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Holocaust Education in Sydney and Regional New South Wales Classrooms

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Declaration

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

No content generated by generative AI tools has been used in the preparation of this thesis.

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Abstract

Holocaust Education in Sydney and Regional New South Wales Classrooms

This thesis has examined the challenges faced by educators when teaching about the Holocaust to Stage 5 classes (Years 9 and 10) in schools across Sydney and in some regional areas in New South Wales. It is based on completed online questionnaires from 75 teachers (mostly History teachers), follow-up qualitative research with over 20 respondents, pre- and post-teaching questionnaires completed by 170 Year 10 students, plus numerous media reports and annual surveys of antisemitism by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. As such, it presents a thoroughly detailed picture of the state of Holocaust education in Sydney and regional classrooms. While many respondents teach about the Holocaust in great detail, spending well above the required hours and covering the essential aspects of Holocaust education, others spend far less time and some do not teach this topic at all. This is despite the Holocaust being a compulsory topic in New South Wales schools. While teachers noted a range of challenges in teaching about this topic, including available time and the confronting nature of the Holocaust, this research has demonstrated that racism and antisemitism present some of the greatest challenges for educators working across a range of sectors and schools. Almost 25% of teachers reported that racism and antisemitism were significant classroom challenges in their schools. Three key strands of antisemitism in Sydney schools have been identified, each of which has different historical antecedents and manifests itself in quite distinct ways. These differences in the nature of antisemitism across Sydney schools can be ascribed to demographic variations, especially with regard to socio-economic position, education, ethnicity and religion. This research has also shown the importance of gender, with very few respondents noting female students as perpetrators of racist or antisemitic incidents, and has highlighted the role that teacher professional development can play in preventing and responding to antisemitism in the classroom.

Dedication

To my two mothers – Shirley Nichols and Phyllis Dodd – the first who gave me life, and the second who gave me all that I needed to live that life. Two loving, resilient and extraordinarily inspirational women. To you both, I owe everything.

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This research project began almost eight years ago and has been constantly supported by my primary supervisor, the indefatigable Professor Emerita Suzanne Rutland (OAM). Her encouragement, friendship, well-timed prompting and criticism have, ultimately, borne fruit. I don't think any other supervisor would have had the stamina that this marathon has demanded! Thank you, Suzanne.

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“To teach and study about the Holocaust and everything that transpired during the Second World War and thereafter involving racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia – that constitutes our next responsibility.”

– Yehuda Bauer, address to the Bundestag, 1998¹

Introduction

Teaching about the Holocaust in secondary schools is unlike teaching about any other topic. It presents to educators a unique set of challenges that is seldom encountered at any other point in the teaching and learning cycle. These challenges include the enormous amount of content to be covered in a time-poor, crowded curriculum; the emotional, often shocking nature of the content; vaguely worded and poorly resourced attempts at instrumentalization of the topic by government and curriculum designers; and the diverse range of reactions from students, from keen interest, through anger, to sustained resistance and antisemitism. Given the significant challenges attached to teaching and learning about the Holocaust, it should come as no surprise that there are intense debates about the most effective pedagogies that should be used in Holocaust education.

Questions about specific pedagogies for teaching the Holocaust have often been tied to the aims of Holocaust education. From the time it became a widely taught topic in the 1980s, there have been calls for the instrumentalization of Holocaust education, with instrumentalization here referring to the demands that it be included in school curricula to address the problems of racism, antisemitism and intolerance. To date, there has been no in-depth study of Holocaust education in Australia, even though officially at the national level it is mandated in the Stage 5 (Years 9–10) History syllabus.² The aim of this study is to investigate the many challenges confronting Holocaust educators through a mixed quantitative and qualitative study in the state of New South Wales and to understand the factors that may lead to a successful approach in meeting the questions of effective Holocaust education within a uniquely Australian context.

After the Holocaust, the Australian government introduced a new migration policy to attract migrants from across Europe and subsequently from across the world. As a result, Australia is

¹ Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (Yale, 2001), 273.

² In all states and territories, students progress through stages or levels, each of these representing two years. New South Wales uses the term “stages;” Stage 5 incorporates Years 9 and 10. The Holocaust is a small part of the Stage 5 History syllabus, which can be delivered in either Year 9 or Year 10 or, most commonly, over the two years. Throughout this thesis, the term “Stage 5” is applied unless referring to teaching in a specific year group.

now one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. This is most strongly seen in schools in Sydney's western suburbs which are some of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse in the world. The overwhelming majority of migrants to Australia have been drawn to the major cities of Sydney and Melbourne, and within these cities, the western suburbs have been the areas where most migrants have settled. As a consequence of this large-scale migration from all over the world, the classrooms in Sydney's western suburbs are extraordinarily diverse. Across all Sydney schools, 55.9% of students have a language background other than English (LBOTE) but 60% of these students are located in the west and south-west. LBOTE students make up 69.9% of total enrolments in state government schools in the western suburbs. This huge diversity includes students whose language background is Punjabi, Hindi, Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese and many more. In fact, throughout the western and south-west suburbs, according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, there are 103 different languages spoken at home.³

The enormous diversity in language background reflects the equally diverse ethnicity of western Sydney students and the variety of experiences and family history that students bring with them to the classroom. A significant number of students have come from traumatic or troubled pasts, from war-torn regions, or areas of severe economic disadvantage. Some have sought to escape religious persecution in their homeland. Given the complex nature of this educational setting, teachers in the western suburbs of Sydney regularly face a unique set of challenges in their classrooms and in their relationships with their students. History teachers in particular, because of the often confronting and sometimes disturbing nature of the content in the syllabus, require a unique set of skills to work with these students. At no time is this more apparent than when teaching about the Holocaust, a topic with the potential to spark an emotional or passionate response that, to varying degrees, may be a reflection of the students' past. In any classroom, these responses may range from despair to anger and in extreme cases may involve antisemitism, racism and Nazi ideation.

This research project began in response to a small qualitative study conducted by Suzanne Rutland which demonstrated that in a number of schools in south-west Sydney, classroom antisemitism was a significant problem and a serious impediment to teaching about the

³ Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, New South Wales Department of Education, Sydney (2019) <https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/educational-data/cese/2019-language-diversity-bulletin.pdf>; and Western Sydney University, id Community, Western Sydney (LGA) <https://profile.id.com.au/cws/language>.

Holocaust.⁴ Such was the depth of the problem she identified that some teachers in the area were fearful of their own safety, had concealed their Jewish identity and had consistently heard deeply antisemitic comments from their Muslim students. This had not been the author's experience from over 15 years teaching in western Sydney non-government schools.⁵ Thus, this current research began with the twin aims of testing the depth and breadth of antisemitism, and racism more broadly, across western Sydney's classrooms; and assessing the impact these challenges, and any others, may have on teaching about the Holocaust.

It soon became apparent that antisemitism was not confined to a small number of classrooms in south-west Sydney, nor was it broadly a western Sydney phenomenon. Teachers across Sydney, and further afield, reported that antisemitism and racism were challenges in their classrooms. As this research reaches completion, 27 out of 82 teachers, mostly from metropolitan Sydney schools, have identified antisemitism and racism as classroom challenges. This has forced an evolution in the focus of this current research so that not only western Sydney, but Sydney more broadly, has become the subject of the study. This has not shifted attention away from the original purpose but has rather allowed a comparison to be made between the different forms that antisemitism might take in classrooms, variations that can be ascribed to the diverse student demographics across Sydney.

This research has, therefore, sought to gain a clearer picture of Holocaust education in secondary schools within the Australian context, and, through this micro-study, provide new understanding that may assist in the provision of Holocaust education in other parts of the world, particularly in those countries with diverse student populations. This has become increasingly important in recent years because, not only has Australia mandated Holocaust education for Stage 5 through the National Curriculum, but Australia has also become a full member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which has Holocaust education as one of its central goals. The IHRA has 35 member nations with education being the focus of one of its three working groups, so that the findings from this study will contribute to the wider body of knowledge in terms of current challenges and responses to teaching and

⁴ Suzanne Rutland, "Creating effective Holocaust education programmes for government schools with large Muslim populations in Sydney," *Prospects* 40 (2010): 75-91.

⁵ The schools included in this research project fall into three categories: state schools, controlled directly by the New South Wales Department of Education; Catholic systemic schools, controlled by Catholic dioceses; and independent religious schools. All schools, regardless of their category, must follow curricula developed by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA).

learning about the Holocaust outside of Australia, especially within the English-speaking world.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis begins with an overview of the current literature as it applies to the key areas identified in the research. Following the suggestion of Ratnapalan, the literature review was conducted in detail only after the collection and analysis of data so that the relevant themes could be developed from the data without influence from the existing literature.⁶ The value of this approach was most evident on the question of gender and classroom antisemitism; the data overwhelmingly represented boys as they main perpetrators of acts of antisemitism in the classroom, yet the literature offered relatively few sources of previous research in this area. If the literature review had driven the creation of the model of investigation, this important thread may have been missed entirely.

The following chapter provides context for the research, explaining the position of the Holocaust as a discrete topic within the study of World War II in the Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10) History syllabi in each state. While the focus of this study is on Sydney, and therefore the New South Wales History syllabus is specifically relevant, there is a belief that Holocaust education is mandatory across the nation via the National Curriculum in History. The reality is quite different, as Chapter 3 will demonstrate, with many students around the country never encountering the Holocaust in any significant detail.

This inconsistency in approaches to Holocaust education is perhaps one of the underlying reasons for ongoing issues of antisemitism in schools and in society more broadly, despite the increase in Holocaust education across school systems. Chapter 4 documents the rise in antisemitism, relying on the annual reports collated by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and media reports of specific incidents of antisemitism in schools around Sydney. The overall picture of antisemitism in Australia, especially since 7 October 2023, is of great concern and one of the reasons why this current research project is of such importance.

Examination of the context of the research continues in Chapter 5 with an analysis of the relevant demographic data from across Sydney, explaining how the population profiles of

⁶ Savithiri Ratnapalan, "Qualitative approaches," 667.

broad geographical areas help to explain the challenges faced in Holocaust education. Sydney is a clearly divided city, with distinct areas characterised by their ethnicity, religious groups and socio-economic status. The second half of this chapter demonstrates the diversity of respondents' schools and the high level of representativeness of the data from across Sydney.

The greater part of data analysis from both the quantitative and qualitative stages of the research has taken place in Chapters 6 and 7 where responses are analysed in detail. Chapter 6 examines in particular the aims of educators in teaching about the Holocaust and begins the process of examining their content and pedagogy as a means of achieving those aims. It soon became apparent through this process that there was often a disconnect between the aims that were stated by teachers and the content that was taught, especially where a human rights' agenda was evident. In Chapter 7, a range of challenges identified by teachers are examined. Almost universally, time was cited as the biggest challenge, with insufficient hours available to teach a most challenging topic. In many schools, antisemitism and racism were also seen as major impediments to teaching about the Holocaust. Such was the level of concern about this challenge and the impact it had on teaching and learning that it was felt necessary to include a distinct chapter on antisemitism. Chapter 8 considers in depth the factors at play in the various forms of antisemitism across Sydney.

The final two chapters present a way forward for Holocaust education, examining exemplar teaching and learning programs from experienced educators and also considering the role that professional development plays in equipping teachers to deal with a range of classroom challenges. One of the key points to come out of the qualitative stage of the research is that teachers who have received significant professional development in this area see problems in the classroom, especially racism and antisemitism, as opportunities for initiating change in their students and promoting tolerance. They are more prepared to call out racism and engage in a conversation with students, rather than ignore it or curtail their teaching about the Holocaust.

Findings

The differences in empathy development between boys and girls outlined above may also play a part in a key aspect of this research: that boys are, almost exclusively, the perpetrators of acts of antisemitism and racism in the classroom. There is a small but growing body of evidence from France, Germany and Sweden that has been supported by this research that demonstrates a clear gender divide in acts of antisemitism and racism. Only two teachers in this current

research noted that girls were sometimes responsible for antisemitic comments. None of the more serious acts of antisemitism discussed in Chapter 4 involved girls. The reason for this clear difference between boys and girls has not been explored in depth in this research but demands further inquiry, especially with regard to the impact it has on teaching about the Holocaust in co-educational classrooms.

Three broad strands of antisemitism have been identified and discussed: the Muslim antisemitism of the south-western suburbs that manifests in boys' and co-ed public high schools with large numbers of Arabic-speaking students; Anglo antisemitism of the north shore and eastern suburbs, predominantly linked to exclusive private boys' and co-ed schools but also found in boys' and co-ed public high schools; and finally a previously undocumented strand of antisemitism that exists in students from the Croatian community of western Sydney and can be traced to an influx of Croatian migration post-World War II.

How teachers respond to the challenge of antisemitism in their classroom will depend very much on their experience, their level of expertise in this topic and the quality of professional development they have received. There is no doubt that, based on this research, teachers who have received substantial professional development in Holocaust education will have a greater depth of content, confidence in meeting sometimes confronting challenges and a range of teaching strategies that recognises the need to adjust for differences between various cohorts. They will also be able to work within the seemingly impossible time constraints imposed by the curriculum.

Time was the biggest challenge noted by an overwhelming majority of teachers who responded to the original questionnaire. Their follow-up comments indicated that it was extremely difficult to squeeze all the necessary content into their class time, when teaching about the Holocaust has to be completed in just a few hours. There should be no surprise in this. A carefully crafted Holocaust program for mandatory Stage 5 History should commence with the history of antisemitism and pre-war Jewish life, and conclude with the Nuremberg trials and the post-war return to life of the Jewish people.⁷ It is a complex, emotionally-charged topic. Yet the Holocaust sits as just one dot point, with three elaborations and no compulsory hours, in the national curriculum that has been adopted in some form by all states in Australia. Most

⁷ Later chapters will demonstrate why this detailed approach is so necessary. See also the work of Dara Horn, "Is Holocaust education making anti-semitism worse?" *The Atlantic*, May 2023.

of the states, where they mandate hours, provide 50 hours or less for a course that cannot possibly be taught in less than 80 hours.⁸ In some states it is less than 40 hours. The variations and anomalies between states are discussed in Chapter 3. For many topics in the national curriculum, it may be possible to teach them in a reasonably short time but the Holocaust has become instrumentalized in ways that no other history topic has been. It is seen not just as an historical topic to be taught within the chronology of World War II, though the national curriculum and state syllabi seem to indicate this is the case. State governments⁹ and even federal ministers¹⁰ have instrumentalized the topic: If students are taught about the Holocaust, the reasoning seems to be, they will be inoculated against antisemitism and racism more broadly; they will be active citizens, aware of their social responsibilities; and they will develop sound moral and ethical frameworks.

Holocaust education may be able to do all these things for students, though this is far from a given, but it certainly cannot do so with the limited hours in the curriculum, the lack of professional development available to teachers and the disruptions that come from racism and antisemitism in the classroom. This research has shown conclusively that Holocaust education in its current form in Australia is not able to achieve the aims publicly espoused by state and federal ministers and community leaders.¹¹ It will not be able to do so until state governments provide the time and resources necessary for teachers' professional development and to allow them to adequately prepare programs and lessons for units of work spanning several weeks.

There has never been a more pressing time for effective Holocaust education in Australia. Even before 7 October 2023, antisemitism was growing in Australia and, as Chapter 4 demonstrates, was a major problem across society and in many schools. The 2021 survey of Australians' knowledge of the Holocaust undertaken by the Gandel Foundation and Deakin University demonstrated that for most Australians, the lessons of the Holocaust and its historical

⁸ Denis Mootz, *Towards a taxonomy: History teachers and History classrooms*, PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney (2014): 259.

⁹ "Labor to tackle antisemitism and to improve Holocaust education in New South Wales schools," *J-Wire*, 15 March 2023. <https://www.jwire.com.au/labor-to-tackle-antisemitism-and-to-improve-holocaust-education-in-nsw-schools/>

¹⁰ "Josh Frydenberg urges more Holocaust education after antisemitic bullying attacks," *The Guardian*, 4 October 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/oct/04/josh-frydenberg-urges-more-holocaust-education-after-antisemitic-bullying-cases>

¹¹ Lucy Carroll "Jewish leaders want more Holocaust education after Perrottet's Nazi admission," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 2023. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/jewish-leaders-want-more-holocaust-education-after-perrottet-s-nazi-admission-20230112-p5cc54.html>; Parliament of New South Wales, Legislative Council Hansard – 21 September 2022, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1820781676-90283/link/122>

importance continue to resonate.¹² The same survey, however, also revealed important gaps in Australians' knowledge and some troubling ideas about Holocaust education: a significant minority (34%) were ambivalent about, or disagreed with, mandatory Holocaust education in schools; 8% believe people still talk too much about the Holocaust; and relatively few Australians know about this nation's connections to the Holocaust. Despite this, the overwhelming consensus among respondents to this research was that their students were consistently more engaged with the Holocaust than with any other topic they study in high school.¹³ Against this backdrop, the Holocaust has become firmly embedded in the Australian History Curriculum and its various iterations in each state, with teachers confronting a range of challenges and opportunities that impact their ability to both promote a human rights agenda and also ensure the memory of the Holocaust is maintained. This research project has highlighted many of these challenges, considered their impact on learning and teaching in Sydney classrooms and, most importantly, provided a direction forward to ensure that Holocaust education is able to achieve the aims that have been set for it.

¹² Steven Cooke, Donna-Lee Frieze, Andrew Singleton and Matteo Vergani, *Gandel Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness in Australia Survey 2021* (Deakin University and the Gandel Foundation, 2022).

¹³ See Chapter 6 for a discussion of student engagement.

“To ignore the history of the Holocaust is to distort the history of humanity and, particularly, that of the twentieth century.”

– Totten and Feinberg, 2001¹

1. Literature Review

Since the mid-1980s there has been a surge in writing about Holocaust education.² This rapid increase has coincided with the release of a wide range of Holocaust films, TV mini-series, novels and non-fiction books and has paralleled the integration of the Holocaust as a topic in secondary school syllabi around the world. Faced with unprecedented public interest in the topic, and demands from many governments for the instrumentalisation of the Holocaust as a tool in the fight against social disharmony, educators have recognised that teaching about the Holocaust is vastly different to teaching about any other topic in History, English or religious education classes. The reason for this, beyond the magnitude and complexity of the Holocaust as a teaching topic, is this: Educators typically strive to teach not only lessons *about* the Holocaust, but also lessons *from* the Holocaust. As this research project will demonstrate, it is often possible for educators to demonstrate their success at increasing students’ content knowledge, but rarely are they able to demonstrate success in developing students’ empathy and understanding of human rights and social harmony.

This chapter, a review of the literature on Holocaust education, begins with an examination of the reasons why educators chose to teach about the Holocaust, with a focus on the debate over universalisation versus particularisation. It then considers the challenges of teaching about the Holocaust in diverse classrooms and looks at the specific issues related to teaching about the Holocaust in Australia in the 21st Century. These two terms, universalisation and particularisation, require some consideration first, as they have been used by some scholars as if, when teaching about the Holocaust, they are diametrically opposed. The reality is that educators will rely on both approaches at different times. Zehavit Gross has differentiated the terms quite succinctly, explaining that:

¹ Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg, *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust* (University of Arkansas, 2009), 3.

² Google Books N Gram Viewer provides an interesting snapshot into the references to “Holocaust Education” contained in published books. Between 1980 and 2017, there was a rapid rise in books on this topic. See: https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Holocaust+Education&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corp_us=en-2019&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=true

The universal lessons of the Holocaust, as the example of ultimate evil through the consequences of racism, can be an important part of teaching global citizenship and human rights. This guarantees the future and meaning of Holocaust education. In terms of Holocaust education, the particularistic narrative focused only on the destruction of European Jewry during World War II, arguing that this phenomenon was unprecedented and unique and should not be compared to any other event of human suffering. suffering. The universalization of the Holocaust argues that once an event occurs in human history, it can occur again.³

As will be seen throughout this thesis, educators have been able to draw on both approaches to Holocaust education at various times depending on the needs of their students and the demands of their specific aims and rationale in teaching about the Holocaust.

Does Holocaust education reduce prejudice?

Education about the Holocaust seems to be the answer to almost every question society faces regarding race, racism, prejudice and intolerance in the world today. The logic seems to be that, if students (and adults) knew about the Holocaust, they would be more tolerant and less racist, and as a consequence our world would be a better place. This idea, which has been in place since the development of Holocaust education in the 1980s, has been neatly summarised by Paul Salmons, former project director at the Centre for Holocaust Education, University College, London:

Much 'Holocaust education' (and, indeed, much History teaching in general) is designed to socialise young people into certain cultural norms, and to teach pre-determined 'lessons' that, it is claimed, are inherent in the past.⁴

One of the problems with this view – and there are several – is that Holocaust education has been embedded in school curricula, in various forms, for many years. At the same time, there have been countless movies and documentaries on screens, big and small, over the last 50 years since *Holocaust* premiered in the US in 1978.⁵ Yet despite this, antisemitism is on the rise and Holocaust denial is growing.⁶ If Holocaust education really is the answer to a range of social problems, then

³ Zehavit Gross, "The Process of the Universalization of Holocaust Education: Problems and Challenges," *Contemporary Jewry* 38, no.1 (2018): 6.

⁴ Paul Salmons, "Beyond 'moral lessons': what does it mean to learn about the Holocaust?" <https://paulsalmons.associates/blog/what-does-it-mean-to-learn-about-the-holocaust>

⁵ *Holocaust* (TV miniseries), Marvin Chomsky (director), NBC, 1978

⁶ Chapter 4, Antisemitism in Australia, provides evidence of the rapid rise in antisemitism in Australia over recent years, particularly since 7 October 2023 and the commencement of the Hamas–Israel war.

there is clearly a need to consider what that education should look like and what its aims really are, since up to now it has not been providing the solutions that have been demanded of it. A review of the current literature demonstrates that there are various (and sometimes competing) aims underpinning Holocaust education, particularly in societies with classrooms that are as diverse as those in Sydney and New South Wales more broadly.

Why teach about the Holocaust? Rationale and aims

There is a most fundamental question that should underpin any teaching and learning program on the Holocaust: Why are we asking students to learn about this challenging and often emotional topic? There are a number of possible responses to this question, as later chapters will show, and indeed, many teachers think very deeply about why they are spending considerable class time on this most difficult of histories. The question is so vitally important because the aim of any education program should shape the content, timing and pedagogy of that program. This research project, and the literature considered in this chapter, broadly places the aim of Holocaust education into one of two categories: Understanding and knowledge of a key historical event; or the instrumentalisation of that event as a means of fostering tolerance and anti-racism agendas in society. Neither aim is free of its own problems and challenges, as a number of researchers have clearly articulated, and nor are the two aims mutually exclusive. It should be possible to combine the two views, so that students learn *about* the Holocaust as much as they learn *from* the Holocaust. As Chapter 10 will demonstrate, it is possible to marry these two aims and create an engaging and intellectually demanding program that develops the ethical and moral frameworks of students.

Writing in 1979, the eminent Holocaust historian Henry Friedlander stated that “as colleges and school systems rush to implement the popular mandate [for Holocaust education], they have no clear idea about the nature, limits, and implications of the Holocaust as a subject.”⁷ Friedlander was present at the very beginning of the surge in Holocaust education, when the “increasing number of books, films, documentaries, and newspaper stories dealing with the Holocaust” made it almost “inevitable that with instant popularity the Holocaust would also become a subject taught in schools and colleges.”⁸ More than 50 years later, debate about aims, content and pedagogy in Holocaust studies continues unabated. There remains no clear consensus on why or how this topic should be taught in schools – though there is increasing understanding of how it should *not* be taught.⁹

⁷ Henry Friedlander, “Toward A Methodology of Teaching about the Holocaust,” *Teachers College Record* 80, no.3 (1979): 1.

