub-themes emerge from the analysis of coded data in this study, grounded hypotheses will be generated about the factors that influence students' choice to learn more about the Holocaust. Grounded hypotheses are not static hypotheses that must be confirmed or rejected based on the findings of the research study, but rather are generated as the data are interpreted and reinterpreted.

Discussion of the Research Problem/Question

In asking "what factors influence students' choice to learn more about the Holocaust?" it is necessary to define what is meant by "factors." Although the intent of this study is to generate grounded hypotheses about those factors that influence students' choice to learn about the Holocaust and social studies, examples of factors that emerged from analysis of data during my pilot study can be used to define the term

“factors.” These factors may or may not appear during the analysis of data from this research study.

Factors that influence students’ choice to learn more about the Holocaust may include: (1) students’ perceptions of their teacher’s views and expertise on teaching the Holocaust. Do students perceive Holocaust education as important to the teacher? Do students see the teacher as knowledgeable on the subject of the Holocaust? Do students perceive that their learning about the Holocaust is important to the teacher? Wegner (1998) noted the impact individual teachers have on Holocaust education, saying “the extent to which any authentic lessons can be drawn from the Holocaust may depend, in significant measure, on the kind of instructional context organized by the teachers” (p. 182). Short (2000) reached a similar conclusion that teachers’ views on teaching the Holocaust are important in determining if and how the Holocaust is taught. In a previous ethnographic study on teaching the Holocaust in high school history classrooms, all of the students I interviewed said they had read the two books their teacher assigned them to read prior to discussion of the Holocaust. During my interviews with her, the teacher expressed her belief in the importance of Holocaust education, and noted that she had written a section of the Holocaust curriculum produced for use in the State of Tennessee. Did her belief in the importance of learning about the Holocaust influence her students’ choice to read the assigned Holocaust literature?

A second factor (2) may be the students’ previous experiences with Holocaust education. Previous experiences could influence their choice to learn more about the Holocaust when additional opportunities for study are offered. Students interviewed in

the pilot study stated that they had learned about the Holocaust from relatives who had been personally affected by the Holocaust. One student's Jewish grandparents had escaped from Nazi Germany. Another student's uncle was part of the American military force that liberated concentration camps near the end of World War II. About one-third of the students interviewed had visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D. C. Another student had taken a class that studied the Holocaust. Others had read books or watched television programs about the Holocaust. Did the previous experiences the students had with Holocaust education influence their choice to continue learning?

A third factor (3) may be the development of empathy, in particular an attempt to understand the perspective of Holocaust victims. Did students' choose to learn about the Holocaust because they developed empathy when reading about a particular victim of the Holocaust or the victims in general? Was that empathy influenced by the victim's age or sex? Did the students feel victimized themselves? One student interviewed in my previous study told of her family's escape from genocide in Bosnia. Another student talked about her experience at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D. C. and the realization that she "wouldn't be here" if her grandparents had not escaped from Nazi Germany. A student who had plans to join the military after graduation talked about weapons and the ghetto uprisings. Did the development of empathy and the subsequent connection each of these students felt to some aspect of the Holocaust influence their choice to learn more about it?

A fourth factor (4) that might influence students' choice to learn more about the Holocaust is the students' desire that the Holocaust "never happen again." Did the

students choose to study about the Holocaust because they believed lessons could be learned from studying the Holocaust? Each of the students I interviewed indicated that lessons could be learned from studying about the Holocaust, and all stated that the Holocaust should be studied “so it never happens again.” One student explained, “If we learn about the Holocaust, and we identify with the people who lived through the Holocaust, and not just the people that were the victims, but also the people who were putting these people in these conditions, then we can find out what made it happen, and we can make sure it doesn’t happen again.” Students used the example of the Holocaust to stress the importance of learning to “think for yourself” in deciding what is right and wrong. They also said that learning about the Holocaust teaches people “not to be prejudiced” and “not to discriminate,” and that it “helps with diversity in general now.”

Part of the purpose of the dissertation study is to identify the factors that influence students’ choices to learn about the Holocaust and social studies. The four factors identified above may or may not emerge as influences on students’ choice when data are analyzed in this study. Analysis of the data will generate grounded hypotheses about factors specific to students participating in this study.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this proposed study is that it is not a generalized study, but one that will produce theories grounded in the research. While some might argue that the grounded theories produced by this study are applicable only to the classroom in which the study was conducted, the findings of this study are not limited to this classroom, but rather provide educators and educational researchers with insights and questions that can guide them in their investigations of other classrooms. The findings of this study

also provide educators and educational researchers with insights and questions with regard to building a theory of student interest in and choice to engage in learning social studies. Grounded hypotheses can provide theoretical constructs upon which such theories can be built.

Another limitation of the study is that the group of students chosen for the study may or may not be representative of other groups of students. The study will focus on a group of students enrolled in an Advanced Placement European History class. Different conclusions may result from data obtained from a different group of students.

Definitions

As even common terms and phrases within disciplines can have different meanings depending on who is interpreting them, it is necessary to define key terms as I will use them in this study.

For the purpose of this study, I have defined “learn more” as engagement and active participation with the subject matter by the students. Students who chose to learn more about the Holocaust will have read the material on the Holocaust assigned by the teacher. They may, perhaps, have read or reviewed additional material on the subject. Students who choose to learn more will also participate in class discussion of the Holocaust by asking questions, answering questions or by offering opinions during the class discussion.

“Commitment to a better world” refers to the students’ desire that studying about the Holocaust will lead to a world where a holocaust would never happen again, where people are not prejudiced and do not discriminate against others.

“Experiences” refer to students’ personal experiences with Holocaust education. For example, students may have read a book written by a Holocaust survivor, seen a documentary about the Holocaust, or visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C. Experience also refers to family experiences. In this case, a student may have been told about the Holocaust by Jewish grandparents who fled Nazi Germany or by an uncle who helped liberate concentration camps during World War II.

“Perceptions of teacher commitment” refers to students’ perceptions of their teacher’s level of commitment to Holocaust education. Students might perceive a teacher’s level of commitment as “high” if their teacher encourages students to gather information about the Holocaust and to participate in class discussions. Students may also perceive the teacher’s level of commitment to Holocaust education as “high” if the teacher appears knowledgeable of the subject, bringing material found outside the textbook to class discussions. Students may perceive the teacher’s commitment level as “low” if the teacher offers little outside information about the Holocaust to the students or does not encourage students to learn about the Holocaust. Regardless, “perception of teacher commitment” depends on student views of teacher behavior and not on teacher behavior per se.

“Performance-grade contract” refers to Doyle’s (1983) work concerning academic tasks and accountability in the classroom. In exchange for grades, students perform academic tasks requested of them by the teacher. Grades include both marks on a report card and various forms of public recognition for appropriate performance in the classroom (Doyle, 1983). Students tend to take seriously only that work for which

they are held accountable and restrict the amount of output they give to a teacher to minimize the risk of exposing a mistake (Doyle, 1983).

“Empathy” refers to a kind of historical understanding (Lee & Ashby, 2001). Although empathy has achieved the status of a technical term in the discipline of history, it is at best a shorthand term for a cluster of related notions (Ashby & Lee, 1987). The term ‘empathy,’ *Einfühlung*, derives from German idealism of the nineteenth century and was seen as an essential element in understanding history (Portal, 1987). The terms ‘empathy’ and ‘historical empathy’ are used interchangeably. ‘Perspective taking’ and ‘rational understanding’ are related terms.

Empathy is a key element in understanding history. We understand people every day, ascribing intentions, grasping motives, inferring beliefs and goals on the basis of what people do and say (Ashby & Lee, 1987). The role of empathy in understanding the ideas of the past is to project oneself imaginatively into the historical situation and to bring into play the standards of intuitive observation and judgment which one has developed in everyday life (Portal, 1987). Historical empathy is of fundamental importance because it plays a role in the process of adductive, inferential thinking that allows historians to make sense of past actions (Foster & Yeager, 1998; Yeager & Foster, 2001).

Ashby and Lee (1987) view empathy as an achievement; stating, “It is where we get to when we have successfully reconstructed other peoples’ beliefs, values, goals, and attendant feelings” (p. 63). To achieve empathy a person must hold in mind whole structures of ideas that are not his/her own and with which he/she may profoundly disagree, and work with those ideas in order to explain and understand what people did

in the past (Ashby & Lee, 1987). Foster and Yeager (1998) argue that empathy is both a process and an outcome. They propose that the development of empathy involves four interrelated phases: “the introduction of an historical event necessitating the analysis of human action, the understanding of historical context and chronology, the analysis of a variety of historical evidence and interpretations, and the construction of a narrative framework through which historical conclusions are reached” (Foster & Yeager, 1998, p.1).

My definition of empathy draws from the work of both Ashby and Lee (1987) and Foster & Yeager (1998). For the purpose of this research study, empathy is defined as the understanding achieved when we have successfully reconstructed other peoples’ beliefs, values, goals, and attendant feelings and can consequently make an interpretation of historical events based on this reconstruction. This interpretation necessitates the understanding of historical context and chronology and the analysis of a variety of historical evidence.

It is also important when defining the term ‘empathy’ to identify what empathy is not. Empathy is not a feeling. It is not sympathy. Empathy does not ask students to share the feelings of people in the past nor to sympathize with those people. It asks them, instead, to entertain a particular perspective on the world and to recognize how that perspective would have affected actions in particular circumstances.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Research

This chapter has two sections. The first section reviews the research on student choice to learn “more” in social studies at the high school level. The second section reviews the research on teaching the Holocaust.

Section 1 – Review of Research on Student Choice to Learn “More” in Social Studies

Searches conducted in ERIC, Education Research Complete, PsychINFO, Academic Search Complete, and Academic Search Premier for the period 1995-2009 yielded no research studies pertaining to students’ choices to learn more in Social Studies at the high school level. Because of the lack of studies on this topic during the selected time period, the search was expanded to include research studies about students’ choices to learn more in Social Studies during the period from 1980-2009. The expanded search also yielded no research studies on the topic. Because of the lack of research studies on students’ choices to learn more about Social Studies and because research on the topic is necessary to inform theory and practice in social studies education, it is imperative that research on students’ choices to learn more about Social Studies be conducted.

Section 2 - Review of Research on Teaching the Holocaust

Over sixty years after the genocide of nearly six million Jews, the Holocaust still, for many people, exemplifies the ultimate in inhumanity and barbarism. In the last decade, with the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps by

Allied troops in 1945, numerous Holocaust museums and memorials have been established in the United States and throughout the world. With its compulsory inclusion in the curricula in Belgium, England and Wales, and parts of Germany, as well as its official encouragement in other countries such as The Netherlands and in some states in the United States, Holocaust education has increased worldwide. Numerous articles and books on the Holocaust along with the Oscar winning film *Schindler's List* have helped keep the memory of the Holocaust in the forefront of the public consciousness. In addition, genocide in Rwanda and massacres in Bosnia and Kosova have evoked memories of the Holocaust.

Although a variety of articles can be found arguing the value of Holocaust education in schools (Brabham, 1997; Friedlander, 1979; Gorrell, 1997; Llingworth, 2000; Totten, 1997), expressing concerns about its quality (Brown & Davies, 1998; Riley & Totten, 2002; Stotky, 1996; Totten & Feinberg, 1995; Totten & Riley, 2005), and offering advice concerning its teaching (Danks, 1996; Fox, 1997; Gorrell, 1997; Lindquist, 2007, 2008; Miindich, 2000; Riley & Totten, 2002; Schweber, 2004; Sims, 1997; Totten, 2000; Totten & Feinberg, 1995; Totten & Riley, 2005; Zola & Ioannidou, 2000), few research studies can be found that actually examine the teaching of the Holocaust in public schools. Those studies, generally conducted in the United Kingdom and Canada, typically focus on teacher experiences with Holocaust education (Brown & Davies, 1998; Maitles & Cowan, 1999; Short, 2000), although the results of student interviews have been reported (Carrington & Short, 1997; Cowan & Maitles, 2007; Short, 2005). One study was located which examined how the Holocaust was taught in high school classrooms in the United States. This study, consisting of classroom

observations and interviews with teachers and students, focused on the presentation of Holocaust curricula (Schweber, 1998). Studies that focus specifically on student responses to Holocaust education are exceedingly rare. Searches conducted in Education Research Complete, PsychINFO, Academic Search Complete, Academic Search Premier and Dissertation Abstracts International yielded no research studies pertaining exclusively to student perceptions of Holocaust education in high school history classrooms in the United States.

In this paper, I review the extant research literature dealing with studies about Holocaust Education in high school history classrooms. I will also discuss articles that have been written in support of the inclusion of Holocaust education in the school curriculum and that suggest methods for teaching the Holocaust.

What is the Holocaust?

Post World War II writers used the term “Holocaust” in reference to the murder of the European Jews, to convey the unimaginable and devastating scale of destruction. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) offers the following definition of “Holocaust” in its resource book for educators. “The Holocaust refers to a specific genocidal event in twentieth-century history: the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001, p. 3). Additional victims of Nazi persecution included Gypsies, Poles, political dissidents, homosexuals, and the handicapped.

The Holocaust is usually taught within the context of World War II, often in history, government, or other social studies classes. It is also discussed in literature and

art classes. Friedlander (1979) expressed concern about the proliferation of Holocaust education, stating “The problem with too much being taught by too many without focus is that this poses the danger of destroying the subject through dilettantism” (p. 520). He argued that “it is not enough for well-meaning teachers to feel a commitment to teach about genocide; they must also know the subject” (pp. 520-21). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum cautions that the teaching of the Holocaust demands “a high level of sensitivity and a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter” (USHMM, 2001, p. 3). Totten (2000) encourages teachers to assess students’ prior knowledge of the Holocaust and have a clear understanding of any misconceptions students’ may have concerning the event.

Support for Holocaust Education

Dawidowicz has stated that the Holocaust is a subject that only Jews can understand and teach (cited in Friedlander, 1979) and Fackenheim has stated that a Jew knows that “the unique crime of the Nazi Holocaust must never be forgotten” and that “the rescuing for memory of even a single innocent tear is a holy task” (cited in Friedlander, 1979, p. 524). Friedlander (1979), however, argued that the Holocaust is not sacred history, but a public event and should be taught in the “major humanistic disciplines” (p. 533). He stated that “exile to the department of Judaica spells ghettoization for the Holocaust as a subject” (p. 533). Bauer (cited in Glynn, Brock & Cohen, 1982) expressed concern that if the Holocaust is declared to be so unique that it is beyond comprehension, exaggeration and legend would overgrow the facts, and ultimately the credibility of the entire event would be undermined by hagiography. Greenberg, in the preface to the Glynn, Brock, and Cohen (1982) study, warned that

another dangerous outcome of declaring the Holocaust to be a unique event could be an inability to apply its lessons to any other situation, which, he said “would make the whole catastrophe horrible but humanly irrelevant” (p. xx).

Although debate continues about whether the Holocaust should be viewed as a unique event or as one with more universal attributes and legacies, there is general agreement that Holocaust education is of value in the school curriculum. History teachers in England and Wales are required to teach about the Holocaust as part of the National Curriculum (Brown & Davies, 1998; Carrington & Short, 1997; Short, 1995). Holocaust education is present or developing in other European countries, including Italy, Germany, The Netherlands, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Latvia (Boersema & Schimmel, 2008; Hamot, Lindquist, & Misco, 2007; Frankl, 2003; Misco, 2008; Santerini, 2003; von Borries, 2003). Although the United States has no national curriculum, several states have produced legislation supporting Holocaust education, while others have supported Holocaust studies by providing teachers with curriculum materials. Most have included references to Holocaust education in their state academic standards. New Jersey, Indiana, Florida, and Illinois require Holocaust education in the public schools. Kentucky incorporated Holocaust education into the curriculum for the 2009-2010 school year. New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and California law locate Holocaust education in the broader context of human rights studies. Although not mandating Holocaust education, Connecticut, Washington, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, and Ohio “encourage” or “recommend” the inclusion of Holocaust education in the curriculum. Virginia has “required” materials for use in teaching the Holocaust. Stating a desire to educate their citizens about the Holocaust, six states

(Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia) have established commissions or councils to provide assistance to schools in implementing Holocaust education (USHMM, 2009).

Why Teach the Holocaust?

One reason given for teaching about the Holocaust is the need to understand the past so the present can be explained (Friedlander, 1979). Friedlander (1979) called the Holocaust “a major historical event...whose various aspects - political, ideological, administrative, technological, sociological, and moral, and so forth - symbolize the problems and dilemmas of the contemporary world” (p. 521). Holt (1992) states that the Holocaust had “a profound effect on the state of the world today,” and that to understand important contemporary events, Holocaust education must be included in the curriculum (p. 2). Totten (1997) refers to the Holocaust as a “novum and watershed event in the history of humanity” (p. 176).

The Holocaust is also taught in an attempt to understand humanity and society (Friedlander, 1979). It allows the viewing of human behavior under extreme situations. The Holocaust offers the opportunity to study the intellectual environment that made genocide possible, and to attempt to understand how citizens can be motivated by their leaders to commit acts of inhumanity on a large scale (Friedlander, 1979). The Holocaust is one of the best documented events in history (Totten, 2001). It was a major genocide perpetrated by an educated populace of a Western nation, and is therefore of special concern to Western democracies (Totten, 2001). Totten (2001) also points out that the general population in the United States seems to have an avid interest

in the Holocaust, and that it is a historical event that receives regular coverage in the media.

Another reason given for teaching the Holocaust in schools is its potential for teaching civic virtue through universalizing the lessons from that period of history (Friedlander, 1979; Wegner, 1998). Through the lessons of the Holocaust, students can learn the importance of responsible citizenship and mature iconoclasm. The Holocaust makes students aware that “the only defense against persecution and extermination is citizens prepared to oppose the power of the state and to face the hostility of their neighbors to aid the intended victims” (Friedlander, 1979, p. 544). Greenberg stated that “the moral response evoked by encounter with the Holocaust can make a major difference in the attitudes of society” (Glynn, Brock & Cohen, 1982, p. xx).

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum listed six rationale for teaching about the Holocaust “offered by educators who have incorporated a study of the Holocaust in their various courses and disciplines” (USHMM, 2001. p. 2). The rationale include:

- 1) The Holocaust was a watershed event not only in the twentieth century but also in the entire history of humanity.
- 2) Study of the Holocaust assists students in developing an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. It helps students develop an awareness of the value of pluralism and encourages tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society.

- 3) The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the danger of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of others' oppression.
- 4) Holocaust history demonstrates how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.
- 5) A study of the Holocaust helps students think about the use and abuse of power, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.
- 6) As students gain insight into the many historical, social, religious, political, and economic factors that cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust, they gain awareness of the complexity of the subject and a perspective on how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of democratic values. Students come to understand that it is the responsibility of citizens in a democracy to learn to identify the danger signals, and to know when to react.

The inclusion of the Holocaust in the national curricula in England and Wales is justified on several grounds. Carrington and Short (1997) conclude that “if taught properly, [Holocaust education] can make an invaluable contribution to the general development of the skills, attitudes and dispositions usually associated with maximalist

notions of citizenship in a participatory democracy” (p. 371). In particular, Holocaust Education plays an important role in anti-racist education (Carrington & Short, 1997; Short, 1999; Short, 2005). Holocaust education can aid students in developing a global perspective of human rights and may serve to deepen students’ understanding of the causes and consequences of stereotyping and scapegoating (Carrington & Short, 1997). Others agree that Holocaust education can lend itself to moral and character development (Buckley, 2004; Goldberg, 1995; Schweber, 2004; Shoemaker, 2003). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum states that in studying the Holocaust, students will come to realize that “Democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected” and “Silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society can – however unintentionally – perpetuate the problems” (USHMM, 2009).

Stotsky (1996) suggested that three forces could account for the emphasis on the Holocaust in American school curricula: 1) the devotion of the American Jewish community to preserving the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust and documenting the course of events leading to their murders, 2) the rise of educational programs about the Holocaust, and 3) the influence of a form of multiculturalism, focusing on victims of racism and intolerance, on the school curriculum (p. 55).

Methods of Teaching the Holocaust

While there are few research studies examining how the Holocaust is taught in elementary and secondary classrooms, there is no shortage of opinions on how it should

be taught. Articles abound on the most effective ways to teach about the Holocaust and the most desirable materials to use.

It has been suggested that one of the most effective ways to teach about the Holocaust is through its literature (Baum, 1996; Brabham, 1997; Danks, 1996; Fox, 1997; Gorrell, 1997; Maitles & Cowan, 1999). Friedlander (1979) states that most students are not professionally interested in the Holocaust, so for them a specialized approach might not be appropriate. He recommends the study of Holocaust literature as a way to engage students in semi-structured discussions of the issues raised by the Holocaust (Friedlander, 1979). Diaries of Holocaust victims, autobiographies of survivors, and poems are the most commonly suggested and used examples of Holocaust literature. *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Night* by Wiesel, and Fisch's *Light from the Yellow Star* are read by students in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain (Danks, 1996; Fox, 1997; Gorrell, 1997; Maitles & Cowan, 1999).