⁸ Henry Friedlander, “Toward a Methodology,” 1.

⁹ See for example Dara Horn, “Is Holocaust education making anti-semitism worse?” *The Atlantic*, 3 April 2023.

In Holocaust education, understanding the rationale for teaching is an essential part of selecting the appropriate content and strategies to be used in the classroom and the desired outcomes for students. The literature on this aspect of Holocaust education is extensive and varied, often stemming from researchers with vast experience in the field and supported by detailed data. Henry Friedlander explained the problem that remains today for Holocaust educators: is it possible to teach about the Holocaust as both history and moral lesson?

As far as the study and teaching of the Holocaust are concerned, the problem is that one cannot have it both ways. One cannot treat the Holocaust as sacred history and also insist that it become a lesson and a warning for public discussion as well as an integrated part of our school curriculum. And throughout much of the debate about the Holocaust there is this attempt to have it both ways: to have it unique, and yet to have it as only the last example of two thousand years of persecution; to teach it as a moral lesson, and yet to make it so particular that no one else can use it. These are contradictions that must be resolved.¹⁰

Forty years later, these contradictions have not been fully resolved and they remain a subject of debate between Holocaust educators. While Friedlander was firmly on the side of universalising the Holocaust in order to impart its civic lessons, other historians have been far less convinced that this is a suitable approach. While speaking at a Salzburg Global Seminar in 2014, Konrad Kwiet, Resident Historian at the Sydney Jewish Museum, explained that “You reduce the significance of the Holocaust for Jews and you use the Holocaust for all sorts of issues – which are important – but in doing so more or less the Holocaust becomes totally instrumentalized, and that is now a major concern which I see.”¹¹

Kwiet’s concerns have been echoed by Zehavit Gross, who has argued that in the process of universalising the Holocaust in an educational setting as a means to combat racism and to promote peace and harmony in the world, a number of important problems have been ignored. She argues that “the universal lessons of the Holocaust, as the example of ultimate evil through the consequences of racism, can be an important part of teaching global citizenship and human rights. This guarantees the future and meaning of Holocaust education.”¹² She warns, but does not fully

¹⁰ Henry Friedlander, “Toward a Methodology,” 3.

¹¹ Tanya Yilmaz, “Holocaust Education – the Case of Australia,” (2014).
<https://www.salzburgglobal.org/news/latest-news/article/holocaust-education-the-case-of-australia>

¹² Zehavit Gross, “The process of the universalization of Holocaust education,” 6.

explain, that “Transforming the Holocaust in an aspect of universal humanity can diminish the whole question of the Holocaust by humanizing the perpetrators and rationalizing their actions.”¹³

These problems were made abundantly clear in a report from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) in 2005 that argued the Holocaust should be taught as an end in itself and not simply as a way to instruct students in civics and citizenship.¹⁴ Its reason was that Holocaust education, when harnessed in this way, had the potential to reduce Jews to victim status and ignore centuries of Jewish life pre-Holocaust, resistance during the Holocaust and the return to life after World War II. These same themes have been taken up by a number of authors, most recently Dara Horn, whose work is summarised in Chapter 8.¹⁵ The OSCE/ODIHR report concluded that if countering antisemitism was to be the aim of education, then specific intervention strategies needed to be developed, thus ensuring that teaching about the Holocaust was not directly instrumentalised. Despite these warnings and concerns, the majority of researchers in this field have argued that it should be possible in a secondary classroom setting to achieve the twin aims of lessons *about* the Holocaust and lessons *from* the Holocaust, provided there is from the outset of any teaching program a clearly articulated set of aims and rationales.

The need for clear rationales before teaching about the Holocaust has been expounded most strongly by Totten, Feinberg and Fernekes, who argue that “Holocaust lessons and units bereft of controlling principles often lack a sound historical focus, including the critical need to address the ‘whys’ of the historical events versus focusing solely on the ‘whats’ of the history.” They believe that without a clear rationale, or rationales, it will be difficult for educators to design appropriate content and assessment strategies.¹⁶ Ultimately, a sound set of rationales helps teachers to design and implement clearly delineated goals, objectives, content, and assessment strategies. Their lengthy list of possible rationales covers the wide range of aims canvassed in this chapter and encourages educators to combine both history and moral lessons: “Many teachers, administrators, and curriculum writers today are certainly well meaning in wanting to teach about the Holocaust, but far too many solely focus on the affective domain as opposed to a fine blend of the cognitive and affective domains. That is... a significant pedagogical problem.”¹⁷

¹³ Zehavit Gross, “The process of the universalization of Holocaust education,” 12.

¹⁴ *Education on the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2005). <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/2/15228.pdf>

¹⁵ Horn, “Is Holocaust education making anti-semitism worse?”

¹⁶ Samuel Totten, Stephen Feinberg and William Fernekes, “The Significance of Rationale Statements in Developing a Sound Holocaust Education Program.” In *Essentials of Holocaust Education*, edited by Samuel Totten and Stephen Feinberg (Routledge, 2016): 1.

¹⁷ Totten and Feinberg, *Essentials of Holocaust Education*, 2.

David Lindquist has commented on exactly this point, indicating that teachers need to “consider the if, the what, and the how of Holocaust education as well as the moral implications that arise from any meaningful and appropriate study of the event.”¹⁸ He has made the argument that learning about the Holocaust has important implications for students in their daily lives: “The Holocaust is a fascinating, compelling topic in which to immerse one’s intellectual energies because it forces students to debate the dilemmas they face in their daily lives, and will continue to face in expanding contexts as they become adults.”¹⁹ This is a view that is shared by many teachers, who view a study of the Holocaust as a means to provide direction for students in their lives outside of the classroom. The problem with this approach, of course, is that students are extremely unlikely to ever confront the dilemmas that faced those who lived and died during the Holocaust and therefore the potential connections to the present may be lost. But if the result of studying the Holocaust is that students understand that all perpetrators, bystanders and rescuers had choices, and that students too will need to make choices within a moral framework, then the “lessons *from* the Holocaust” approach may well succeed.

For Paul Salmons, there is no need for teachers to separate the moral from the historical: “Just as moral issues can motivate historical enquiry, so too can historical events inform attitudes and perceptions in the present.”²⁰ Salmons believes the two primary objectives in Holocaust education are not mutually exclusive and that “many of the 'big historical questions' we want our students to investigate are a function of the moral questions that continue to trouble academic historians, as they search for the meaning of human action and inaction during the Holocaust.”²¹

According to English researcher, Geoffrey Short, there is no doubt that the Holocaust should be instrumentalised, particularly for anti-racism education. He argues that “the single most important lesson to extract from the Holocaust is that Nazism, in respect of its racial policies, is an unmitigated evil.”²² But he provides a thorough examination of the various ways in which teaching about this

¹⁸ David H. Lindquist, “A Necessary Holocaust Pedagogy: Teaching the Teachers,” *Issues in Teacher Education*, 16:1 (Spring 2007): 21.

¹⁹ David Lindquist, “Meeting a Moral Imperative: A Rationale for Teaching the Holocaust,” *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 84, no.1 (2010): 28.

²⁰ Paul Salmons, “Moral dilemmas: history, teaching and the Holocaust,” *Teaching History* 104, (September 2001), 38.

²¹ Salmons, “Moral dilemmas,” 35.

²² Geoffrey Short, “Failing to Learn from the Holocaust,” In *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*, ed. Zehavit Gross and Doyle Stevick (Springer, 2015), 456.

topic can fail to have any impact on students. Chief among these factors is time: “I noted the importance of the time factor, arguing that other things being equal, there is likely to be a direct correlation between the benefits students derive from engaging with the Holocaust and the length of time schools devote to it.”²³ Unfortunately Short gives relatively little attention to how that time should be spent in the classroom when learning about the Holocaust, beyond some suggestions for content: “If... teachers operate on a broader canvas and focus on the background to the Holocaust, the lessons resonate more loudly, for they have a firmer purchase on contemporary society where racist groups operate both within and beyond the bounds of legitimate politics.” It is exactly this point, that teachers must spend time on explaining antisemitism and pre-war Jewish life if students are to understand the lessons of the Holocaust, that is so important when rationales are constructed and content selected.

It is, however, difficult to resolve Short’s optimism about the usefulness of Holocaust education with the lack of data on student attitudes. When he claims that “The Holocaust has been shown to possess unambiguous and important lessons for both the educational system as a whole and for individual students,” we are left asking, just where has this been shown?²⁴

At Yad Vashem, this problem of dealing with potentially competing aims is addressed by Shulamit Imber, formerly Pedagogical Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies. Imber stresses the need for a sound empirical base that is then humanised to show clearly the impact of the Holocaust on individuals:

Every teacher who wishes to teach this chapter in human history first needs to be a student, building a concrete base of knowledge. After acquiring the historical information, it is the teacher's job to present the Holocaust as a human story. This will enable empathetic teaching about the Holocaust to young minds in the twenty-first century.²⁵

Yad Vashem defines the Holocaust as a specifically Jewish catastrophe that should be viewed through the lens of its Jewish victims. It is not an event to be compared and contrasted with other genocides, although its universal significance will become apparent to students: “The educational axis deals with the Jewish and universal significance that is derived from the elements of the events

²³ Short, “Failing to Learn,” 456.

²⁴ Geoffrey Short, “Lessons of the Holocaust: A response to the critics,” *Educational Review* 55, no.3 (2003): 286.

²⁵ Shulamit Imber, “How we approach teaching about the Shoah (2013).
<https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/pedagogical-philosophy.html>

taught on the historical axis. The educational axis demands that the Holocaust be regarded not only as a historical narrative, but also as a human story.”²⁶ But it is a Jewish human story that is told at Yad Vashem, not a universal human story.

In contrast to the approach at Yad Vashem, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), considers that Holocaust education has enormous potential for contributing to campaigns against a range of threats to society. In 2019, IHRA released its *Recommendations for Teaching and Learning About the Holocaust*.²⁷ As Australia is now a full member of IHRA, it is important to consider what this organisation sees as the important aims in Holocaust education. IHRA considers that “teaching and learning about the Holocaust provides an essential opportunity to inspire critical thinking, societal awareness, and personal growth.”²⁸ No History educator would disagree with this, but they might argue that almost every topic in the History syllabus has this capacity. However, IHRA says that decades after the event:

Societies continue to wrestle with both the memory and historical record of the Holocaust in the midst of contemporary challenges. These include persistent antisemitism and xenophobia, unfolding genocides in the world, the ongoing refugee crisis, and threats to many democratic norms and values. This is particularly relevant with the rise of authoritarian-style governments as well as by populist or extreme movements within (liberal) democracies.²⁹

This imbues the Holocaust with unique abilities and suggests that teaching about this genocide is directly relevant to the rise in current societal threats. It is doubtful that any other event in human history has been charged with such importance in today’s society.

IHRA further suggests that Holocaust education raises “challenging questions: about individual and collective responsibility, the meaning of active citizenship, and about the structures and societal norms that can become dangerous for certain groups and society as a whole.”³⁰ If the aim of teaching about the Holocaust is indeed to raise such questions and to allow students to make a wide range of connections with the modern world, then further questions must be asked of how the Holocaust is taught, what content is included, and how many hours are available for its study.

²⁶ Imber, , “How we approach teaching.”

²⁷ IHRA, “Recommendations for teaching and learning about the Holocaust.”

<https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/recommendations-teaching-learning-holocaust>

²⁸ IHRA, “Recommendations for teaching and learning,” 4.

²⁹ IHRA, “Recommendations for teaching and learning,” 11.

³⁰ IHRA, “Recommendations for teaching and learning,” 11.

There is no suggestion from IHRA, of course, that all of its suggested aims be attempted in any classroom. Teachers will naturally select those that work best in their setting. The same is true of IHRA's summary of key arguments for teaching about the Holocaust, only some of which will be relevant in any particular classroom:

- To understand that the Holocaust represented a challenge to universal human values.
- As a means of understanding the rise and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism.
- To support learners in commemorating Holocaust victims.
- To help learners to identify distortion and inaccuracy when the Holocaust is used as a rhetorical device in the service of social, political and moral agendas.
- To understand the process of genocide.
- To understand the impact of choices made by individuals, institutions, organisations, and government agencies at the local, national, regional and global levels.³¹

In classrooms where only a few hours are dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust, achieving just one of these aims could be seen as a success. When it is considered that students also need to have a sound empirical base of knowledge about the Holocaust to work from, it becomes almost impossible for these aims to be met in any practical sense in many classrooms. These impracticalities have been addressed by Larissa Allwork from the University of Derby, who has offered great insight in this area. Allwork has highlighted the limitations of current practice in Holocaust education in countering antisemitism in particular and has advocated for an approach that combines empiricism with instrumentalisation. In this, she has taken her lead from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education³² which has for some years attempted to “encourage teachers to move away from forms of Holocaust education that are framed by simplistic moral lessons but not substantive knowledge, to a mode of education that is built on rigorous historical knowledge which also includes critical reflection on the past and how it shapes young peoples’ attitudes towards present-day social and cultural issues.”³³ Allwork has argued that if Holocaust education is to be harnessed as a means of countering antisemitism amongst young people, “teachers and instructors must learn from problematic practice in order to provide forms of Holocaust education that are historically accurate, culturally sensitive and in dialogue with the challenges presented by

³¹ IHRA, “Recommendations for teaching and learning,” 12-13.

³² <https://holocausteducation.org.uk>

³³ Larissa Allwork, “Holocaust Education and Contemporary Antisemitism” (2019).

<https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/holocaust-education-and-contemporary-anti-semitism>

contemporary forms of antisemitism.”³⁴ This combination of detailed content knowledge with critical reflection on current events ensures that students develop not only a sound historical framework for viewing the Holocaust, but also develop the ability to discuss the implications of this history in today’s society. As Allwork has so succinctly stated, “when young people encounter contemporary antisemitism in everyday life it is highly unlikely that it will be wearing a Nazi uniform. It will instead require students to make sometimes quite complex judgements about cultural representations of antisemitic stereotypes which appear both off-line and online.”³⁵

If Holocaust education is to be used in the fight against antisemitism, Allwork believes its success will be highly dependent on a number of key factors including the placement and time devoted to the subject and the knowledge and commitment of teachers. She adds that the ability to make connections to the students’ local area, through Jewish communities or direct Holocaust associations, will also allow students to see the parallels between antisemitism in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, and in their own society.³⁶

Monique Eckmann also considers local connections an important means for students to see relevance in their learning. Eckmann provides an overview of Holocaust education that assesses the question of whether the Holocaust should be taught as a tool for teaching human rights and demonstrates how this will vary according to the regional and national contexts. She points out that even the term “Holocaust education” has serious failings: “Does it focus on history or on the lessons of history?”³⁷ Her conclusion is that History teachers are able to do both, but there are important considerations that educators must keep in mind. “Using Holocaust education as a tool for human rights’ education offers some possibilities but it also has many limits.” There are, Eckmann says, four crucial elements for educators to consider if they seek to instrumentalise the Holocaust: Students must “learn the historical facts” and understand the process of destruction; secondly, they should develop knowledge of what happened to the Jewish people after the Holocaust; third, “it is important to address current violations of human rights, especially those in students’ own nations or regions; and lastly a study of the Holocaust should be used to deconstruct national myths about this history and reflect on the history of our own countries.”³⁸

³⁴ Allwork, “Holocaust Education.”

³⁵ Allwork, “Holocaust Education.”

³⁶ Allwork, “Holocaust Education.”

³⁷ Monique Eckmann, “Is teaching and learning about the Holocaust relevant for human rights education?” In *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*, ed. Zehavit Gross and Doyle Stevick, (Springer, 2015), 53.

³⁸ Eckmann, “Is teaching and learning about the Holocaust,” 64-65.

Echoing the view of Allwork and Eckmann, Avril Alba has made some of the most valuable contributions to this debate. Alba's most recent publication considers the shape of Holocaust teaching within schools and whether these programs should be focused on historical knowledge or ethical development:

...future iterations of Holocaust curricula cannot abdicate either historical rigour or ethical complexity. Educators must be equipped to work with the difficulty of the history while laying bare and contending with the implicit ethical messages and 'lessons' embedded in the educative process itself. Augmenting both historical knowledge and ethical development must be the goal of the next generation of Holocaust educators.³⁹

The task that is being assigned to teachers through this argument is complex, often daunting and one for which many teachers will be thoroughly unprepared. Yet achieving the twin aims of "historical knowledge and ethical development" must be the goal of Holocaust educators, leaving them with the question of how this is to be achieved in a classroom setting with insufficient hours. The specific question of whether to teach students about ethics, and to develop their own moral framework, is addressed by Alba within the context of a study of the ethics program previously conducted by the Sydney Jewish Museum:

Is it possible, or indeed desirable, for students to identify and grapple with their own ethical concerns through the prism of a society where democratic processes were suspended, a government sponsored propaganda campaign underpinned by 'legalised' discrimination had marginalised and de-humanised an array of individuals and groups, and an unprecedented and savage war had ravaged entire populations? How does one remain true to the radical historical context of the material presented, while connecting these materials to ethical or moral lessons in the present? In short, is ethics education best served through the lens of Holocaust history, or in connecting these paradigms do we necessarily do damage to both?⁴⁰

Ultimately, Alba provides answers to the questions she raises and affirms the importance of learning not just *about* the Holocaust, but *from* the Holocaust:

³⁹ Avril Alba, "Holocaust History and Ethics Education: Teaching at the Crossroads," in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (Wiley, 2020), 605.

⁴⁰ Alba, "Holocaust History," 600.

Whether reflection on the history of the Holocaust and other mass atrocities can assure ethical action in the present remains open for debate. Yet whether these histories can and should be studied to shake our ethical convictions to their foundations and demand that we consider them anew is surely undeniable. If teachers can engage such histories to unsettle rather than simply affirm their students' ethical frameworks, they will do justice to the history at hand. In so doing they will also challenge students to recognise the contingency of their own 'presents', encouraging complexity rather than complacency in the negotiation between present and past.⁴¹

Cowan and Maitles extend on this point and demonstrate the immediacy of Holocaust education in a range of nations that have experienced genocide or mass atrocities. They show that in nations such as South Africa, Bosnia and China, the Holocaust provides valuable lessons for the present: "This explains and justifies why Holocaust education involves wider learning *from* the Holocaust. The premise for this is that these lessons provide opportunities to study issues such as genocide, social intolerance, anti-racism, antisemitism, human indifference and human rights."⁴² Likewise, the South African Holocaust and Genocide Foundation has argued that its education programs "must make concrete the connection between prejudices of the past and the prejudices of the present," otherwise "the only lesson the Holocaust will teach is that the past was terrible."⁴³ In nations such as those above, the connections between the process of the Holocaust and the human impacts with their own nations' history are not difficult to make. But in a nation such as Australia, there is perhaps a reluctance to confront our own genocidal past through the prism of the Holocaust. Not one of the respondents to this research project suggested that in their classrooms they make direct connections to the dispossession and genocide of First Nations peoples in Australia.

Many educators and curriculum designers do, however, see Holocaust education as a tool to be used in shaping young people's attitudes to contemporary issues. Therefore it is reasonable to ask if there is any data that establishes its effectiveness in doing so. The answer is essentially, no, but with just one notable exception. A number of studies have examined the short term impacts of Holocaust education, but the work of Cowan and Maitles deserves mention as it is one of very few longitudinal studies to establish a link between Holocaust education and change in student attitudes.⁴⁴ Their

⁴¹ Alba, "Holocaust History," 614.

⁴² Paula Cowan and Henry Maitles, *Understanding and Teaching Holocaust Education* (Sage, 2017), 25.

⁴³ Tracey Petersen, "Moving beyond the toolbox: teaching human rights through teaching the Holocaust in post-apartheid South Africa," *Intercultural Education* 21 (2010), 28.

⁴⁴ Paula Cowan and Henry Maitles, "Does Holocaust education produce better citizens?," *Educational Review* 59, no.2 (May 2007): 115-130. An earlier study by Gordon, et al, examined tertiary students in the US but there were issues with the selection of participants which render this study of little use in comparing attitudinal shifts between

research established that students who had been taught a unit on the Holocaust developed and retained more tolerant attitudes towards minorities in Scottish society. In their conclusions, they summed this up by saying “There is evidence... that the core group had stronger positive values, were more tolerant and were more disposed towards active citizenship by their understanding of individual responsibility towards racism.”⁴⁵ Clearly this is an area demanding additional research. If Holocaust education is to be instrumentalised in the fight against racism and intolerance, as so many stakeholders believe it should be, then there needs to be research establishing, firstly, if this can be achieved and if so, what content and pedagogies will best serve this rationale.

Holocaust education in diverse classrooms

Sydney schools, particularly those in western Sydney, are not unique in their often diverse classrooms. Other nations, which have seen a surge in migration since the second half of the twentieth century, have also had to accommodate a wide range of learning styles associated with a diverse mix of religions and ethnicities. It has not always been the case that educators have been able to make appropriate adjustments that genuinely reflect the background of the students, particularly when teaching a topic that is as confronting and emotive as the Holocaust. There has been very little research completed on the specific challenges of teaching about the Holocaust in what is broadly defined as multicultural settings, although there has been more than a passing interest shown by researchers in the teaching of the Holocaust to Muslim students, an area which is treated separately below. Thus far, the most substantial work in the multicultural area (outside of Suzanne Rutland’s work in Australia) has come from Elke Gryglewski⁴⁶ and Debora Hinderleiter Ortloff,⁴⁷ both working in German settings, Geoffrey Short in England⁴⁸ and Günther Jikeli’s European study.⁴⁹ The lack of research in this area has led to a deficit of concrete knowledge relating to how teachers can best adapt their lessons on the Holocaust to students from diverse backgrounds, including students with traumatic pasts.

control and experimental groups. See Stacy Gordon, et al, “The effects of Holocaust education on students’ level of antisemitism,” *Educational Research Quarterly* 27, no.3 (March 2004): 58-71.

⁴⁵ Cowan and Maitles, “Does Holocaust education produce better citizens?” 128.

⁴⁶ Elke Gryglewski, “Teaching about the Holocaust in multicultural societies: appreciating the learner,” *Intercultural Education* 21 (2010): 41-49.

⁴⁷ Debora Hinderleiter Ortloff, “They Think It Is Funny to Call Us Nazis”: Holocaust Education and Multicultural Education in a Diverse Germany,” in *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*, ed. Zehavit Gross and Doyle Stevick (Springer 2015), 209-223.

⁴⁸ Short, “Lessons of the Holocaust” and “Failing to Learn from the Holocaust.”

⁴⁹ Günther Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism: Why Young Urban Males Say They Don’t Like Jews* (Bloomington, 2015).

The focus on the importance of knowing and respecting students' diverse backgrounds in the context of Holocaust education is at the centre of Elke Gryglewski's research. One of the first researchers to document the challenges and opportunities that arise from teaching about the Holocaust in multicultural settings, Gryglewski was formerly a member of the education team at Wannsee House in Berlin, Germany. In some respects, the position of ethnically diverse students in Germany mirrors the experience of similar students in Australia, particularly in Berlin and Munich, though of course there are some stark differences in context. Gryglewski says that in Germany, there is a 'national' approach to Holocaust education "which implies that German pupils need to learn about this history because their parents and grandparents were the ones responsible for the crimes committed during the Nazi period."⁵⁰ Gryglewski points out that German students from diverse backgrounds will not necessarily make this connection as their ancestors may not have been resident in Germany during or even in the aftermath of World War II. Germany has become a multicultural society, though much later than Australia and without the history of successive waves of immigration that Australia has experienced. "It is not uncommon," according to Gryglewski, "for those in the education field to treat such students, especially those with a Turkish or Arabic background, as though they do not fully belong to German society."⁵¹ This view of non-ethnic Germans, even those who have lived in Germany for three generations or more, as outsiders is also noted by Hinderleiter Ortloff.