One reason given for teaching the literature of the Holocaust is that while historical knowledge is essential to any understanding of the Holocaust, Holocaust literature teaches the individual "how to feel about the historical facts" (Baum, 1996, p. 44). Danks (1996) argued that literature makes it possible for students to learn about and experience historical events through the voices of people who were there. She recommended that the literature used to teach the Holocaust be "accurate in both historical facts and perspective, authentic in the voices it portrays, approachable in form for students, and practical in length for the time constraints of the classroom" (Danks, 1996, p.101). Drew (1995) states that teachers should present "as balanced a piece of the picture as possible, conveying the facts, demonstrating the scope and magnitude of

the event, and not losing sight of the human aspect” (p.101). The latter, she argues, is where the role of literature is important. “History records the events and compiles the statistics; literature translates the events and statistics into real things happening to real people” (Drew, 1995, p.103).

One popular method for teaching the Holocaust using literature is to have students read one autobiography or poem, then give them time to think and write about what they have learned and how they reacted to the new knowledge (Danks, 1996; Gorrell, 1997). Having students read an autobiography or poem and then following with a class discussion about the material is also a method commonly used to teach about the Holocaust (Danks, 1996; Fox, 1997; Gorrell, 1997).

The use of survivor testimony is advocated as one of the most effective methods of teaching the Holocaust (Fox, 1997; Maitles & Cowan, 1999; Short, 2005; Totten, 2000). The opportunity to listen to and engage in discussion with a survivor is claimed to leave a lasting impression on students (Short, 2005; Totten, 2000). Survivor speakers are considered a valuable resource in helping students understand that the Holocaust was real and not just another story (Fox, 1997; Maitles & Cowan, 1999; Short, 2005). Greenberg called survivor testimony “fundamental in teaching the Holocaust,” and stated that “no teaching compares in insight to hearing from someone who lived through it” (Glynn, Brock & Cohen, 1982, p. xvi). Videotapes in which survivors tell about their experiences are also available.

Drama, dance, film, art, and music are other mediums suggested for teaching about the Holocaust (Allen, 1998; Lindquist, 2007; Maitles & Cowan, 1999; Russell, 2007; Sims, 1997). Drama, in the form of reader’s theater, is used in elementary

classrooms. Students craft scripts from excerpts they read from Holocaust literature (Allen, 1998). Feedback from teachers showed that drama brought the Holocaust to life in a personal way for students (Maitles & Cowan, 1999). Students at a New Jersey dance school read a selection of diaries of women and children of the Holocaust, watched films on the subject, and then responded in first-person essays. This experience allowed them to more effectively dance their parts in “Suffer the Innocent,” a tribute to mothers and children who were separated during the Holocaust (Sims, 1997). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum offers a list of recommended videos, as well as a list of readings, in its resource book for educators (USHMM, 2001). Spielberg’s film company leads a nationwide Holocaust education project of which his film, *Schindler’s List*, is the cornerstone. The company offers a curriculum and free screening of the film for program participants (Merina, 1994). Although the film has been praised for bringing the Holocaust to millions of Americans, it received strong criticism for its depiction of Jews as powerless and passive victims (Schweber, 1999). Online Holocaust artwork, including Nazi art and ghetto and concentration camp art, has been used to aid students in developing an understanding of the Holocaust (Russell, 2007). Music, particularly song lyrics, can be used to facilitate discussions about the Holocaust. One lesson plan involves using the song “Denmark 1943” to teach about Holocaust rescue (Lindquist, 2007).

The use of simulations to teach history has many proponents as well as opponents. While some believe that allowing students to simulate complex social studies content can serve powerful learning and motivational goals (Zola & Ioannidou, 2000), and allow students to empathize with characters involved (Miindich, 2000);

others argue that the use of simulations constitutes poor pedagogy as a result of the drastic over-simplification of Holocaust history (Totten, 2000). Totten (2000) points out that there are ample resources available to teach the Holocaust which are engaging, thought-provoking, and memorable; resources such as primary document, first-person accounts of survivors and liberators, readable secondary sources, and powerful and accurate documentaries. In its resource book for educators, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum cautions that “even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound.” (USHMM, 2001, p. 8). The USHMM further states that while the activity may engage students, they often forget the purpose of the lesson, and are left with the impression that they know what it was like during the Holocaust (USHMM, 2001). While Zola and Ioannidou (2000) and Miindich (2000) argue that simulations engage students’ interest and leave a lasting impression, Totten (2000) considers them a waste of time and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum finds them pedagogically unsound (USHMM, 2001). Although Schweber (2003) does not advocate the use of simulations to teach Holocaust History, she concedes that “Done well, they allow students emotional and intellectual access to past events,” while cautioning that “done poorly, they pose miseducative, indeed harmful, opportunities galore” (p.185).

Curricula for Teaching About the Holocaust

Discussion has resulted over the quality and purpose of the curricula being offered to teach about the Holocaust in American schools. It has been suggested that surface consideration of the Holocaust in school classrooms often results in the neglect of historical perspective and literary voice (Wegner, 1998), and that interest in the

Holocaust “has spawned any number of curriculum products that seek less to help the student of history acquire an understanding of the historical event than to dictate the terms of the content that he or she should understand” (Riley & Totten, 2002, p. 542). According to Wegner (1998) “distortion and trivialization of the Holocaust appear in curricula that overlook the history of anti-Semitism and its roots in Christianity as a long-range cause for the rise of Nazism, as well as the dynamics of Hitler’s race philosophy” (p.171). Riley and Totten (2002) are concerned that teachers who are unfamiliar with the Holocaust will look to the curricula developed or endorsed by state departments of education as sources of authority on the Holocaust. They argue that there are many problems that plague flawed Holocaust curricula, including “inaccurate information, a simplistic portrayal of complex history, a lack of adequate information and/or omission of key issues and events, and watered-down concepts” (p. 559).

The various Holocaust curricula have been endorsed by those who developed them; however, few curricula have been specifically endorsed by those not involved in the development process. Several reviews of Holocaust curricula have been published examining and comparing various curricula (eg. Riley & Totten, 2002; Totten & Riley, 2005). Generally, Holocaust curricula can be divided into one of two approaches: one supported by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum which focuses on teaching the history of the Holocaust, and the other supported by the educational organization, Facing History and Ourselves, which focuses on the moral and ethical lessons of the Holocaust (Shoemaker, 2003).

Facing History and Ourselves, an interdisciplinary moral education/human rights program developed in the mid-1970s, has been the subject of several research and

comparison studies. In the Glynn, Bock and Cohen (1982) study, the *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum, which has a strong staff development component, was determined to be “an emotionally demanding course” whose content was “well worth the effort” (p. 110). Reed (1993) found it to be an example of good anti-racist education. Brabeck, Kenny, Stryker, Tollefson, & Sternstrom (1994), in a study examining the effect of the program on the moral development and psychological functioning of eighth grade students, concluded that the *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum significantly increased eighth grade students’ moral reasoning without adversely impacting on their psychological well-being. These conclusions were based on answers students provided in a series of standardized tests. It should be noted that at the time of the study, two of the researchers in the study held executive positions in the offices associated with the promotion of the *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum. *Facing History and Ourselves* is, however, a widely acknowledged moral education program. Short (2005) suggested that teachers “might usefully consult” *Facing History and Ourselves* to aid student in learning lessons from the Holocaust (p. 378).

Studies About Holocaust Education

Of the nine research studies located which specifically examine Holocaust education, six were based on data obtained from interviews with participants from schools in the United Kingdom and Canada (Brown & Davies, 1998; Carrington & Short, 1997; Cowan & Maitles, 2007; Maitles & Cowan, 1999; Short, 2000 & 2005). Three of the studies consisted of interviews with teachers who had taught about the Holocaust in their classrooms (Brown & Davies, 1998; Maitles & Cowan, 1999; Short, 2000), the fourth consisted of data obtained from interviews with students who had

studied the Holocaust the previous year (Carrington & Short, 1997), the fifth discussed data obtained from interviews with students who had attended Great Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day (Short, 2005), and the sixth focused on data obtained from three surveys given to students during the course of a short longitudinal study (Cowan & Maitles, 2007). Three studies were located which were conducted in the United States (Glynn, Brock & Cohen, 1982; Schweber, 1998; Wegner, 1998). One study compared and contrasted four Holocaust curricula by interviewing curriculum developers, teachers, and students (Glynn, Brock & Cohen, 1982). Another examined essays written by middle school students in the United States who had studied the Holocaust in their language arts and history classes (Wegner, 1998). The third study consisted of observations in classrooms in which the Holocaust was being taught and interviews with teachers and selected students (Schweber, 1998). In light of the plethora of articles expressing opinions about how and why the Holocaust *should* be taught, the minimal number of studies on how the Holocaust *is* taught is disturbing.

In examining the extant research studies on Holocaust education, the common theme that emerged from the few studies that exist is the need to understand how the Holocaust is taught and how teaching the Holocaust can be used to achieve civic virtue or anti-racist goals in education. Most researchers sought to understand Holocaust education and students' experiences with it from the teachers' perspective. In Holocaust education studies, interviewing students is not a common method of obtaining data. The voice of the student experience is largely absent.

An examination of a study conducted by Brown and Davies (1998) revealed that the researchers focused attention on problems associated with learning about the

Holocaust and suggested issues that should be investigated further. The researchers conducted an analysis of secondary school classroom texts, written responses from students to three questions they were given, and interviews with teachers. Ninety-one students gave written responses to three questions: 1) Should the Holocaust be taught in schools? 2) Should it be taught in both history and religious education lessons? 3) Why? The main data, however, were gathered from interviews conducted with sixteen secondary school teachers in England. Eight of the teachers taught history and eight taught religious education. The researchers analyzed the teachers' perceptions about teaching the Holocaust.

Brown and Davies (1998) concluded that further investigation is needed to discover if too little time is devoted to teaching about the Holocaust. They also raised concerns that the events of the Holocaust may sometimes be used as a mere context for understanding World War II, and that teachers may not perceive the Holocaust as being significantly unique. Brown and Davies also suggested that teachers may not collaborate effectively in teaching about the Holocaust, and that there may be a lack of clarity about the nature of the affective and cognitive aims of Holocaust education.

A major concern about the Brown and Davies (1998) study is that there were no classroom observations made by the researchers. The authors acknowledged that "In some ways the data was an aid to the authors' reflections as opposed to the sole source of the analysis" (p. 77).

A further concern about the Brown and Davies (1998) study is that, although ninety-one students provided written answers to three questions about Holocaust education, results of the analysis of their answers were not provided by the researchers.

What were the students' views of Holocaust education? The authors conclude that what students understand and the best way to develop that understanding was not clear in the minds of the teachers who were interviewed. If this is the case, students' responses to questions about Holocaust education are vital in understanding what problems exist in teaching about the Holocaust.

An examination of the Maitles and Cowan (1999) study revealed that the purpose of the study was to obtain an accurate picture of the practice of Holocaust education in primary schools. The researchers conducted interviews with five primary school teachers in Scotland, who taught students between the ages of nine and eleven.

From their analysis of the interviews with the five teachers, Maitles and Cowan (1999) concluded that with appropriate methodology, the Holocaust is a successful, stimulating area of study for pupils aged 9-11 years. However, there was no definition or discussion of what was meant by appropriate methodology.

Maitles and Cowan (1999) state that Holocaust education develops students' understanding of World War II; explores issues which are relevant to citizenship and values education, such as the ideas of justice, tolerance, equal treatment and the dangers of fascism; and enhances pupils' understanding of racism, stereotyping and discrimination. Since no studies were cited to support these statements, one might presume that the Maitles and Cowan study provides support. It does not. Maitles and Cowan provide no data that were obtained from observations in classrooms where the Holocaust was being taught, and no students were interviewed to ascertain their thoughts concerning Holocaust education. Without classroom observations and student

interviews, it is doubtful that the appropriateness of Holocaust education can be determined.

The purpose of the study conducted by Carrington and Short (1997) was twofold. The first purpose was to assess the potential of Holocaust education for developing “maximalist notions of citizenship” among secondary school age students (p. 271). The second purpose was to note the contribution of Holocaust education to the realization of anti-racist goals. The researchers interviewed 43 students from six urban secondary schools in South East England, all of whom had studied the Holocaust the previous year.

Carrington and Short (1997) concluded that the majority of the students benefited from their lessons on the Holocaust. Twenty-six students stated that, in regards to their awareness of racism and stereotyping, they felt they had been changed as a result of their experiences of learning about the Holocaust. Carrington and Short found, however, that about half of the students appeared to lack any real grasp of the concept of a stereotype. While the authors did not indicate how the students in the study were taught about the Holocaust and did not conduct classroom observations, the use of student interviews as a source for data analysis of students perceptions of Holocaust education provided validity that was lacking in other Holocaust education studies.

The purpose of a subsequent study conducted by Short (2000) was to gain insight into the attitudes and practices of history teachers in Toronto with respect to the Holocaust. Short stated his intention to use the data as a basis for assessing the contribution made by teachers of the Holocaust to the attainment of anti-racist goals.

A survey of twenty-three history teachers, all of whom taught the Holocaust as part of a compulsory Canadian history course to ninth and tenth graders, was conducted. Short (2000) stated that the purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into the experience that all students have of the Holocaust. Content analysis of history textbooks used by the students was also completed.

Short (2000) concluded that teachers' views on teaching the Holocaust are important in determining if and how the Holocaust is taught, and that Holocaust education has the potential to promote anti-racist goals. From the analysis of the textbooks, he concluded that the textbooks contributed little to combating racism because they neglected critical issues.

Part of the data in the Short (2000) study includes assumptions the teachers made about students' feelings and emotions. Teachers stated that students "get very upset, particularly when we visit the Holocaust Centre," that "The visual imagery overwhelms [some young adolescents]," and that "The students get so emotionally drawn and drained." (p. 4) Another teacher remarked that "in my experience, the students here don't have any particularly strong feelings about Jews or any other ethnic group" (p. 8). These statements are assumptions made by the teachers, no students were asked to give their opinions.

The focus of a second Short study (2005) was to "shed light on the problems that *might* be widespread in regard to learning the lessons of genocide, particularly as they apply to the Holocaust" (p. 369). Participants of the study were students from four schools who had attended a local synagogue as part of Great Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day. The students had attended a talk on the Holocaust, heard a survivor

speak, watched a video about the Rwanda genocide, and participated in small group discussion designed to encourage reflection on what they had learned. The students were interviewed to ascertain background on their preparation for the day, their perceptions of Holocaust Memorial Day, and the nature, extent and personal impact of the lessons they had learned about genocide.

Short (2005) concluded that for many of the students the benefits of participating in Holocaust Memorial Day included developing their knowledge of the Holocaust and acquainting themselves with the Rwandan genocide. Overall, he found that the students had failed to learn a number of important lessons from the Holocaust and the events that led to it; for example, few students conceptualized lessons of the Holocaust in terms of action required to prevent a repetition and few saw knowledge of the Holocaust affecting their lives in the future. He further concluded that for many students “the lessons of the Holocaust will not emerge automatically as they assimilate new knowledge” and they will “need help not just in learning about the Holocaust but also in learning from it” (p. 378.)

While the findings cannot be generalized to encompass all students, this study provides interesting insight into the lessons students learn, or fail to learn, from studying about the Holocaust and can guide teachers in their efforts to facilitate student learning.

A study conducted by Cowan and Maitles (2007) examined the immediate and long-term effects of Holocaust education on students’ citizenship values and attitudes and compared their responses with other students of the same age who had not studied the Holocaust. This was a longitudinal study, conducted over a thirteen-month period,

in which students who had studied the Holocaust responded to identical surveys on three different occasions. Their responses were then compared to those of students who had not studied the Holocaust.

Cowan and Maitles (2007) concluded “the core group had stronger positive values, were more tolerant and were more disposed to active citizenship by their understanding of individual responsibility towards racism” (p. 128). They suggested that “learning about the Holocaust can have both an immediate and lasting impact on students’ values” and that “studying the Holocaust teaches citizenship targets that are central to the development of well-rounded young people” (p.128).

Although Cowan and Maitles (2007) surveyed students who had studied the Holocaust, they did so with an instrument consisting of nine questions to which the students answered either “yes” or “no.” For example, “Do you know what the HOLOCAUST is?” and “Do you know what GENOCIDE is?” were two of the questions asked of the students (Cowan & Maitles, 2007; Maitles & Cowan, 2004). While the overall design of the study appeared to be an effective way to determine the effect of Holocaust education on students’ citizenship values and attitudes, the questioning format was flawed. With yes/no questions, students may answer “yes,” thinking they know what the Holocaust or genocide is; when, in fact, they do not. Asking “What is the Holocaust?” and “What is genocide?” would have allowed the researchers to more effectively determine the extent of students’ understanding of the terms.

Holocaust research studies conducted in the United States are limited. Only three studies were located and examined. The first was a study conducted by Wegner

(1998) which involved three middle schools in Wisconsin. Wegner examined essays written by eighth grade students, which focused on the moral issue: “What lessons from the Holocaust are there for my generation today?” In the three schools, teaching about the Holocaust was an interdisciplinary approach involving the language arts and social studies teachers. Wegner joined a team of teachers in designing the lessons that were used to teach about the Holocaust. All students wrote an essay of at least 300 words at the end of the four-week integrated language arts and social studies curriculum on the Holocaust as part of a required assignment. Two hundred students voluntarily submitted their essays to Wegner for analysis.

In his analysis of the students’ essays, Wegner (1998) found that “a vast majority of the essays articulated moral prescriptions relative to what human beings should not do in their relations with each other in light of the sobering revelations growing out of the Nazi policy of mass murder” (p.175). Wegner stated that twelve percent of the sample simply recorded factual information about the Holocaust without articulating any connection to lessons from that period. He called it “a significant and sobering point” that those students did not understand that the central issue to be covered in their essays was lessons that were learned from the Holocaust (p. 175). Wegner pointed out that students mentioned the following five themes in their essays: 1) not to allow the Holocaust to happen again (82 percent mentioned this theme), 2) not to dehumanize others (64 percent), (3) not to be bystanders (60 percent), (4) not to discriminate against individuals or groups (52 percent), and 5) not to blindly follow political leaders (40 percent) (p. 175). He also noted that many of the students interwove the negative themes listed with discussions of how citizens *should* act in a

political culture. Wegner concluded “each (student) essay represents an effort to clarify the moral lessons from the Holocaust within a contemporary framework of civic virtue” (p. 176). In their essays, a percentage of the students mentioned tolerance (42%), becoming a rescuer (35%), preserving peace (28%), remembrance (23%), and personal involvement in politics (20%) as lessons from the Holocaust, which Wegner identified as being related to “affirmation of political values for civic virtue” (p. 180).

By using student essays as the source of data for analysis, Wegner (1998) provided his study the validity lacking in most other Holocaust research studies. If he had actually interviewed the students, however, the opportunity for greater depth of understanding would have existed. Perhaps if Wegner had conducted interviews, it would have been possible to ascertain from students’ answers whether or not they understood the question he wanted answered. At that point, if students had not understood, then the question could have been clarified and students’ could have answered the question the researcher wanted answered. Although Wegner mentioned in his article that he joined a team of two teachers from social studies and language arts in developing the lessons used, he does not mention whether he observed the lessons being taught. Perhaps observing student participation in class would have provided additional insight into how it was that some students did not understand the question they were being asked to answer in their essays. In stating that “each (student) essay represents an effort to clarify the moral lessons from the Holocaust within a contemporary framework of civic virtue,” Wegner (1998) makes an assumption of student motive that could best be answered by conducting student interviews and asking for further explanation of the essays (p.176).

Another concern about the Wegner (1998) study involved the student essays. Wegner stated that the essays were a required assignment and had to be at least 300 words long. In his discussion of the findings, he pointed out topics about the Holocaust that had been included in the curriculum that was taught, but were not mentioned in students' essays. One such example was the "potentially explosive" issue regarding the role of the Protestant and Catholic churches within the larger historical context of anti-Semitism in Germany (p.177). Was this failure to include issues that had been discussed an indication that students did not internalize the information and draw conclusions? Or was the choice of material to be included in the essay influenced by the required length of the essay? Interviews with the students might have provided answers to questions such as this. Wegner also did not mention whether the essays were written solely by the students during class time or if students wrote the essays outside of the school day with input, perhaps, from friends and parents. Again, interviews could have helped clarify students' understanding of the Holocaust. While students' opinions on various topics are likely influenced by the curriculum, teacher, friends, peers, and parents; during an interview, students would have had to articulate their understanding of the Holocaust.