The result is a range of classroom student behaviours in Berlin schools not dissimilar to those described by Suzanne Rutland among young Muslim boys in south-west Sydney, where student language is disruptive and often difficult to control, and even threatening behaviour is commonplace.⁵² Gryglewski says that, in the German context, it would be an error to assume that "every 'problematic' reaction by youths with a non-ethnic German background – specifically with a Turkish or Arabic background – is evidence of their refusal to deal with this part of German history."⁵³

In many cases a young person's refusal to engage appropriately with the history of National Socialism is simply a provocation. Young people in Germany are acutely aware of the fact that mainstream discourse attaches very special significance to this particular period in German

⁵⁰ Gryglewski, "Teaching about the Holocaust," 41.

⁵¹ Gryglewski, "Teaching about the Holocaust," 42.

⁵² Suzanne Rutland, "Creating effective Holocaust education programmes for government schools with large Muslim populations in Sydney," *Prospects* 40 (2010): 75-91.

⁵³ Gryglewski, "Teaching about the Holocaust," 46.

history. Thus for many youths, whether they have an ethnic German background or not, reacting in a manner other than that expected by their teachers and other educators is a perfect opportunity to provoke those adults.⁵⁴

The difficulties of learning about the Holocaust as an “outsider” in Germany is explained by Hinderleiter Ortloff in some detail:

First, the idea of the Holocaust and shame is put forward, especially by the teachers, but also in more subtle ways in the textbooks, as something uniquely German. Non-ethnic Germans cannot be included in this education because their ethnicity bars them from engaging in the shame discussion. Violence in the textbooks was depicted as perpetrated by Germans, but the victims’ voices were, for the most part, absent. Non-ethnic Germans were also absent as perpetrators. Shame and guilt over xenophobia and violence were held as uniquely the purview of ethnic Germans.⁵⁵

Hinderleiter Ortloff does not argue against the instrumentalisation of the Holocaust; quite the opposite, especially in German society which is comparatively new to the experience of multiculturalism. Rather, she is suggesting that “Holocaust education be able to include a wide variety of conversations and interrogations about what it means to live together in a diverse society. Holocaust education cannot continue to be just a separate educational goal, but must be an educational goal that contributes to preparing citizens to live in a multicultural society.”⁵⁶ In her respect for “a wide variety of conversations,”⁵⁷ Hinderleiter Ortloff is clearly in agreement with Gryglewski; both researchers seek to include otherwise marginalised groups in German society by modifying the strategies and content of History lessons to become more inclusive. These strategies are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

Geoffrey Short has expressed a similar view, suggesting that “students are likely to learn most from genocides that have occurred in societies similar in significant respects to their own... In those parts of the world that are very different politically, culturally and economically from twenty-first century Britain, students might derive more benefit from examining a genocide other than the

⁵⁴ Gryglewski, “Teaching about the Holocaust,” 47.

⁵⁵ Hinderleiter Ortloff, “They Think It Is Funny to Call Us Nazis,” 219.

⁵⁶ Hinderleiter Ortloff, “They Think It Is Funny to Call Us Nazis,” 219.

⁵⁷ Hinderleiter Ortloff, “They Think It Is Funny to Call Us Nazis,” 219.

Holocaust.”⁵⁸ For Gryglewski and Hinderleiter Ortloff, this means that when working with students with non-German ethnicity, they adopt an approach that values and respects the learner’s past and gives them opportunities to share their own family history, which will often be very different to the history of their ethnic German peers.

The contrary view, that the Holocaust should be taught as a singular event, regardless of the background of the learner, is one expressed by Doron Avraham from Bar Ilan University. This view was echoed by a number of teachers in the original questionnaire conducted for this current research project, who believed that the Holocaust should be taught in the same way – as an historical event – to all students. Drawing on his experience from teaching at Yad Vashem, Avraham says that “teaching the Holocaust in multicultural classrooms and in places which have experienced mass violence raises the question of whether specific methods of teaching are required.”⁵⁹ He then explores two possible answers to this question: “That Holocaust education... should facilitate the creation of parallels and similarities between past events and the experiences of the learners,” or that educators should adopt “a historicist approach, which studies and comprehends each event in its own particular context.” His clear preference is for this latter approach, which stands in stark contrast to the strategies suggested by Gryglewski and Ortloff, and “focuses on the subject matter and much less on the identity of the learners.”⁶⁰

Avraham’s views, while supported by extensive first-hand experience at Yad Vashem, are not supported by the limited research in this area and his argument that “historical events... should be introduced in the same way to every group, excluding the natural criteria of age-appropriateness”⁶¹ is difficult to sustain. He believes that strategies, resources and content should be the same, regardless of the background of the learner, but should also be diverse in the examination of victims, bystanders, perpetrators and rescuers. It is very much a historicist approach that he espouses, where the educator should not “lose the broader view, that of the objective circumstances – relating to political, social and other relevant developments – the same circumstances within which a specific event attains its historical significance.”⁶² Only after a thorough study of the Holocaust should similarities and parallels to other events be considered, he says, when students have sufficient content knowledge to make meaningful connections. This approach perhaps works well in

⁵⁸ Short, “Lessons of the Holocaust,” 286.

⁵⁹ Doron Avraham, “The problem with using historical parallels as a method in Holocaust and genocide teaching,” *Intercultural Education* 21, no.S1 (2010): 33.

⁶⁰ Avraham, “The problem with using historical parallels,” 33.

⁶¹ Avraham, “The problem with using historical parallels,” 39.

⁶² Avraham, “The problem with using historical parallels,” 39.

classrooms of relatively high achieving, homogeneous students, where literacy and critical thinking skills are well developed, and in less diverse classrooms where there are shared histories and cultures. In the multicultural classrooms of western Sydney, however, it is an approach that presents significant difficulties which are explored later.

Teaching the Holocaust to Muslim students

In this current research project, respondents made few comments about the challenges of teaching the Holocaust in diverse classrooms, even where the class included significant numbers of students with traumatic pasts. The exception was those teachers who were employed in government secondary co-ed and boys' schools with significant numbers of Arabic-speaking students. For this reason, the debate over teaching the Holocaust to Muslim students is considered separately here. Overall, the British research has explicitly rejected the suggestion that teaching the Holocaust to Muslim students represents a difficult challenge. This is in contrast to research conducted in France, Germany and Sweden, where a number of researchers have shown that antisemitism is not only more entrenched among Muslim students, but that males are almost exclusively the perpetrators of antisemitic comments and actions in the classroom.⁶³

A number of British researchers have found that there are no significant issues in teaching the Holocaust to Muslim students in the UK. The research includes an extremely detailed 2009 report from the Holocaust Education Development Programme (HEDP)⁶⁴ as well as a follow-up 2016 report, *What do students know and understand about the Holocaust?*⁶⁵ Both reports found that British students' "attitudes towards learning about the Holocaust appeared broadly stable across gender, year group and religious affiliation. In contrast to regularly voiced concerns, Muslim students' attitudes did not appear to differ significantly from those of the full cohort taking part in the research."⁶⁶ The most recent research reinforces the view that British Muslim students do not

⁶³ See Günther Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*; Georges Bensoussan, *Les territoires perdus de la République (The Lost territories of the Republic)*, Pluriel, 2002; and Jonas Ring, et al, *Intolerance: Anti-Semitic, homophobic, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant trends among young people*. Living History Forum, Stockholm, 2004.

⁶⁴ Alice Pettigrew, et al, *Teaching About the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools: An empirical study of national trends, perspectives and practice* (Institute of Education, University of London, 2009). [https://holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-Master-Document-19-October-2009-HIMONIDES .pdf](https://holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-Master-Document-19-October-2009-HIMONIDES.pdf)

⁶⁵ Stuart Foster, et al, *What do students know and understand about the Holocaust?* Centre for Holocaust Education (2016). https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1475816/14/Foster_What-do-students-know-and-understand-about-the-Holocaust-2nd-Ed.pdf

⁶⁶ Foster, et al, "What do students know," 71.

represent a significant challenge to teaching about the Holocaust in the UK, but there is little attention given to the students' ethnic background.⁶⁷

There are a number of possible explanations for the apparent differences between the European and British research. The 2009 HEDP report comprised a 54-question online survey completed by over 2000 teachers, followed by interviews with 68 teachers. The study provided invaluable data on teacher knowledge of the Holocaust, teacher aims and their experiences in the classroom. Yet, despite its apparent breadth and depth, the HEDP study provided little data about the challenges faced by teachers, perhaps because it offered no opportunities for respondents to describe these challenges via the online survey. Nor were there any questions about student and school demographics that might have allowed researchers to measure the engagement with Holocaust education of differing cultural, language and religious groups. As a result, the HEDP online study found no substantial evidence of resistance to learning about the Holocaust amongst any cultural, ethnic or religious group of students; nor did it find direct evidence of antisemitism or racism amongst students. This issue was directly addressed in the report when it stated that there was a “problematic and growing perception that students from specific national/religious backgrounds are resistant to learning about the Holocaust”⁶⁸ but the authors believed that “the data gathered through both the HEDP survey and follow-up interviews does not reflect that this is the case. Indeed, a number of teachers in both the survey and interview made an explicit point to reject such an idea.”⁶⁹

One should be cautious in using the online stage of the HEDP study to demonstrate the absence of resistance to Holocaust education amongst any specific groups in Britain. The questions were simply not framed to elicit responses of this nature. The qualitative phase of the study, however, did reveal a number of interesting comments and some teachers believed that “antisemitism and/or Holocaust denial ‘might be a potential’ issue among certain groups of students, but very few reported having any direct experience of this.”⁷⁰ Other teachers suggested that prejudice and racism could be challenges, but the form and frequency of these challenges were not explained.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Alice Pettigrew, “Muslim students and the Holocaust in England’s secondary schools: ‘Reluctant learners’ or constructed controversies?” in *Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies*. Eds. Stuart Foster, et al, University College London Press, 2020.

⁶⁸ Foster, et al, “What do students know,” 93.

⁶⁹ Foster, et al, “What do students know,” 93.

⁷⁰ Foster, et al, “What do students know,” 93.

⁷¹ Foster, et al, “What do students know,” 93-94.

Alice Pettigrew has addressed the issues raised earlier about the HEDP research, a project she was involved in. Writing in *Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies*, Pettigrew confronted the debate directly: “Muslim students’ responses to learning about the Holocaust are regularly presented as ‘a challenge’ and often framed in terms of ‘controversy’.”⁷² She warns, however, that it is of considerable importance that both teachers and educational researchers avoid alarmist over-generalisations and resist essentialist ‘explanations’ that overdetermine the significance of ‘Muslimness’. Pettigrew’s work is one of the most substantial contributions to this debate and it suggests a number of lines for further investigation. She does not reject outright that instances of Muslim antisemitism may disrupt teaching about the Holocaust, indeed she accepts that “in some contexts” it may be a problem in the classroom when “students identified as Muslim may express antipathy, resentment or hostility towards learning about the Holocaust.”⁷³ But on the whole, in Pettigrew’s view, the problem has been overstated and even sensationalised in the British media.

Pettigrew’s view is supported by Geoffrey Short, who found that there are no significant issues in teaching the Holocaust to Muslim students in the UK. Short points out that, given the widespread antisemitism amongst Muslims in British society, “it might reasonably be assumed that a significant proportion of Muslim students will respond to lessons on the Holocaust in ways likely to cause their teachers some anxiety.”⁷⁴ But this assumption, he says, is not grounded in evidence. His small-scale study of 15 schools of predominantly Muslim students found that “contrary to expectation, antisemitism did not pose a major difficulty for most teachers. The students generally responded appropriately, clearly distinguishing between current events in the Middle East (where their sympathies understandably lie with the Palestinians) and the fate of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.”⁷⁵

In his later published research, Short’s views on English Muslim students had changed little but had become somewhat more nuanced: “Muslim youth are not a monolithic entity but are divided in their attitude towards learning about the Holocaust. While the majority are likely to have encountered antisemitic sentiments in the course of growing up, the experience in many cases does

⁷² Alice Pettigrew, “Muslim students and the Holocaust in England’s secondary schools: ‘Reluctant learners’ or constructed controversies?” in *Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies*, ed. Stuart Foster, Andy Pearce and Alice Pettigrew, (UCL Press 2020), 171.

⁷³ Pettigrew, “Muslim students,” 176.

⁷⁴ Geoffrey Short, “Teaching the Holocaust in Predominantly Muslim Schools,” *Holocaust Studies* 14, no.2 (2008): 97.

⁷⁵ Short, “Teaching the Holocaust,” 108.

not seem to have impacted adversely on their willingness to learn about the Holocaust.”⁷⁶ But he was careful to add a warning to his assessment: “No matter how amenable some Muslim students might be to learning about the Holocaust, teachers ought to be prepared for a hostile reaction from others.”⁷⁷ This warning for teachers does suggest that his earlier optimism about Muslim learners had become at least a little subdued by subsequent research and media reports.

Short’s views about Muslim students’ engagement with learning about the Holocaust would appear at first to be at odds with a survey conducted in the UK during 2006 that showed only “one third of 1,000 Muslims interviewed believe the Holocaust happened in the way that history teaches and 17% believed it had been exaggerated, although just 2% believed the Holocaust did not happen at all.”⁷⁸ Short’s work, however, suggests that Muslim students are able to put aside their antisemitism, if they hold such ideas, during a study of the Holocaust. He found that most of the teachers interviewed said that students in their schools were responsive to learning about the Holocaust, although he did find that in one of the schools surveyed there had been severe issues in relation to antisemitism. Short also felt that in these schools, teachers could have made “more productive pedagogical use of examples of where the history of the Holocaust intersects with Muslim histories, such as the rescuers of Jews in North Africa or the actions of the Waffen-SS Handschar Division in the Balkans.”⁷⁹ In this recommendation, he was reflecting the views of Gryglewski and Hinderleiter Ortloff, and suggesting lessons should be tailored to reflect the history of the learners.

As noted with other studies, perhaps the greatest limitation in Short’s work is not the relatively small sample size, but the lack of a nuanced examination of the background of the students in the schools he studied. (In this he is by no means alone.) With only one exception, Short’s work refers to “Muslim students,” with no consideration of the specific branch of Islam they practise or the country from which they or their parents have originated. This point about extreme diversity in the Muslim communities is made most succinctly by David Feldman (and is cited by Alice Pettigrew⁸⁰):

⁷⁶ Geoffrey Short, “Reluctant learners? Muslim youth confront the Holocaust,” *Intercultural Education* 24, no.1-2 (2013): 131.

⁷⁷ Short, “Reluctant learners?” 131.

⁷⁸ Attitudes to Living in Britain - A Survey of Muslim Opinion, GfK NOP Social Research (2008).

<https://www.slideshare.net/brighteyes/attitudes-to-living-in-britain>

⁷⁹ Short, “Reluctant learners?” 129.

⁸⁰ Pettigrew, “Muslim students,” 185.

Muslims encompass a very diverse population which contains distinctions of class, education, sex, ethnic background, generation, religious practice and belief. Surveys of attitudes that are unable to take into account these potential sources of variation may prove blunt instruments.⁸¹

Michael Gray makes the point that future studies into Muslim students' attitudes to learning about the Holocaust "should employ larger sample sizes and engage in more systematic research with more sophisticated analysis. These must explore Muslim youths from different backgrounds, different ethnic origins and who have been exposed to different influences."⁸²

While it is difficult to reconcile the differences between the findings of English researchers and those in Europe, Alice Pettigrew's views are thoroughly well-informed by extensive, large-scale research. She has also made some perceptive and pertinent comments about the possible resentment some students could have towards learning about the Holocaust if the histories that are relevant to them are seen to be marginalised or even ignored. In this she is also echoing the work of Elke Gryglewski. However, it does appear she is perhaps too willing to dismiss the work of Jikeli, Short and Rutland when the explanations for the contrast in their research findings may lie in the diversity of Muslim student populations within and between countries. Put simply, there are substantial differences in ethnicity between Muslim populations. These differences may help to explain the significant variations between England, European nations, and even between Sydney schools in this current research project. Together, they strongly suggest that the more contentious negativity captured in studies by Jikeli and Rutland, for example, is unlikely to reflect a majority perspective and is less widespread than readers of only those studies might be inclined to believe.

In France, Germany and Sweden, large scale studies have shown clearly that there is a very real problem in teaching about the Holocaust in schools with large Muslim student populations which have originated from North Africa. (It is worth noting here that the British Muslim population is predominantly from South Asia, whereas the Muslim population in France and Germany originates mainly from North Africa.). Studies by Georges Bensoussan and Manfred Gerstenfeld reveal teachers who are intimidated by students and have given up on teaching about the Holocaust. Writing under the *nom de plume* Emmanuel Brenner, Georges Bensoussan published *Les territoires perdus de la République* in 2002.⁸³ The book is a collection of testimonies from teachers working

⁸¹ David Feldman, *Antisemitism and Immigration in Western Europe Today: Is there a connection?* Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism (University of London, 2018), 23.

⁸² Michael Gray, *Contemporary Debates in Holocaust Education* (Palgrave, 2014), 32.

⁸³ Georges Bensoussan, *Les territoires perdus de la République* (Pluriel 2002).

in the poorest districts of French cities, teaching in schools with predominantly North African Muslim student populations. The teachers to whom Bensoussan gives voice, speak of hatred and sometimes violence directed at non-Muslims, French society generally and most often Jews. Teaching about the Holocaust in these schools is almost impossible, yet some teachers still try; others give up. Bensoussan quotes one teacher who said: “One of my colleagues, a French teacher, decides to cancel the unit on the Holocaust that she teaches every year after a stormy session that is punctuated with shouts of ‘What the Jews do to the Palestinians is just like what the Nazis did!’”⁸⁴

The situation described by Bensoussan in the early 2000s has been seen across Europe according to Manfred Gerstenfeld, who ascribed the increase in attacks on Jews to “massive, non-selective immigration of Muslims into Western Europe.”⁸⁵ Gerstenfeld gives examples from Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden where Holocaust lessons have been disrupted and even stopped because of Muslim antisemitism. He also references a Belgian study of school students conducted by Mark Elchardus which showed that 50% of Muslim students in Brussels’ schools express antisemitic attitudes whereas the general student population showed a level of 10% antisemitism.⁸⁶

The most recent study on French schools, conducted by Ifop in 2020-21 for the Jean-Jaurés and Charlie Hebdo Foundation, provides more disturbing data: In the wake of the killing of teacher Samuel Patys by a Chechen Islamist, 49% of teachers avoid or minimise discussion of sensitive topics that could be seen to offend or anger Muslim students. These topics include sexuality, evolution, democracy and the Holocaust.⁸⁷ According to the study, which questioned 801 teachers from across France, self-censorship by teachers has been rising since 2018.⁸⁸ Writing on the online news website *rt.com*, Frank Furedi claimed that this was not a singularly French problem, and that “many teachers in the UK indicate that they are under constant pressure not to raise so-called ‘sensitive’ subjects with their Muslim pupils.”⁸⁹ Furedi failed, however, to provide a substantial

⁸⁴ Bensoussan, *Les territoires perdus de la République*, 65.

⁸⁵ Manfred Gerstenfeld, “Muslim antisemitism in Europe,” *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* 5, no.1 (June 2013): 195.

⁸⁶ Gerstenfeld, “Muslim antisemitism in Europe,” 195. The study Gerstenfeld references is by Nicole Vettenburg, Mark Elchardus, Johan Put and Stefaan Pleysier, *Jong in Antwerpen en Gent* (Young in Antwerp and Ghent) (Acco, 2013).

⁸⁷ Francois Legrand, et al, *An Analysis of Antisemitism in France*, Fondation Pour L’Innovation Politique and American Jewish Committee (2022). <https://www.fondapol.org/en/study/an-analysis-of-antisemitism-in-france/>

⁸⁸ Anon, “Deflection of religious debate in French classrooms on the rise following Paty beheading,” *Radio France Internationale*, 6 January 2021. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20210106-deflection-of-religious-debate-in-french-classrooms-on-the-rise-following-paty-beheading>.; Agnes Poirier, “Why French teachers are afraid,” *UnHerd*, 19 January 2021. <https://unherd.com/2021/01/why-french-teachers-are-afraid/>

⁸⁹ Frank Furedi, “Teachers who tailor lessons so as not to offend Muslim children are becoming a problem,” *Russia Today*, 7 January 2021. <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/511817-teachers-lessons-offend-muslims/>. It should be noted that there are issues of reliability with this site which, when combined with Furedi’s lack of evidence, makes his claims more than a little questionable.

body of evidence to support his claims which run counter to the views of Pettigrew, Short and others cited earlier.

The link between European classroom antisemitism and Islam was apparent in a large-scale quantitative study conducted in Sweden in 2004 by the Living History Forum.⁹⁰ Over 10,00 students in elementary schools and gymnasias from across the nation were interviewed about their attitudes towards Jews. Students' attitudes were ranked from "very tolerant" through to "intolerant." Girls were shown on average to be significantly more tolerant than boys in their attitudes towards Jews. Significant differences were also noted between Muslim Swedes and Christian Swedes, with the latter being more tolerant. Swedes of no religion were almost equally intolerant of Jews as Muslims. The survey also considered the employment of the students' parents, demonstrating a clear link between the nature of employment and antisemitism. Parents in unskilled work were much more likely to be intolerant of Jews than those in skilled work. Overall, the study showed that those students who are most likely to be antisemitic are male and Muslim, with parents working in unskilled occupations, highlighting a link between socio-economic status, Islam and antisemitism.⁹¹ These findings are supported by later chapters in this current research project which examine the links between demographic indicators and antisemitism in schools in south-west Sydney.

A later study of 5,000 Swedish teachers by the Living History Forum took these results a step further, examining the impact of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on Holocaust teaching in Sweden. The report's author, Anders Lange, found that 19% of teachers felt that the conflict made teaching about the Holocaust more difficult but 20% said they believed it made the topic easier to teach, presumably because it provided a "hook" or entry point for students. Just over 60% felt the conflict made no difference.⁹²

The most recent research has been conducted by Günther Jikeli. His research differs from the other works cited in this article in that it is focussed not on classrooms, but on young Muslims in wider society. Nevertheless, it is important to this research because many of the young people he interviewed were of school age and the views they hold reflect directly on their participation in classroom lessons on the Holocaust. Jikeli conducted 117 semi-structured face-to-face interviews

⁹⁰ Jonas Ring and Scarlett Morgentau, *Intolerance: Anti-Semitic, homophobic, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant trends among young people*, Living History Forum, Crime Prevention Council (Stockholm, 2004).

⁹¹ Ring and Morgentau, *Intolerance*, 50.

⁹² Anders Lange, *A Survey of Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions in relation to Teaching about the Holocaust* (Living History Forum, 2008), 62. <https://www.levandehistoria.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/A-survey-of-teachers-experiences-and-perceptions-in-relation-to-teaching-about-the-Holocaust.pdf>

with young Muslim males in Berlin, Paris and London. Females were not interviewed for “practical reasons:” any increase in the number of interviews was not possible because of a lack of resources and it was simpler to access male interviewees who were more visible and less reluctant to talk to the interviewers. According to Jikeli, six or seven interviews were initially conducted with females, “but some of them were worried that somehow their relatives would find out what they said;” male interviewees were less concerned about what others thought of their comments.⁹³ Despite generally having quite vague, decontextualised understanding of the Holocaust, Jikeli found that “very few interviewees were explicitly disinterested in the history of the Holocaust.”⁹⁴ Their most important source of information about the Holocaust was school and many had visited memorial sites or met Holocaust survivors yet there was limited understanding of “the ideological driving forces for the extermination of Jewry.”⁹⁵ Three interviewees explicitly rejected the Holocaust as an historical event or minimised the numbers murdered while others expressed some doubts about the Holocaust itself. A large majority disapproved of the atrocities of the Holocaust, but some were indifferent; few of the participants approved of the systematic mass murder of the Jews.⁹⁶ However, Jikeli makes the point that, despite the fact that “most perpetrators of antisemitic incidents are young men,” his own findings “should not be transferred to Muslim women without further research.”⁹⁷

In Germany, research that has been conducted by Carl Philipp Schröder suggests that there are two branches of antisemitism that need to be investigated: imported antisemitism, brought to Germany with Muslim immigrants; and antisemitism rooted in right-wing extremism. His study of over 6,000 ninth grade students suggests that “higher values of antisemitism are found among Muslims, but the main predictor of antisemitic attitudes is by far right wing attitudes.”⁹⁸ Schröder’s work has important implications for this study, as Germany and Australia both have significant immigrant populations, most recently drawn from predominantly Muslim nations. Both nations too have seen a recent increase in right-wing, neo-Nazi groups with clearly antisemitic agendas. Schröder asked the question: “Do people with a migration background have antisemitic attitudes more frequently than people without a migration background?”⁹⁹ The answer, when he applied a regression model, was that right-wing attitudes are a far greater signifier of antisemitism amongst students than either migrant background or gender.¹⁰⁰ Identifying the source of German antisemitism is central to an

⁹³ Email correspondence with Günther Jikeli, 19-20 October 2019.

⁹⁴ Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*, 61.

⁹⁵ Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*, 187.

⁹⁶ Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*, 190.

⁹⁷ Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*, 61

⁹⁸ Carl Philipp Schröder, “Antisemitism among adolescents in Germany,” *Youth and Globalization* 2 (2020): 163.

⁹⁹ Schröder, “Antisemitism among adolescents in Germany,” 170.

¹⁰⁰ Schröder, “Antisemitism among adolescents in Germany,” 178.

announcement made recently by the Federal Minister of Education and Research. Germany has allocated 35 million euros into research and education to determine the causes of antisemitism. This is at least in part a response to the 15% increase in antisemitic incidents recorded in 2020. University research projects will be funded to explore the reasons for antisemitism in schools, the justice system and on social media.¹⁰¹

Perhaps the most relevant recent study for this research project is a meta study of 136 publications conducted by the University of Gothenburg and Uppsala University which evaluated the effectiveness of educational programs in combatting antisemitism.¹⁰² This study has opened critical new lines of enquiry into the current usefulness of Holocaust education as a means of countering antisemitism. It found that in most examples of teaching and learning about the Holocaust, antisemitism was barely mentioned:

Anyone devoted to TLH [teaching and learning about the Holocaust] and engaged in educational efforts to prevent antisemitism should be alarmed that 60% of the available studies of the educational outcomes of TLH only mention the term antisemitism in passing or not at all.¹⁰³

Teaching programs that ignore pre-war Jewish life and the long history of antisemitism will struggle to humanise the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and fail to achieve their aim of shifting student attitudes towards tolerance for others.

There are some important final comments to be made about the research conducted in countries outside Australia, research that has implications for this current work. Firstly, the work of Carl Philip Schröder confirms that antisemitism is at least as significant a problem of the extreme right as it is a problem within immigrant Muslim communities. The annual survey by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) suggests that many antisemitic incidents in Australia may not be perpetrated by Muslims but by right wing ethnically Anglo-Celtic Australians.¹⁰⁴ As Chapter 8

¹⁰¹ Associated Press, "Germany Announces \$41m Investment to Fight Antisemitism," *Haaretz*, 4 August 2021. <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2021-08-04/ty-article/germany-announces-41m-investment-to-fight-antisemitism/0000017f-e946-dc91-a17f-fdcfd4e30000>

¹⁰² Isabella Pistone, et al, *Education After Auschwitz – Educational outcomes of teaching to prevent antisemitism*, (University of Gothenburg, Segerstedt Institute, 2021). https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2021-10/Education%20after%20AuschwitzX_0.pdf

¹⁰³ Pistone, et al, *Education After Auschwitz*, 89.

¹⁰⁴ The only firm data for this — and it is extremely limited — comes from the 2016 ECAJ annual survey which shows that roughly 45% of the perpetrators of antisemitic violence were Caucasian in appearance, with another

will clearly show, in Sydney schools there are three dominant strands of antisemitism that are not confined to any single ethnic or religious group. Secondly, the very term “Muslim” suggests a homogeneous community when in fact the opposite is true. The work of David Feldman, Günther Jikeli and Wolfgang Frindte, et al¹⁰⁵ in particular reveals the diversity of Muslim backgrounds, experiences and attitudes towards Jews. This diversity has not always been appreciated but, as a comparison of the British and European experiences with Muslim antisemitism demonstrates, there are quite probably stark differences in attitudes towards Jews within and between Muslim populations. Finally, the apparently gendered nature of antisemitism in particular and racism more generally requires further study. The Living History study in Sweden makes a clear assessment that boys are far more likely than girls to express antisemitic sentiments,¹⁰⁶ a view supported by Philip Mendes’ work referenced below and also by this current research. Of the teachers involved in this research project, only two suggested that antisemitism could emanate from girls. All other respondents pointed to boys as the perpetrators. The Swedish study also draws clear links between the profession of parents and the likelihood of their children to express antisemitic ideas; this potential link between antisemitism and socio-economic status deserves additional research.

Lastly, it is important to note here that teaching the Holocaust to Muslim students should not be seen as inherently problematic. Teaching the Holocaust to antisemitic students is, however, an enormous challenge, one for which teachers are rarely well-prepared. Whether Muslim students are inclined to be antisemitic depends to a large extent on a range of factors, chief amongst them their socio-economic position in society but also including their form of Islam, ethnic background, parental influences, peer groups and the expectations of wider society. Alice Pettigrew has called for further study in the area, seeking a less emotional debate:

If we are to move beyond ‘Muslimness’ as an insufficient explanation for a particular type of (potential) opposition to learning about the Holocaust, further, more nuanced, reflexive and responsible research and classroom reflection is required.¹⁰⁷

45% of Middle Eastern appearance. All perpetrators were male. Julie Nathan, “Antisemitic Incidents in Australia 2016,” *Times of Israel*, 30 November 2016. <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/antisemitic-incidents-in-australia-2016/>

¹⁰⁵ Wolfgang Frindte, Klaus Boehnke, Henry Kreikenbom and Wolfgang Wagner, “Lebenswelten junger Muslime in Deutschland,” Federal Ministry of the Interior, Berlin 2011. https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/62849/junge_muslime.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁰⁶ Ring and Morgentau, *Intolerance*, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Pettigrew, “Muslim students,” 192.

Indeed, this is precisely the type of research that is needed to explore the underlying causes of the various strands of antisemitism identified in this current research project. Muslim antisemitism is just one of these strands; all require further, detailed investigation. As Pettigrew highlights, the UCL study demonstrated that “gender, academic ability and socioeconomic class all appeared to have a more pronounced impact than ‘Muslimness’ on how students will approach the topic of the Holocaust.”¹⁰⁸

The Australian context

Within the Australian context, a number of scholars have examined issues in Holocaust education. Judith Berman’s work was focussed on Jewish day schools, while Avril Alba’s large body of work has, until recently, largely been confined to educational programs within a museum setting.¹⁰⁹ One key 2004 study that addresses general issues of Holocaust education is Sophie Gelski and Jenny Wajsenberg’s chapter in Kwiet and Matthäus’ *Contemporary Responses to the Holocaust*.¹¹⁰ It provides a useful discussion of the issues associated with teaching the Holocaust, especially the “interconnectedness” of historical, social and ethical issues. However, the work is flawed by a general lack of supporting evidence for its claims about teachers and their approach to teaching the Holocaust, claims that are not supported by the current research. To suggest that “many teachers lack not only the adequate historical knowledge but also the necessary professional background and training to teach the Holocaust” without any data or even anecdotal evidence is not helpful to debates on how we can best teach this topic.¹¹¹ Much of the chapter explores the contemporary debates surrounding the Holocaust, claiming that it is “imperative for teachers to understand the substance of these historical debates and the politics that underpin each author’s interpretation.”¹¹² But the authors do not explain why it is “imperative” that secondary teachers should be familiar with the most recent historiography, nor have their many different motivations for teaching about the Holocaust been examined.

Gelski’s unpublished PhD thesis, “The Missing Paradigm,” offers a more substantive contribution to debates about teaching the Holocaust and examines the extent to which teachers’ life stories

¹⁰⁸ Pettigrew, “Muslim students,” 188.

¹⁰⁹ Judith Berman, *Holocaust remembrance in Australian Jewish communities, 1945-2000* (University of Western Australia Press, 2001); Avril Alba, *The Holocaust Memorial Museum: Sacred Secular Space* (Palgrave Macmillan, (2015).

¹¹⁰ Sophie Gelski and Jenny Wajsenberg, “Teaching the Holocaust Today,” in *Contemporary Responses to the Holocaust*, ed. Konrad Kwiet and Jürgen Matthäus (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), 219.

¹¹¹ Gelski and Wajsenberg, “Teaching the Holocaust Today,” 219.

¹¹² Gelski and Wajsenberg, “Teaching the Holocaust Today,” 219.

influence their teaching about the Holocaust.¹¹³ Gelski argues that “History teachers who are directly (that is emotionally, privately and personally) connected to the history (in this case, the Holocaust) that they teach possess a unique form of knowledge (second generation emotional knowledge – SGEK) due to the distinctive nature of their primary socialisation.”¹¹⁴ This role of the teacher as one who is emotionally invested in the topic being taught raises important questions about how pedagogy and the teacher-student relationship might help to counter challenges to Holocaust education in the classroom.

The work of Suzanne Rutland is the most directly relevant to the current research, as it is the only study to directly address the challenges faced by teachers in diverse classrooms in south-west Sydney. In a qualitative study of 15 respondents, including eight high school teachers from eight different high schools in south-west Sydney, Rutland found a significant level of antisemitism amongst predominantly Muslim students.¹¹⁵ In large part, this current research project has set out to discover if this antisemitism is widespread across Sydney schools or if it is confined to a fairly narrow demographic in south-west Sydney. The teachers Rutland interviewed, two of whom were Jewish, “consistently testified to a pattern of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs among their Muslim students.”¹¹⁶ The students in these schools “often expressed an admiration for Nazism and Hitler; some drew swastikas on their desks and had posters of Hitler. They also made statements in class such as ‘Hitler did not go far enough.’ Many also believe that the Zionists cooperated with Hitler during the Holocaust in order to create a pretext to take Palestine from the Arabs.”¹¹⁷ Rutland found that Jewish teachers in these schools had been harassed by their Muslim students or they simply refused to reveal they were Jewish from fear of abuse. One teacher had requested a transfer as a consequence of the harassment and Jewish children had also been forced to change schools to escape the antisemitic bullying.¹¹⁸ The teachers who were interviewed also commented on the fact that, on the whole, other (non-Jewish) teachers in their schools were less concerned by the phenomenon of Muslim children’s hatred of Jews and that more needed to be done about it. One Jewish teacher commented, “I hear it because I am so tuned in to hearing it.”¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Sophie Gelski, “The Missing Paradigm,” PhD thesis, Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney (2010)

¹¹⁴ Gelski, “The Missing Paradigm,” 237.

¹¹⁵ Suzanne Rutland, “Creating effective Holocaust education programmes for government schools with large Muslim populations in Sydney,” *Prospects* 40 (2010): 75-91.

¹¹⁶ Rutland, “Creating effective Holocaust education programmes,” 81.

¹¹⁷ Rutland, “Creating effective Holocaust education programmes,” 81.

¹¹⁸ Rutland, “Creating effective Holocaust education programmes,” 81.

¹¹⁹ Rutland, “Creating effective Holocaust education programmes,” 83.

Rutland found that the students' homes appeared to be the source of their antisemitism. "In these interviews," she commented, "the teachers said that most of the prejudicial views came from the students' homes: students reported that this is what they have been told by their parents. The students experience a sense of disconnection when their teachers tell them something different about the Jewish people or the Holocaust from what they have learnt at home."¹²⁰ Günther Jikeli reached a similar conclusion in his study of European Muslim youth. He found that "the attitudes of family and friends play an important role in interviewees' own attitudes, and antisemitic views are often adopted."¹²¹ Jikeli reported that some of his young Muslim interviewees mentioned "approvingly that their parents and other members of their family possessed antisemitic views," but others tried to distance themselves from such views. There was a range of antisemitic views expressed by family members, from "open hatred of Jews and approval of the Holocaust... to more subtle negative views of Jews, such as warnings against a Jewish friend."¹²²

Rutland's work is supported by the findings of Jennifer Nayler and Philip Mendes, both of whom conducted more limited surveys of Muslim youth to ascertain their attitudes towards Jews.¹²³ Mendes in particular raised a number of important points about the lack of contact between Muslims and Jews in Sydney and the diversity of Sydney's Muslim population, a point that is taken up in Chapter 5. In a survey conducted in a single Sydney high school with a majority Arabic-speaking student population, Nayler found a range of negative stereotypes about Jews embedded in student attitudes. Mendes also supported these findings in his paper based on an interview with one teacher who had experience working at several schools in south-west Sydney. Mendes explained that antisemitism among Muslim youth appeared to be confined to males: "Antisemitic sentiment and expressions come almost exclusively from boys. It appears to be a form of male violence which is not mirrored by girls in the same cohort."¹²⁴ Mendes makes a number of points that are extremely relevant to this study. Firstly, Sydney is an ethnically divided city. Jews and Muslims, for example, rarely mix in schools, on the street or socially. Therefore, the lack of actual contact between the groups means that antisemitic stereotypes are unchallenged by reality.¹²⁵ Rutland makes a similar point, using a range of demographic data to show that "While Muslims and Jews live in the same

¹²⁰ Rutland, "Creating effective Holocaust education programmes," 82.

¹²¹ Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*, 224.

¹²² Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*, 223.

¹²³ Jennifer Nayler, unpublished survey, cited by Rutland, "Creating effective Holocaust education programmes," 234; Philip Mendes, "Antisemitism among Muslim Youth," *ADC Special Report*, May 2008.

¹²⁴ Mendes, "Antisemitism among Muslim Youth," 2.

¹²⁵ Mendes, "Antisemitism among Muslim Youth," 4.

cities, they have minimal interaction in neighbourhoods and schools.”¹²⁶ Secondly, Mendes points out that there are varying levels of antisemitism among Muslim students, ranging from the extreme views of Turkish and Lebanese Muslims through to the liberal views of Bosnian Muslims, from whom he has never heard any antisemitism.¹²⁷ An important point of departure between Mendes and Rutland is the question of gender. Mendes contends that “Antisemitic sentiment and expressions come almost exclusively from boys. It appears to be a form of male violence that is not mirrored by girls in the same cohort,”¹²⁸ while Rutland found that antisemitic sentiments were present in both boys’ and girls’ schools and that “Muslim students, both male and female, hold negative perceptions of Jews.”¹²⁹ This current research project did not assess student views of Jews or the Holocaust; it sought only to examine classroom challenges when teaching about the Holocaust. Therefore it is quite possible that both Mendes and Rutland are correct, as the girls in Rutland’s study, and this current research, may not be vocalising their antisemitism. Boys perhaps are more likely to be less discreet in their antisemitism.

Ultimately, Rutland offered a number of solutions to the issues inherent in teaching about the Holocaust in some Sydney classrooms (solutions that have not been forthcoming from all researchers). She found that for Holocaust education to be effective in schools with a significant Muslim population, the topic could be incorporated into an anti-racism curriculum that is adapted to the needs of the specific school. Teacher education, pre-service and ongoing professional development, are essential and principals should “ensure that the Holocaust is taught within the school’s religious and ethnic context.”¹³⁰ Echoing the views of Elke Gryglewski discussed earlier, Rutland believes that “it is important to teach genocides where Muslims have suffered, such as Bosnia, in addition to using the Holocaust to illustrate the evils of racism and conveying the message that Muslims, as well as Jews, could have suffered under Nazi racial ideology.”¹³¹ Drawing on her experience in developing inter-faith dialogue, Rutland demonstrates how the Holocaust can be instrumentalised to support an anti-racism education program that respects the background of the learners and acknowledges their own place within Australian society.

¹²⁶ Suzanne Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education: Exploring Different Australian Approaches for Muslim School Children,” in *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*, ed. Gross and Stevick (Springer 2015), 227.

¹²⁷ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education,” 227.

¹²⁸ Mendes, “Antisemitism among Muslim Youth,” 2.

¹²⁹ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education,” 234.

¹³⁰ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education,” 239.

¹³¹ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education,” 239.

Discussion

If there is one salient point to take away from a review of the literature on Holocaust education it is this: There is precious little evidence to support the claim that teaching about the Holocaust will lead to attitudinal shifts among students, making them more tolerant of ‘others’ in society and more likely to become upstanders. There is a great deal of hope that this is the case. There is even considerable belief that it is so. But unfortunately there are very few studies to clearly demonstrate that Holocaust education can (or should) do the things that have been demanded of it. Cowan and Maitles offer possible directions for such research, which should include large-scale, longitudinal studies to establish if it is possible to initiate change in students, and if these changes can be sustained over time. Recent work by the Echoes and Reflections Partnership also suggests that appropriately constructed programs can make a difference in college student attitudes;¹³² the work of Jack Jedwab in Canada reinforces this possibility.¹³³ But to date, there have been no longitudinal studies of secondary students to establish the efficacy of a range of Holocaust programs. Chapter 9, The value of pre- and post-testing students, offers some possibilities for how such studies might be constructed and also the limitations that researchers should strive to avoid. Importantly, however, the study examined change in student attitudes over a period of just five weeks when, ideally, sustained change would be examined over a much longer period.

If positive change in student attitudes is to occur, the research makes clear that a well-defined set of aims and rationales must be in place before the teaching program is constructed. Thus far, syllabus writers in Australia and particularly in New South Wales have not considered this to be a priority. They have not made clear why the Holocaust is to be taught and what impacts they seek from its inclusion in syllabi. The reality, of course, is that governments and curriculum designers demand much of Holocaust education. It is expected to be an antidote to racism, bigotry, intolerance and antisemitism, yet no government in Australia has provided educators with a clear rationale or set of aims on which Holocaust teaching and learning programs can be developed. The literature, especially the work of Totten and Feinberg, makes clear that without a rationale it is extremely difficult to construct a program that will achieve the aims demanded by government. Chapter 7 highlights this problem and demonstrates that despite their best intentions, some teachers have created programs that represent a serious disconnect between aims and content.

¹³² Echoes and Reflections Partnership, 2020 <https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/College-Survey-Summary-Article-September-2020-a.pdf>

¹³³ Jack Jedwab, “Measuring Holocaust knowledge and its impact: A Canadian case study,” *Prospects* 40, no.2 (2010): 273-287.

Finally, it is important to reflect on the comments about diversity and especially Muslim students made by Alice Pettigrew: “Gender, academic ability and socioeconomic class all appeared to have a more pronounced impact than ‘Muslimness’ on how students will approach the topic of the Holocaust.”¹³⁴ This research project will demonstrate clearly that there are many factors that drive antisemitism in the classroom. “Muslimness” *on its own* is not one of these factors. Indeed, there are other strands of antisemitism in Sydney classrooms that have no connection to Islam, each of which was revealed by this research. Yet the work of Rutland and Mendes, supported by the evidence throughout this thesis, demonstrates that in south-west Sydney there is a serious problem with antisemitism amongst Muslim boys in a number of schools. Further research in each of these areas is essential if the origins of these strands of antisemitism are to be understood and effective teaching programs to work with students are to be developed. The path to dealing with each of these forms of antisemitism has been suggested by Gryglewski and Rutland, who stress the need for teachers to know their students, to respect their histories, and construct teaching programs that foreground that respect. Such programs will need to be grounded in the current research and their efficacy thoroughly assessed in a range of settings to establish how teachers can best work to counter antisemitism in their classrooms. The need for further research in this area is great. As the next chapter will demonstrate, antisemitism and racism present major problems in many schools in Sydney and regional areas, problems that have the potential to impact the learning of all students in affected classrooms.

¹³⁴ Pettigrew, “Muslim Students,” 188.

“There are many entry points into this history and everybody enters through his or her personal story... To work on genocide and to think you have no particular personal reason to be doing this kind of work is pure illusion.”

– Father Patrick Desbois, *Yahad in Unum*¹

2. Methodology

The methodology used in the research for this thesis was a mixed method social-constructivist approach, which evolved into five separate stages. The study began with a quantitative stage, followed by four distinct qualitative stages. Stage 1 provided a wide range of data that was analysed and then used to inform the subsequent stages whereby subjective ontology underpinned the framing of questions that were provided to respondents. During stages 2-5, grounded theory methodology² was applied to reflect the ongoing evolution that took place in the research aims and questions.

Evolution of research aims and questions

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, a change in our understanding of the extent of antisemitism across Sydney and beyond, forced an evolution in the focus of the research so that not only western Sydney, but Sydney more broadly, along with some regional schools, became the subject of the study. This did not shift attention away from the original purpose but rather allowed a comparison to be made between the different forms that antisemitism might take in classrooms, variations that can be ascribed to the diverse student demographics across Sydney and regional New South Wales.

Further evolution in the research aims took place once the qualitative stage of the research commenced. A number of educators commented on the role of school leadership in either normalising or preventing the spread of racism and antisemitism in their schools. This was not an area for research that had initially been anticipated, hence there were no questions about leadership in the quantitative stage of the research, but the number of respondents who referred to this aspect demanded that it be explored further. Thus, this emerged as a research aim during

¹ Patrick Desbois in *Witnessing Unbound : Holocaust Representation and the Origins of Memory*, Henri Lustiger Thaler and Habbo Knoch, 2017, 56.

² See discussion below re the application of the work of Savithiri Ratnapalan in grounded theory methodology.

Stage 2 of the research. In hindsight, this would have been a useful area to explore in the quantitative survey of Stage 1 and could have provided useful insights into the reasons why some schools seem to be relatively free of racism and antisemitism while other, demographically similar schools, experience ongoing problems with these issues. Similarly, when this researcher began this study, he was sceptical about the level of antisemitism in New South Wales' schools, and he was surprised by the number of interviewees who listed this as a challenge in their questionnaire responses of Stage 1, also requiring a greater focus on this problem for the Stage 2 interviews.

Thus, the research aims for this project may be summarised as:

- Mapping the 'how' and 'why' of Holocaust teaching in New South Wales' schools to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening in classrooms.
- Describing the challenges encountered by History educators in Sydney when teaching about the Holocaust.
- Testing and understanding the extent and nature of antisemitism in secondary History classrooms across Sydney and regional New South Wales when the Holocaust is being studied.
- Examining the role that school leadership plays in normalising or countering antisemitism in the school.
- Examining the role that professional development plays in preparing educators to teach about the Holocaust and meet the range of challenges that may be encountered in the classroom.
- Exploration of how experienced educators meet the range of challenges that are unique to Holocaust education.