Wegner (1998) also noted the impact individual teachers have on Holocaust education, saying "the extent to which any authentic lessons can be drawn from the Holocaust may depend, in significant measure, on the kind of instructional context organized by the teachers" (p. 182). Short (2000) reached a similar conclusion that teachers' views on teaching the Holocaust are important in determining if and how the Holocaust is taught. These speculations make it apparent that studies examining how

the Holocaust is taught in classrooms, including interviews with students and the teachers, are necessary in attempting to understand Holocaust education in the United States.

In a second study conducted in the United States, Glynn, Brock and Cohen (1982), examined four “exemplary instances of Holocaust curricula” in four cities in the eastern United States (p. 1). The curricula they examined included *Facing History and Ourselves*, which was discussed earlier. The research objective was to compare and contrast what curriculum developers claimed they were trying to teach, with what teachers said they were able to teach, with what students reported learning from the material and experience. To accomplish this goal, curriculum developers, teachers, and students were interviewed. Students were given pre- and post-tests to ascertain the extent of their knowledge of the Holocaust and to record any changes in moral reasoning that occurred.

Glynn, Brock and Cohen (1982) concluded that students’ learning related to teachers’ goals and the specific objectives of individual curriculum. They found that, in general, the study of prejudice, racism and inter-group relations is an underlying goal of Holocaust education. Common to all of the curricula was “the central theme that the Holocaust becomes an instrument by which we teach the fundamental values of American society: democracy, pluralism and respect for differences, freedom from prejudice, individual responsibility, anti-racism” (p. 123). The authors noted that teachers consistently reported that when students were interested in the material and were emotionally involved with the content, they were more likely to learn. The researchers stated that, although they could not prove it, they suspected that a teacher’s

interest in the topic itself was a catalyst for student learning. Teachers in the study said that students were excited and interested to learn about the Holocaust. Students agreed, stating that learning about the Holocaust was “a positive and worthwhile experience” (p. 92).

By interviewing curriculum developers, teachers, and students in their effort to compare and contrast goals and reported learning, Glynn, Brock and Cohen (1982) provided comparative data that would have been lacking if any of the groups had been omitted from the interview process. Interviewing the students combined with testing their knowledge of the Holocaust with pre- and post-tests provided a more reliable measure of what students had learned. However, the researchers were not as thorough when gathering information concerning teachers' goals. Although teachers were interviewed, no classroom observations were conducted. Such observations could have provided confirmation that teachers' were attempting to reach the goals they had set for teaching about the Holocaust.

The third study conducted in the United States was a dissertation study which examined the teaching of the Holocaust as a moral endeavor (Schweber, 1998). The study involved case studies of four experienced teachers who taught about the Holocaust. Schweber indicated she was investigating four domains: the curriculum potential, the intended curriculum, the enacted curriculum and the experienced curriculum. She conducted classroom observations, interviewed the four teachers, surveyed all of the students in the teachers' classes, and interviewed a small number of students who were chosen by each teacher from a group of volunteers from his/her class. The study focused on the following research questions: 1) How do experienced

high school teachers teach about the Holocaust? 2) What moral lessons do they convey implicitly and communicate explicitly? 3) What is their impact on students?

Schweber (1998) provided her audience with a thick description of the classes she was observing. She quoted in detail from the teachers' and students' interviews, from the lectures given in class, and even from the rules provided for the simulation used by one of the teachers. This provided the reader with a good description of how the Holocaust was being taught in the classrooms Schweber chose to observe.

Schweber (1998) concluded that although four different Holocaust curricula were being taught, all "were inherently morally laden, and their moral messages complex," and in terms of student outcomes, a "high engagement level was correlated with a high moral impact" in three of the four cases (p. 247).

As well as describing the teaching of the Holocaust in each classroom, Schweber (1998) provides an interpretation/critique of each teacher's method of teaching. While I agree with her decision to provide the reader with a thick description of the classrooms in which she observed, I question the lens, which was Eisner's (1991) educational criticism. Not enough research studies on the teaching of the Holocaust exist for a pattern of teaching methods to have been established. Without an available background of what 'works' in the classroom, the criticism/interpretation can be viewed as researcher bias. This is evident in one case study as Schweber states that while she criticized the teacher for the methods he used to teach the Holocaust, "it nonetheless seems clear that it served these students" (p.133). Schweber subsequently published the findings of her dissertation study in 2004.

Most of the research studies that examined Holocaust education have been conducted in the last fifteen years. Only one study, Schweber (1998), included observations of classrooms in which the Holocaust was being taught. The methods used in the research studies to obtain data for analysis usually consisted of interviews with teachers or surveys to which teachers respond. The focus of the research study was usually on the teacher, generally teachers' perceptions of Holocaust education or on the curriculum, generally the use of Holocaust curricula as a tool to promote anti-racist education, citizenship, or moral development. Observations of classrooms in which the Holocaust is being taught and interviews with students who are currently enrolled in Holocaust education classes are rare. A table has been provided (see Appendix A) that summarizes the research studies that were found examining Holocaust education.

Discussion of the Research Literature on Teaching The Holocaust

The literature would indicate that there is a general consensus that Holocaust education is important. The division among those in education results from differences in how the Holocaust should be taught. While all might agree with the importance of justice, tolerance, and equal treatment and desire to enhance students' understanding of racism, stereotyping, and discrimination, not all would agree that Holocaust education is the setting in which to accomplish these goals. There is concern that the Holocaust will be seen as a supplier of additional understanding of World War II and lose its uniqueness as a historical event. Loss of uniqueness is a possibility if the Holocaust is equated with other examples of racism and intolerance. Glynn, Brock and Cohen (1982) state that "Holocaust education works best when students directly relate the information to their own personal concerns and to their lives" (p. 129). If that is the

case, one could argue that if students are to attempt to understand the Holocaust, they need to be able to relate it in some way to something with which they already have experience. Racism and intolerance in the United States may be that ‘something’.

There appears to be a consensus among educators that Holocaust literature consisting of first-person accounts of the Holocaust is effective material to use for teaching the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors who talk with students about their experiences are considered excellent resources for teaching Holocaust history. Simulations get mixed reviews. While viewed by some educators as good learning and motivational tools, they are seen by others as poor ways to teach about the Holocaust. Opponents believe that simulations are little more than games and that they oversimplify Holocaust history.

Since the teaching of the Holocaust has been either encouraged or legislated by state governments, curricula, produced largely by state departments of education, have been provided to support the educational process. While many of these curricular materials have not been reviewed, others have been examined and found deficient in basic information about the Holocaust (Riley & Totten, 2002, Totten & Riley, 2005).

A table (see Appendix B), based on Duncan and Biddle’s (1974) review of research on the study of teaching, categorizes and summarizes some of the different factors associated with Holocaust education. It is one way of looking at how the different kinds of factors associated with Holocaust education could be related to each other. Some of the factors have been examined in research studies on Holocaust education, while others have been talked about but not studied. The factors in boldfaced type are those factors that have been examined, however briefly, in research

studies on Holocaust education. As evidenced by this summary, there are more factors associated with Holocaust education that have not been studied than have been studied. Other factors which could be included in the chart, such as how much time is spent on teaching about the Holocaust, have received little mention in research studies.

The table is divided into three sections: Presage/Input Factors, Process/Classroom Factors, and Output/Product Factors. Presage/input factors are those factors that are brought into a classroom in which the Holocaust is taught. These factors include teacher and student factors, such as interest, knowledge, ethnicity, and background experiences. They also include curriculum factors and resources, such as survivor talks, Holocaust literature, specific curriculum packages, and Holocaust education as a way to realize anti-racist goals. Process/classroom factors are those events which occur in the classroom. These factors include instructional activities, such as reading about the Holocaust and discussing it or simulation exercises used to teach about the Holocaust. Output/product factors are those factors that result from events associated with presage and process factors. Output/product factors include cognitive factors, such as the knowledge gained about the Holocaust or history, as well as affective factors, including emotions, moral development, and citizenship development.

One presage/input factor that has been the focus of research studies is teacher interest in and perceptions of teaching about the Holocaust and Holocaust education. Specific curriculum packages, such as the human rights program, *Facing History and Ourselves*, have also been the focus of research studies. The Holocaust as Jewish education and Holocaust education as a tool for achieving the goals of anti-racist and moral education are presage/input factors that have received the attention of researchers.

Process/classroom factors, although widely written about in ‘how to teach the Holocaust’ literature, have received almost no attention from researchers. Few research studies have been done which focus on how the Holocaust is taught in classrooms and what instructional activities are used. Research is limited on the affect of instructional activities on the student population in the classroom. Output/product factors including cognitive factors, such as knowledge gained about the Holocaust, and affective factors such as moral and citizenship development have been the focus of limited studies. However, there has been little attempt to study the relationship of one factor to another. For example, teacher interest has not been correlated with student learning, nor has the use of a specific instructional activity such as reading and discussing been correlated with student learning.

Although a number of factors associated with Holocaust education have been identified, little research has been done on the individual factors or the relationships among them. How do presage/input factors affect process/classroom factors, and how do those process/classroom factors affect the output/product factors? For example, how does teacher interest in the Holocaust affect the instructional activities used in the classroom, and how do those instructional activities affect a student’s ability to apply the knowledge gained to a new situation? The table helps draw attention to the lack of research studies that have been done in all categories associated with Holocaust education, and underscores a need, in particular, for research studies on process/classroom factors.

In order to obtain a clear picture of how the Holocaust is taught in a high school history classroom, it is necessary that a variety of data sources, classroom observations

and interviews with teachers and students included, be used. Data collection should include classroom visits by the researcher during which time extensive fieldnotes should be taken. In-depth, structured interviews should be conducted with both the teacher and the students. Student work should be collected. The analysis of the data obtained from a variety of sources, including the researcher's fieldnotes and interviews with students and the teacher, could provide greater depth to the research study. The themes and patterns which emerge could provide a richer understanding of Holocaust education in high school history classrooms.

Although educators agree that the Holocaust should be taught, they struggle with the issue of how to teach it. Educators argue about the most effective way to deliver the lessons of the Holocaust and opinions abound (Danks, 1996; Fox, 1997; Gorrell, 1997; Lindquist; 2007, 2008; Miindich, 2000; Riley & Totten, 2002; Schweber, 2004; Sims, 1997; Totten, 2000; Totten & Feinberg, 1995; Totten & Riley, 2005; Zola & Ioannidou, 2000). Research to support the opinions is scarce. Many of the research studies that do exist rely heavily on the analysis of interviews with teachers. Observations of classrooms in which the Holocaust is being taught and interviews with students who are studying the Holocaust are scarce, although they are imperative for understanding the way the Holocaust is taught and the effects of Holocaust education on the student population.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes the research methods used in this dissertation study as well as the theoretical framing of those methods. It begins with an Overview of the Research Design, a discussion of the Theoretical Constructs Guiding the Methods, a description of the Research Setting and Participants, a description of the Data Collection Methods, a description of the Corpus Of Data Collected, and a description of the Data Analysis Methods.

Overview of the Research Design

As noted in Chapter 2, past Holocaust Education studies have consisted primarily of surveys and/or interviews with teachers in an effort to understand students' experiences with Holocaust Education. These studies featured teachers' perceptions of students' experiences. Students' perceptions are largely absent as are classroom observations. The research study here was an observational study during which I observed a high school history classroom for a period of ten weeks, collected data, and analyzed the data in depth, and as such differs from previous studies.

As interest in Holocaust Education grows, more students are enrolled in classes which feature Holocaust study as part of the curriculum. New curricula are being produced and instructional strategies are being suggested. Although information is being disseminated on how best to teach about the Holocaust, little research exists which actually documents the teaching of the Holocaust. Students' perceptions of

Holocaust education are rare. This study examines Holocaust education in a high school history classroom by analyzing student perceptions of Holocaust education. As noted in Chapter 1, the focus on Holocaust education in this dissertation is intended to help address questions about those factors that influence students' choices to "learn more" in high school social studies classes.

Theoretical Constructs Guiding The Methods

There are four theoretical constructs guiding the methods of this study. They are: (1) the importance of an emic perspective, (2) the importance of viewing knowledge as situated and contextualized, (3) the importance of focusing on particularity, and (4) the importance of knowledge as occurring at multiple levels.

The first theoretical construct that guides the methods of this study is the importance of an emic perspective (Garcia, 1992; Hymes, 1982). Most research is conducted from the perspective of the researcher. An alternative to the researcher perspective is the emic perspective or insider perspective. The emic or insider perspective is the perspective of the person who is actually involved in the setting. In a classroom setting, the emic perspective is that of the student who is enrolled in the class. The student has an inside perspective in the interpretation of events that occur in the classroom. In order to understand the emic perspective, a researcher must ask questions of the insider in an attempt to understand the setting from the insider perspective. While a researcher might observe the events taking place in the classroom, her interpretation of the events relies on her past experiences of such events (Hymes, 1982). These interpretations are grounded in her own experiences which have taken place outside of that particular classroom. By asking questions of an insider to ascertain

her/his interpretation of the event, the researcher gains an interpretation of the events grounded in the setting in which the events occurred. This interpretation of events from the emic perspective is particularly important when describing student experiences with Holocaust education. While the researchers can provide explanations of their observations of students' reactions to Holocaust education, only the students can interpret their own reactions.

Besides providing knowledge of the norms of the classroom, an emic perspective provides a history of the norms of the classroom. A researcher might observe a particular type of activity on the occasion of a classroom visit, but not understand the significance of an event because she doesn't know the history of the norms in that particular classroom. If the researcher observes, for example, the teacher lecturing about the Holocaust, she may assume that this is the usual structure of a lesson in the classroom. Asking students about the event might reveal that lectures were a rare event and as such students were paying close attention to the information being imparted. An emic perspective would also provide the researcher with knowledge of affective domains associated with the norms of the classroom. For example, in the classroom being observed, the development of empathy may be a cultural expectation. If, during a lesson on the Holocaust, a student fails to demonstrate knowledge of how conditions which existed in ghettos led to uprisings, a researcher might have one interpretation of the event while the insider in the classroom would interpret the event from the perspective of one who understands that the cultural expectation within the classroom to develop empathy has not been achieved. Interviews with an insider might allow the researcher to view the event from an emic perspective. Interviews with an

insider might also provide a description of the meanings of the norms that have been established in the classroom. These descriptions would be provided in the language of the classroom; language to which the researcher would only have access through obtaining an emic perspective.

The second theoretical construct that guides the methods of this study is the importance of viewing knowledge as situated and contextualized (Erickson & Shultz, 1981; Spindler & Spindler, 1987). By situated, I mean that behavior cannot be interpreted outside of the specific context in which it occurs. Here, context is defined as the classroom environment including the students, the teacher, and their interactions with each other, the cultural norms of the classroom, and the history of the classroom culture, the institutional context, its norms, structures, and opportunities for activity. For heuristic purposes, a context can be viewed as having four dimensions: a physical, geographical location; a set of established and shared cultural norms, including norms for affective response as well as what constitutes appropriate behavior; a shared history; and a shared framework for interpreting and predicting events and their meanings (what is sometimes called a shared cultural model). The physical, geographical context of the classroom involves the location of the classroom within the school. A small, crowded classroom would have a different context than a classroom where space is plentiful. In the crowded classroom, it may be unacceptable for students to leave their backpacks in the aisles. This may not be the case in a classroom where more individual space is available.

The context of the classroom also includes a set of established and shared cultural norms (Green & Dixon, 1994; Zaharlick & Green, 1991). These shared cultural

norms include norms for affective response as well as what constitutes appropriate behavior in the classroom. In the classroom, behavior norms are negotiated and established by the students and the teacher. Both student and teacher behaviors are interpreted according to these established classroom norms. Established norms in one classroom are different from those established in another classroom. The factors that influence the establishment of cultural norms can include such things as class size, religious preference, and lesson format. Norms established in a classroom of thirty students are different from those established in a class of twelve students. Students who are members of a small class may be more willing to share their opinions on topics with their peers than students in a class of thirty students. Interpretations of student behavior must allow for differences in the religious preferences of students. Jewish students may express a greater interest in Holocaust education than do Christian or Muslim students. Classrooms in which lesson formats consisting of teacher-led discussions are common may have students who are willing to debate topics with their classmates. It may have been established in the classroom that during a teacher-led discussion it is acceptable for students to offer their perspectives on the lesson. While one student is talking, others are expected to listen attentively and refrain from ridiculing the student if his/her opinion differs from their own views on the topic. Also within the class, there may be an established norm that requires an affective response of horror to the acts of genocide committed during World War II.

The context of the classroom includes a shared history (Zaharlick & Green, 1991). For example, while the shared culture may require students to refrain from interrupting others who are sharing their opinions with classmates, it may be acceptable

to interrupt a particular student who has a history of making what the class considers inappropriate comments. A researcher viewing the interrupting behavior would have to discover through interviews with students that this exception to established classroom norms is allowed because of the shared history the students have with this classmate. Researchers who attempt to interpret students' behavior in the classroom must observe in the classroom for an extended period of time in order to begin to recognize and understand the norms that have been established in the classroom. They must have knowledge of the context in which the behaviors occur before adequate interpretations of the behaviors can be made. There are also multiple levels of context. For example, the classroom is located within the context of the high school in which it exists, in the context of the school district within which the high school exists, and within the context of a particular community.

The third theoretical construct that guides the methods of this study is the importance of focusing on particularity (Bloome, 2005; Blum, 1994). By particularity, I mean the differences of perspective and experience that occur within a classroom that are not necessarily generalizable or common across classrooms and students. For example, the perspectives of the individual students as to why passing a scheduled test is important may widely differ. The past experiences of some students may lead them to interpret passing a scheduled test as important for admission to college, while others may view passing a test as important for parental approval. Students in a classroom have many common behaviors, but the differences in perspective and experience bring richness to a research study. Situations in the classroom also have particularity. For example, the size of the class of students may determine the instructional strategies the

teacher uses in the classroom. A small class may allow for more student/teacher and student/student interactions during a lesson than does a class with a large number of students. Students in a small class may develop a greater sense of community than do students in a larger class. A class period that involves the reading of the school announcements over the intercom may result in lessons which end in a different manner than do lessons in a classroom where school announcements are not read. A 'last period of the day' history class may require different instructional strategies for successful teaching and learning than does a first period class. An advanced placement history class may have a different focus in May, as they get ready to take the advanced placement tests, than they do in September, when class is beginning. Extended observation in the classroom allows researchers the opportunity to discover the particularities of the individual students and those of the class as a whole.

The fourth theoretical construct that guides the methods of this study is the importance of knowledge as occurring at multiple levels (Geertz, 1983). For example, students may exhibit a surface understanding of a topic, but when questioned more fully, may demonstrate a depth of understanding not previously exhibited. Extended observation in the classroom setting allows researchers the opportunity to move beyond the discovery of surface knowledge. Extended observation can allow researchers time to develop a series of follow-up interview questions which could facilitate the discovery of the meaning which lies in the depth of the student's understanding of a topic or event. For heuristic purpose, knowledge can be classified as four types: knowledge of, knowledge how, surface knowledge, and deep knowledge. The table below shows possible interactions between the types of knowledge.

Table 3.1 Interactions Among Types of Knowledge

	Knowledge Of	Knowledge How
Surface Level Knowledge	Facts about the Holocaust	Limited historical inquiry
Deep Level Knowledge	Deep historical principles	Historical inquiry using primary documents and other sources

Using Holocaust Education as an example, the intersection of “Surface Knowledge” and “Knowledge Of” results in the understanding of general information about the Holocaust. This information includes statements such as: “the Holocaust was a genocide involving the Jewish population in Europe during World War II” and “Hitler ordered the systematic elimination of Europe’s Jewish population.” The intersection of “Surface Knowledge” and “Knowledge How” results in the understanding of how one would investigate to obtain knowledge about the Holocaust. To accomplish this, a student might research the Holocaust in books. The intersection of “Deep Knowledge” and “Knowledge Of” results in the understanding of deep historical principles. For example, the Holocaust and Nazi Germany provide the opportunity for students to explore “Power, Governance, and Authority,” one of the national standards of Social Studies education. The intersection of “Deep Knowledge” and “Knowledge How” results in the understanding of the use of primary documents to investigate history. To achieve this goal, students could examine a Nazi propaganda poster in an effort to identify propaganda’s role in the Holocaust. A researcher would need extended classroom observations and interviews to uncover the multiple levels of knowledge in a classroom.

Research Setting/Participants

The research setting for this dissertation study was an Advanced Placement European History class that included a unit on the Holocaust and genocide as part of the curriculum. The class was located in a large metropolitan public high school in the southeastern United States. The study was conducted during the spring semester of the school year. The Advanced Placement European History class consisted of twelve twelfth-grade students, ages 17-18. Five of the students were female and seven were male.

After a brief explanation of the research study, students were offered three choices concerning participation in the study. They could choose 1) to be observed, to have their written work collected, and to be interviewed, 2) to be observed, to have their written work collected, but not consent to be interviewed, or 3) not to participate in the study. Eleven of the students chose to participate fully in the study; to be observed, to have their written work collected, and to be interviewed. One student chose to be observed and to have his work collected, but chose not to be interviewed.

Nine of the students were of European descent; two of whom had immigrated to the United States as children from Eastern Europe. Two of the students identified themselves as Asian. One of whom had immigrated to the United States from Saudi Arabia, the other's parents from Afghanistan. One student was African-American. Christianity was the majority religion in the class. Nine students were Christian and two were Muslim. One student was the child of a Christian mother and a Jewish father. When asked with which religious group, if any, she associated herself, she stated, "That's a really hard question for me." She went on to say "I believe in Jesus so I

guess that makes me Christian, but I don't feel Christian and I don't like to think of myself as Christian. But I agree with a lot of the Christian values and ideas." All of the students had plans to attend a college or university after graduation.

The teacher in this classroom, whom I will refer to as Ms. Gibson, is very interested in Holocaust education. She has attended workshops and conferences on the subject, and was a member of the committee that wrote, *The Holocaust and Other Genocides: History, Representation, Ethics*, a curriculum for use in secondary schools in Tennessee. Ms. Gibson is also very knowledgeable about literature, having obtained a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. She employs a literature-based approach to teach about the Holocaust. The curriculum she chose to use in the Advanced Placement European History class included material obtained from *The Holocaust and Other Genocides*.

During the school year, Ms. Gibson also taught two classes of Advanced Placement English IV. Eleven of the twelve students in the Advanced European History class were taking Advanced Placement English with her. The English classes were large classes of over thirty students. Ms. Gibson had the students read *Maus* I and II, a Holocaust survivor story written by Art Spiegelman, for the English class. Since she had, in previous years, assigned this reading to her Advanced Placement European History class, this was a change in the history curriculum.

Overview of the Classroom Environment

A pleasant classroom environment existed in sixth period Advanced Placement European History. Students seemed to be very comfortable in the classroom, with each other, and with their teacher. Students appeared to have respect for Ms. Gibson and her

knowledge of history, while she, in turn, treated them with respect. Ms. Gibson generally allowed the students to visit with each other and with her for a few minutes before she began class. This appeared to allow students to release some energy so that they were ready to focus on the lesson. When class was called to order, students responded by quieting down and facing the teacher.

After the lesson began, students seemed to focus on the topic. During teacher-led discussions, students generally raised their hands in answer to questions asked or to volunteer an opinion. Both teacher and students appeared to listen to the student who had the floor answer the question or express an opinion. Answers and opinions appeared to be respected even if not agreed with. Although the individuals in the class did not appear to all know each other well, the class as a whole seemed very comfortable with offering answers and opinions in front of their peers. Students said they liked the small class size. They spoke fondly of their class as a whole. As one student noted, “I think we’re a pretty good group.”

The students appeared to be very comfortable with their teacher. She sat in a student desk facing the class as she lectured and led the class in discussion of various topics. The students seemed comfortable responding to Ms. Gibson’s questions, asking her for clarification of a point or for more information on the topic, and offering their opinions or observations on the topic. Class members also responded to her joking comments and offered comments of their own.

As sixth period was the last class period before school was dismissed at 2:15, class ended when someone from the office read the school announcements over the intercom. The announcements usually began at 2:10, and were loud enough to interfere

with usual speech volume in the classroom. Lessons ceased when the announcements began. Students began putting their books in their backpacks and generally getting ready to leave the classroom. Students usually talked among themselves during the announcements, unless a rare announcement was deemed important enough by the class for conversation to cease.

Data Collection

As a researcher, I assumed the role of observer-participant. In this role, my participation in the group was secondary to my role as observer (cf., Merriam, 1998). I sat at the side of the classroom, observing the students and the teacher as they interacted during the class period. I recorded my observations of the events and interactions in field notes. On a few occasions, Ms. Gibson, who knew I had taught high school history, asked me for confirmation of a point she had made. Before and after class, I casually conversed with the students who accepted my presence in their classroom quickly and were willing to interact with me. Apparently, and fortunately for the study, the students did not view me as an authority figure in the classroom. It was evident by their behavior one day when a substitute teacher was in charge of the classroom that they trusted that my observations of them were confidential.

The unit on the Holocaust and genocides taught in the Advanced Placement European History class consisted of approximately two days of classroom discussion. Data was collected from a variety of sources. Data sources included:

a) extensive fieldnotes. Fieldnotes were taken during the class period beginning with my entry to the site. These fieldnotes serve as a form of representation of the events and interactions that occurred during the class period. My descriptive account of

the classroom is inevitably selective, focusing on the events and interactions that I perceived as significant (cf., Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001).

b) formal interviews with students. These interviews were approximately fifteen to thirty minutes in length. Formal interviews consisted of a series of pre-established questions followed up with clarifying questions.

c) interviews with the teacher. Informal interviews with the teacher occurred sporadically during the study.

d) the collection of curriculum material the teacher used. This included handouts students received from the teacher.

e) written answers to questions asked of the students. Students were asked to give written answers to a series of oral questions.

f) written class work students produced. Written class work included one test given to the students by the teacher.

Table 3.2 Corpus of Data Collected

Number of Observations	50 days for one hour each day
Number of Students Interviewed	11 students for approx. 15-20 minutes each
Number of Interview Audio Tapes	3
Number of Pages of Fieldnotes	50 pages
Pieces of Student Work	11
Number of Written Interviews with Students	24

Data Analysis Methods

Two major categories of data analysis were used in this study. The first category involved constructing descriptions of lessons that were taught in the high school history classroom. The second category involved identifying themes, topics and issues that were emically identified in the teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides in the classroom.

To construct descriptions of the lessons that were taught, I took my field notes and reviewed them for actions taken by the teacher and students as they participated in the class lesson on genocide. I supplemented analysis of the actions of the teacher and students with interviews I conducted with them. My description of the lessons is not emic, but, instead, is an etic description of the lessons.

The coding structure that guided the data analysis was developed using terms, expressions, and evidence from the students and teacher. It also was built upon concepts that emerged from the data in line with a grounded theory approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which is a qualitative methodology that is useful for the purpose of developing theory that is derived from systematically gathered and analyzed data. Although the design of qualitative research is necessarily emergent (Straus & Corbin, 1998), the grounded theory method provides a process for synthesizing data and creating a set of criteria against which to evaluate results. Moving from raw data to conclusions involved a process of “data reduction” that entailed breaking data down, conceptualizing them, and putting them back together in thematic categories that best fit the text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data reduction

process had three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The analysis began with open coding approach in which I read through the transcripts and field notes to identify key themes emerging from the data. To identify themes, topics, and issues, I looked at the data for terms, expressions and evidence from the teacher and students that suggested major categories that establish themes, topics, and issues for them. For example, students frequently used the word “interest” as a category of explanation; thus, “interest” became a theme, topic, and issues category because of the students’ emic use of that term.

Next, a process of axial coding was used to define the relational nature of these categories by identifying the properties and dimensions (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Special attention was paid to alternative and competing explanations of the research questions and drew upon data from multiple informants in this study to understand and to explain such discrepancies.

The final process consisted of selective coding, which involved identifying the central themes related to the research questions. Although the grounded theory approach reduces data into concepts, the quotations provided in the findings allow the reader to join in the process of viewing the data in its original, albeit selective, form and to share in the interpretive process (Stake, 1995).

Chapter 4

Findings

In Chapter 4, I report the findings of this research study. It begins with a description of the school followed by a description of a lesson on genocide. In describing the interaction between teacher and students during the lesson, I will refer to the students using letters of the alphabet (eg. Student A) to keep the identities of the students confidential while allowing the reader to follow the interaction between the teacher and various students.

Even though the study of the Holocaust and other genocides was only a two-day event in this classroom, my analysis of it is informed by the observations I did in the classroom from March 22nd through May 3rd. The description of the lesson is followed by the themes, topics, and issues that organize the data from the interviews, written work, and written interview questions.

Description of the School

The school in which this research study took place was a large metropolitan high school located in an affluent area of a large city in the southeastern United States. Businesses surround the school on three sides. Across the street from the school is one of the metropolitan area's seven shopping malls. On one side of the school is a small shopping complex, on the other professional offices and another small shopping complex. Behind the school are houses. Information provided by the school characterizes the school's social and economic make up as suburban and high income. The student body is diverse. School information identifies the student body as 59.0%

white, 29.9% African-American, 7.3% Asian, 3.2% Hispanic, and .6% Native American. The school has a large immigrant population as well as diverse religious affiliations. One student who participated in the study chose to attend the school even though she lived out of the school's zone, which necessitated a thirty to forty-five minute commute daily. Because the school had a larger Muslim population than other schools in the area, she believed she wouldn't "feel out of place" wearing her traditional Islamic head scarf.

As I entered the front doors of the comprehensive high school on the afternoon of March 22nd, I first noticed a large map of the world hanging on the wall in the entry. The school has a diverse population of immigrants whose names and countries of origin are typed on a list on the wall. Small groups of students occasionally stopped to examine the map, talk, and point out various countries of the world. On either side of the map are cases of trophies that the school has received for winning or placing in various competitions. To the right are the school offices, the "main" office and the freshman office, as well as the cafeteria, stairs leading to the second floor, and a hallway leading to the school library. To the left is a long hall lined with classrooms. I "signed in" each day in a "visitors log" located on the counter in the main office. There was usually a student or two in the office when I arrived.

Students in the high school are offered a variety of classes from which to choose including Latin, Art History, and Comparative Governments. Some subject areas, including English and History, offer regular, honors, and Advanced Placement classes. The students who participated in the study were all enrolled in Advanced Placement European History. Eleven of the twelve students were enrolled in Advanced Placement

English. Some were taking Advanced Placement classes in mathematics and science as well.

As I walked toward the hallway located on the left of the main entrance to the school, on my left was an alcove which contained vending machines and a set of stairs leading to the second floor. Vending machines were located elsewhere in the school as well. To my right was a short hallway leading to another long hall lined with classrooms. The two long halls are parallel to each other. At the end of the long hallway in front of me was a double doorway that led into another part of the school. Student lockers took up much of the wall space in the hallway. A small section of the wall along Ms. Gibson's classroom was empty of lockers, but had a small concrete ledge where it appeared that lockers may have been located at one time. The school appeared mostly clean and graffiti-free. Diagonally across the hall from Ms. Gibson's classroom hung a glass-enclosed case where, during student government elections, pictures and biographies of the candidates were posted. At other times during the period I was observing, other photographs or information were posted in the class-covered case. The hallway was relatively quiet for a large metropolitan high school.

Fifth period was still in session when I first arrived and most students were in their classrooms. In the open doorway of the first classroom on the left, stood a group of five or six students who appeared to be waiting for the bell to ring so they could leave the classroom. During the course of the research study, I noticed that the location of this group of students occasionally varied. Usually they stood close to the door and in the doorway, but sometimes the group spilled out into the hall. As I waited outside

Ms. Gibson's classroom, I observed a few students who appeared to have errands that necessitated their being in the hall before the bell rang.

As the bell rang to end fifth period, students moved into the hall from classrooms along the hallway talking and laughing with each other. The hallway was very noisy during class changes, but the change appeared to go smoothly. I noticed two police officers during the time I observed in the school. They appeared to patrol the entire school as I did not see them in the hallway where Ms. Gibson's classroom was located on a daily basis. As Ms. Gibson's classroom emptied, I quickly slipped into the classroom to avoid the crush of students in the hall. On a few occasions, I arrived in the school as students were leaving their fifth period classrooms. As I entered the school on those occasions, I was greeted, to my left, with a crush of students heading in one of four directions. The area to the left inside the front door is the confluence of two hallways on the first floor and two sets of stairs leading to the second floor. One set of stairs emptied directly at the intersection while the other set was at the end of the hallway, a short distance away. On those occasions when I arrived during the change of classes, I slipped into place behind a student, preferably one larger than I, and joined the stream of people going down the hallway in the direction of Ms. Gibson's classroom.

Ms. Gibson's Classroom

Ms. Gibson's classroom is the second classroom on the left in the first long hallway. The door into the classroom opened into the back of the classroom. On the opposite end of the room is Ms. Gibson's desk. It sets on the left of the room with her computer station against the wall. Her teaching podium occupies a center left position in the front of the room. Large whiteboards and bulletin boards fill the walls in the

front and on the right side of the classroom. The left wall is lined with windows. On warm days, students opened the windows. Since the school is located on one of the major streets in the city, traffic noise filtered in the open windows. Students did not appear to pay much attention to the sounds of the busy street. Construction on the mall parking lot located across the street would, on occasion, created enough noise to distract the class. Usually students appeared to be focused on events inside the classroom.

There were approximately thirty student desks that faced the front of the classroom. The desks were brightly painted in primary colors; most were multi-colored. The seniors were allowed to paint the desks for the next school year. In classes with large numbers of students, Ms. Gibson stood at the front of the room to conduct class. The Advanced Placement European History class was a small class by the school's standards. Twelve seniors were enrolled in the class. Since the class was small, Ms. Gibson sat in a student desk in the middle of the room facing the students to conduct class. The students sat in desks across the back of the room. No one sat in the row along the right side of the room. Four students sat in the last four chairs in the second row from the right. A male student sat in the back desk with three female students in front of him. In the next row were three students, two female students with a male student in front of them. In the fourth row, three male students occupied the last three desks. In the row of desks closest to the window sat two male students. Although the students did not have assigned seats, during the time I observed the classroom, they did not change their choice of seats.

The twelfth student in the European History class joined the class during the second semester. The original eleven students were also enrolled in Ms. Gibson's

Advanced Placement English class. This class had approximately thirty students in it. The twelfth student was not enrolled in the Advanced Placement English class.

It was in the English class that the students read *Maus* by Art Spiegelman. Not reading *Maus* in history class was a change in the history curriculum. In years past, the European History students were assigned to read *Maus*. They were tested on it, discussed it in class and were shown a Nazi propaganda video clip. The study of the Holocaust and other genocides usually occupied about a week of the school year. During the current year, according to the teacher, since students were reading about the Holocaust in English class, the study of the Holocaust in history class occupied less time than it had in previous years.

Day One: A Lesson on Genocide

The class period began with Ms. Gibson asking the students if the next Wednesday would be a good day for a test. The students thought it over and decided that next Wednesday would be fine. They decided that “note cards” would be due on the Tuesday before the test. Note cards are three by five note cards upon which students have written information about the topics discussed during the testing period. Students also wrote any questions they had about the topics that they wanted Ms. Gibson to answer in class on the note cards. As the lesson began, Ms. Gibson was sitting in a student chair facing the students. The students took out paper in preparation for “taking notes.”

Ms. Gibson began the discussion on genocide with a definition of genocide. “Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: 1) killing members of the group,

2) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, 3) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, 4) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the groups, or 5) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” She repeated the definition several times as students wrote on their notebook paper. All of the students were writing on their paper as Ms. Gibson read the definition. She gave examples of genocides that have occurred. Students were busily writing on their paper. A couple students asked for clarification.

Ms. Gibson asked if al-Qaida’s attacks on the United States could be termed genocide. Two students tried to decide if they were. Ms. Gibson asked the students what the distinction was between mass murder and genocide. She asked students to give examples of large-scale mass murders. Student A gave the example of Saddam Hussein killing Kurds. Student H asked if there is a specific number of people needed to constitute an ethnic group. Student B commented that two people are not an ethnic group. Student H countered that the two people are part of it. Student C asked if the Japanese actions in World War II would be considered genocide. Ms. Gibson said that some people argue for it. Student B asked about the killing of Russian guards. Ms. Gibson answered that mass murder is political. Student I stated that genocide is not political. Student G asked about the Trail of Tears. Ms. Gibson answered that there is an argument about it. Student H asked about switching Muslim and Christian children from their original religion to the other; would that be considered genocide? Student I asked what it mattered whether it was mass murder or genocide, that killing was something that people should care about. Ms. Gibson answered that genocide has a

stigma. She mentioned the Gacy murders. (Gacy was a serial killer convicted of the 1970s murders of 33 boys.) Student I said that murder is murder. Student H pointed out that it was thirty boys versus six million Jews. Student I replied that there were Jews, homosexuals and gypsies killed. Students H, I, C, and G continue a discussion of what should constitute genocide. Ms. Gibson talked more about genocide and asked if slavery could be considered genocide. Student H asked for clarification. Ms. Gibson explained that there were mass killings, which could meet the criteria of genocide.

Class discussion turned to the official genocides. The first was the Armenian genocide. Student C asked for clarification that these are official genocides. Student H asked why Armenia was considered a genocide. Ms. Gibson explained that the Turks killed Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and that the Germans asked the Turks not to because Germany needed workers. She said that the United States did not want to get involved. Students C, I, and H asked clarification questions about the Armenian genocide. Student H asked if the Crusades were an example of genocide. Ms. Gibson said that they were not because the intent was to capture Jerusalem. She told them that intent was a big part in determining genocide. Student I asked how you could judge intent. Ms. Gibson said that you had to try.

The second genocide they talked about was the Holocaust. Ms. Gibson said that twelve million people were killed in this genocide. Student I thought that six million were killed. Ms. Gibson explained that there were six million Jews killed, but that other groups were killed also. Student I and Student H discussed this.

The third official genocide that Ms. Gibson listed was Rwanda in 1994. Student I asked what happened. Ms. Gibson told the class that three million Tutsi were killed

by Hutu in a month. Students I and B asked clarification questions. Student H asked how that many people can be killed that fast. Ms. Gibson explained about machetes. All of the students in the class were taking notes as Ms. Gibson talked about the official genocides. Ms. Gibson told the students that the Bosnian/Serbian conflict was a possible fourth genocide. She explained the situation. Students wanted to continue the discussion of the Rwanda genocide. Student H asked how they told the ethnic groups apart in Rwanda. Ms. Gibson said that the Tutsi were taller and had narrower noses. She said that the Tutsi were treated better by the colonial powers. Student C asked why, in 1994, “didn’t somebody send anyone in.” Ms. Gibson said that it was because other nations needed an invitation. Student C said that you don’t need permission to save three million lives. Student G asked about military operations. After Ms. Gibson answered, Student G asked if the class could watch *Black Hawk Down*. Ms. Gibson said that they could not.

Ms. Gibson listed the five stages of genocide: 1) define the enemy, 2) use concentration camps to put the enemy all in one place, 3) utilize mobile killing units, 4) use mass deportations, 5) employ killing centers. The students wrote quickly as Ms. Gibson listed and explained the stages of genocide. Students I, H, and C offered discussion of the topic. Ms. Gibson answered questions. She told the students that Rwanda did not have the technology for genocide that the Germans did.

Ms. Gibson then asked the students why the genocides happened. Student C said that economic distress in Germany was a cause. Ms. Gibson continued with this line of thought. Student H asked for clarification of a point. Ms. Gibson answered and continued with the discussion. Student I asked if someone was looking at Austria’s role

in the genocide. Ms. Gibson answered that there was a war crimes tribunal and that the United States did not join. Student B asked a clarification question. Ms. Gibson answered the question. Student L asked about the process for individual crimes. Ms. Gibson said the tribunal was for mass killings and that the United States did not join to protect its military. Student G asked about stolen artifacts. Ms. Gibson said that on a large scale an international tribunal would be needed. Student H asked why it took the United States so long to join the process. Ms. Gibson said that the United States does not want to put anything above its constitution. She then guided the discussion back to Student C's comment on economic distress in Germany as a cause of the genocide. Students G, C, H, and B discussed with her. The list of causes was expanded to include social unrest, the need for a strong leader, desire to return to former glory, fear of an outside enemy, and the lack of liberal values. Student I asked what that list meant in terms of Germany. Ms. Gibson reminded the students that the Treaty of Versailles was imposed on Germany. Student I asked if it was dangerous to impose a government on a country. Student C commented. Ms. Gibson asked about Afghanistan. Student D said that the Afghans made their constitution; the United States did not agree to it. Student I asked a question. The bell ending the period rang. Student H asked a final question, "What would happen if...?"

Day Two: Conclusion of the Lesson on Genocide

As class began, Student C commented that yesterday's class was interesting and that she enjoyed it. The other students teased her. Ms. Gibson began class by reading an excerpt from a Turkish soldier about the Armenian genocide. She then corrected a statement made the previous day about the genocide in Rwanda. In the spring of 1994,

one million people were killed in thirteen weeks. She said that fourteen percent of the population in Rwanda was Tutsi and eighty-five percent was Hutu. The Tutsi had been in power. Student H asked a clarification question. Ms. Gibson gave further information on Rwanda. Student H asked another clarification question. Ms. Gibson answered the question. Ms. Gibson clarified information on the British monarchy. Students C, H, B, and G commented on the inheritance of the British throne. Students C asked about a picture of a Rwandan church. Ms. Gibson answered the question.