The meaning of “antisemitism”

“Antisemitism” is a widely contested term, not so much for teachers in secondary classrooms, but in the wider community and in academic circles. Even in high school classrooms, however, there will be some debate about what constitutes an antisemitic act or comment. Therefore, it is important at this point, then, to immediately settle on a definition that will be used throughout this thesis.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) has developed a definition of antisemitism that has been widely adopted officially including by the Australian government, and will be relied upon in this thesis:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.³

On its website and in its publications, IHRA provides a number of examples of actions and comments that could be considered antisemitic and expressly states that criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.⁴ This point is important in terms of the criticism that has been made of this definition and the institutions and nations that have adopted it. Günther Jikeli has highlighted that “the strength of the definition is in its descriptive examples that cover most contemporary expressions of antisemitism, and that can be used as guidance...”⁵ It is these examples, primarily those that define acceptable criticism of Israel, that have generated the most debate, yet despite the sometimes extreme predictions from observers such as Rebecca Ruth Gould, criticism of Israel has been largely unchecked.⁶ As Cary Nelson has pointed out:

Widespread commitment to free speech, academic freedom, and the IHRA definition’s own guidelines have prevented the fears of pervasive restrictions on speech from materializing, though a growing chorus of dire warnings and unfounded complaints about the Definition persists nonetheless.⁷

These debates and warnings, though they consume countless hours on university campuses around the world, including on Australian campuses, have failed to gain any significant traction in secondary schools. Respondents to this research project were not provided with definitions of antisemitism or racism. Where they have indicated in the responses that either of these issues were classroom challenges, they have done so because they have perceived that the behaviours

³ <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

⁴ <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

⁵ Günther Jikeli, et al, “Toward an AI Definition of Antisemitism,” in *Antisemitism in Social Media*, edited by Monika Hübscher, Sabine von Mering, Taylor & Francis, 2022, 195.

⁶ Rebecca Ruth Gould, “The IHRA Definition of Antisemitism: Defining Antisemitism by Erasing Palestinians,” *The Political Quarterly*, 91:4 (October–December 2020), 830.

⁷ Cary Nelson, *Hate Speech and Academic Freedom*, Boston (2024), 197.

they have witnessed meet criteria for racism and antisemitism, criteria that are entirely their own construct. It follows, then, that there is a possibility of teacher bias in their reporting, a possibility that is explored later in this chapter on methodology. No specific questions about antisemitism were asked of respondents in the quantitative stage of the research. The only mention of antisemitism in the questionnaire came in a list of 13 potential challenges that respondents could select (See Appendix i). Other options included lack of time, the need for professional development and parental resistance to the topic. Thus, those respondents who noted antisemitism as a classroom challenge when teaching about the Holocaust, did so by applying their own understanding of antisemitism and without undue prompting from the researcher.

Theoretical orientation

A social-constructivist approach was deliberately adopted for this research for reasons that are closely intertwined with the discussion below about the researcher's emic position. The highly personal nature of education and the relationships that are forged within the classroom between teachers and students means that there is a degree of subjectivity in all levels of this research. Each teacher who responded to the questionnaire or took part in interviews has brought their own unique perspective to bear on the questions of why and how we teach about the Holocaust. This has necessitated a somewhat fluid approach to questioning and data interpretation. As Judith Boyland has explained,

Constructivism offers a paradigm of investigative thinking whereby the researcher journeys with participants into a space of interpreted reality that is as personal and individual as each person in the collective sampling and as diverse as the multiplicity of lived experiences that are profiled... By being aware and recognising how one's own interpretations of lived experience can influence interpretation of the data, the researcher acknowledges, owns, and explicitly deals with personal subjectivity throughout the investigative process.⁸

This social-constructivist approach can be seen in the formation of the research focus, questions put to respondents (especially during the qualitative stage of research) and the interpretation of data. It is considered an ideal approach when the "locus of inquiry is to profile distinctive

⁸ Judith Boyland, "A social constructivist approach to the gathering of empirical data," *Australian Counselling Research Journal*, 13:2, 30.

patterns of constructing meaning within a specifically defined social context.”⁹ Included in these social contexts, according to Boyland, are individuals, families, workers and students and “multiple other social constructs within the community of human experience.”¹⁰ Using Boyland’s framework, the social-constructivist approach to research provided an ideal tool in this research project which operated within the clearly defined context of education and pedagogy.

Given the researcher’s emic position and the adoption of a social-constructivist approach, it follows that a subjective ontology underpins the framing of questionnaires, interview questions and the analysis of data. Moreover, this subjective ontology is reflected in the wide range of responses to similar questions, even from teachers practising in schools with superficially similar demographics. As Keith Taber has pointed out:

Teacher attitudes are not the kind of thing we can count (which needs to be taken into account if research presents numerical results comparing the frequency of different attitudes, as clearly this reflects an analytical process which has sought to classify attitudes in some way that requires interpretation). Eliciting an attitude requires interpersonal communication which is dependent upon developing rapport and on the state of mind of those involved. Attitudes may not be entirely fixed – and a teacher may present a somewhat different attitude sometime later.¹¹

These issues were particularly relevant for Stage 2 of the research. The task of the researcher, then, is to attempt to draw from this body of subjectively constructed data, findings that are both reliable and useful, and to develop through empirical epistemological conclusions that will support effective Holocaust education. Using a positivist paradigm, this research has proceeded on the presumption “that the social, cultural, economic, and educational world can be known and researched in much the same way as the natural and physical world.”¹² One of the issues of taking this approach, as Taylor and Ainsworth have noted, is whether the researcher is a “rational and neutral knowing subject” and, therefore, “whether knowledge

⁹ Judith Boyland, “A social constructivist approach,” 33.

¹⁰ Judith Boyland, “A social constructivist approach,” 33.

¹¹ Professor Keith Taber, Science-Education-Research, <https://science-education-research.com/research-methodology/ontology-2/>

¹² Carol Taylor and James Ainsworth, “Epistemological Issues in Educational Research,” *Sociology of Education: An A-to-Z Guide*, 2013, Vol.1, 246.

produced by such methods will (even can) be objective, truthful, certain, and legitimate, as positivists assume.”¹³

Ethics

Integral to the research conducted was feedback and approval conditions from the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney. Approval was required at two stages of this research project. The committee’s stipulations ensured that responses to all questions would be entirely voluntary, there would be no direct recruitment or remuneration, data would be securely stored and that the anonymity of respondents would be protected. This was especially the case in the second application, where access to student data was being sought. All teacher respondents received a detailed Participant Information Statement that explained the purpose of the research, data storage, options for accessing further information about the research and contact details to access the results of the research.

In Stage 1, the quantitative online questionnaire, anonymity was protected but respondents were able to provide an email address and follow a link if they wished to participate in the second, qualitative stage of the research. Respondents were advised through the Participant Information Statement that they were able to withdraw from the study at any point and that there would be no remuneration for their participation.

In the second and subsequent stage of the research, respondents were known to the researcher and communication was conducted via email and Google Docs. However, those participants were not identified in the dissemination of research results. They were referred to simply as teachers and their schools described in broad geographical terms, for example, “a teacher at a DoE school in south-western Sydney.” Broad descriptors avoided the possibility that any specific school could be identified, but unfortunately made the analysis and discussion of specific school demographic data challenging.

A further application to the Ethics Committee was made in early 2024 with a view to utilising data that had been collected from students by teachers at one of the participating schools and discussed above. (This data forms the basis for Chapter 9, “The value of pre- and post-testing.”) The History faculty at the school had conducted pre- and post-teaching questionnaires of 170

¹³ Carol Taylor and James Ainsworth, “Epistemological Issues in Educational Research,” 246.

Year 10 students to ascertain their prior knowledge of the Holocaust and their attitudes to bullying and minority groups in society. The same questions were asked at the conclusion of the 5-week teaching program on the Holocaust. Pre- and post-testing of students is an effective method of understanding the efficacy of teaching programs and practice and is a relatively common procedure amongst secondary teachers. Data collection and analysis such as this is considered an important tool in formative assessment and in measuring the success or otherwise of classroom pedagogy.

Students who participated in these questionnaires did so with the knowledge that their responses would be used to inform teaching practice but they were not aware that the responses would be used in further research such as this current project as this use was not anticipated when the data was collected. The lack of explicit, informed consent complicated the use of the data for this research project and required a number of key steps to be followed so that express informed consent could be waived.

The owner of the original data set¹⁴ gave express permission for the data to be used in this current research project. The Ethics Committee then needed to be assured that: there was no risk to students in the use of the data they provided; it was explained that it would be impossible to now seek consent; that anonymity would be assured; and that the data offered important insights into the efficacy of Holocaust pedagogy. Although these pre- and post-teaching questionnaires were not designed to be used in research such as this, the data still assists in understanding how students learn **about** the Holocaust and most importantly, what they learn **from** the Holocaust. It also points to the differences between males and females in the development of empathy. The data supports a number of contentions that have been made in other aspects of this research project and in this respect its inclusion was considered extremely important. The Ethics Committee thus approved the use of the data, provided safeguards were put in place to protect student and school identity. To protect anonymity, the school is referred to simply as “a New South Wales school,” and no quotes from students have been included in this thesis. While these provisions were important for students, they did prevent the use of correlating the data with any additional demographic and geographical information about the school that might have provided additional insights while direct quotations from student responses would have helped to illustrate the findings.

¹⁴ Copyright in the data set is owned by the governing body of the school.

Stage 1 – Quantitative Research

This first stage of the research sought to establish the place of the Holocaust in the classrooms of western Sydney: when it is taught, how many hours it receives; what aspects are taught; and the challenges experienced by teachers. In the last 30 years or so, there has been rapid growth in the number of texts written about Holocaust education and pedagogical strategies that might be employed to convey its historical, moral and personal complexity.¹⁵ There has, however, been very little written about what actually happens inside classrooms. Teachers as a group have many creative solutions to the pedagogical problems they confront every day, but so often their doors remain closed to observers. And while we may know how many hours of Holocaust education is stipulated in state syllabi, our understanding of the reality of Holocaust education – hours, age groups, strategies and issues – is limited to anecdotal evidence. Thus this first part of the research was constructed to understand what aspect of the Holocaust teachers are teaching, how much time they spend on this topic, the challenges they encounter and their aims in teaching about this difficult topic.

Question development

This first stage of the research began when History teachers across New South Wales were invited to participate in an online questionnaire through circulation of a survey link at the History Teachers Association of Australia National Conference, 28-30 September 2016, in Sydney. The same link was also promoted through *Teaching History*, the journal of the History Teachers Association of New South Wales (HTA). Teachers from other subject areas were able to respond to the questionnaire; their responses, like the responses of teachers from outside western Sydney, provided useful comparison points in Holocaust education. The questionnaire was disseminated via Google Forms to teachers over a 12-month period. Most teaching on the Holocaust in Australia is carried out in History classrooms — though significant teaching time also comes from English and Religion classes — so that the HTA membership was an effective means of communicating with the most engaged teachers within the profession. Additional respondents came via the Sydney Jewish Museum, which emailed the questionnaire link to teachers on its mailing list, and the “History Teachers in New South Wales” Facebook group, which shared the link several times. Based on date/time stamps on each response, the majority of respondents appear to have come via the Facebook group.

¹⁵ For example, Ian Davies, *Teaching the Holocaust*, Continuum, London, 2000; and Geoffrey Short and Carol Ann Reed (eds), *Issues in Holocaust Education*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004.

The questions in this section were modelled on a 2009 study conducted by the Holocaust Education Development Programme (HEDP, now known as the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education) in the United Kingdom.¹⁶ Its study comprised a 54-question online survey completed by over 2000 teachers, followed by interviews with 68 teachers. The United Kingdom study provided invaluable data on teacher knowledge of the Holocaust, teacher aims and some of the challenges faced in the classroom, but it did not provide respondents with the opportunity to develop in any depth their personal experiences of the challenges to Holocaust education in their classrooms. The current study differs in that it focussed on a smaller geographical area and the 31 questions were designed to elicit more detailed responses largely on the possible correlations between the challenges noted by teachers, with their experience, location, pedagogy and student diversity.

Questions in this stage of the research were not piloted on a small sample group as it was believed that the previous study cited above provided sufficient understanding of the efficacy of the questions that were selected. This proved to be sound reasoning except in the areas of pedagogy, where additional information would perhaps have been useful in ascertaining the effectiveness of teachers and teaching programs, and school leadership. As an example, teachers were asked if they used films in their classrooms when teaching about the Holocaust. While many answered in the affirmative, follow-up questions about which films were shown, how they were used and perceptions of student engagement were not asked. While this did not affect the validity of the data that was collected, it did leave unanswered questions about the efficacy of film in Holocaust education.

Questions were constructed to elicit information about the background of the teacher, demographics of the school's student population and the nature of Holocaust teaching in the school, including individual teachers' motivation for teaching about the Holocaust. The focus was on the Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10) mandatory History course rather than other opportunities in the school curriculum for teaching about the Holocaust, although one question did ask about other areas where the topic was taught. Responses to this question included Stage 5 Elective History, Religion and English. Detailed responses were invited in areas such as challenges to

¹⁶ Alice Pettigrew, et al, *Teaching About the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools: An empirical study of national trends, perspectives and practice* (Institute of Education, 2009). https://holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-Master-Document-19-October-2009-_HIMONIDES.pdf

Holocaust education in the school, student reactions to Holocaust education and teacher professional development. While some questions were entirely closed with a limited number of checkboxes, most questions were either a combination of open and closed or entirely open.

Questions in this stage of the research focused on:

- The background of the respondent (gender, age, ethnicity, religion, teaching experience and subject training)
- School location
- Student demographics (gender, age, ethnicity and religion)
- Teacher knowledge of the Holocaust
- Holocaust-specific training/professional development
- Teacher aims in teaching the Holocaust
- When the Holocaust is taught: subjects, hours and years
- Aspects of the Holocaust taught
- Approaches to teaching the Holocaust (strategies, resources)
- Challenges faced in the classroom and in the curriculum

Responses

The methodology for this research project was designed to maximise the opportunities for History teachers to contribute their thoughts and experiences about teaching the Holocaust in secondary schools across Sydney. Open questions invited longer responses, providing an opportunity that was accepted by the majority of respondents who provided detailed answers recounting their experiences of teaching the Holocaust.

By the time the Google Form was closed, 75 responses had been received, largely from teachers across the metropolitan area of Sydney, with a small number from regional areas. Data from the responses was initially stored on the Google platform, in accordance with the original ethics' approval, and later moved to the University of Sydney's OneDrive once data storage requirements had been updated. Google Forms is able to immediately convert data into graphs and tables, which makes the task of interpreting data a good deal easier than with other programs. However, it cannot establish correlations between the responses to various questions. This task was conducted manually on a spreadsheet, with each of the responses individually examined, coded and correlated to other responses. Such a method might be

impractical with a larger data set, but was perfectly reasonable for the 75 responses that were received.

This stage provided some of the most telling insights. For example, clear links were established between the gender of students and classroom antisemitism; between professional development, teacher confidence and classroom challenges; as well as between aims in teaching about the Holocaust and the content that was, and was not, covered in class. The analysis of this data produced a number of unexpected conclusions including the variety of aims in teaching about the Holocaust listed by teachers, aims which in many cases appeared to be unsupported by the content and pedagogies used in classrooms.

Participant anonymity

Individual teachers and their schools could not be identified in the data as respondents were not asked to provide this information. To protect their anonymity, and that of the schools, only demographic data and postcodes were collected. For the purpose of visualising the data, a Google Map was created, with each response located along with a description of the challenges that were identified by the respondent. This map proved to be useful in demonstrating the geographical spread of antisemitism and racism across Sydney schools.

Analysis of data

The analysis tools provided on the Google platform were ideal for a questionnaire of this nature as they immediately and progressively updated a summary of responses in line graphs, pie charts and bar graphs. In addition, responses were automatically loaded into a spreadsheet which provided advanced summary functions. Filters could be applied to examine data from, for example, specific types of schools or a narrow range of postcodes and create pivot point reports. All-text responses could be averaged to determine, for example, the degree of confidence felt by teachers when delivering Holocaust lessons. The real-time sharing connectivity of Google is one of its greatest strengths: it is possible for co-researchers to view results and analyse data collaboratively at the same time.

Demographic data

The decision was taken quite early in the research that, for the sake of consistency, no correlation would be made between the data accumulated for this research and identifiable school data. While the Department of Education in New South Wales (DoE) makes publicly

available its own student data, no such data set exists for Catholic systemic or independent schools. The DoE data gives a clear picture of student background, literacy and numeracy achievement and socio-economic position. When coupled with the data accumulated for this research project, some new insights into the causes of antisemitism might have appeared. Indeed, this could well be a fruitful area for future investigation. In the context of this research, however, it was considered that the absence of comparable publicly available data sets for Catholic systemic and independent schools made this an area that could not be explored at this time. Notwithstanding this, the quantitative questionnaire did ask of teachers certain questions about the nature of the student body at their schools, particularly with reference to ethnicity and language groups. This was done for two reasons: firstly, to test the veracity of the earlier findings by Rutland, et al, regarding Muslim students' antisemitism; and, secondly, to understand any specific challenges that might arise from teaching about the Holocaust to students from traumatic pasts, primarily refugee students.

Stage 2: Qualitative Research

During Stage 2 of the research, interviews were conducted amongst those respondents who indicated their willingness to participate in the more in-depth follow-up interviews and who had provided their names and email contact. These interviews included teachers from a cross-section of schools. Participants in this stage of the research self-selected to be part of the study; each teacher from Stage 1 who nominated for Stage 2 was included in this aspect of the study. As such, this group of teachers could be viewed as a convenience sample, one that provided simplified access for the research but may not be fully representative of the wider group that took part in the quantitative stage of the research.¹⁷ To account for the potential bias that might arise from this process, the responses of each teacher, when used throughout this thesis, are prefaced with brief background information about their school and students. The alternative to a convenience sample would have been to have made a random selection from the 72 respondents to the questionnaire, but many of these responses were anonymous and were not prepared to take further part in the research. Thus, only the respondents who indicated their willingness to provide additional information through interviews were included in the second stage of the research as required by ethical procedures

¹⁷ Nikolopoulou, K, *What Is Self-Selection Bias? Definition & Example*. Scribbr. Retrieved 24 March 2025, from <https://www.scribbr.com/research-bias/self-selection-bias/>

This second phase of research, using grounded theory methodology, involved interviews with a smaller number of teachers and was based on the content and nature of responses received in stage 1. Thus, the direction of these interviews varied somewhat and depended on the teachers' earlier responses. Notwithstanding the limitations imposed by Covid and explained below, this approach to the questioning of interviewees produced rich data that could be analysed in conjunction with Stage 1 data to produce a surprising range of new insights. This approach followed a traditional, or Glaserian, approach to grounded theory methodology that encouraged the development of new lines of inquiry as the research unfolded. As Savithiri Ratnapalan has pointed out, this approach to methodology attempts to "discover a theory that might be subsequently verified by further research."¹⁸ All of the 21 teachers who agreed to participate in this stage were asked to develop their responses to questions about challenges in Holocaust education. All interviews began with a set of standard questions. From there, some teachers were asked about their pedagogical choices, particularly around the use of historical fiction such as *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Graduates of the Gandel Holocaust education program and those who had participated in professional development at the Sydney Jewish Museum were explicitly asked questions about professional development and its impact on their teaching. Most were asked about the role of school leadership in responding to classroom challenges. There was a representative geographical spread of teachers at this stage with the exception of the south-west of Sydney which was marginally less well represented than other parts of Sydney. A significant number of teachers were based in western suburbs' schools.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the later addition of student responses via pre- and post-teaching questionnaires (discussed below) allowed for the effective triangulation of data that, when compared with the extant secondary research, ensured a high degree of confidence in the conclusions that have been drawn from this research. The result is a multi-layered picture of Holocaust education in Sydney and regional schools that has not previously been explored.

The use of asynchronous interviews

Stage 2 of the research, the qualitative interviews, coincided with the Covid pandemic and the range of restrictions this brought to research generally and school-based research in particular.

¹⁸ Savithiri Ratnapalan, "Qualitative approaches: Variations of grounded theory methodology," *Canadian Family Physician* 65, 9 (2019): 667-668.

As an alternative to the face-to-face interviews that had been planned for Stage 2, teachers were given the choice of responding through Google Docs, email or Zoom. Any prospect of a third stage to the research – entering schools and talking with teachers directly and even observing lessons – was clearly not feasible.

The efficacy of asynchronous interviews such as the ones in this research has been reasonably well documented by researchers such as Lokman Meho,¹⁹ Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart,²⁰ and Kateřina Ratislavová and Jakub Ratislav.²¹ The latter have defined this technique as: “A qualitative research method where information is repeatedly exchanged online between researcher and participant within a particular time-frame.”²² They have highlighted some of the deficiencies of this process, including the lack of human contact and nonverbal communication that would come from face-to-face interviews. For this reason, they suggest that interviews conducted in this manner should “be used for qualitative research only in justified cases and not only as a cheap alternative to face-to-face interviews.”²³ They recommend that asynchronous interviews are a “best feasible choice” for certain niche situations such as when a social group would otherwise remain closed or difficult to access or where the computer competency is not an issue for researcher or participants.²⁴

In the case of the current research, face-to-face interviews became difficult at best, and often impossible because of the pandemic. Most of the interviews were conducted via Docs, with teachers answering a variety of open questions and providing clarification when required via email exchanges. This negated the need for transcription of interviews but it was limiting in its ability to develop answers through the natural ebb and flow of face-to-face interviews. Nevertheless, this process ensured that respondents were able to provide information at a time that suited them and write as much or as little as they felt was appropriate. It is, perhaps, a reflection of the importance that teachers place on the Holocaust as a topic that so many were prepared to spend a substantial amount of time on their responses, with one respondent providing over 2,000 words and many others over 1,500 words. Such detailed, highly reflective

¹⁹ Lokman Meho, “E-mail interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(10), 2006, 1284-1295.

²⁰ Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart, *Internet communication and qualitative research: A handbook for researching online*, London, Sage, 2000.

²¹ Kateřina Ratislavová and Jakub Ratislav, “Asynchronous email interview as a qualitative research method in the humanities,” *Human Affairs*, 24 (2014), 452-460.

²² Ratislavová and Ratislav, “Asynchronous email interview,” 452.

²³ Ratislavová and Ratislav, “Asynchronous email interview,” 548.

²⁴ Ratislavová and Ratislav, “Asynchronous email interview,” 459.

responses would possibly not have eventuated in face-to-face interviews, especially in group settings where responses might have been modified according to the group dynamics.

Stage 3: Case Studies

From the outset, it was believed that this research should do more than identify challenges for Holocaust educators: it should also suggest a path forward to successfully meet the aims that have been set for Holocaust education by government, community organisations and teachers. Detailed examination of the teaching programs of successful educators was considered the best way to construct this path forward, as it would be in a form that was readily understood and could be adapted by other educators to their own settings.

As Arya Priya has written, when embarking on case study research, “the researcher should be well-trained to ‘bracket out’ her value preferences and preconceptions before going into the field.”²⁵ This might create difficulties where an emic approach has been taken and the researcher has an “insider” position, as has been the case in this current research. By the time the case studies were undertaken, the researcher had a clearly developed set of “preferences and preconceptions,” particularly with regard to specific pedagogies and responses to classroom challenges. Putting these preferences and preconceptions aside is difficult but acknowledging them is vital if research integrity is to be maintained.

The two educators that were selected for this stage of the research met a number of criteria:

- They were willing to participate in a time-consuming part of the research.
- They were reflective and articulate, as demonstrated by their responses to earlier stages of the research.
- They taught in quite different schools, with substantial variations in the demographics of their student body.