The discussion of genocide concluded and Ms. Gibson began a discussion of the Age of Dictators. Student I and Student C asked for clarification. Ms. Gibson explained and continued talking about dictators. During this time students made comments aiding in Ms. Gibson's discussion of the topic. Ms. Gibson told students that modern dictators want you to think the way they tell you to and that the old dictators did not operate this way. She told them it had to do with mass communication and the ease of communication. Ms. Gibson told students that by 1938 all of Eastern Europe was totalitarian except Czechoslovakia and asked students what the alternative to dictators was. Student G answered that the alternative was communism. Ms. Gibson explained communism, stating that the State cares about all areas of a person's life. Students took notes during this time, but there was little participation from the students.

Ms. Gibson talked about problems in Italy and asked what the Italians wanted. Students E, K, and G attempted to answer the question. Then Student H asked what the Italians *did* want. Ms. Gibson discussed the problems in Italy and stated that there were divisions in Italy. Student B commented that some people were communist and some fascist. Ms. Gibson gave a summary of the two political parties. Student C commented

that the divisions were regional. Ms. Gibson agreed. Student G asked if Italy had a civil war. Ms. Gibson said that they did not. The division was rural versus urban rather than being a racial or religious split.

Ms. Gibson began a discussion on Mussolini. Students H and Student C commented on the dictator. Ms. Gibson asked Student J a question concerning Mussolini. Student J answered and Ms. Gibson continued with the topic. Student H asked a clarification question. Ms. Gibson answered. She continued to list what Mussolini wanted and talked about his followers. She added interesting “tidbits” about the topic. The students seemed to like this additional information. It captured their attention and Ms. Gibson continued discussing Mussolini. Student C asked a clarification question that Ms. Gibson answered. Student H asked a question. Ms. Gibson answered that she was getting to that. She continued the story, spelling names when necessary as students took notes. Students H and I offered comments. Students G and Student I each asked a question. Ms. Gibson answered the questions. She continued with the story, talking about Mussolini’s pact with the Vatican. She commented that the Pope was sulking. Students laughed at the comment. Students C and H asked questions about the Vatican. Ms. Gibson answered the questions and continued with women and family issues in Italy under Mussolini. She asked students what the purpose of the laws was. Student C answered. Ms. Gibson commented. Student H asked a question. Ms. Gibson answered the question and continued with the story. As Ms. Gibson finished talking about Italy under Mussolini, two more students asked questions. Ms. Gibson told the students that Italy was not as anti-Semitic as

Germany. Student H asked why Italy was so bad. Ms. Gibson said that she had no answer for that. The lesson concluded and students began preparing to go home.

Findings Across the Lessons

The structure of the lessons was consistent across both days. Instructional strategies consisted of teacher talk, student-teacher interaction, and occasionally student-student interaction. Ms. Gibson told the story of genocide and the rise of dictators in Europe in a conversational manner, “giving notes,” asking questions of the students, answering questions they posed, and listening to students’ comments both on and off topic. Students appeared comfortable with the lesson format. When Ms. Gibson started talking on the day’s topic, students were quick to take out pieces of paper or open notebooks. In interviews, students spoke of Ms. Gibson “giving notes” and of “taking notes” because they wanted to remember the material so they could do well on both the class tests and the Advanced Placement Test. Students also appeared comfortable answering questions, asking questions, and offering comments. During interviews, students referred to this lesson format as “discussion.” Seven of the twelve students in the class participated in the class discussion each day. Five of those students participated in the discussion both days. During interviews, seven students said that “class discussion” was the way they liked to have history lessons taught. One student referred to the interaction as “conversation style.” Although most students said the best way to teach about the Holocaust was through the use of videos/visuals, the majority of students said that the best way to teach history topics was through the use of class discussions. The majority of students also listed the use of class discussions as a way to make class interesting.

Report of the Findings

In this section, I report findings in twelve different areas:

- (1) students' definitions of the Holocaust,
- (2) students' previous Holocaust education experiences,
- (3) students' views on why the Holocaust should be taught,
- (4) students' views on why there is increased interest in the Holocaust,
- (5) students' views on what lessons are learned from studying the Holocaust,
- (6) students' views on the use of *Maus* to teach about the Holocaust,
- (7) students' views on the choices they make with regard to learning about the Holocaust,
- (8) students' views on the influence of parents and society on their choices,
- (9) students' views on empathy,
- (10) students' views on what makes class interesting,
- (11) students' views on the way the Holocaust should be taught, and
- (12) students' views on the location of knowledge about the Holocaust.

Definition of the Holocaust

Each of the students interviewed gave a definition of the Holocaust that included an understanding that the Nazis had killed Jews during World War II. They defined 'the Holocaust' using descriptions such as: 1) "the mass murder of the Jews or those that were thought to be Jews," 2) "when the Nazis, and the Germans I guess, deprived

people of their rights and put them in concentration camps and, I think, that it was mostly Jewish people, and gypsies and homosexuals,” 3) “when the Nazis were singling out the Jews or gypsies or homosexuals and basically murdered all of them,” 4) “a genocide.... a killing of a select group of people depending on their race, their ethnicity,...the Jewish people...there were some select groups like some homosexuals were killed, you know, just select groups of people were killed,” 5) “when Hitler and the Nazis put the Jews through concentration camps and there was a period when a lot of them were exterminated,” 6) “the killing of six million ethnic gr...like Jews and, I think, gypsies,” 7) “when the Nazis rounded up all the people that, you know, didn’t share the same political ideologies as they did and, you know, killed all the opposition to their thought,” 8) “extermination and genocide by Hitler of Jews, gays, handicapped people, Gypsies, and so on,” 9) “the genocide of, you know, six million Jews, Gypsies, and homosexuals,” 10) the Nazis killed a lot of Jews,” and simply 11) “the killing of Jews.”

Of the eleven students, ten included the concept of murder in their definition of the Holocaust. Two students used the word murder itself, four referred to “killing,” one used the term genocide, one used both “genocide” and “killing,” and two used “extermination” or “exterminated” to describe what happened to the Jews. One student did not include the concept of murder in his definition of the Holocaust. He said the Nazis “deprived people of their rights and put them in concentration camps.” All of the students identified the “Jews” or “Jewish people” as having been the target of the Holocaust. Four students identified only Jews as targets of the Holocaust. Two identified Jews and homosexuals as targets; one identified Jews and Gypsies; three

identified Jews, homosexuals, and Gypsies; and one student listed “Jews, gays, handicapped people and Gypsies” as targets of the Holocaust. Four of the eleven students included the concept of selection in the choice of whom to target. One student said Nazis were “singling out” the Jews to kill, another said “select groups” were being killed, two mentioned “race” and “ethnicity” or “ethnic” when describing who the victims of the Holocaust were. One of the students said the selection of the groups for killing was based on “race and ethnicity.” One student identified those with different “political ideologies” or the “opposition” to Nazi thought as being selected for killing.

Students’ Previous Holocaust Education Experience

The students interviewed indicated they had previously learned about the Holocaust in a variety of ways. They had read books about the Holocaust, seen movies, videos and television documentaries and visited Holocaust museums or exhibits. Students had listened to Holocaust survivors talk about their experiences and attended a Holocaust convention held in their community. Students said they learned about the Holocaust in school, from their parents, and by talking with friends. One student had learned about the Holocaust through a poem written by her sister for a school assignment. Another student explored the Holocaust through her artwork.

All of the students said they had read books about the Holocaust. The students named five different books they had read, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Maus*, *Night*, *The Upstairs Window*, and *Devil’s Arithmetic*. Students also mentioned they had read other books about the Holocaust, including novels, but did not name any of those books. *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Maus* were most often named as books that students had read. Seven of the eleven students said they had read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. All of the

students said they had read *Maus*. Students said they had read *The Diary of Anne Frank* in junior high and *Maus* for Advanced Placement English during their senior year of high school. Only two students mentioned reading *Night* although it had been on the school's summer reading list their freshman year. One of the students said he thought *Night* was "a good book" because it was "really sorta emotional." He said he was "sympathetic" when he read it. Of the seven students who said they had read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, four were female and three were male. Each of the female students said reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* stimulated their interest in learning about the Holocaust. Two of the female students said after reading the book, they bought other books about the Holocaust. They said they "related" to or felt a "connection" with Anne. One of the female students said "I felt a connection with Anne and was devastated by the fact she had murdered. From that point on, the Holocaust became my favorite subject to discuss." She continued, "Although I have seen and learned lots of things about the Holocaust, the most effective thing that made me so interested to learn more was *The Diary of Anne Frank*. I connected with the main character and I hurt when she hurt. I wanted to learn more about her life and what she went through." Another said that *The Diary of Anne Frank* "brought me further into the horrors of the Holocaust." For the male students, *The Diary of Anne Frank* did not stimulate interest in the Holocaust. One male student called the book "soporific – despite the implied horrors." He said that the book "taught much less about the Holocaust than about Anne's personal matter, although I got an idea of what living then was like, in a hideout." Another said, "...honestly, I didn't enjoy that book...."

Eight of the eleven students interviewed said they had watched videos, films, or movies about the Holocaust. *Schindler's List* was the most named movie with four of the students saying they had seen the film. One student said she had seen the film with her mother; another mentioned watching it in school during her eighth grade year. Five of the students watched videos that they did not name. One student said he had watched *The Wave* in school, while another said she had watched *The Pianist* in piano class. Two of the students mentioned a Hitler propaganda video clip they had seen in class. The students who mentioned seeing movies or videos said that movies/videos are "effective" ways to learn about the Holocaust. One student said of the movie she saw, "...that movie made me aware of how truly horrible that event (the Holocaust) was. The movie just made me more AWARE! (student emphasis)" She continued, "Sometimes, no, all the times, actions speak louder than words and that movie definitely proved it to me." Another student preferred watching movies/videos about the Holocaust rather than reading about it because "Reading it out of a book isn't quite as convincing because it's less visual..." A third student said that watching movies was "helpful in making the event a reality." Another student, who recalled watching videos of Holocaust victims and the camps, said, "These visuals had about the greatest impact on me – they were grotesque and shocking and they have stuck with me." One student, who watched *Schindler's List*, said that he "learned more from that movie than I did from the history books and everything else." He said, "Once I saw the movie, like I was so interested I thought I should like go online and do a little bit of research."

Four of the students said they had heard a Holocaust survivor speak about her experiences. One student had heard a speaker during his grade school years. He

remembered having seen a number tattooed on the woman's wrist. "I remember her number tattoo making an impression on me," he recalled. "The Holocaust was real, it had been out there, it had touched these tangible people – even one right in front of me," he said. Another student talked of hearing a Holocaust survivor speak during a special program day offered by the school. "That was incredibly moving," she said. Still another student said that the best method of teaching about the Holocaust is "eyewitness accounts because they are generally true and can tell the learner details of how it really was." One student said that Holocaust survivor speakers "show that the people are real and their sufferings and tragedies were real."

Three of the students had visited a Holocaust museum or exhibit. One student visited the Holocaust museum in Washington, D. C. with her parents. The same student, who spent most of her life in Brazil, visited a Holocaust museum with her school class while she was attending school in Brazil. "I will never forget the images I saw there," she said. Another student had visited a monument with her school class during the time she was attending school in Florida. She described the statue as "like a hand and there are like a billion people crawling up it." Another student said he had seen a Holocaust exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum during a seventh grade class trip to Washington, D. C.

Three of the eleven students interviewed said they had attended a Holocaust convention held in their community with their teacher, Ms. Gibson. One student talked about hearing three prisoners of war talked about their experiences. "I realized how dramatic an experience it had been, especially for Jewish POWs, and I even roughly outlined characters and events in a book I wanted to write," he said. He referred to the

experience as “exciting and sad and emotional at the same time.” Another student said she had “learned a whole (student emphasis) bunch there, concerning our Jewish POWs.”

Two students mentioned learning more about the Holocaust in ways other than those listed by their classmates. One student recalled having learned about the Holocaust from a poem, entitled *I Cry*, that her older sister had written for a school assignment. Another student said, “I’ve done some artwork about it (the Holocaust) which is a form of learning for me.”

One student mentioned having read about the Holocaust in a textbook, although none of the students suggested reading the textbook as a way to learn about the Holocaust. Four students, however, referred to the textbook when listing ways NOT to learn about the Holocaust. “NOT (student emphasis) textbook reading,” said one student when listing effective ways to learn about the Holocaust. “Not just having to read about it out of a book (textbook),” said another student. Movies or books (first person accounts), “things like that help you learn better than just reading out of the textbook,” she continued. Another student said, “I think it’s important to get some sort of interaction going besides just reading a textbook.” Reading “the text” did not appeal to her.

All of the students said that they had learned about the Holocaust in school. One student mentioned having learned about the Holocaust in fifth grade, one in sixth grade, and a third learned about the Holocaust in seventh grade. Four students said they had learned about the Holocaust in eighth grade. Two students said they had learned about the Holocaust in middle school or junior high. Two mentioned having learned about the

Holocaust in ninth grade. Two students said they had learned about the Holocaust in World History, while nine said they had learned about it as juniors in high school. All of the students had learned about the Holocaust in Advanced Placement European History during their senior year. Ten of the eleven had also learned about it in their Advanced Placement English IV class. All of the students said they had read books about the Holocaust in school. Nine of the students said they had watched videos or movies about the Holocaust in a school class. Three mentioned having gone to a museum or Holocaust monument with a school class. Four students said that they had heard a Holocaust survivor speak at their school. Three attended a Holocaust convention with a school group. Six of the students said they had learned about the Holocaust outside of school, from or with their parents and/or siblings. “The first time I remember learning about the Holocaust was when my mom asked me to sit down and watch *Schindler’s List* with her,” said one student. “After that my mom and I sat down and talked about the movie and the Holocaust,” she continued. Another student said, “My family was in New York City and we went to the Holocaust museum there. My dad loves history, and so he’s always been a big fan that wherever we go, my mom too, we do stuff like that.” Another student said that he learned about the Holocaust “when my dad and my sister would discuss it between themselves.” Still another student learned about the Holocaust “when my parents first told me about it in the seventh grade.” One student whose father is “100 percent Jewish” said she had learned about the Holocaust from her parents. “Interestingly enough, my mom’s talked to me more about it than my father. And, my mom’s not Jewish. Yeah. She’s sorta fostered my learning about it,” she said.

Five of the students shared some of their feelings about the Holocaust and learning about it. One student said that the Holocaust was “so tragic” and that “Hitler and how he came to power is fascinating.” Another student called the Holocaust “a truly horrible event,” and said that she was “truly shocked” after watching a movie about it. “Before watching it, I had never been more shocked in my entire life,” she said. One student who had listened to a Holocaust survivor talk said that the experience had made the Holocaust “real” for him. The student whose father is Jewish referred to the Holocaust as having “cruelly effected my own flesh and blood.” After reading her first book about the Holocaust, *Devil’s Arithmetic*, she remembered being “shocked, scared and even more interested” as the book “made even the idea of the Holocaust much more accessible” to her. Another student called the Holocaust “dramatic and horrifying” and said “if the details start to bother me too much I just close my book or turn off the movie....”

Why Teach About the Holocaust

All of the students interviewed expressed the belief that students in American schools should be taught about the Holocaust. When asked why, in general, the Holocaust is taught in American schools, the students gave four reasons why they think it is taught. The first reason given for teaching about the Holocaust was that the Holocaust was an important event in the world’s history. Of the three students who identified the Holocaust as an important event in history, only one gave a reason why it was important. He called the Holocaust “the biggest example of genocide there is.” The other two students were less direct with their reasons. “Because it’s an important part of history for anywhere. It’s part of what we learn,” said one of the students when

asked why American schools should teach about the Holocaust. Another student said, "...because it's a very important, uh, event that happened...."

The second reason given for teaching about the Holocaust was that people "need to know" about the Holocaust. Five of the students used the phrase "need to know" while a sixth said that it was "important to educate people" about the Holocaust. Seven students said that the Holocaust is taught in American schools because students should know about other people's history. As one student observed, "if we were to only learn about things in the US, it would make us very narrow-minded. We don't live on the earth by ourselves; we live with a whole bunch of other people. And, I think it's just as important to know their history and what other people went through than just what we went through and what happened in our country." Two of the students expressed the need for Americans to know about Jewish history. One of the students stated that American students need to know about Jewish history "because there's so many Jews that did come to American for safety, and we need to know their history as well as our own." Another said, "...especially in the United States right now we have a whole lot of Jewish population, and I think it's important that like we all know what all has happened...." Another student said that "because the United States was a part of the war" it was important to study about the Holocaust.

The third reason given for teaching about the Holocaust was that it "teaches us something." Six of the students said that lessons could be learned from studying the Holocaust. One student said that the Holocaust is taught "...so we can learn about how wrong it was...." Five students said that the Holocaust is taught to prevent it from happening again. We learn about the Holocaust to ensure that it "doesn't happen

again,” said one student. “...so history won’t repeat itself,” said another. “...to learn not to make those mistakes that were made earlier,” said a third student.

The final reason given for teaching about the Holocaust was the need to “be prepared.” One student said that students study about the Holocaust because it’s “good to know, in a way, that such horrible things can happen so you’re not just completely taken aback if anything ever does happen.”

When asked specifically why *their* teacher taught *them* about the Holocaust, all of the students interviewed expressed the belief that their teacher, Ms. Gibson, taught them about the Holocaust so they would be knowledgeable about an important event in the world’s history. “It’s, you know, it’s part of history. It’s an important part of history,” said one student. “I think she wants to get us a better understanding of it. I think it’s a worldwide event that everybody should know about,” said another student. “It obviously was extremely significant,” he added. Another student said that Ms. Gibson realized the importance of helping her students “be as well informed about the world we live in as we can possibly be.” “She (Ms. Gibson) knows that it’s important to know about what’s happened in the past and in our world,” said one student. Another student said that Ms. Gibson wanted her students to have “a comprehensive understanding of European history because it (the Holocaust) was such a major event in it, within the Second World War.” “I think she (Ms. Gibson) just wants us to learn to be aware of what happened, and for us to be able to walk out of her class knowing that we got to see how awful it was, and that we’re not lacking information in that area,” one student commented. Two of the students also mentioned that Ms. Gibson taught about the Holocaust because information about it would be on the Advanced Placement Test

that they would have to take to receive college credit for the course. One student said, “Sometimes I think a lot of it in the AP (Advanced Placement) class is geared toward the AP test. And so, I mean at the same time we’re learning about it because it’s important to learn about it, but we’re also learning about it for the test, so we can get college credit, I think.” Three students said that Ms. Gibson taught about the Holocaust because it was part of the curriculum in public and private schools. Four students expressed the belief that Ms. Gibson wanted to teach them about the Holocaust for reasons other than to be informed about a historical event. One student said that Ms. Gibson wanted her students to “understand what other people have been through” and “to know that we’re pretty privileged to live here and not be treated that way.” Another student said, “I think she wants us to be able to appreciate the world we live in and the things we’ve gone through.” Still another student said “I think that she just wants us to learn about the Holocaust, and like just kinda get an idea of what it was like back then and what it was like to be in that situation at that time.” “I think that she wants us to understand how it was started and how other countries had many opportunities to prevent it from happening before it actually took place – and didn’t. And just the mistakes that we made,” said another student. One student stated that Ms. Gibson taught the class about the Holocaust “so we can compare it to today’s society and how we relate to each other and other races. Now and then.” Another student said that “plenty of crazy things” had happened in the past and that “who knows, there might be crazy things going on today, and when people like, let’s say a hundred years from now, they’re probably going to look back on us and they’re going to be like “geez, those guys are just, just crazy” and that’s, I think that’s what we’re learning.” Another student said

that Ms. Gibson taught them about the Holocaust “in order to put it into the minds of young people so nothing like that happens.”