Both teachers were also graduates of the Gandel program and were active in the professional community of History educators. Given these attributes, it was clearly understood that neither teacher was representative of the wider group of teachers who had participated in this research. However, since they were selected as exemplars, not representative examples, this in no way

²⁵ Arya Priya, “Case Study Methodology of Qualitative Research: Key Attributes and Navigating the Conundrums in Its Application,” *Sociological Bulletin*, 2021-01, Vol.70 (1), 108.

impacted their contribution to the research. Each teacher was supplied identical questions that asked for information about aims, content, strategies, resources and assessment. There were also questions on the current political implications of Holocaust education in their schools and the conversations that take place at a faculty level. Further information and clarification was sought via email exchanges over a period of several weeks.

Stage 4: Pre- and Post-Teaching Questionnaires

The advent of Covid prevented any classroom-based research, but it did become possible late in the research process to access a valuable data set from one secondary school which provided data from the student perspective.²⁶ History teachers at that school had asked students to complete pre- and post-teaching questionnaires to measure the efficacy of their approach to Holocaust education. Pre- and post-teaching questionnaires are a long-standing strategy for teachers to assess the knowledge and understanding with which students commence and complete new topics, yet there is little evidence to suggest that this strategy is used widely in Holocaust education. From over 70 schools that are represented in this research project, this was the only school which used pre- and post-testing of students. Teachers in this case study sought to measure the effectiveness of their Holocaust teaching programs in developing students' knowledge of the Holocaust and the impact they had on student empathy for “others” in society. They did this by asking students to complete online questionnaires prior to starting their study of the Holocaust and then again at the end of the unit.²⁷ Males and females enter secondary classrooms, especially in Stage 5, with significantly different levels of empathy. This provides a major challenge for teaching about the Holocaust if one of the aims of teaching about this topic is to develop in students a social conscience and promote awareness of human rights' issues.

The use of this data set in the current research clearly had ethical implications which are discussed below. The original questionnaire was not intended to be used for this research project and the questions were framed to elicit information about the effectiveness of pedagogy rather than providing insights about challenges to Holocaust education. Importantly, there was no control group and there were no distinctions made between class groups so that individual teacher pedagogies or their relationship with their classes could be considered. For these

²⁶ The school has been completely de-identified as required by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Sydney.

²⁷ See Appendix iii for the questions used by the school.

reasons, the conclusions drawn from this data set should be considered tentative. Yet despite these limitations, there appears to be significant correlation between the voices of these students and the voices of the teachers who participated in this research.

Stage 5: Professional Development

The chapter on professional development is an example of the grounded theory methodology that encouraged the development of new lines of inquiry as the research unfolded. The quantitative stage of the research demonstrated that many teacher respondents had completed significant professional development around Holocaust education, either at the Sydney Jewish Museum or through the Gandel Philanthropy program at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. When noting the challenges to their teaching about the Holocaust, these teachers were no less likely to point to racism and antisemitism as problems in their classroom but, as one respondent noted, challenges could be seen as opportunities for student learning. In order to understand how these teachers responded to challenges, and if this was different for teachers who had not completed substantial professional development in this area, a set of questions was developed specifically for Gandel graduates.

The follow-up questions supplied to Gandel graduates asked them to elaborate on some of the ideas contained in the original questionnaire and then asked specific questions about their professional development and its impact on their teaching. That the Gandel graduates were over-represented in this research (Gandel graduates represented 21% of teachers who completed the original questionnaire) is an indication of their willingness to be involved in projects that support Holocaust education. As well, the fact that they were willing to also be part of follow-up interviews is further evidence of this.

Information from this group of respondents was obtained via asynchronous interviews, with questions provided either via Google Docs or email, depending on respondents' preference. Basic demographic data about their schools was collected but the focus was squarely on the final three questions:

- How do you introduce the topic of the Holocaust? What is the starting point for your teaching program?

- Have you ever encountered any antisemitism, Holocaust denial or other forms of racism in class while teaching about the Holocaust? If yes, can you describe the circumstances and your response?
- Are there any other challenges you have faced that are specific to teaching about the Holocaust? Were you able to effectively deal with these challenges?

These questions were seen as key to understanding the impact that professional development might have on the ability of teachers to deal with classroom challenges and reframe them as opportunities for student growth. In most cases, there was follow-up correspondence via email where respondents were asked to elaborate on or clarify specific comments they had made.

Limitations

There are clearly issues relating to the representativeness of the cohort of teachers who took part in this research. The teachers in this research were actively involved in their profession through the HTA or various specialist, private Facebook groups. Females were overrepresented, as were graduates from the Gandel program at Yad Vashem. The spread of responses from across Sydney did not match population densities, with the south-west somewhat underrepresented, though still providing sufficient data for valid comparisons to be made. These problems were a direct result of the anonymous recruitment method via professional organisations, which favoured teachers who are self-reflective, involved in the profession and therefore are more accessible and can be more easily recruited. Direct recruitment, in the form of personal or email contact with teachers, may have produced a more representative spread of responses but would have made those responses identifiable and therefore possibly limited the honesty and openness of teachers in their answers. The impact of this possible lack of representativeness is impossible to measure but it can be speculated that, while this research highlights the extent of the many challenges teachers face with Holocaust education, the true extent may be far greater. Those teachers who are not part of a professional network, who do not access teaching journals nor attend professional development courses, are possibly confronted by even greater classroom challenges and are possibly less equipped to deal with them. While this may be speculative, it is an important consideration for future research in this area: how should teachers be recruited so that genuine representativeness is achieved, while protecting confidentiality and the anonymity of teachers, schools and students?

The lower level of representation from teachers in the south-west of Sydney quite possibly led to one of the expectations at the start of this research not being fulfilled: classrooms with students from traumatic backgrounds were expected to constitute a significant challenge for teachers of the Holocaust, but this did not materialise as teachers of these students were not well represented by the data. It was expected that this would be an important thread to follow in the research, as anecdotally there seemed to be a significant issue with teaching the Holocaust to students who had themselves experienced comparable events in their lives. If this area of research is to be pursued, it will most likely have to involve direct recruitment of teachers with support from the New South Wales Department of Education to identify schools with significant student populations from conflict zones.

One of the additional problems for this research is knowing exactly what happens in classrooms. Teachers, typically, operate behind closed doors. The syllabus determines their topics, programs reflect how topics could be taught, and registers show when the topics were taught. Yet, the realities of classroom pedagogy and teacher–student relationships are typically unavailable to the researcher. Even if researchers do venture through the doorway and into the classroom, the dynamics are invariably distorted by their presence. This current research suffers from this problem as it was not possible to undertake classroom observations due to the pandemic.

As well, this study does not seek to understand, *from their own perspective*, the experiences of students, their relationships with teachers, their engagement with learning about the Holocaust or their biases. It seeks only to understand, *from the teachers' perspective*, the issues and challenges they confront when teaching about the Holocaust. This is partly due to the design of the methodology, which was always primarily concerned with teachers' perceptions of challenges to effective Holocaust education, but it is also a consequence of Covid which made classroom observations and student interviews. Therefore, it should be noted that whenever student learning, behaviours and diversity are discussed, these are from the classroom teachers' perspective and recounted using their words. Students may well have quite different views about much of this current research and the conclusions it has reached.

Potential participant bias

In addition to the already noted potential issue surrounding the representativeness of the sample of respondents who took part in this research, it should also be noted that there is the potential for unwitting teacher bias in their responses to questions about challenges to Holocaust education in their classrooms. In a recent qualitative study conducted in New Zealand, the researchers found some level of teacher bias in each of the classrooms in which they conducted observations. They stated that “bias was displayed through various nonverbal and academic interactions, and some teachers portrayed their bias by treating some students differently when the situation for all students was the same.”²⁸ A much larger study found that “teachers had negative implicit bias towards ethnic minority students, regardless of student gender,”²⁹ while a study conducted by researchers at the University of Queensland showed that “only 15% of teachers were gender-neutral in their behaviour.”³⁰

These findings suggest that teacher bias may play a role in determining some of the conclusions in this research, particularly in relation to the gender and religious-cultural background of the students reported to be engaged in challenging behaviours in the classroom. The possibility must be considered that some teachers are more attuned to racism in their classroom while others will barely notice comments that they consider to be minor and just “banter” between students. Other teachers may also be more likely to respond to the behaviours of boys rather than girls, resulting in accusations of gender-based teacher bias. However, the overwhelming results in terms of gender – as reported by the interviewees, racism and antisemitism were perpetrated almost exclusively males – would suggest that gender bias has played only a minor role in this study. In terms of religious background, where interviewees in some schools with significant Muslim student populations reported antisemitism, the results confirmed earlier studies conducted by Rutland and others, providing verification for this study’s findings.

Researcher bias/positionality

One final limitation should be noted: the researcher’s personal background, with 25 years’ experience as a secondary History teacher in both the public and Catholic school systems,

²⁸ Gamze Inan-Kaya and Christine M. Rubie-Davies, “Teacher classroom interactions and behaviours: indications of bias,” *Learning and Instruction*, Volume 78, April 2022, 1.

²⁹ Sabine Glock and Florian Klapproth, “Bad boys, good girls? Implicit and explicit attitudes toward ethnic minority students,” *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 2017-06, 53, 77.

³⁰ Rigissa Megalokonomou, “Teacher gender bias has lasting effects on students’ marks and study choices” <https://economics.uq.edu.au/article/2021/12/teacher-gender-bias-has-lasting-effects-on-student-marks-and-study-choices>

places him squarely as an “insider researcher.” Using the definition developed by Hanin Bukamal – “A researcher is considered an ‘insider’ when he or she shares particular attributes with the participants of the study” – it must be recognised that there is a range of advantages and potential disadvantages that comes from this position.³¹ As David Hogg, et al, have pointed out, “Research conducted within an organization or social group where the researcher is also a member raises important questions about the methodological and ethical decisions that need to be made.”³² In the case of this current research, the author’s “insider knowledge” has ensured that the original questionnaire was constructed in a form that was relevant and meaningful to educators and provided them with opportunities to develop their responses in areas that were considered important to them. The potential loss of objectivity that might come from this position of “insider” was negated as far as possible by ensuring that questions were neither prescriptive nor leading.

Writing in *Holocaust Studies*, Alasdair Richardson examined the specific issues concerning close-to-practice (CtP) research in Holocaust education by classroom practitioners. He noted that “What practitioners bring to CtP studies is their intimate acquaintance with the research site. They have a close knowledge and understanding of the practice under scrutiny, which can afford them distinctive insights, particularly in research situations where relationships are key to gathering the richest data.”³³ In this current research, the relationship between researcher, respondents and classrooms has enabled the development of a shared understanding of the challenges to Holocaust education that has perhaps encouraged a frank discussion that is reflected in the depth and detail of many of the responses.

Finally, there is the issue of researcher motivation – why this field of study? – which is harder to define. As Patrick Debois has said, “To work on genocide and to think you have no particular personal reason to be doing this kind of work is pure illusion.”³⁴ What particular reason has drawn this researcher to the field of Holocaust studies, and how might it have shaped this research project, is difficult to say, but perhaps the key lies in the PhD research undertaken by

³¹ Hanin Bukamal, “Deconstructing insider–outsider researcher positionality,” *British Journal of Special Education* 49, no.3 (2022): 332.

³² David Hogg, John Crossland and Kieron Hatton, “Insider or Outsider? The Saliency of Researcher Identity in the Context of a Qualitative Study of Early Help for Families Where There is Child Neglect,” Sage Publications, (2018). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526445292>, 1.

³³ Alasdair Richardson, “Introduction: Close-to-Practice research in Holocaust Education,” *Holocaust Studies*, 29:2 (2023), 172.

³⁴ Patrick Desbois in *Witnessing Unbound: Holocaust Representation and the Origins of Memory*, Henri Lustiger Thaler and Habbo Knoch, 2017, 56.

Sophie Gelski. A number of her participants were adopted at birth and many others spoke of the importance of family in their lives. The loss and often total destruction of the family unit in the Holocaust, is a loss that is felt most acutely by teachers in Gelski's study and is quite possibly one of the reasons they had been drawn to Holocaust education.³⁵ This emotional connection to the Holocaust, perhaps borne out of adoption, is one that is deeply shared by this researcher.

The Israel– Hamas Conflict

Towards the end of the final phase of the research, Israel was attacked by Hamas and the current conflict in Gaza and beyond erupted. This had an almost immediate impact on the research and the willingness of some participants to continue their input. One teacher withdrew in the days soon after 7 October, saying she could not teach about the Holocaust in her school at the time because the conflict had created such a volatile situation. Other teachers, who had been enthusiastic supporters of the research, became impossible to contact. One teacher reported that student numbers for their annual excursion to the Sydney Jewish Museum were well down, with many students staying away on the day of the excursion despite having paid and completed permission notes for the visit. At the same time, Gandel Philanthropy was forced to cancel a planned conference on Holocaust education because there were not sufficient teachers who were prepared to attend. Likewise, the HTA declined to run any specific Holocaust topics at its 2024 State Conference and a major religious organisation delayed indefinitely the launch of an online program to counter antisemitism. (The program was finally launched in early 2025.)

The impact on this current research project was significant. There was an expectation that valuable data would result from interviews with some of the participants who withdrew, but it was not a fatal blow to the project as a whole. So much data had already been collected, and the rapid rise in antisemitism post 7 October provided another avenue, albeit an unwelcome one, to be explored in the research. In some schools, including the author's, the war between Hamas and Israel had little impact on teaching, with students largely unaware of the details of the conflict or the relationship between Israel and its largely Muslim neighbours. In some other schools, however, student bodies were much more politically attuned and the conflict either

³⁵ Sophie Gelski, "The missing paradigm," PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, 2010.

made for highly relevant, meaningful class discussions or prevented teaching about the Holocaust entirely.

Discussion and conclusions

Throughout this research project, there has been an ongoing evolution of research aims, questions and methodologies. At times this was driven by unexpected findings in the data requiring new analysis, such as the clear distinction between male and female students in the perpetration of acts of antisemitism. At other times, outside forces, such as the Covid pandemic, required a change in methodology. Such evolution, perhaps inevitable in a project that has extended over several years, should be seen as a strength in the research, as it has provided opportunities for the examination of a wider range of challenges to Holocaust education in Australia.

Despite this evolution, a social-constructivist approach has been maintained throughout and it is perhaps one of the reasons why so many educators were prepared to spend significant amounts of time in supporting this research. There was an element of understanding that both researcher and respondent were sharing in the journey of attempting to understand the challenges to Holocaust education and to provide workable strategies and pedagogies that would improve outcomes for students. This is the strength of constructivism: it allows, indeed encourages, this relationship between participants in the research process.

Researcher and respondent positionality have been discussed at length in this chapter, a reflection of their importance in the construction and evolution of the methodology applied to this research project. It is not often the case that teachers have the opportunity to research the work of other teachers in such a sustained form as that offered by a PhD thesis. Such an approach could clearly present difficulties when accounting for potential biases and when verifying results. But the emic position of the researcher also offers a wide range of positive opportunities that have been embraced during the current research. Chief amongst these is the openness and frankness between researcher and teachers which contributed greatly to a revealing dialogue about the challenges faced by educators when teaching about the Holocaust. These challenges begin with the place of the Holocaust in the various curricula in Australian states and territories, examined in the next chapter, and the attempts by educators to do justice to this topic in the limited time available to them.

“There is simply too much in the curriculum to teach in the amount of time that schools allocate to the subject... the history curriculum is full of options. Teachers are expected to teach some core material and then choose from the options. It’s quite possible some options in the history curriculum are not being taught anywhere.”

– Dr Deb Hull, HTA Victoria, 2023¹

3. Teaching the Holocaust in Australian secondary schools – a contemporary overview

Introduction

There is a widespread belief that Holocaust education in all Australian states is mandatory. The reality, however, is quite different. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) developed the National Curriculum on which state curricula are based, but it did not mandate hours. States and territories have tried to “shoehorn” what was intended as an 80-hour course into 50 hours or less, squeezing the Holocaust to a brief mention in each state’s History syllabus. Teachers involved in this current research project consistently pointed to the difficulties of addressing all the important aspects of the Holocaust in extremely limited time. In the National Curriculum, Version 8.4, the Holocaust is mentioned just once in the Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10) course: “Examination of significant events of World War II, including the Holocaust and use of the atomic bomb.”² This solitary point, expanded somewhat in the syllabus elaborations, is repeated in various syllabi used in most states and territories. Few states and territories explicitly mandate the teaching of the Holocaust and none prescribe the hours that it should be taught. Victoria has attempted to do so, but has failed to implement the necessary changes. In New South Wales, the Holocaust is a single point amongst many: “outline and sequence the changing scope and nature of warfare from trenches in World War I to the Holocaust and the use of the atomic bombs to end World War II.”³ As in Victoria, there are no mandated or recommended hours for studying the Holocaust in New South Wales, though the topic is theoretically compulsory.

¹ Correspondence with Dr Deb Hull, HTA Victoria, 21 November 2023.

² ACARA, *Australian Curriculum, Year 10 History* (2018).

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/history/?year=12321&strand=Historical+Knowledge+and+Understanding&strand=Historical+Skills+capability=ignore&capability=Literacy&capability=Numeracy&capability=Information+and+Communication+Technology+%28ICT%29+Capability&capability=Critical+and+Creative+Thinking&capability=Personal+and+Social+Capability&capability=Ethical+Understanding&capability=Intercultural+Understanding&priority=ignore&priority=Aboriginal+and+Torres+Strait+Islander+Histories+and+Cultures&priority=Asia+and+Australia’s+Engagement+with+Asia&priority=Sustainability&elaborations=true&elaborations=false&scotterms=false&isFirstPageLoad=false>

³ New South Wales Education Standards Authority, *New South Wales History Syllabus*, 2012.

<https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/hsie/history-k-10/content/1049>

The Australian Curriculum in History

Many students in Australian schools will encounter the Holocaust as a discrete topic for study in History. They may also learn about the Holocaust through literature in English or through a study of Judaism in religion. History in Stage 5 is not a compulsory subject for all Australian students.⁴ Every state and territory in Australia follows either the *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: History* or their own curriculum that has been based on this document.⁵

The presence of a national curriculum in History means that there is the potential for a great deal of consistency in both *what* is taught and *when* it is taught. The reality, however, is that there is great variation between states. Not all states mandate the number of hours that each subject should be taught. Two states, New South Wales (50 hours) and Queensland (36-40 hours), and the Northern Territory (50 hours), mandate the hours that History must be taught in Years 7-10. Other states allow schools to make this determination and one state, Victoria, does not even mandate the “compulsory” course after Year 8. Based on conversations with History teachers’ associations in each state, the average hours that History is taught in Australian secondary schools is most likely between 40 and 50 hours per year, for four years (Years 7-10). Some individual schools may offer more hours while in Victoria, where History is not compulsory, there may be no History taught after Years 7 and 8 (Stage 4).

The problem with time and hours when teaching the Australian Curriculum in History was raised soon after the curriculum was drafted, with Stuart McIntyre saying that “The national curriculum was restricted to an agreement by States and Territories to teach the curriculum and report outcomes; it was left to the States to determine how it would be taught, by whom, with what support and for what number of hours.”⁶ States therefore are able to determine the number of hours the compulsory course should be taught. The problem was also noted by Dr Denis Mootz in his doctoral dissertation when he pointed to “a managerial determination to write a national curriculum document for an 80-hour course for each stage in a context where it was

⁴ In Australian secondary schools, students enter Year 7 aged approximately 12 years and leave in Year 12 aged approximately 18. Years 7 and 8 are designated Stage 4; years 9 and 10, Stage 5; and years 11 and 12, Stage 6. This research project deals with Stage 5 students in Years 9 and 10, aged between 14 and 16 years.

⁵ ACARA, 2018

⁶ Noted by Rachel Anne Bleeze in her Doctoral Dissertation, “National Curricula: A Comparative Education Investigation of History in Australia and Singapore’s Lower Secondary Years,” School of Education, Faculty of Arts, The University of Adelaide (2019), 215.

https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/126972/1/Bleeze2019_PhD_vol%201.pdf

known that state jurisdictions would allocate no more than 50 hours per stage.”⁷ Tony Taylor at Monash University expressed the problem a little more bluntly: “I think the indicative hours issue is ACARA’s biggest failing as far as the History curriculum is concerned. What it means is that time-tablers can squeeze the subject into a small corner of the curriculum.”⁸ The impact of ACARA’s decision to recommend indicative hours and not mandate a reasonable number of teaching hours has been significant for Holocaust education. The majority of teachers who took part in this current research project nominated time as the biggest challenge they faced in teaching about the Holocaust.

The Holocaust of course is one very small component of a very content-heavy syllabus and teaching it in any detail is not compulsory. For some teachers and schools in New South Wales, including a number involved in this current research, the only way they believe they can address all the content in the syllabus is to move through some areas extremely quickly. Based on its position in the syllabus, and the other historical events competing for time, it might have been expected that the Holocaust would receive at least between 1 and 3 hours in Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10). Yet the syllabus provides no direction about what aspects of the Holocaust should be taught and no direction for how it should be taught. Victoria is the only state that offers a detailed framework, which is discussed later in this chapter, but despite claims to the contrary, many Victorian students will not learn about the Holocaust.⁹ Most schools in Australia are unlikely to have time to consider the birth and growth of antisemitism, pre-war Jewish life or post-war issues such as displaced persons, the return to life of survivors or the Nuremberg Trials. This is borne out by responses to the questionnaire that forms the basis of this current research. The reason for this is that in all states, the Holocaust is just one aspect of the two world wars and teaching about it can be easily lost in the competition for class time. Despite this, the current study has found that many teachers in Sydney schools spend more than ten hours on this topic. Teacher choice is likely to be the determinant of the number of hours that any topic receives in the classroom; and in making this choice, teacher expertise is critical. Teachers will generally teach more of what they are comfortable with, so that pre-service instruction and ongoing professional development in Holocaust education are essential to embed the Holocaust as a significant and meaningful topic for History students.

⁷ Denis Mootz, *Towards a taxonomy: History teachers and History classrooms*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Western Sydney, 2014, 259. <https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws%3A28549>

⁸ Bleeze, “National Curricula,” 214.

⁹ Victorian Education Department, “*Holocaust Education – Delivery Requirements.*” <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/holocaust-education-delivery-requirements/print-all>

A new version of the Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0, has been endorsed by state education ministers and will be released according to timelines that have not yet been advised. The new version still contains one single bullet point on the Holocaust: “The significant events and turning points of the Second World War, including the Holocaust and use of the atomic bomb.” It also contains a rather misleading explanation of the Holocaust: “Development in the 1930s and 1940s *mostly in sites across Germany* involving the mass-scale killing of about 6 million Jewish people as well as Romani people, homosexuals and other people.”¹⁰ This is despite the fact that the vast majority of those murdered in the Holocaust died not in Germany, but in Eastern Europe.

The elaborations for this bullet point are much more detailed than in the previous iteration of the curriculum and provide greater guidance for teachers. There are three specific elaborations relating to the Holocaust:

- *Examining the historical context in which the Holocaust occurred, including anti-Semitism and Nazi race theory*
- *Investigating the scale and significance of the Holocaust using primary and secondary sources, such as survivor testimonies*
- *Discussing the short- and long-term impacts of the Holocaust on the Jewish community post-Second World War, such as coming to terms with the scale of loss, migration to Israel, Australia and the United States, and the creation of Yad Vashem and other Holocaust centres, museums and memorials.*¹¹

If teachers were to follow the new curriculum closely, and cover each of the elaborations in some detail, it would be possible to provide students with a solid introduction to the Holocaust within a sound historical framework. Importantly, they would be considering the specifics of Nazi antisemitism as a precursor to the Holocaust, including survivor testimony, and examining the return to life after World War II. In short, they would be humanising the victims of the Holocaust; this aspect could be strengthened by including pre-war Jewish life. The reality, of course, is that this curriculum will be adapted by each state to suit its own perceived needs and

¹⁰ ACARA, *Australian Curriculum, History* (2024) <https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/history-7-10/year-10?view=quick&detailed-content-descriptions=0&hide-ccp=0&hide-gc=0&side-by-side=1&strands-start-index=0&subjects-start-index=0> My emphasis.