Why the Increased Interest in Society Regarding the Holocaust

When asked why more people are learning about the Holocaust now, as evidenced by the number of museums, books, and movies available, six of the students expressed the belief that as time passes and people are farther from the event, they are more willing to talk about it. For example, one student stated that “they’d really be more sensitive” closer to the time the event occurred and now that time has passed “they can feel more comfortable bringing it up.” Another said, “... now we look at it (the Holocaust) as history. Because the time frame, because, you know, time has developed where we can look at it, look back at it, look back on it.” Three of the eleven students referred to “9/11” and another referred to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq when explaining why more people are learning about the Holocaust today as opposed to perhaps forty years ago. One student stated that “right after it happens people are so frightened and so horrified by what happened that they don’t want to talk about it. But say fifty, ninety years later you can make a movie about Pearl Harbor with all the bombings and the soldiers dying and everything. I mean people right now wouldn’t even be close to attempting any movies about September 11th or planes flying into buildings. I guess it’s just been awhile (the Holocaust) so people have become more open to it. Because it’s not so horrible, like standing right there.” Another offered “I think as time passes, you know, it becomes like an easier subject for people to talk about. Kinda like 9/11 like right now. I mean if somebody tried to make a movie about it, it might be, you know, a little too much because it’s still so, you know, so close to

what happened. But now that time's passed, I think people are a little easier about discussing it (the Holocaust)." Still another student said that since the events of the Holocaust are further away people "feel like it's maybe safer to talk about it. You know, it's not quite as threatening 'cause it's not in your face. And it's not like my generation's lifetime, so it's easy to be interested in it when it didn't directly affect you." One student said that forty years ago the Holocaust was still "a relatively new thing that happened" so people did not see it as history yet. "It's like 9/11, you know. We look at it as an event that struck our country, but we don't look at it as something that we're going to learn about in, you know, in fifteen years from now that, you know, totally changed history and that impacted in such a way. Because we don't think of it as, like that," she said. She expressed the belief that "it takes that long (forty years or more) for you to realize the importance of an event and how it changed a country or the people or the world." Another student said that forty years ago, "since it (the Holocaust) was such a recent event, I don't think that it was like published right away. Like, for example, we had the war in Afghanistan. We had the war in Iraq. And *right now* (his emphasis) you're really not going to find that many books and movies. Like, let's say around 10 or 20 years from now on, they'll come up with a movie like "War on Iraq", you know, or something like that." Two students said that people are more aware of the Holocaust now because more information is available. "Maybe they didn't have an opportunity (to learn about the Holocaust) because there wasn't much information on it," said one student. One student said that more people are learning about the Holocaust today than did forty years ago because "people are wanting to know who they are and where they come from...and I think history is a big part of that (what

shapes people).” She said that people want to learn about the Holocaust because “it could have happened to anybody” and “it’s about common people...so you feel a connection and you want to know more about it.”

Lessons Learned from the Holocaust

When asked if lessons could be learned from studying the Holocaust, all of the students agreed that they could. Their ideas of what lessons could be learned differed. Two students said that studying the Holocaust helps people learn from their mistakes and not make the same mistakes again. Two students believed that moral lessons could be learned from studying the Holocaust. One of those students said that the Holocaust can teach “moral lessons” such as “everyone should treat each other justly despite religion.” The other student said that from the Holocaust “...we can learn about how wrong it was and just learn, try, you know, to learn not to make those mistakes that were made earlier.”

Four students discussed the dangers of dictators and blindly following others. They said that the lessons of the Holocaust included learning “about how people follow others and how people assume roles,” about “the evils of fascism and blind obedience,” “about how people could be brainwashed,” and “what happens when dictators get out of hand.”

Two students believed that lessons about the evils of human nature could be learned from studying the Holocaust. One of these students said that the Holocaust can teach us “how racism exists.” The other student said that from studying the Holocaust we can learn about “the potential for human ignorance, indifference, and cruelty.”

The Use of *Maus* to Teach the Holocaust

Ten of the eleven students interviewed were enrolled in both the Advanced Placement European History class and an Advanced Placement English IV class also taught by Ms. Gibson. In their English class, the students had been given an assignment to read *Maus*, written by Art Spiegelman. Although *Maus* is comprised of two volumes, both the teacher and the students referred to the two books in the singular form, as either “*Maus*” or “the book.” Because they did so, I have also used “*Maus*” or “the book” throughout this paper.

Nine of the eleven students interviewed stated that they had read the assignment. One student confessed to not reading the entire book saying, “Well, to be honest, I mean I started reading it, but since I’m so busy...I just didn’t have the time to finish. So, like, I just skipped through the book.” The eleventh student was not in the Advanced Placement English IV class with Ms. Gibson and the other students; consequently, he was not assigned to read *Maus* and did not do so.

When asked why they had chosen to read the assignment, three students replied that *Maus* was an “easy read,” or “easy to understand,” or “interesting.” One student liked the book “...because it was a comic book. Well, she (the teacher) calls it a graphic novel, but it’s like a comic book, and that’s an interesting, that’s a new way to read a book. I hadn’t read any books like that before.” Another student said of reading *Maus*, “It’s a comic str...well it seems like a comic strip. And, I’m sure there’s a lot of symbolism in it, but it’s a comic strip when you get down to it. ...so it’s easy to read and so it doesn’t take very long to read it. And, so the reason why I read that book was honestly is because it’s short, simple and I knew we’d have a quiz on it.” Three of the

students read the assignment because they thought *Maus* was “interesting.” Said one of the students, “...it was really interesting so I didn’t mind (reading it).” Five of the students read *Maus* because they were interested in learning about the Holocaust. “I guess I just find it interesting (the Holocaust). It’s something that intrigues me,” said one student. One of the students who was interested in learning about the Holocaust said it was because she felt “a strong connection with the Jewish race and culture and the tradition” and that the Holocaust is “a huge (emphasis on huge) part of the Jewish history.” This student’s father is Jewish. One student said that she read the assignment because, when assigned something to read for school, she reads it “to get good grades, so I can pass, to graduate.”

When asked to evaluate *Maus* as a literary representation of the Holocaust, students gave both pros and cons of using the book to teach about the Holocaust. Ten of the eleven students who evaluated *Maus* said that it should be used as a literary representation of the Holocaust because it was a true story containing factual details. The eleventh student had not been assigned to read the book. One student said that the book was “honest and realistic” while another said it was “an accurate portrayal of the Holocaust.” “The book reflects actual history about the Holocaust,” said one student. Another student said that *Maus* was “accurate and very detailed about the Holocaust.” Still another student described *Maus* as a “disturbingly accurate depiction of (the) Holocaust mixed with relieving jumps to the present.” Eight of the students referred to *Maus* as a “comic book.” Four of them said that being a comic book made *Maus* easier to understand. One student said the book showed a “surplus of imagery that made the event more tangible.” “The pictures were descriptive without having to necessarily be

violently graphic,” said one student. “Although it is a ‘comic book,’ its pictures provide more detailed description of what occurred,” said another student. One student said that *Maus* was “more effective than other books in telling the story from a very human perspective and without overwhelming the reader.” He said that the “comic book” style of the book allowed the author to use “facial expressions and physical tension (to) put into pictures emotions which would have been more difficult to put into words.” Another student commented that the writing style in *Maus* “helped the reader with visualizing some of the events that occurred in the Holocaust.”

The students also pointed out disadvantages of using *Maus* as a literary representation of the Holocaust. Six of the students said that the book was “one-sided.” One student said, “*Maus* only tells the story of a few people, and there were millions of others who suffered.” Another commented, “...it was also only from one man’s point of view and it only showed one person’s journey. A lot of people had much different, even more horrible experiences.” She questioned, “What about other persons’ stories who had not been so wealthy?” Another student commented that *Maus* was “biased in its accounts.” Two students were concerned about stereotyping in the book. One student said that *Maus* “might not be a good choice because it furthers some stereotypes of Jews, with Art’s father.” Another student said, “*Maus* shows a stereotypical Jew and may help to pass on stereotypes.” Five of the students thought that the “comic strip” style of the book could be a disadvantage. One student pointed out that “some limitations apply to the literary value of comics.” “It is a ‘comic book’ therefore it lacks the literary merit and prestige found in other Holocaust works,” said another student. One student said, “No great metaphors or literary devices (were) used in the

comic.” Another student said “...it’s a comic strip and therefore might not be taken seriously.”

Why Students Chose to Learn About the Holocaust

When asked why they listened, took notes, and participated in history class, all of the students said they did so because they were “interested.” One student said, “If I’m interested in something I’m willing to put more of an effort into it. Just like if you’re doing anything else. If your heart’s in it, you’re going to give it your best... engaging or really listening and taking in everything comes down to if I’m interested or not....” She concluded, “I still care, but I might not be, depending on the day, I might not be interested enough to engage myself.” Another student stated, “Well, if it’s something that I’m interested in then I would take notes and I would listen. I would usually pay attention but I pay better attention...(if she is interested).” Students’ interest occurred because they liked the topic being studied, liked the way it was being taught, because they perceived their teacher to be interested in the topic or because they could relate to the topic in some way.

All of the students said they listened, took notes, and participated in class because they were interested in the topic being discussed. One student said she listened in class because “when anything has to do with people...I want to know about it.” Another student said that she listened and took notes “regardless of the topic because I’m just interested in learning. I mean, I really like history a lot.” One student said he listened, took notes, and participated, “Because I enjoy the class. And I like, you know, what we’re discussing, what we’re going over.” Another student said, “Like certain topics, I just love.”

Five students said they listened, took notes, and participated in class because they could relate to the topic in some way. One student said, "...I have taken this class to learn something and, plus, I was born in Europe...." One student whose father is Jewish stated, "I feel a strong connection with Judaism. ...I haven't been raised Jewish, but I still feel like that's a big part of me. And I feel a strong connection with the Jewish race and culture and the tradition, and ummm, so that's a huge (she emphasized huge) part of the Jewish history, the Holocaust you know." Another student, who is Muslim, talked about the strong "anti-Jew" feeling at his mosque. He mentioned the "Middle East conflict" as the main reason for the feeling. "Like it wasn't that bad a couple of years ago.... But like right now it's, it seems as though both sides are just like spreading apart each day." That concerned him. He said he had friends who are Jewish and "we get along just fine. But, it's just like the community, like you know, just sorta have this feel of anti-Semitism, you know." He continued, "I mean like recently like after September 11th, I mean we were going through a whole lot of stuff too, so...." His sentence trailed off and he concluded with "yeah."

Eight students said that they chose to listen, take notes, and participate in class because they liked the way the topic was taught. One student said, "I think it all depends on the teacher and the way she teaches." Another student said, "...the way Ms. Gibson teaches sometimes...it'll be more conversation style and she'll sit down to us and just like "this is what happened in history" and if you want to know you're gonna listen...." One student said he listened in class because "I really like, you know, her class, the way she teaches." He continued, "It's more involving, you know, because there's like debates and, you know, a lot of group stuff. There's a lot more interaction

in her class than there is in others.” Of these eight students, seven acknowledged “group discussions” as the way they liked topics to be taught. One student noted that group discussions and debates “makes us more entertained than just when she’s just talking and we’re taking notes.” Another student said, “I love to debate and discuss and argue.” One student said, “Sometimes we get into discussion and debates within our class.” She added that those discussions were “interesting” and even though she did not talk a lot during them, she “was hearing what other people had to say, what they thought about things, and those sort of things always grab my attention.” Another student said that class is interesting “when you get drawn into the topic or the discussion....” “And, I guess things that interest particular students can draw them specifically in and so drawing the whole class in,” he concluded.

Two students said that the teacher’s interest can affect students’ interest in the topic. One student said, “If she or he puts a lot of emotion into it. And like, “this is important, this is exciting. I like this maybe you should too;” it’s a lot easier to pay attention and a lot more fun in class....” Another student said, “And when I really see her (the teacher) get passionate about it, it helps me to learn.”

When asked why they listened, took notes, and participated in class, nine of the eleven students admitted they did so for the grade. “I want to get a better grade on my test, first off,” said one student. Another student said that she listened and took notes to “pass the AP (Advanced Placement) test and get good grades.” “I want to do well on the test,” said a third student. One student said, “Sometimes I think a lot of it in the AP class is geared toward the AP test. And so, I mean at the same time we’re learning about it because it’s important to learn about it, but we’re also learning about it for the

test, so we can get college credit, I think.” Another student said, “And with me, all I care about are my tests. That’s *all* I care about.” Still another student said, “One of the main things is just I want to do well on the test. I want to be prepared.” One student confessed, “I’d like to say that 150 percent of it is I’m interested and that motivates me to learn. But that’s not always true. It depends on the day, you know? If I’m really tired I take notes because I need a grade.” She admitted that there “probably is something wrong with the fact that even a small percent of the time I’m taking it for the grade.” When asked why, she answered, “Because I’d like to think that I believe my incentive to learn is not about the grade.” She concluded that learning for the grade “sucks, but it happens. It’s like the pressure to get into college, do well, all that stuff.” All of the students interviewed expected to take the Advanced Placement European History Test and all had plans to attend a college or university after graduation from high school.

Influences on Students’ Choice to Learn

One influence on students’ choice to learn about the Holocaust is their desire to please their parents. Six of the students said that their choice to learn about the Holocaust was, in some cases, the choice of their parents or family members. One of the students had visited two Holocaust museums. When talking about the experience, she stated that “the museums weren’t really my choice, well, I mean, I guess they were in a sense.” She went on to say that her parents both like history. “My dad loves history, and so he’s always been a big fan that wherever we go, my mom too, we do stuff like that,” she said. Another student said that she’d watched *Schindler’s List* because “my mom thought it would be a good thing for me to watch. She wanted me to

know that things had happened in the past; and that no matter, it doesn't matter what a person looks like, you ought to be compassionate towards them. And she thought that would help with that." A student whose father is Jewish has talked with her parents about family history and the Holocaust. She said that her great-grandmother escaped from Poland during World War II. She concluded, "Interestingly enough, my mom's talked to me more about it than my father. And my mom's not Jewish. She's sorta fostered my learning about it." One student had talked with his father and sister about the Holocaust, while another student had learned about the Holocaust from reading a poem her sister had written.

Friends also influenced students' choice to learn about the Holocaust. One student said that the first time she chose to learn about the Holocaust was to maintain her popularity with her friends. All of her friends were going to watch a movie about the Holocaust. "I had to watch that movie otherwise I would be the only one in my group of friends that did not," she said. Two students mentioned learning about the Holocaust because they had friends who were Jewish.

Teachers also influenced students' choice to learn about the Holocaust. Three of the students talked about a Holocaust convention they had volunteered to attend with Ms. Gibson. One student talked about his German teacher, who told stories about the Holocaust in class. Another student said she had seen *The Pianist* in her piano class.

Two students chose to learn about the Holocaust because they perceived it as an important event in history and wanted to be knowledgeable about history's important events. One student said, "It's, you know, one of the biggest events in our history and I kinda like to know how it happened and all of it." Another student said, "...I don't

want to not be knowledgeable about it (the Holocaust) because it is a very important event. And just when you get into an everyday discussion with someone not even involved with school or anything, outside of school, you know, these things come up sometimes and it's good to know about everything that happened.”

Six of the students chose to learn about the Holocaust because they wanted to understand why it happened. “It was such a disturbing event that, you know, I want to know something about it,” said one student. Another student said, “I just wanted to learn about it and what all happened. ...I didn't realize all the different stuff...” Another student said, “No one really understands why no one stopped it.” She chose to pay attention in class because by learning about it “maybe we can make some reasoning out of it.” One student said she was interested “when anything has to do with people.” “I just don't understand why people are the way they are sometimes in their thinking,” she said. Another student commented, “I'm the sort of person who will get something like an event, like that (the Holocaust), and be like, ‘How did it happen?’ ...I'm sort like ‘Why? Why?’ you know, ‘How?’” She concluded, “And why I would learn is because I'm just, I need to answer those questions for myself.”

Two students chose to learn about the Holocaust because they thought that lessons could be learned from studying it. One student said, “It was a huge mistake that I think we shouldn't let happen to us again. And if you understand how it did happen, how no one tried to stop it like from happening or how we were too late in stopping it, um, you can learn from your mistakes.” Another student recognized that, by exposing her to Holocaust education, her mother was trying to teach her lessons. “She wanted

me to know that things had happened in the past; and that no matter, it doesn't matter what a person looks like, you ought to be compassionate towards them.”

Empathy

Although they did not use the word specifically, six students described how learning about the Holocaust aided in the development of empathy. One student said that learning about the Holocaust helped students “understand what other people have been through. And to know that we're pretty privileged to live here and not be treated that way.” Another student said that it was “important to know their history and what other people went through.” One student said that when students study about the Holocaust, they “kinda get an idea of what it was like back then and what it was like to be in that situation at that time.” Another student said students learn about the Holocaust “to understand how it was started and how other countries had many opportunities to prevent it from happening before it actually took place, and didn't.” One student said, “I think with genocide, especially World War II and Hitler and all that stuff, it's all about what these people in their minds really believed. And that's what fueled them to do what they did or whatever.”

The Structure of an Interesting Class Period

When asked to reflect upon what makes a class period a “wow, the bell's already rung!” kind of day, seven of the eleven students interviewed said class discussions made the period go by quickly. They indicated a need to be actively involved in their learning. For these students being actively involved in their learning meant discussions and debates, interactions with the teacher and with each other. They expressed a need for what one student termed “interactive stuff.” “It's when you get

drawn into the topic or the discussion” was one student’s description of what makes a class period fly by. Another student said a class period went by quickly “when we’re all sitting there and we’re having a really good group discussion, everyone’s in on it.” Another student said that time went by quickly when “we get into discussions and debates within our class.” One student explained, “A lot of times we’ll have group discussions or we’ll have debates or we’ll have teams and we’ll answer questions. And things like that make the class go by.” Another student said that the class period went by quickly, “...If I’m putting points out there and people are kinda arguing with me and go back and forth and discussing like that.”

The students also mentioned that the topic of the lesson could make a difference as to whether a class period flew by or not. All of the students said that an “interesting topic” made a class period go by more quickly. One student said that class time went by quickly “when we’re talking about an interesting topic.” Another student said time went quickly when the class was “discussing very interesting stuff.” “Certain topics, I just love,” said one student. Another student said that class went by quickly “if it’s interesting and if I’m engaged...” Another student described a class period that flew by as one “when we’re talking about an interesting topic.” One student said, “Also, some days when she’s lecturing, I’m just really interested in what she’s doing.” Another student said that a class period went by quickly because “of the interesting things that you hear.” He continued, saying that a class period went by quickly “if you haven’t heard something or just get into it so deep that you lose track of time.”

The teacher’s enthusiasm for the topic was another factor that three of the eleven students interviewed said made the period go by quickly. One student said, “It also

helps when I feel like she (the teacher) knows a whole lot about what she's talking about and then she's real interested." Another student said the period goes by quickly "if she or he (the teacher) puts a lot of emotion into it (the topic). And like this is important, this is exciting. I like this, maybe you should too." "It's a lot easier to pay attention and a lot more fun in class..." he concluded. Another student agreed saying, "If a teacher is interested and excited by a subject, students become more interested."

Methods for Teaching About the Holocaust

When asked what they thought would be the best way to teach about the Holocaust, ten of the eleven students interviewed said that using visual aids would be the best way to teach about it. Visual aids included videos, films, and photographs. Artifacts from museums were also considered visual aids by two of the students. One student said, "I would use a lot of visual aids because it makes it more real using the visual aids as to just the words." Another student said, "I'm a visual person so I need visual things and that helps me." One student said that the best way to teach about the Holocaust "would probably be the most graphic way so people would get, you know, a better understanding of what really happened." One student, who had watched *Schindler's List*, praised the use of films saying, "I learned more from, from that movie than I did from the history books and everything else. Like once I saw the movie like I was so interested like I thought I should go online and do a little bit of research. And that's what really got me into it." Another student said that movies had also been "helpful in making the event a reality." One student suggested using videos and museums "anything that can put it in real form, because until you see something that puts it at that perspective, it's like its fantasy. It doesn't really exist."

Six students suggested using books written by survivors to teach about the Holocaust. Said one student "...things like that help you learn better than just reading out of the textbook. Because it's more personal." Another student said, "Books have been really helpful for me (in learning about the Holocaust). I was really interested in reading stuff that I could relate to." One student said that the best way to learn about the Holocaust was "to watch movies and/or read books like Maus...because you can see it and/or feel it." One student, however, disagreed that reading about the Holocaust was a good way to learn about it, saying, "Reading it out of a book isn't quite as convincing because it's less visual.... If they (a survivor) wrote the book, it does give it a, a kind of plausibility, reality. But, but it's still a book. It's still like the things that happened can sometimes seem so horrible that they could be unreal."

Five students suggested "first-hand accounts" would be the best way to teach about the Holocaust. First-hand accounts included both books written by survivors and survivor testimony. One student said that first-hand accounts would "show that the people are real and their sufferings and tragedies were real." Another student said, "I've always learned better when I know personal accounts of something...."

Three students said that discussion was a good way to learn about the Holocaust. Said one student, "But discussion, I think, is very important. And just, people are going to have lots of questions, and just being able to converse back and forth about certain issues or whatever (is important)." Another student said, "They (discussions) help a lot because you can read something in a book and you're just totally confused...so if you have discussions within your classroom, it's easier for you to understand what actually happened."