¹¹ ACARA, *Australian Curriculum, History* (2024).

that there are no mandated hours for teaching Stage 5 History, let alone the Holocaust as a discrete topic. New South Wales has already provided its own interpretation of ACARA's Version 9.0 curriculum which will be used in classrooms from 2027.

The Holocaust in New South Wales' schools

In the New South Wales History syllabus, the first mention of the Holocaust was not in the content of the syllabus but in the rationale for the *7-10 History Syllabus* in 2003. At the top of the page was a quote attributed to Holocaust survivor Hadasa Rosenbaum: "How can we live together if we don't appreciate our own and others' histories."¹² There was no other mention of the Holocaust in the mandatory Stage 5 course or the Elective History syllabus which formed part of the same document. The inclusion of this quote, however, would suggest that there was, in the minds of the curriculum writers in New South Wales, already a nexus between the Holocaust, the study of History and aims that extended beyond simple content knowledge. The content of the syllabus, however, was very much focused on Australia's involvement in World War II and it is unlikely there would have been any room to even touch on the Holocaust as part of the study. Even in the History Elective syllabus, the Holocaust was not mentioned, though here the structure of the course would have allowed for its inclusion if teachers chose to do so.

Between 2012 and 2014, the Holocaust became a (theoretically) mandatory topic in all Australian state and territory History curricula as a result of the implementation of the national curriculum. Nationally, the Holocaust appeared in one bullet point – 'Examination of significant events of World War II, including the Holocaust and use of the atomic bomb' – and one elaboration – identifying key events in the European theatre of war (for example, Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939; the Holocaust 1942–1945; the Russians reaching Berlin in 1945) – in the national curriculum.¹³

In New South Wales, the Board of Studies (the forerunner of the New South Wales Education Standards Authority, NESA) included the Holocaust as a mandatory topic from 2014 when it released its own interpretation of the National Curriculum. The Holocaust was included in one bullet point: "Outline and sequence the changing scope and nature of warfare from trenches in

¹² NESA, *History Years 7-10 Syllabus*, 2003, page 8; the quote was taken from Tony Taylor's *The Future of the Past*, Routledge, 2002.

¹³ ACARA, *Australian Curriculum, History*, 2018.

World War I to the Holocaust and the use of the atomic bombs to end World War II.”¹⁴ At the time, a spokeswoman for the Board of Studies said “The Holocaust is now mandatory in the national curriculum History overview and will be taught in classrooms from 2014.”¹⁵ The verbs that were chosen to accompany the Holocaust – “outline” and “sequence” – meant that it was possible to meet the mandatory requirement by spending virtually no time on the Holocaust and with little if any explanation of the topic. The reality was that teachers could mention the Holocaust quickly and then move on to other aspects of the wars. This continues to be a problem in some schools.

Despite this, it was a change that was welcomed by community groups, including Vic Alhadeff, CEO of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, who at the time said:

I have been meeting with [the] Board of Studies and Department of Education for some time to discuss the notion that the Holocaust should be compulsory up to Year 10. Throughout our discussions, the leaders of both organisations have been extremely supportive of the principle of making Holocaust education mandatory. Our discussions have been very positive.¹⁶

Alhadeff explained that the Holocaust “teaches us that every generation owes it to itself and to future generations to cherish and, if necessary, fight to defend the sanctity of life, dignity and freedom.” But there were dissenting voices from the Greens, who believed that the Holocaust should not be afforded a special role amongst other twentieth century genocides. Their spokesperson, the late John Kaye, said “The Holocaust is rightly an essential part of the state syllabus but should be taught in the context of the other 20th-century genocides.”¹⁷ The broad positivity around the inclusion of the Holocaust in the New South syllabus is, with hindsight, difficult to understand, as there was never a requirement to spend any more than a minute or two on this topic while still meeting the requirements of the verbs “outline” and “sequence.”

Ten years after this change to the New South Wales’ mandatory Stage 5 History syllabus and the inclusion of the Holocaust as a compulsory topic, it is useful to reflect on how successful

¹⁴ Board of Studies New South Wales, *History K-10 Syllabus*, Sydney 2012, 90.

¹⁵ Anna Patty, “Study of Holocaust Mandated for Schools,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 December 2012. <https://www.smh.com.au/education/study-of-holocaust-mandated-for-schools-20121207-2b10k.html>

¹⁶ Anna Patty, “Study of Holocaust Mandated for Schools.”

¹⁷ Anna Patty, “Study of Holocaust Mandated for Schools.”

the change has been. In New South Wales, where the current research is being conducted, NESA mandates that schools will provide 100 hours of History in Stage 5 (Years 9-10), generally taught as 50 hours per year. The mandatory core study, “Australians at War,” would generally receive at least 20 hours and most likely considerably more given the emphasis that most History teachers place on Australia’s involvement in World War I and World War II. How much time the Holocaust is allocated is at the teacher’s discretion. There is no specific time mandated for study of the Holocaust. Teachers may mention it in the context of World War II or they may spend considerable time on it and even include it as an optional school-developed topic. But in some classrooms, as this research has shown, it may not even be mentioned.

In Depth Study 6 of the Stage 5 History course, the Holocaust is one of the optional topics that schools may develop and teach, but it is not supported by additional materials such as sample programs or assessment activities in the same way that other options are supported. There are, however, a number of textbooks that dedicate considerable space to the Holocaust and may be used in classrooms to support the optional depth study. Beyond the mandatory Stage 5 History, students may also spend considerable time studying the Holocaust in Stage 5 Elective History, religious studies, English and the senior Modern History course if they select these subjects. Chapter 7 examines the subject areas and year groups that may learn about the Holocaust in the current research project. Each of these areas of study is very much dependent on teacher choice and interest. As later chapters will demonstrate, there is a clear link between professional development and the hours allocated to Holocaust education.

Given that the Holocaust in New South Wales’ schools is a mandatory topic in name only, with no requirement for teachers to do any more than mention it, and no support from NESA to enable teachers to dedicate more time to it, it is difficult to understand why the 2014 syllabus was so warmly welcomed by Holocaust educators. However, a revised version of the History syllabus for New South Wales, to be implemented from 2027, offers a good deal more substance.¹⁸ The Holocaust is mentioned 16 times in the document and appears as two, much more meaningful, bullet points under the topic Australia at War (1939-c.1945):

- *The experiences of Jewish people and other victims in the Holocaust*

¹⁸ New South Wales Education Standards Authority, *History 7–10 Syllabus*, September 2024. <https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au>

- *The experiences of the Holocaust for Jewish survivors in post-WWII Australia*

Both bullet points, no longer merged with other events of World War II, encourage teachers to humanise the Holocaust and focus on the Australian connections to this topic. This is vitally important if the Holocaust is to be studied as much more than a significant event, and is seen as a potential vehicle for civics, citizenship and anti-racism education.

The optional depth study on the Holocaust is no longer just part of a list but in the new syllabus is a detailed overview of content, outcomes, concepts and skills. The content begins with pre-war Jewish life and antisemitism, and concludes with liberation, rebuilding lives and memorialisation. Again, there is a humanising aspect to the study of the Holocaust that has been previously missing from study of the Holocaust. This is a major step in a positive direction but of course, without an increase in genuinely mandated hours (not indicative hours) or a substantial decrease in other content areas, the Holocaust may still be squeezed into just a few minutes or at best a couple of hours in many New South Wales' schools. There is also no mention of aims in teaching this topic. If learning about the Holocaust is to be tied to a civics and citizenship agenda, this should be explicitly stated so that teachers can implement appropriate pedagogies.

The Holocaust in Victorian schools

The Victorian experience with Holocaust education has been complicated, confused and ultimately disappointing. Like all states, Victoria's History curriculum is based on the National Curriculum. It includes a single bullet point on the Holocaust and an elaboration with slightly more detail. However, in response to a series of disturbing antisemitic incidents (discussed in Chapters 4 and 8), Victoria has developed a comprehensive framework for teachers of Levels 9 and 10 History.¹⁹ This was accompanied by a series of government and community group announcements that created the impression that Holocaust education in the state was to be seriously improved.

¹⁹ Victorian Education Department, "*Holocaust Education – Delivery Requirements.*" <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/holocaust-education-delivery-requirements/print-all>

The headline on the *ABC News* website in February 2020 claimed that “Holocaust education becomes compulsory in Victorian state schools in bid to tackle rising anti-Semitism.”²⁰ The government press release on the same day said that “All government secondary school students in Years 9 and 10 will be taught about the Holocaust from this year, to tackle rising anti-Semitism, racism and prejudice in our schools and broader society.”²¹ The release observed that “While the Holocaust is in the current Victorian curriculum, it is not taught in all schools, and when it is, it is often not taught as well as it could be.”²²

On this last point, the press release was accurate. The Holocaust is in the Victorian History curriculum, but it is not taught in every school. The reason for this is quite simple: History at Levels 9 and 10 is an elective. It is not compulsory. The announcement from the Minister of Education made no mention of this and in the four years since the announcement, the government has not moved to make History compulsory. Therefore, Holocaust education cannot be mandatory in Victoria as claimed by the Education Minister and community groups.

The reality in Victoria in 2024 is that:

- The Holocaust appears in the Levels 9 and 10 History Curriculum, which is an elective subject
- A significant number of students do not do this subject.
- Four years after the major announcement about mandatory Holocaust education, many Victorian students still do not learn about the Holocaust.

According to the Executive Officer of the History Teachers Association of Victoria, Dr Deb Hull, the issues around Holocaust education in Victoria are “somewhat complex.” Dr Hull said that “the Holocaust is mentioned in one *content description* and one *elaboration* within the Level 9-10 History curriculum. There are no mandated hours for anything in Levels F-10, and teachers at these levels do not have to teach everything mentioned in the curriculum. The elaborations, for example, are only suggestions about how teachers might choose to approach the teaching of the content descriptions.”²³

²⁰ “Holocaust education becomes compulsory in Victorian state schools in bid to tackle rising anti-Semitism,” *ABC News Online*, 26 Feb 2020. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-26/compulsory-holocaust-victorian-education/12001214>

²¹ Press release from Jacinta Allan, “Strengthening Holocaust Education In Victorian Schools,” 26 February 2020. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/strengthening-holocaust-education-victorian-schools>

²² Allan, “Strengthening Holocaust Education.”

²³ Hull, correspondence, 2023.

The curriculum in Victoria makes a vague statement that students should be given an opportunity to demonstrate achievement standards but it does not specify how this should be done and, Deb Hull says, “As far as I can tell, there is no education authority in Victoria checking whether this opportunity is being offered to all students at a school.”²⁴ By Year 10, when the Holocaust would be taught according to the curriculum, History is an elective in most schools, which according to the Victorian HTA may constitute sufficient evidence of schools providing students with an opportunity to demonstrate achievement standards.

Complicating issues further is the fact that the announcement of mandatory Holocaust education did not come from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) which publishes and monitors the curriculum, but came from the minister’s office after consultations with various community groups. As Hull points out, “The curriculum was unchanged. To change the curriculum is a multi-year consultation and development process.”²⁵ Despite this, the Victorian Department of Education developed a policy regarding the delivery of Holocaust education in response to the minister’s announcement. This policy says that it *is* a requirement and that it should be taught as part of the History curriculum program at Years 9/10. Yet still, the issue of History being an elective at this level remains.

The Victorian HTA says it has “no way of knowing how many schools are aware of or are trying to comply with the new policy, and the VCAA and Department of Education do not have any process to collect that information.” It seems schools are trying to be creative in adapting to the policy by “hosting one-off guest speakers, or taking the whole year level on an excursion, or by moving the Holocaust unit to Year 9 if History is still being taught to all students in Year 9 but not Year 10, or by adding a novel with a Holocaust theme to the Year 10 English curriculum.”²⁶ Such approaches may well satisfy the ministerial requirement and the Department of Education’s policy, but they are fraught with problems if Holocaust education, especially if intended as a salve for antisemitism, is not integrated into whole school programs.

As discussed above, a new national curriculum has been endorsed and this will require Victoria to review its own curriculum. According to Hull, “It is possible that it will include further

²⁴ Hull, correspondence, 2023.

²⁵ Hull, correspondence, 2023.

²⁶ Hull, correspondence, 2023.

guidance for schools about what is mandatory, and how the word ‘opportunity’ can be interpreted. Or it might not.”²⁷

Student numbers are declining in History in Victoria and the History Teachers Association of Victoria estimates that the number of students doing History at Level 9 and 10 may be as low as 10%. And even for those few students who do study History at this level as an elective, there are no mandated hours for Holocaust education. This leaves Victoria in the position that it really does not know how many students are doing History and learning about the Holocaust. When she was interviewed for *Education HQ News*, Hull said that “Almost every school is now offering it [History] as an elective. There’s also no data; nobody in Victoria could tell you how many people are studying history at Year 10. Nobody collects that data, there’s no such thing. So, it’s quite possible that 10 per cent or less of Victorian students are actually still studying History at [that level].”²⁸

Some of the problems Victoria is facing with Holocaust education are not unique to the state, particularly with a content-heavy national curriculum. In all states, teachers and schools must make choices between content to include and content to ignore. “There is simply too much in the curriculum to teach in the amount of time that schools allocate to the subject,” says Deb Hull. “Also, the History curriculum is full of options. Teachers are expected to teach some core material and then choose from the options. It’s quite possible some options in the History curriculum are not being taught anywhere.”²⁹

If Victoria can find a way to make Holocaust education genuinely compulsory in the future, the framework it developed and announced in 2020 would be an enormous advance on the situation in all other states. Created with extensive input from Yad Vashem, The Melbourne Holocaust Museum and Gandel Philanthropy, the framework provided a clear set of aims in teaching about the Holocaust. These included developing students’ capacity to be informed and active citizens and understanding the effects of prejudice, discrimination and, ultimately, genocide. The policy states that “Learning about the dangers of hatred and discrimination in the Holocaust is important to fighting intolerance and prejudice in today’s world.”³⁰ Inherent

²⁷ Hull, correspondence, 2023.

²⁸ Sarah Duggan, “Fighting against the drift’: Vic history teachers battle to save their subject,” *Education HQ News*, July 14, 2023.

<https://educationhq.com/news/fighting-against-the-drift-vic-history-teachers-battle-to-save-their-subject-151097/>

²⁹ Duggan, “Fighting against the drift’.”

³⁰ Duggan, “Fighting against the drift’.”

throughout the policy is the recognition that serious acts of antisemitism experienced by Victorians in recent years can be countered by lessons on the Holocaust that “encourage students to build an understanding of, and value, a diverse and cohesive society.”³¹

Clearly visible in the policy is the extensive use made of IHRA’s recommendations for content, approaches and strategies in Holocaust education.³² These recommendations explain the lesson sequence, content, the need for experiential components and pedagogical choices that enable deep learning; they are sensitive to the particularities and complexities of the Holocaust, and are inclusive of diverse learners. It will not be possible for Victorian teachers to achieve all of these requirements in a program of any less than ten hours, which for teachers will raise questions about where this time will come from. There are no mandated hours in the policy, or in the national curriculum or in previous Victorian curricula. Yet teachers will need to include all key aspects of the Holocaust, from pre-war Jewish life through to remembrance, legacy and life lessons, in the teaching. The detailed list of content suggests that teachers may be able to meet the wide range of aims set out in the Victorian framework, but first they will need to find the required hours in an already dense curriculum.

Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland

Western Australia follows the national curriculum, where the Holocaust is covered by the single bullet point in Year 10. President of the HTA in Western Australia, Catherine Baron, says that although it is just one bullet point, “it is covered in detail by most teachers.”³³ As HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) is compulsory for all students, except those with special educational needs, it can be expected that all West Australian students will receive at least a basic overview. In addition to the Year 10 syllabus, the Holocaust is also covered in a senior subject. “In Year 11 ATAR History it is covered as part of the Nazism unit, in a lot more detail,” says Baron. “But this isn’t compulsory, either for students to select History or for this unit to be covered. However, the majority of students who study History do this unit.”³⁴

³¹ Victorian Education Department, “*Holocaust Education – Delivery Requirements*,” <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/holocaust-education-delivery-requirements/policy#>

³² IHRA, *Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust*, 2019. <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/2021-09/Recommendations%20for%20Teaching%20and%20Learning%20about%20the%20Holocaust%20%E2%80%93%20IHRA.pdf>

³³ Email correspondence with Catherine Baron, 28 November 2023.

³⁴ Baron, correspondence, 2023.

South Australia follows the National Curriculum and reduces the Holocaust to one bullet point: “Outline and sequence the changing scope and nature of warfare from trenches in World War I to the Holocaust and the use of the atomic bombs to end World War II.” Stage 5 History is mandatory in schools but the hours allocated to History are up to individual schools in the state. However, the president of the HTA in South Australia, David Albano, says he has not heard of any schools ignoring the mandated content or reducing hours to a token level. Albano also pointed out that with the opening of the new Holocaust museum in Adelaide, more schools are likely to spend more time teaching about the Holocaust.³⁵

Both Tasmania and Queensland also follow the National Curriculum and include the single bullet point for the Holocaust, “Examination of significant events of World War II, including the Holocaust and use of the atomic bomb;” elaborated as investigating the scale and significance of the Holocaust using primary sources; and explaining the race to build the atomic bomb (by Germany, Japan, the US) and why the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Tasmania there are no mandated hours for Stage 5 History, whereas in Queensland there is a recommendation for 98 hours through Stage 5.

Discussion and conclusions

One of the key findings of this current research is that the aims in teaching about the Holocaust must be clearly articulated before a program is written and well before pedagogical strategies are developed. There are several potential aims that will influence the decision to include this topic in a teaching scope and sequence and each will require a different approach in the classroom. Yet the state curricula and the national curriculum all fail to articulate *why* the Holocaust is to be studied. Victoria includes details about aims in the framework released by the Department of Education, but not in the History curriculum. Without clearly articulated aims, it is difficult for teachers to construct programs, since to a large extent the aims will determine the content, strategies, and resources. The question of why certain content should be included in the curriculum is always an important one, especially when including the Holocaust, since it will impact what aspects of the topic are taught and the strategies that are employed by teachers in the classroom. This, then, will impact the meaning that students take from their lessons. Those who construct the state curricula must ensure that teachers are aware of the intent behind inclusion of the Holocaust in the curriculum. Is it because of the topic’s

³⁵ Phone conversation with David Albano, 27 November 2023.

intrinsic historical importance or are there issues of morality, ethics, racism or citizenship that are considered at least equally important? In implementing the ministerial directive about Holocaust education, the Victorian Department of Education clearly believes that both aims are vital aspects of a well-constructed Holocaust program. Other states will need to be equally clear in articulating their aims.

Thus far, there has been a thoroughly uncritical acceptance by the media and community organisations of the place of the Holocaust in the national and state curricula.³⁶ There has been widespread belief that because this topic exists as a single bullet point in curricula that it is being taught in a substantive and meaningful way in classrooms. The experience in Victoria is quite unique in its complexity: the Holocaust has become compulsory by ministerial decree, but History is not compulsory and even when History is taught, there are no mandated hours for the Holocaust. In New South Wales, and other states, the Holocaust appears as a single bullet point but again, there are no mandated hours for the Holocaust. It may or may not be taught; it may receive in depth treatment or a passing mention. As this research has shown, 16% of Sydney teachers who responded to this questionnaire do not teach about the Holocaust in Stage 5 History.

In writing about the place of the Holocaust in the English curriculum, Andy Pearce has highlighted how this issue is by no means confined to Australia. In both countries, politicians and community leaders seem to be under the impression that placing the Holocaust in the curriculum guarantees it will be taught and lessons will be learnt:

Within the discourse popularized by politicians, commentators, and even some working in the field, there is often little to no space for pedagogy; instead of contemplating the intricate and complex ways in which teaching and learning interface, the compulsive and unthinking assumption is that it is enough just to have the Holocaust in the curriculum, as if this guarantees it will be ‘taught’ and, in some osmotic fashion, subsequently ‘learnt.’³⁷

³⁶ See for example: Sharon Mittelman, “Lessons that must not be forgotten,” *Australia/Israel Jewish Affairs Council*, 16 December 2020. <https://aijac.org.au/australia-israel-review/lessons-that-must-not-be-forgotten/>; Jan Lanicek, “It’s not just about the rise in anti-Semitism: why we need real stories for better Holocaust education in Australia,” *The Conversation*, 27 January 2021. <https://theconversation.com/its-not-just-about-the-rise-in-anti-semitism-why-we-need-real-stories-for-better-holocaust-education-in-australia-153645>

³⁷ Andy Pearce, “The Holocaust in the National Curriculum after 25 years,” *Holocaust Studies* 23, no.3 (2017): 233.

The reality in Australia today is that it is impossible to know when and where the Holocaust is being taught, in how much depth it is being taught, and the effectiveness of teaching programs. Any claim that Holocaust education in any Australian state is compulsory is founded purely on hope rather than reality. As a minimum, each state would ideally ensure that History becomes a mandatory subject until the end of Stage 5 or Year 10. This was, and remains, the intent behind the national curriculum but it has neither been enforced nor actively encouraged. Further, there should be compulsory hours for History (not indicative hours) so that teachers are able to plan effectively. Lastly, the Holocaust must become a substantial focus of teacher training and professional development if it is to become a major topic in History classrooms. This research demonstrates clearly that, when faced with crowded curricula and a vast array of content, teachers will spend more time on the topics with which they are familiar. If Holocaust education were to become a substantial component of teacher training programs, there is a far greater chance that it will become a substantial part of classroom practice.

“Within hours of this brutal attack directed mainly against civilians, anti-Israel groups and individuals began to mobilise politically and capitalise on the targeting of Jews around the world, including in Australia.”

– Julie Nathan, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 2023¹

4. Antisemitism in Australia and Australian schools

Introduction

There is a long history of antisemitism, along with other forms of racism, in Australia. Both antisemitism and racism were prominent as teacher-identified challenges in response to the online questionnaire that forms the basis for this current research, with around one quarter of teachers saying that these were classroom challenges when teaching about the Holocaust. Throughout this thesis, issues of classroom antisemitism are regularly addressed, so that it is essential to have a clear understanding of what is meant by “antisemitism.” In 2021, the Australian government adopted the definition of antisemitism as used by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.²

Each example of antisemitism cited in this thesis, ranging from drawing swastikas on classroom desks to violent and abusive acts, clearly fits this definition as the individuals and groups were targeted because they were Jewish. Teachers and schools are often poorly equipped to recognise and deal with classroom antisemitism, evidenced by the observation that some of the most egregious examples of school-based antisemitism in this chapter have come from schools where the problem has become normalised as a result of school leaders’ and teachers’ inability to effectively confront the problem. The high levels of antisemitism in many Australian schools – identified by this current research, annual reports from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), The Blueprint Institute and mainstream media – has the potential to seriously

¹ Julie Nathan, “Preliminary statistics concerning surge in antisemitic incidents following Hamas atrocities in Israel on 7 October 2023,” Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 15 December 2023, 1.

² International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), “Working definition of antisemitism,” (2016). <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

impact the ability of educators to effectively teach about the Holocaust. This issue has been dramatically exacerbated by the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza which has resulted in a significant spike in antisemitic incidents across Australia, but particularly in Sydney and Melbourne. This has inevitably spilled over into schools and impacted classrooms.