Locations of Knowledge About the Holocaust

When asked to name the most effective ways to learn about the Holocaust, ten of the eleven students interviewed said that watching movies/documentaries/videos and reading “first-hand accounts” were the most effective ways to learn about the Holocaust. (Students were allowed to define ‘effective’ in whatever way they chose.) One student explained her choice by saying “...sometimes those (movies and books) are the only effective ways of really learning about an event like that because you can see it and/or feel it.” Another student said of reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, “I felt a connection with Anne and was devastated by the fact that she had been murdered. From that point on, the Holocaust became my favorite subject to discuss.” One student said of watching a movie about the Holocaust on television, “...that movie just grabbed my attention and truly shocked me. Before watching it, I had never been more shocked in my entire life.” Another student said, “I watched some videos of Holocaust victims and the camps.... These visuals had about the greatest impact on me. They were grotesque and shocking and they have stuck with me.” Another student preferred books and movies to discussions about the Holocaust because “if the details start to bother me too much, I just close my book/turn off the movie; but you can’t just ask a group of people to stop discussing something as dramatic and horrifying as the Holocaust and expect them to hush.” Three students said videos combined with discussions were an effective way to learn about the Holocaust.

The students all agreed that survivor testimony is very effective in teaching about the Holocaust. One student said that survivor testimony “brings the reality of the Holocaust to life.” Another said, “It helps students become closer to the subject by

showing that it affected real people.” “Personal accounts will always be more impactful than the accounts of outsiders,” said another student. One student said of his experience with survivor testimony, “The Holocaust was real. It had been out there. It had touched these tangible people – even one right in front of me.” Another student spoke of attending a Holocaust Convention and listening to POWs recount their experiences, saying “It was so exciting and sad and emotional at the same time...” “I realized how dramatic an experience it had been, especially for Jewish POWs, and I even roughly outlined characters and events in a book I wanted to write,” he said. One student said “Growing up Jewish, hands down” was the most effective way to learn about the Holocaust. “I don’t think I would be nearly as passionate about the Holocaust had it not directly affected my relatives,” she said.

Summary

As one problem for social studies education is engaging students in social studies content in a way such that they choose to learn more, the purpose of this research study was to examine the factors that influence students’ choices to learn more about the Holocaust with a view to applying the findings to other social studies topics. The findings of this study address the question, “What factors influence students’ choices to learn more about the Holocaust?” and more broadly, “What factors influence students’ choices to learn more about history topics?” Students’ interest in the topic and in how the topic is presented, the desire for good grades, outside influences such as parents and friends, and societal obligations such as knowledge of the world’s history, empathy and prevention of future occurrences of genocide appear to be key factors in

students' choices to learn more. I will discuss these findings at greater length in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The guiding question of this dissertation study is “What factors influence students’ choices to learn more about the Holocaust?” This question resulted from research studies which indicate that students do not choose to learn more about social studies, but do choose to learn more about the Holocaust (Libowitz, 1993; Hootstein, 1995; Hope, 1996; White, 1997). The challenge for social studies education researchers is to identify factors that will encourage students to learn more about social studies.

In an effort to more clearly present the finding of this study, throughout my discussion of the findings I have included, in parentheses, numbers that correspond to a model which lists the grounded hypotheses related to Holocaust education in this study (see Appendix C). The presage/input factors in this model begin with the letter A, the process/classroom factors with the letter B, and the product/outcome factors with the letter C. Each factor within the group is then assigned a number. Presage factors range from A-1 through A-13, process factors from B-1 through B-7, and product factors range from C-1 through C-9. As an example, when referring to the relationship between “teacher’s pedagogy” and “length of time spent on study of the Holocaust” in my discussion of the findings, I include the following information relating to the model of grounded hypotheses related to Holocaust education in Appendix C: “(A-3, B-5)”. In the model, A-3 refers to the teacher’s pedagogy and B-5 refers to the length of time spent on study of the Holocaust in this history classroom.

The Participants

This dissertation study was conducted in an Advanced Placement European History class which was part of a large metropolitan high school located in an affluent area of a large city in the southeastern United States. School information characterized the social and economic make up of the school as suburban and high income. The student body was diverse and included a large immigrant population as well as diverse religious affiliations. The Advanced Placement European History class included a unit on the Holocaust and genocide as part of the curriculum. Generally, the study of the Holocaust and other genocides occupied about a week of the school year; however, since the students were reading about the Holocaust in their Advanced Placement English IV class, also taught by their history teacher, the study of the Holocaust in the history class occupied much less time that it had in previous years.

The Advanced Placement History class consisted of twelve twelfth-grade students, ages 17-18. Five of the students were female and seven were male. Nine of the students were of European descent; two of whom had immigrated to the United States as children from Eastern Europe. Two of the students identified themselves as Asian. One had immigrated to the United States from Saudi Arabia, the other's parents from Afghanistan. One student was African-American. Christianity was the majority religion in the class. Nine students were Christian and two were Muslim. One student was the child of a Christian mother and a Jewish father. This student was conflicted about naming her religious preference. Her belief in Jesus indicated a strong Christian influence, although she said she identified closely with her Jewish heritage. The students all had plans to attend a college or university after graduation. All of the

students in the class chose to participate in the study; however, one student, an African-American male, declined to participate in the interview portion.

The teacher in the Advanced Placement European History classroom, whom I referred to as Ms. Gibson, was very interested in Holocaust education. Ms. Gibson had attended workshops and conferences on the subject, and was a member of the committee that wrote a Holocaust curriculum for use in secondary schools. Ms. Gibson, who holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, employed a literature-based approach to teach about the Holocaust in her history classes. During the school year in which the study was conducted, Ms. Gibson taught two classes of Advanced Placement English IV. Eleven of the twelve students in the Advanced European History class were taking Advanced Placement English IV with Ms. Gibson. The student who was not in the English class had transferred to the school at the beginning of the second semester.

Students' Perceptions of Holocaust Education

All of the students in the study had a basic understanding of what the Holocaust was as evidenced by their answers to the question, "What was the Holocaust?" All of their answers included the knowledge that the Holocaust involved Hitler killing the Jews and that it occurred during World War II (A-8). They all agreed that the Holocaust was an important topic of study and should be taught in American schools.

The main reasons given for why it should be taught concerned the Holocaust's importance as a historical event and the importance of learning about other people's history. Influenced by findings in my pilot study, I had anticipated a unanimous response of "so it won't happen again." Only one-fourth of the students gave the 'never again' response to the question. While they all agreed that lessons could be learned

from the Holocaust, there was no consensus, or even majority opinion, of what those lessons actually were.

Two students said that studying about the Holocaust allowed people to learn from their mistakes, while two others said that the studying the Holocaust taught “moral lessons.” The danger of dictators and blind obedience to them was the lesson the largest number of students said could be learned from the Holocaust. Four students responded with that answer, while two students said that the Holocaust showed the evils of human nature and the potential for human cruelty.

The students in this study appeared to focus more on the causes of the Holocaust, the dangers of dictators and the evil of human nature, than on the idea of ensuring a holocaust never happens again. They did not show evidence of the “commitment to a better world” attitude that I had anticipated. They appeared to accept that evil and horror exist and did not see themselves as instigators of change to correct the situation. Instead, the majority of the students appeared to view the Holocaust as another important history topic. Further research would be necessary to discern whether this view could have been influenced by students’ limited exposure to the Holocaust during this particular history class, by students’ ethnic and religious backgrounds, or by students’ experiences connected with the events of September 11, 2001.

Personal Desire to Learn About the Holocaust

One-fourth of the students interviewed expressed a personal desire to learn about the Holocaust (A-10). I termed students’ desire to learn about the Holocaust

“personal” if it extended beyond those experiences initiated by their history class assignments.

One student, with the encouragement of her mother, had initiated much of the learning she had done on the Holocaust. This student had done the most reading about the Holocaust and was the only student interviewed who talked passionately about the Holocaust. This student’s father is Jewish; and, although she was not raised Jewish, the student expressed strong ties to her Jewish background. Her Jewish background appeared to be the major factor in her interest in learning about the Holocaust.

Another student also expressed interest in learning about the Holocaust. Her interview responses indicated a degree of empathy associated with the young, female Holocaust victims about whom she had read. This student had visited Holocaust museums with her parents. She was the only student to do so. This student expressed an interest in learning about “anything (that) has to do with people” or “what people have to overcome or go through.” She planned a career as a missionary medical doctor. Her interest in people appeared to be the major factor in her choice to learn more about the Holocaust, beyond classroom assignments.

A third student, who had attended a conference on the Holocaust with his teacher, expressed a personal interest in the Holocaust period. He had listened to Jewish-American prisoners of war talk about their experiences and was inspired to begin outlining the plot for a book. This student had also heard a Holocaust survivor talk about her experiences in Auschwitz.

The other students, while appalled at the events of the Holocaust and adamant about the need for Holocaust education in American schools, did not express a personal

desire to learn more about it. This lack of personal desire to learn more could be the result of their lack of exposure to the Holocaust. Although all of these students said that they had learned about the Holocaust in previous classroom experiences, none of the students had visited a Holocaust museum and only one had heard a survivor speak. Compared to previous years, little time had been spent talking about the Holocaust in their Advanced Placement European History class. Listening to Holocaust survivors speak and visiting Holocaust museums appeared to aid in the development of empathy in the students and influence their personal desire to learn more about the Holocaust. The relationship between students' personal experience with Holocaust education and their personal desire to learn more about the Holocaust is an area that requires further study.

Students' Experiences of Holocaust Education

As mentioned previously, students in this study agreed that the Holocaust was an important event in the world's history and should be taught in American schools. They had all learned about the Holocaust in school, prior to taking the Advanced Placement European History class (A-8). Some of the students mentioned having learned about the Holocaust in elementary or middle school. Most of them said they had learned about the Holocaust during American History class their junior year.

All of the students had read books about the Holocaust. Some had seen movies or documentaries. A few students had visited Holocaust museums and exhibits, or heard Holocaust survivors speak of their experiences. Most of the students studied about the Holocaust because it was part of their school curriculum. A few of the

students also learned about the Holocaust outside the classroom setting. This learning was initiated either by the students or their parents.

When asked about strategies for teaching the Holocaust, student said that visual aids, such as videos, films, and photographs, were an effective way to teach about the Holocaust. Books written by survivors and survivor testimony were also considered effective. Students said that learning about the Holocaust from survivors, either in books or in testimony, made the Holocaust “real” for them.

Factors That Influence Choice

“What factors influence students’ choices to learn about the Holocaust?” was the question driving this research study. From the data, four themes emerged as factors that influenced students’ choice to learn. The first theme was “interest.” Students said they chose to learn because they were “interested” (A-10). Their choices were influenced by their interest in the topic, by the topic’s perceived relevance to their lives, by their interest in the presentation of the topic, and by their perception of teacher interest in the topic. The second theme was “good grades.” Students said they chose to learn because they wanted “good grades” (A-11). To these students, good grades meant passing the tests and the class. The third theme was “perceived expectations of others.” Students chose to learn because of perceived expectations of others, including their parents, friends, and teachers (A-13). The fourth theme was “obligation to society.” Students chose to learn about the Holocaust because of what they appeared to perceive as an obligation to society (A-12). As members of society, they accepted responsibility for learning about the history of their country, which they referred to as “our history,” as well as the history of “other people.”

Interest

The most significant factor in students' choices to learn was what students referred to as "interest" (A-10). According to Alexander, Murphy, Woods, and Parker (1997), "interest signifies the processes by which the underlying needs or desires of learners are energized" (p. 128). There are two types of interest, individual and situational (Hidi 1990). Alexander, et. al. (1997), summarizing the works of Hidi (1990) and Schiefele (1991), stated that individual interest is "a more long-term or deep-seated investment in a pursuit," while situational interest represents "more temporary arousal or attention often triggered by conditions within the immediate context" (p. 128). Further study would be needed to determine the type of interest demonstrated by the students in this study. To these students, interest appeared to simply mean they "liked" the topic being studied. A topic which interested students appeared to hold their attention. If students were interested, they actively engaged in the lessons. Students demonstrated their interest by listening, taking notes, or participating in the class discussion.

The students' interest can be divided into four categories. The first category is student interest in the topic. Students were willing to listen, take notes, and participate in class discussions if they were interested in the topic being studied. Topics of interest varied among the students. While all demonstrated interest in the Holocaust and genocide, other topics of interest included World War II, World War I, the Communist revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and, for one student, any situation that affected people on a personal level. Students were interested in the Holocaust as observers to the story. They were drawn to the topic by the details they heard and the images they saw.

The second category of interest is student interest in topics to which they could relate. Students were interested if they considered the topic relevant, in some way, to their lives. Some students related to characters in Holocaust literature they had read because the characters were the same age and sex as the students. This, in particular, happened with the girls who read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Because Anne was a girl their age, they felt a connection with her. Students considered the material relevant if the person in the story was someone they perceived as “real,” if the person in the story made the students believe that the events in the person’s life actually happened. Students were interested in the topic if they had a personal interest in the topic. If their own history or their family’s history was connected to the topic, students were interested in it. A student whose father is Jewish said she was interested in the Holocaust because the event was part of her family’s history. Another student was interested in European history in general because he had been born in Europe. Still another student was interested in political history. He was interested in World War II because the men in his family had fought in America’s wars beginning, he said, with the American Civil War. Students were also interested in the topic if they could relate to the situation. A male student, who is Muslim, spoke of the growing anti-Semitism in his mosque and of the unwanted, negative attention his religious group has experienced following the events of 9/11. Other students referred to 9/11 when explaining why there is more information available today about the Holocaust and why more people are choosing to learn about it. Their perception is that people were not ready to talk about the events of the Holocaust for years after it occurred, just as people today are not ready

to see movies about 9/11. Students' ability to relate to the topic influenced their interest in it.

The third category of interest is students' interest in the presentation of the lesson. Students were willing to actively engage in the lesson if they were interested in the way the lesson material was presented by the teacher, if they liked the teacher's style of teaching. The students said they preferred active learning – discussions, debates, and conversations with the teacher and each other. They demonstrated their preference in class by actively engaging in the lesson when opportunities for discussion and conversations with the teacher and each other were available. Students asked questions, responded to questions, and offered comments during the discussions. One student, who confessed to being “shy,” said she preferred the discussions and conversations even though she rarely chose to offer her opinions in class. She demonstrated her interest during class discussions by displaying body language that signaled active listening. Students also said that lessons were interesting if the lessons included the viewing of video materials, such as a film clip of Hitler's propaganda.

The fourth category of interest is perceived teacher interest in the topic. Students' interest in a topic was influenced by their perception of the teacher's attitude toward the material being presented. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, or lack of enthusiasm, influenced the students' interest in the material. If they perceived the teacher as being interested in the material, they were willing to actively engage in learning. The importance the teacher placed on the material also influenced the students' interest in the material. If they perceived that the teacher saw the event as important in history, they were interested in learning about it.

Grades

A second factor that influenced students' choices to learn about the Holocaust was grades (A-11). Students chose to listen, take notes, and participate in class discussions because they wanted to "pass the AP Test," "pass the class," and "get into college." They appeared to view grades as a way to accomplish these goals and actively participating in class as a way to get the grades. Most of the students admitted that they were listening and taking notes for the grade. Taking notes appeared to be connected solely with the desire to get a good grade. Listening was associated with both the desire for a good grade and with interest in the topic. Answering questions asked directly of them by the teacher during class discussions was not a clear indication of students' interest, nor were questions of clarification asked by the students during the lesson. Participating in class discussions by answering questions posed by the teacher appeared to be associated with both the desire for a good grade and interest in the topic. The 'what did you say' type of clarification questions appeared to be asked in the pursuit of a good grade. Initiating participation in class discussions with comments or questions appeared to be a sign of students' interest rather than an indication of desire to get a good grade. Questions and comments offered to further discussion on the topic also appeared to be an indication of interest in the topic rather than the pursuit of a grade.

Perceived Expectations of Others

Perceived expectations placed upon the students by others was the third factor that influenced students' choices to learn about the Holocaust (A-13). 'Others' included students' parents, friends and teachers. Students' choices were influenced by others' choices or by the students' desire to please others. Students, in some cases, learned

about the Holocaust because of their parents' choices. Some of the students said they learned about the Holocaust because their parents talked with them about it, watched Holocaust content films with them, or visited Holocaust museums with them. One student talked about visiting the library with her mother to choose Holocaust content books to read. Another student talked about watching *Schindler's List* with her mother because her mother thought it would teach the student a lesson in values.

Desire to be accepted by their friends was a factor in students' choices to learn about the Holocaust. One student talked about watching a film about the Holocaust because she didn't want to be the only one in her group of friends who had not seen it. Other students spoke of wanting to be knowledgeable enough about the Holocaust to discuss it with friends and other people outside of the classroom. Christian and Muslim students said they had talked with Jewish friends about the Holocaust.

Teacher influence was a factor in students' choices to learn about the Holocaust. One student talked about a school sponsored trip to visit a Holocaust museum, while another recalled a school trip to a Holocaust monument. Three students chose to attend a Holocaust conference with their Advanced Placement European History teacher.

Obligation to Society

A fourth factor which influenced students' choices to learn about the Holocaust was what they perceived as their obligation to society (A-12). Students viewed the Holocaust as an important event in the world's history about which everyone should have knowledge. They wanted to be able to talk with others about important events in history. Students expressed the view that it was important to understand not only their

own history but also the history of others. Half of the students said they wanted to understand why or how the Holocaust happened.

Students described how learning about the Holocaust aided in the development of empathy. They talked of understanding what other people had experienced and of understanding “what it was like back then.” One student spoke of studying about the Holocaust in an attempt to understand what people believed and what led them to behave as they did during that time.

Students said that people should study about the Holocaust so that they can prevent something like it from happening again. Although the idea of a commitment to a better world was not a common theme among the students, some of the students did express the belief that the Holocaust should be studied in an effort to prevent something like it from happening again.

A few of the students offered the opinion that learning about the Holocaust could prepare them in case something like it happened again. The idea that something like the Holocaust could happen again and affect them appeared for the first time in responses from students who talked about the Holocaust after the events of September 11, 2001. In my pilot study conducted prior to 9/11, although students said that the Holocaust should be studied so that it could be prevented from happening again and although they acknowledged that genocides had occurred since the Holocaust, none of the students indicated that something like the Holocaust could directly affect them. Post 9/11 study students did not appear as confident that their lives could not, or would not, be affected by a horrific event.

The majority of students appeared to view learning about the Holocaust as an obligation to learn about a historical event rather than as an obligation to learn about an event in order to prevent the event from happening again. Although half of the students said they wanted to study the Holocaust in an effort to understand why or how it happened, far fewer said the Holocaust should be studied in an effort to prevent it from happening again.

Grounded Hypothesis Related to Holocaust Education

Findings from this study suggest grounded hypotheses related to Holocaust education that include presage, process, and product factors. Based on Duncan and Biddle's (1974) review of research on the study of teaching, a model was developed that categorizes and summarizes the different factors associated with the findings of this study (see Appendix C). The model is divided into three sections: presage/input factors, process/classroom factors, and product/outcome factors. The presage/input factors are those factors that were brought into the classroom by the teacher and the students, which was the focus of this Holocaust education study. The presage factors brought into the classroom by the teacher included her ethnic background (A-4), her religious beliefs (A-5), her interest in and knowledge of the Holocaust (A-1, A-2), and her pedagogical practices (A-3). Ms. Gibson is European-American and Christian. She is interested in and knowledgeable about the Holocaust. She has attended conferences and presentations about the Holocaust and has written and presented on the topics of the Holocaust and genocide. With her Advanced Placement European History class, Ms. Gibson favored a relaxed, conversational style of lecture and discussion.

Presage factors contributed to the classroom by the students included their ethnic backgrounds (A-6) and their religious beliefs (A-7). The students brought a variety of ethnic backgrounds to the class. Some students were European/American; two students had been born in Europe. One student was Persian/American, while another was born in Saudi Arabia. Most of the students were Christian; however, two students were Muslim and another was strongly influenced by her Jewish father. Presage factors also included students' family values related to social justice and the importance of good grades (A-11, A-12). All students appeared to share the belief that good grades were important. Students brought a variety of educational experiences to the classroom (A-8). Some had read books by or about Holocaust victims and survivors. Some had seen videos or films, visited museums and monuments, or attended conferences about the Holocaust. Some students had heard Holocaust survivors talk about their experiences, had talked with their parents, siblings and friends about the Holocaust, or studied about the Holocaust in school. All except one of the Advanced Placement European History students had read *Maus* in the Advanced Placement English IV class that they were taking concurrently with their history class. Students also brought preferred learning styles (A-9) and varied levels of interest in the topic (A-10) to the classroom. Students said they liked class discussions and videos as learning tools and expressed an interest in studying the Holocaust.

Process/classroom factors are those events which occur in the classroom. Process factors in the Advanced Placement European History classroom included discussion of the Holocaust and genocide as part of the unit on World War II (B-1), the reading of *Maus* (B-2), and the use of discussion and “active” learning (B-4) as part of

the instructional strategies used in the classroom. The relatively short length of time spent on the study of the Holocaust (B-5), the small class size (B-7), and the connection to grades and passing the Advanced Placement Test (B-6) were also process factors. Less attention was focused on the study of the Holocaust in the Advanced European History class during the school year in which the study took place than had been in previous years. Because of the teacher's interest in the Holocaust, her history classes usually read *Maus* and spent a week discussing the Holocaust and other genocides. This year, students read *Maus* in their Advanced Placement English class rather than in their history class. The Advanced Placement European History class was smaller than the average history class in the high school where the study was conducted. Usual class size was approximately thirty students. This European History class contained twelve students, one of whom had joined the class after the semester break. Another process factor was a connection to grades. The students expressed concern about their grades and passing the Advanced Placement Test so they could get college credit for the course.

The product/outcome factors in this model of grounded hypotheses related to Holocaust Education included cognitive factors, affective factors, and student choice to learn more about the Holocaust. The cognitive factors included knowledge acquisition about the Holocaust (C-1), about World War II history, and about history in general (C-2). Acquisition of knowledge about the Holocaust through Holocaust literature (C-3) and the application of knowledge to new situations (C-4) were also cognitive factors. All of the students had read Holocaust literature. Students applied knowledge learned from studying the Holocaust to events of September 11, 2001. Affective factors such as

emotions (C-5), values (C-6), morals and citizenship (C-7) were product factors in this study. Some of the students developed empathy or identified lessons that could be learned from studying the Holocaust. Students also said that the prejudice which led to the Holocaust was wrong. Some said that prejudice in general is wrong. A final product resulting from the presage and process factors was students' choice to learn more about the Holocaust (C-8) and history in general (C-9). All of the students said they chose to learn more because they were interested in the topic.

Examination of the factors in the model suggests that relationships exist among the factors. The decision to spend less class time than usual studying the Holocaust in the Advanced Placement European History class was influenced by the fact that the history students were part of larger Advanced Placement English IV classes that Ms. Gibson also taught and by her knowledge that the students had previously studied about the Holocaust in other classes (A-3, B-5). Ms. Gibson's views on effective pedagogy for history classes influenced her decision to use instructional strategies consisting of discussion and active learning in the classroom (A-3, B-4). It was less clear to what extent students' preferred learning styles influenced the use of discussion and active learning in the classroom (A-9, B-4). The small size of the class influenced Ms. Gibson's decision to sit in a student desk facing the students and talk with them in a more casual atmosphere than she does in her larger classes (A-3, B-7). The connection to grades and passing the Advanced Placement Test was influenced by the teacher, the students, and the emphasis families placed on the importance of grades and passing tests (A-3, A-11, B-6). The relationship between teacher interest in the Holocaust and demonstrated teacher interest in the topic in the classroom was less clear (A-1, B-3).

Although the teacher has a high interest in the Holocaust, less time was spent on study of the Holocaust in the European History class than in previous years. The decision to spend less time studying the Holocaust in history class was a result of the decision to study the Holocaust with a larger number of students in the English IV classes.

Knowledge acquisition was influenced by several factors. One such factor was the value the student's family placed on grades (A-11, C-1). If students' parents stressed the importance of good grades, students chose to acquire knowledge in an attempt to get good grades and to pass the Advanced Placement Test. Students were also influenced to pass the Advanced Placement Test as a result of the emphasis placed on the test in the history classroom. Knowledge acquisition was also influenced by students' interest in the Holocaust, in World War II, or in history in general (A-10, C-1, C-2). Students acknowledged that they were more willing to learn if they were interested in the topic. Literary understanding of the Holocaust through the use of literature written by and about Holocaust victims influenced students' acquisition of knowledge (B-2, C-1, C-2, C-3). Students recommended the use of literature to teach about the Holocaust. Students' knowledge acquisition was influenced by their ability to view the knowledge as applicable to new situations (C-1, C-2, C-4). In particular, some students made connections between study of the Holocaust and events of September 11, 2001. The acquisition of knowledge was also influenced by the use of discussion and active learning (B-4, C-1, C-2); however, since students admitted to taking notes to get a good grade, family values related to grades appeared to have a greater influence on knowledge acquisition than did the use of discussion and active learning and students' preferred learning styles (A-9, A-11, B-4.)

Students' choices to learn more about the Holocaust were influenced by their interest in the topic, their desire for good grades and to pass the Advanced Placement Test, by their parents' choices, and by their perceived obligations to society (A-10, A-11, A-13, C-8). The model of grounded hypotheses related to Holocaust education strongly suggests a relationship between students' choices to learn and other factors in the model. Family values related to social justice and to grades, previous interest and background in the Holocaust, teacher interest in the topic, and the students' ethnic and religious backgrounds are presage factors that appeared to directly influence students' choices to learn more about the Holocaust (A-1, A-6, A-7, A-8, A-10, A-11, A-12).

The use of discussion and active learning in the classroom influenced students' levels of interest in history topics (A-10, B-4). Class size influenced some students' desire to participate in class discussion (A-9, B-7). Those students preferred to take part in discussions because the class was small and they felt more comfortable speaking in front of a smaller number of their peers. To other students, class size appeared to have no influence on their desire to participate, but may have had an impact on their opportunities to participate.

There is also evidence of relationships between students' choices to learn more about the Holocaust and the affective factors that were products of teaching about the Holocaust. Students' choice to learn more because of their perceived obligations to society may result from the development of empathy, from their belief that lessons can be learned from the Holocaust, that another Holocaust should be prevented, and that prejudice, based on race or religious beliefs, is morally wrong (A-12, C-5, C-6, C-7).

A number of apparent relationships between and among presage, process, and product factors have emerged from examination of the data in this study. Further study is needed to determine the extent of the relationships between factors and the influence factors exert upon each other.

Implications for Social Studies Classrooms

Conclusions in this dissertation study suggest that students' choice to learn about the Holocaust have implications for social studies classrooms. In high school history classrooms, the study of the Holocaust is located within the context of World War II. Students in this study learned about the Holocaust along with Hitler, the rise of Nazism, World War II, and genocides in Armenia and Rwanda. Although a seemingly popular topic with students, a limited amount of time and a full history curriculum limit the study of the Holocaust in history classrooms to a few days in some cases and much less time in others.

Previous Holocaust education studies noted the impact of individual teachers on Holocaust Education. Studies show that teachers' views on teaching the Holocaust determine how or even if the Holocaust is taught (Short, 2000; Wegner, 1998). This dissertation study supports the conclusions of previous studies on the influence of the teacher in studying the Holocaust. For example, students in this study spent less time learning about the Holocaust than had students in previous Advanced Placement European History classes that their teacher had taught. Evidence of the teacher's interest in the Holocaust could be seen in her decision to teach about the Holocaust in Advanced Placement English IV, a class with over twice as many students in it as the history class. The teacher's interest in and knowledge of the Holocaust as well as her

pedagogy appeared to influence students' choice to learn more about the topic. Students indicated that they chose to learn more about history when the teacher demonstrated an interest in and appeared knowledgeable about the topic. Even if students were not interested in the topic initially, teacher interest and an interesting presentation could stimulate their interest, they claimed.

Previous studies suggested that students' attitudes toward social studies could be improved if social studies teachers used a greater variety and more active approaches in teaching social studies (Fines, 1987, Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984). Findings in this study would support the previous conclusions. Discussion, which students defined as teacher/student and student/student interaction, was the most popular instructional strategy with students in this study. Lectures, however, frequently dominate in social studies classrooms; not a particularly effective instructional strategy according to students in this study. Based on students' definitions of "discussion," it would appear that adjusting lectures to include student/teacher and student/student interaction would stimulate students' interest in learning.

The apparent relationship between teacher interest, knowledge, and pedagogy and students' choice to learn more should be an important consideration of teachers in history classrooms, especially those classrooms in which students demonstrate indifference toward history. Students in this study wanted to be interested in the presentation of the lesson. This finding is consistent with findings in previous studies that indicate students desire a greater variety in instruction methods, but are taught in classrooms in which teacher talk dominates and conventional textbooks are the primary instructional tools (Hootstein, 1995; Armento, 1986; Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984).

Students who mentioned textbooks said that they were not effective ways to teach about the Holocaust. Instead, they encouraged use of survivor testimony and books written by and about Holocaust victims. This is consistent with findings that students found textbooks in general boring (Pahl, 1995).

Students' interest in history topics appeared to be a significant factor in their choices to learn more in history class. Students wanted to be interested in the topic. This finding is consistent with findings in other studies which indicate that students found social studies content to be uninteresting (Schug, Todd & Beery, 1984; Haladyna, Shaughnessy & Redsun, 1982). The previous studies found that one reason students found social studies content to be uninteresting was because it was too removed from their own experiences (Schug, Todd, & Beery, 1984; Haladyna, Shaughnessy & Redsun, 1982). Students in this study confirm this finding. They were interested in history topics to which they could relate. A relationship between students' interest in topics and their religious beliefs, ethnic backgrounds, previous Holocaust experiences, and preferred learning styles appeared to exist with students in this study. History teachers should be aware of and consider these influences on students' choices to learn when planning history lessons.

Not surprisingly, this class of college-bound students said they chose to learn more about the Holocaust and other history topics because of their desire for good grades. Teachers should be aware; however, that while grades may heavily influence some students' choices to learn about history, others may not have the same desire for good grades. Awareness of other factors influencing students' choices, factors such as interest and perceived obligations to society, could be especially important when

working with students to whom grades are not a significant influence on their choice to learn.

Depending on a teacher's goal for her/his students, several factors should be considered in planning lessons about the Holocaust in history classrooms. If knowledge acquisition about the Holocaust and history is a major goal, consideration should be given to students' interest in the Holocaust and in history, in students' family values related to grades, and in students' preferred learning styles. This study gives evidence that students will choose to learn if they are interested in the topic, if they like the way the topic is taught, and if grades are important to them. Family values related to grades appears to be a presage factor that significantly influences students' acquisition of knowledge about the Holocaust and history. Students chose to learn about history topics in which they had little interest and which were taught using instructional methods other than those they preferred in order to get a good grade on the test and in the class.

If a teacher's goal for her/his students is the development of empathy or moral development, consideration should be given to students' family values related to social justice and the students' religious beliefs. Students in this study chose to learn more about the Holocaust, in some cases, because their parents encouraged them to learn about the Holocaust in order to learn "lessons" from it or because family members were Jewish.

If a teacher's goal for students in her/his history classroom is to encourage students to learn more about the Holocaust and history, consideration should be given to students' interest in the Holocaust and in history, their preferred learning styles, and

students' family values related to social justice. Students chose to learn more about the Holocaust and history topics when they were interested in the topic, believed the topic was relevant to their lives, or developed empathy for "real" people in history. These presage factors appeared to influence students' choices to learn more for reasons beyond knowledge acquisition for good grades. The teacher's interest in and knowledge of the Holocaust also influenced students' choices to learn more about the Holocaust. In this study, teacher interest in the Holocaust influenced students' choices to attend a conference on Holocaust Education.

If a teacher's goal is students' understanding of the Holocaust through Holocaust literature, consideration should be given to students' interest in the Holocaust, previous experiences with Holocaust Education, and preferred learning styles. These factors should be considered when choosing Holocaust literature for classroom reading. Students in this study preferred to read literature written by and about Holocaust survivors. This literature, they said, made the Holocaust "real."

Suggestions for Further Research

Findings from this dissertation study indicate the importance of considering presage factors such as teacher interest and knowledge about the Holocaust, students' interest in the topic and preferred learning styles, and students' family values related to grades and social justice when establishing goals for Holocaust education and planning Holocaust lessons in a history classroom. Since this dissertation study generated grounded hypotheses indicating apparent relationships between several presage, process, and product factors related to Holocaust education in a history classroom, it

illuminated several areas for further research in both social studies and Holocaust education.

One such area of possible interest to researchers is the perceived relevance of the topic of study to students' lives. If students perceive the topic to be relevant to them, do they choose to learn more about it? Findings in this study indicate an apparent relationship between perceived relevance and the choice to learn; however, further study is needed to confirm a relationship.

Another area requiring further research is the topic of student interest in history. What do students mean when they say they are "interested" in a history topic? What factors influence their interest? Are students inherently interested in topics such as war, revolution, and genocide? In this study, interest appeared to be a significant factor in students' choices to learn. The relationship between interest and students' choice to learn more about a history topic is another area that requires further research.

Students in this dissertation study talked about their interest in the Holocaust, their interest in the presentation of Holocaust lessons, and in teacher interest in the Holocaust. During their interviews, they referred to topics other than the Holocaust as well. They spoke of interest in World War II, World War I, and the Napoleonic Wars. This would suggest that the factors that influence students' choice to learn about the Holocaust would also influence students' choice to learn about other topics in history. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the factors that influence students' choice to learn about the Holocaust influence students' choice to learn about other topics in social studies. An understanding of the influences on students' choice to learn could provide direction in the continued development of instructional strategies

for use in social studies classrooms. Instructional strategies which could, perhaps, lead to changes in student perceptions of social studies from dull and boring to exciting and interesting.

Appendix A

Survey of Research Studies

Authors/Date	Methods	Focus of Study
Brown & Davies, 1998	Analysis of classroom text, written responses from students to three questions, interviews with teachers	Teachers: Teachers' perceptions of Holocaust education
Maitles & Cowan, 1999	Interviews with teachers	Teachers: Teachers' perceptions of Holocaust education
Carrington & Short, 1997	Interviews with student who had studied about the Holocaust the previous year	Curriculum: Holocaust education as a tool for the realization of anti-racist and citizenship goals
Short, 2000	Survey of teachers who taught about the Holocaust, analysis of textbooks	Curriculum: Realization of anti-racist goals
Short, 2005	Interviews with student who had attended Holocaust Memorial Day	Students: Lessons learned from study of the Holocaust
Cowan & Maitles, 2007	Three surveys given to students within a thirteen month period (longitudinal)	Students: Immediate and long term effects of Holocaust education on students' citizenship values and attitudes
Schweber, 1998	Classroom observations, interviews with teachers and a sample of students	Curriculum: Holocaust Education as a moral endeavor - intended, enacted, and experienced curriculum
Glynn, Brock, & Cohen, 1982	Interviews with curriculum developers, teachers, and students	Curriculum: Examined four Holocaust curricula

Appendix B

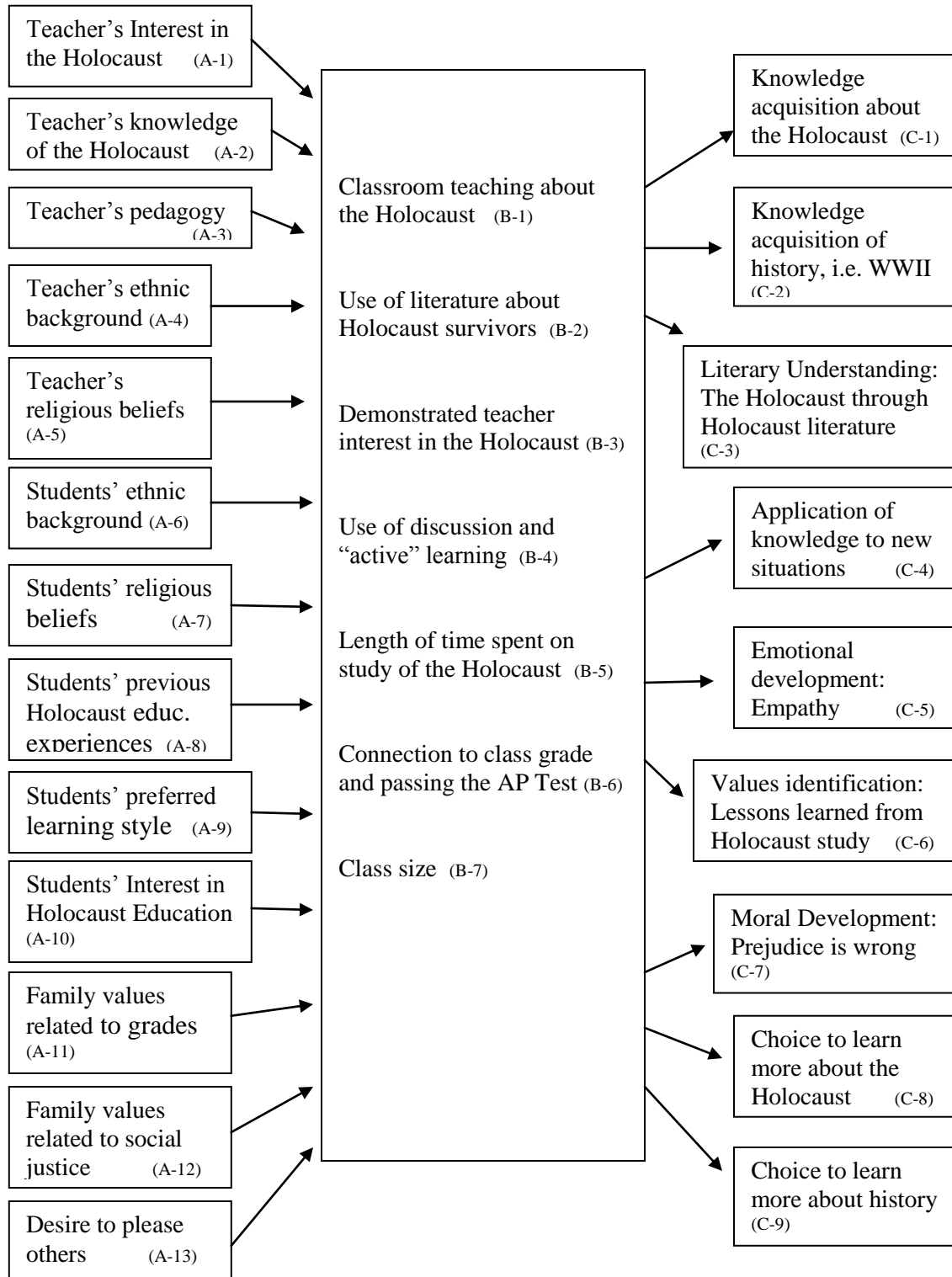
Factors Associated with Holocaust Education

Presage / Input Factors	Process / Classroom Factors	Output / Product Factors
<p>Teacher Factors</p> <p>Teacher Interest</p> <p>Teacher Knowledge</p> <p>Teacher Ethnicity</p> <p>Teacher Religious Beliefs</p> <p>Curriculum Factors/ Resources</p> <p>Survivor Talks</p> <p>Survivor Stories</p> <p>Holocaust Literature</p> <p>Specific Curriculum Packages</p> <p>State-Mandated Curriculum</p> <p>Elected Curriculum</p> <p>Holocaust as History</p> <p>Holocaust as Jewish Education</p> <p>Holocaust as Anti-racist Education</p> <p>Holocaust as Moral Education</p> <p>Student Factors</p> <p>Student Interest</p> <p>Student Ethnicity</p> <p>Student Background</p> <p>Experiences</p> <p>Student Religious Beliefs</p> <p>Student Age</p>	<p>Instructional Activities</p> <p>Read and Reflect</p> <p>Read and Write</p> <p>Read and Discuss</p> <p>Simulation Exercises</p>	<p>Cognitive Factors</p> <p>Knowledge gained about the Holocaust</p> <p>Knowledge gained about History</p> <p>Literary understanding</p> <p>Ability to apply to a new Situation</p> <p>Affective Factors</p> <p>Emotions</p> <p>Morals</p> <p>Values</p> <p>Citizenship</p>

The factors in boldfaced type are those factors that have been examined, however briefly, in research studies on Holocaust education.

Appendix C

Model of Grounded Hypotheses Related to Holocaust Education in a History Classroom



Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. What is the Holocaust?
2. Why do you think we teach about the Holocaust in American schools?
3. Why do you think Dr. Gibson teaches you about the Holocaust? What goals does she hope to accomplish? What's the best way to teach about the Holocaust? What materials would you use?
4. More people are taking classes about the Holocaust today than 40 years ago. There are more books, movies and museums to visit. Why do you think people choose to learn about the Holocaust?
5. You all listed several ways you have learned about the Holocaust (books movies, listening to teachers, visiting museums). Why did you choose to read the book, watch the movie, visit the museum, or listen to the teacher about the Holocaust?
6. In class I saw you listening and sometimes taking notes when Dr. Gibson talked about the Holocaust and genocide. Why did you choose to listen? To take notes? (As opposed to zoning out?)
7. Sometimes in History class, a student chooses to listen, take notes, and/or participate in the discussion with questions and answers. What makes you choose to listen, take notes, and participate during some lessons but not others? What makes it a "wow, it's already time for the bell" class rather than a "will this period even end" class?

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