Antisemitism in Australian society

A significant portion of this thesis concerns antisemitism in classrooms across Sydney as a challenge for teachers of the Holocaust. There can be few greater disruptions to student learning about the Holocaust than persistent interruptions by peers making often quite hateful antisemitic comments. Thus, it is useful to consider the current levels of antisemitism in Australian society more broadly and specifically within schools. This chapter examines the recent data on antisemitism in Australia and cites the numerous examples of school-based antisemitism collected by the ECAJ along with a number of media reports from schools in Sydney. The Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza was a major turning point in the level of antisemitism across the world, including in Sydney's classrooms. The impact this has had is considered separately in the second half of this chapter.

A detailed study conducted by Andrew Markus provides a clear picture of the background levels of antisemitism in Australian society prior to 7 October 2023. The survey of attitudes of almost 3,500 people indicates that there is a “relatively low level of antisemitism in Australian society,”³ and that “a large majority of the survey respondents indicate a positive attitude to Jewish Australians.”⁴ When presented with the proposition ‘I am just as open to having Jewish friends as I am to having friends from other sections of Australian society,’ 64% of respondents indicated that they ‘definitely’ agreed and 27% agreed, a total of 91%, while only 8% disagreed.⁵ As the ECAJ annual surveys demonstrate, however, this generally low level of antisemitism in Australian society does not preclude the existence of vocal and sometimes violent antisemites in the wider community and in schools.

The ECAJ has conducted regular surveys of antisemitic incidents in Australia since 1989, using a mixed methodology approach that relies on reports from community groups, official Jewish

³ Andrew Markus, *Crossroads 21: Australian attitudes to Jewish people, antisemitism and Israel*, Plus61J Media (Monash Centre for Jewish Civilisation, 2021), 7. https://jewishindependent.yourcreativeagency.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Plus61J-report_FINAL.pdf

⁴ Markus, *Crossroads 21*, 8.

⁵ Markus, *Crossroads 21*, 8.

organisations and reports made directly to the ECAJ. Each report is verified inhouse. Their report for the year 2021-2022 revealed that they had recorded 478 antisemitic incidents, an increase of 6.9% in the overall number of reported antisemitic incidents compared to the previous year. Overall, the report said that there had been “substantial increases in the number of reported incidents in two categories: posters/stickers (up 70% from 72 to 123) and graffiti (up 18% from 106 to 125). There were significant decreases in two categories: physical assault (down from 8 to 5), and messages (down from 103 to 76). There was a minor decrease in verbal abuse (down from 147 to 138). Vandalism remained the same at 11.”⁶ The ECAJ explained the increase in poster and graffiti activity as a result of two contributing factors: COVID regulations and an increase in neo-Nazi activity.

The perceived impact of COVID and lockdowns was perhaps felt most acutely in Victoria, where the centre left government of Daniel Andrews seemed to provoke a raft of negative responses from sections of the community. The “freedom alliance” promoted various conspiracy theories, some of which claimed Jews were behind the pandemic. In their submission to the 2022 Inquiry into Extremism in Victoria, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria highlighted a disturbing and rapid increase in antisemitic attacks during the pandemic.⁷

The rise of far-right extremism linked to antisemitism in recent years has been attributed to growing mistrust in politicians, law enforcement and other sources of authority, as well as the spread of misinformation online, the lax approach by social media companies toward removing hateful content, and the use of algorithms that drive social media users to view more and more extreme material.⁸ The appeal of extremist movements was particularly noticeable in Victoria. It is broadly accepted that Victoria’s COVID-19 public health measures and lengthier lockdowns relative to other major Australian cities may have contributed to a stronger-than-expected growth in popularity of extreme political views, particularly via the so-called “freedom movement.” This heterogeneous movement brought together people from a range of backgrounds and rapidly morphed into a grassroots campaign of tens of thousands of Australians.⁹ There was a clear link between the group’s demands for an end to lock-downs

⁶ Julie Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2022* (Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 2023), 6.

⁷ Parliament of Victoria, Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, “Inquiry into Extremism in Victoria,” June 2022.

https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/490d10/contentassets/524c119f230c4d158445b545b6a05722/3.-final-ecaj_ohpi_jccv.pdf

⁸ Parliament of Victoria, “Inquiry into Extremism,” 3.

⁹ Parliament of Victoria, “Inquiry into Extremism,” 3-4.

and their claims of Jewish conspiracies. Graffiti, online antisemitic and antisemitic protest signs became a staple of the group. Another hallmark of the “freedom movement” was the habitual comparisons between COVID-19 public health measures and the Holocaust. While potentially not intended to be antisemitic, these comparisons cause offence and distress to Jewish people, including Holocaust survivors and the families of those killed in the Holocaust.¹⁰

The considerable extent of antisemitism in Australia is also reflected in the findings of a 2020 study of Queensland’s 4,000 Jews which found that 60% had experienced antisemitism in some form over the previous 12 months. Half of those “were either abused, harassed, intimidated or bullied simply because they are Jewish and, distressingly, many of these incidents occur in the workplace.”¹¹

Antisemitism in Australian schools

A 2024 report by The Blueprint Institute, an independent public policy think tank based in Sydney, demonstrated that antisemitism is a significant problem in Australian schools. The report surveyed 510 teachers and school administrators across the nation to establish “the prevalence and types of antisemitism transpiring within Australian public schools.”¹² It found that 61 participants, or 12% of the sample, had witnessed antisemitism in their school; 103 participants (20%) had been informed by others of antisemitic incidents in their schools; five participants said they had been a victim of antisemitism.¹³ The incidence of antisemitism was significantly higher in secondary schools: 35% of secondary educators and administrators reported antisemitism compared with 16% in primary schools.¹⁴ As the report makes clear, these figures are quite disproportionate to the number of Jewish students in Australian primary and secondary schools.¹⁵

The findings of The Blueprint report are supported by the annual survey conducted by the ECAJ. A large number of the antisemitic incidents recorded by the ECAJ occurred in schools,

¹⁰ https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/495e73/contentassets/524c119f230c4d158445b545b6a05722/3.-final-ecaj_ohpi_jccv.pdf

¹¹ Anon, “Sixty Percent of Jews in Australian state of Queensland have experienced antisemitism,” *The Allgemeiner*, 10 August 2021. https://www.algemeiner.com/2021/08/10/sixty-percent-of-jews-in-australian-state-of-queensland-have-experienced-antisemitism-survey/?fbclid=IwAR2-v_TbMXCBRfSOUXEVE7_TKSA9S_vrrEEEnPT1rRel2BbF5wbQY-i_gHnc

¹² L. Downey, M. Ouliaris, C. Poulton, S. Black, M. An Tran, *Antisemitism in Australian schools: an examination*, (Blueprint Institute, 2024), 4.

¹³ Downey, et al, *Antisemitism in Australian schools*, 1.

¹⁴ Downey, et al, *Antisemitism in Australian schools*, 6.

¹⁵ Downey, et al, *Antisemitism in Australian schools*, 4.

predominantly in the eastern suburbs and north shore of Sydney. As will be seen in Chapter 8, the response of school leadership to these incidents was often woefully inadequate and directly contributed to the continuation and repetition of antisemitism in a number of schools. The ECAJ report stated that “Incidents of abusive behaviour towards Jewish school students at public and private schools continued to emerge throughout the year, with very little response by school administrations to halt such behaviours.”¹⁶

While most of these incidents took place in areas with a relatively high proportion of Jewish students, one student from regional New South Wales was a victim of ongoing antisemitic abuse, both verbally in person and online, and was physically assaulted.¹⁷ Other recorded incidents at schools, all of them in Sydney, included the following:

- Nazi swastikas regularly graffitied at schools.
- Nazi salutes on a regular basis performed at Jewish students.
- Jewish students often subjected to antisemitic jokes by other students.
- A Jewish student was called “Jew” rather than by his name, by students in his year, on a daily basis, and subjected to inappropriate comments and jokes, and the Nazi salute used in his presence.
- A Jewish student was called “Rich Jew” and greeted with Nazi salutes.
- A Jewish boy was forced into a locker and sprayed with deodorant to simulate a Nazi gas chamber, while other students laughed and filmed the incident at a Sydney private school.¹⁸

Many other incidents in Sydney schools took place over social media and via text messages:

- A photo was distributed of a Cranbrook student performing a Nazi salute.
- A photo, which had been doctored to show a student with a Nazi symbol on his armband, was sent to other students.
- A video was made of a student performing a Nazi salute to the camera while smiling in the school corridor, while other students unpacked their lockers.¹⁹

¹⁶ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 7.

¹⁷ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 35.

¹⁸ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 51.

¹⁹ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 47.

A series of antisemitic incidents also took place at schools in the Lismore area (northern New South Wales), most of which were in a Catholic systemic high school:

- Nazi swastikas were inscribed on a school desk at a primary school.
- Nazi swastika graffiti was inscribed on locker doors.
- Two 11-year-old boys harassed a Jewish fellow-student. One said “Heil Hitler” to the Jewish student; the other boy spoke positively about Nazis.
- Regular incidents, including calls of “Heil Hitler,” jokes about the Holocaust, jokes about hating Jews, and how Hitler was right, impacted students in Years 8, 9, and 10, at a Catholic high school.
- Harassment of a 12-year-old Jewish girl by a boy, also in Year 7, from the same Catholic school saying “Heil Hitler” and doing the Nazi salute towards her. When she told him to stop, he then made a gun gesture with his fingers and thumbs and pretended to shoot the student saying "Shoot the Jew! Shoot the Jew!"²⁰

A number of the reports contained in the ECAJ report came from Rose Bay Secondary College, a co-educational state school in Sydney’s eastern suburbs. Messages were sent via Discord between students, including to Jewish students, of photos of Hitler often accompanied by comments such as “dumb ass jew nigger” and “I hope your family gets gassed.” At the same school, a Jewish student, 16-years-old, was constantly being called “Fat Jew.”²¹ *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that a Jewish student at Rose Bay was told by another student that he would go back in time and become Hitler to “hunt down his family and stop the bloodline.”²² The situation at Rose Bay was not unique within the eastern suburbs. In December 2022, New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies chief executive officer, Darren Bark, said that these were the latest examples in a “systemic and cultural problem” across both private and public schools in the area.²³ Girls-only schools in the area, however, do not appear to experience the same problems.

²⁰ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 46.

²¹ Caitlin Fitzsimmons, “Eastern Suburbs schools grapple with nazi salutes and anti-semitic bullying,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 2022. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/eastern-suburbs-schools-grapple-with-nazi-salutes-and-anti-semitic-bullying-20220830-p5bdxg.html>

²² Caitlin Fitzsimmons, “I’ll stop your bloodline’: Anti-semitism reports grow across Sydney,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 September 2022. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/i-ll-stop-your-bloodline-anti-semitism-reports-grow-across-sydney-schools-20220909-p5bgrf.html>

²³ Caitlin Fitzsimmons, “Eastern Suburbs schools grapple with nazi salutes.”

Similar issues existed at Cranbrook, an independent Anglican boys' school also in the eastern suburbs. *The Sydney Morning Herald* revealed that the school was dealing with several instances of antisemitic bullying, including a video of a boy performing a Nazi salute in full uniform while at school. The media report claimed that a former parent was aware of antisemitic bullying at the school that dated at least as far back as 2017.²⁴ At nearby Waverley College, a Catholic boys' school, the *Daily Mail* reported in December 2022 that antisemitism was "rife" and that there had been an "exodus of Jewish staff and students."²⁵ The article quoted a source saying the antisemitic abuse included routine Nazi salutes and racist phrases including "fuck the Jew," "you Jewish slut" and "I idolise Hitler." The media outlet had earlier reported that six Year 9 students had been expelled for brutal and bizarre hazing rituals inflicted on Year 7 students.²⁶

While the majority of the incidents cited above came from the eastern suburbs of Sydney, the north shore also experienced a series of antisemitic events in late 2022. A group of Year 9 students at Knox Grammar, a Uniting Church boys' school, were uncovered sharing antisemitic, racist and misogynistic comments via a Discord chatroom called "Gang Gang." *The Daily Telegraph* revealed the extent of the extreme comments when one of its journalists was invited to join the group.²⁷ According to the 2022 ECAJ report about the incidents, "students posted racist, including antisemitic, comments, images and videos, as well as those of an overtly homophobic, sexist, misogynistic, and paedophile (eg raping children) nature."²⁸ The group had been operating for two years when it was exposed and revealed to college leadership. Potential child abuse material was handed to police. The ECAJ report contained examples of chat content including: "I hate fems I hate gays, jews, people who don't play fortnite, furies, niggers, I love titties, feet abortion, rape, drugs ..." and "Hitler is always stay in my heart."²⁹ Speaking to *Nine News*, Darren Bark described the comments as "abhorrent and

²⁴ Caitlin Fitzsimmons, "Cranbrook School delayed acting on Nazi salutes, anti-semitism, families say," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 2022. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/cranbrook-school-delayed-acting-on-nazi-salutes-anti-semitism-20220908-p5bqgc.html>

²⁵ David Southwell and Olivia Day, "Anti-Semitism accusations hit one of Australia's most elite boy's schools." *Daily Mail*, 9 December 2022.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11516337/Waverley-College-Sydney-Anti-Semitic-culture-revealed-elite-Catholic-boys-school.html>

²⁶ Southwell and Day, "Anti-Semitism accusations."

²⁷ Cited by Lucy Carroll, "Knox Grammar students suspended after posting offensive messages in chat group," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 2022. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/knox-grammar-students-suspended-after-posting-offensive-messages-in-chat-group-20220831-p5bee2.html>

²⁸ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 126.

²⁹ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 126.

unacceptable and they should not be tolerated in our society.”³⁰ As a result of these comments surfacing in the media, the entire Knox cohort was invited to the Sydney Jewish Museum to meet a Holocaust survivor. Some students were expelled from the college while others were “counselled” about their comments.³¹

Research by Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff also confirms the embedded antisemitism in some schools in Canberra. Based on focus group interviews with Jewish students and parents, they found that “antisemitism is common in Canberra schools, as almost all Jewish children and youth in this study have experienced it.”³² The study found deficiencies in school leadership and amongst some teachers: “Significantly, religious ignorance, insensitivity and intolerance were expressed not only by pupils but also the schools themselves. What can be described as religious insensitivity at best, and outright discrimination at worse, was manifest in several ways relating to religious studies.”³³ The authors found that ignorance was often at the heart of discrimination and that many of the children who participated in the study “had many non-Jewish friends who rejected antisemitism,” yet there was still a “disturbingly resigned acceptance by the children that antisemitism happens and you just put up with it.”³⁴

The most publicised antisemitic incident in recent years in Australia took place in Melbourne in October 2019, when a 12-year-old Jewish school boy was forced to kiss the feet of an older Muslim boy. The incident was filmed, posted on social media and captured headlines around the world. While the state secondary school at which the two were students took no action because the incident occurred out of school, police later acted and charged the older boy over death threats made against the Jewish boy and his mother. A boy involved in filming the original incident was later suspended for five days over an assault on the Jewish boy that did occur on school grounds. A second incident took place in a Melbourne state primary school at about the same time, with a 5-year-old Jewish boy subjected to taunts and bullying because he had been circumcised. The school viewed these complaints as bullying rather than antisemitism because they could not be corroborated by staff.³⁵ The publicity that attended these incidents resulted in reporting of a series of disturbing events at other Victorian and New South Wales’

³⁰ Posted on the Facebook page for the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, 1 September 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/NewSouthWalesJBD/videos/750110312723953/>

³¹ Carroll, “Knox Grammar students suspended.”

³² Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff, “Antisemitism and Jewish Children and Youth in Australia’s Capital Territory Schools,” *Social Inclusion* 2, no.2 (2014), 47.

³³ Ben-Moshe and Halafoff, “Antisemitism and Jewish Children and Youth,” 52.

³⁴ Ben-Moshe and Halafoff, “Antisemitism and Jewish Children and Youth,” 53.

³⁵ Julie Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2020*, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 40.

secondary schools where administrators had failed to take action against entrenched antisemitism amongst both students and staff.³⁶ The most notable of these events concluded in a widely publicised case in the Federal Court.³⁷

In September 2023, Justice Mortimer in the Federal Court in Melbourne, made a judgement with the potential for far-reaching ramifications throughout all Australian schools. In awarding damages that totalled over \$500,000, Justice Mortimer found that the claimants, five Jewish students from Brighton Secondary College, had been victims of unfair treatment under the Racial Discrimination Act. The respondents, the state of Victoria, the school principal and a number of teachers, had failed to act to protect the students from consistent, long term antisemitism from other students. Justice Mortimer's judgement has implications for this current research as she reached a range of findings about the pedagogies used in classrooms when teaching about the Holocaust and about the culture of the school with regard to deeply entrenched antisemitism and its impact on the learning and welfare of Jewish students, in particular.

In her judgement, Justice Mortimer said that “the court has generally accepted the narrative from the applicants, their family members, and the 17 former and current Brighton secondary school student witnesses who gave evidence about the unusually high levels of swastika graffiti and the frequent complaints they made about swastikas and the antisemitic bullying and harassment.”³⁸ The judge ruled that the school principal, Richard Minack, had failed in his duty of care over an extended period of time and had allowed an atmosphere of antisemitism to flourish in the school. In her judgement, she said “For whatever reason, Mr Minack was not prepared to be empathetic or sympathetic towards Jewish students, their families, or issues dealing with Jewish people.”³⁹ This lack of empathy was reflected in declining Jewish enrolments at the school, which had fallen from roughly 40% to almost zero over a period of 10 years.⁴⁰

³⁶ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2020*, 92-95.

³⁷ Kaplan v State of Victoria (No 8) [2023] FCA 1092

<https://www.judgments.fedcourt.gov.au/judgments/Judgments/fca/single/2023/2023fca1092>

³⁸ Adeshola Ore, “Court finds former students suffered antisemitic bullying and discrimination at Melbourne school,” *The Guardian*, 14 September 2023.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/sep/14/brighton-secondary-college-melbourne-students-antisemitic-bullying-graffiti-court-case>

³⁹ Judgement in Kaplan v State of Victoria (No 8) [2023] FCA 1092 (hereafter, “Judgement”).

<https://www.judgments.fedcourt.gov.au/judgments/Judgments/fca/single/2023/2023fca1092>, 88.

⁴⁰ Testimony of former Principal, Julie Podbury, cited in: Tammy Reznik, “Apparent mass amnesia at Brighton Secondary College hearing,” *Australia/Israel Jewish Affairs Council*, 6 December 2022. <https://aijac.org.au/fresh-air/apparent-mass-amnesia-at-brighton-secondary-college-hearing/>

The judgement by Justice Mortimer has wide-ranging ramifications for other schools. Firstly, the court held that specific actions, or inaction, by named teachers and the principal, had been in contravention of the Racial Discrimination Act. While the Victorian Department of Education was responsible for costs and damages, the professional impact and reputational damage on the named respondents was significant. (The principal resigned his position at the school one month after the judgement was handed down.⁴¹) Secondly, the school was deemed to have failed in its duty of care in part because it had not protected Jewish students in the same way it had protected students from other minority groups, such as LGBTQI+ students. The school clearly knew how to respond to an identified problem but, in the case of antisemitism, chose not to, despite repeated complaints from students and parents. The court found that the school did not care sufficiently about antisemitism to take action. Other schools around Australia should now be on notice that all students are entitled to full support and protection under the Racial Discrimination Act, regardless of their ethnic heritage and that individual staff may be held accountable.

At the same time as the Brighton Secondary College proceedings were taking place, a group of Jewish students from a high school in Melbourne set out to determine the level of antisemitism experienced by Jewish students in Victorian state schools. David Loven and Nathan Loyer presented their findings to the B'nai B'rith triennial conference and later to a group of Victorian government ministers. They surveyed 74 students from Years 7-12 from 13 schools on their personal experiences of diversity and antisemitism. Approximately 33% of students who participated in this survey had experienced discomfort at their school due to anti-Israel comments, Jewish stereotypes or Jewish jokes. Holocaust studies were either tokenistic or, in some cases, completely overlooked their study found.⁴² The experiences chronicled by these Victorian school students mirror those of students who took part in an English study in 2015. In a study of 28 Jewish students who attended non-Jewish schools, Daniel Moulin found that these students regularly encountered antisemitism in the classroom and the playground and that poor pedagogy could exacerbate the situation. The British study claimed that “while not all participants reported negative schooling experiences, anti-Semitic prejudice, abuse and

⁴¹ Kristian Silva, “Melbourne principal resigns after Federal Court finds Jewish students were subject to bullying,” *ABC News Online*, 23 October 2023. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-23/brighton-secondary-college-principal-resigns-after-federal-court/103011874>

⁴² Ori Golan, “Being Jewish in a non-Jewish school,” *J-Wire*, 28 September 2022. <https://www.jwire.com.au/being-jewish-in-a-non-jewish-school/>

stereotypes were integral to many participants' reported peer experiences of secondary school."⁴³ And again, strikingly similar to the Victorian study, the report found that "another time when participants reported being uncomfortable in non-Jewish schools of all types, was during Holocaust education. Holocaust education was reported as another instance of Jewish identity being brought to the fore and ascribed to them."⁴⁴ Teaching about the Holocaust in classrooms with Jewish students is an area that has not been explored in this research, largely because no teachers in the original questionnaire described their classrooms as having a significant number of Jewish students. But it is an area deserving of far greater research, especially in the secondary classrooms of the eastern suburbs and north shore of Sydney.

While the numerous media reports are thoroughly disturbing in their content and frequency, they are not the most reliable barometer of overall levels of antisemitism in Australian schools. On the other hand, the ECAJ annual reports, following a consistent methodology and well-developed network of reliable sources, provide a much clearer picture of the increasing level of antisemitism. Over recent years, antisemitism has continued to increase both in Australia and overseas. At no time has this increase been more dramatic than in the aftermath of the 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas, when levels of antisemitism in Australia soared. Research conducted by Matteo Vergani *et al* prior to the 7 October attack on Israel had already shown that there was a clear link between events in the Middle East and antisemitism in Australia.⁴⁵ The group from Deakin University analysed 673 antisemitic incidents across Australia from 2013–17 and correlated these to specific events that were taking place at the same time. They found that incidents such as hate speech and verbal abuse were more likely to occur during special Jewish celebrations, possibly because Jewish worshippers were more visible on the streets in Jewish neighbourhoods. They also found that criminal acts of antisemitism, such as assault, were more likely to occur during periods of conflict between Israel and Palestinians, such as the 2014 Gaza conflict. Almost immediately after the 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel, reports surfaced of virulent antisemitic incidents. These incidents took place in mosques, in the media and in schools, where they impacted teachers in schools in areas with significant Muslim populations, particularly in the south-west of Sydney. The ECAJ reported that:

⁴³ Daniel Moulin-Stozek, "Reported schooling experiences of adolescent Jews attending non-Jewish secondary schools in England," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 19 (2015): 12.

⁴⁴ Moulin-Stozek, "Reported schooling experiences of adolescent Jews," 17.

⁴⁵ Matteo Vergani, Dan Goodhardt, Rouven Link, Amy Adamczyk, Joshua D. Freilich and Steven Chermak, "When and How Does Anti-Semitism Occur? The Different Trigger Mechanisms Associated with Different Types of Criminal and Non-Criminal Hate Incidents," *Deviant Behavior* 43, no.9 (2022), 1135-1152.

Within hours of this brutal attack directed mainly against civilians, anti-Israel groups and individuals began to mobilise politically and capitalise on the targeting of Jews around the world, including in Australia. On 8 October, a rally was held by extremist Muslims in Lakemba, Sydney, where a speaker and attendees expressed their exultation at the killing of Jews by Hamas. On 9 October, at a rally held by anti-Israel Muslims and left-wingers at the Sydney Opera House, protesters chanted “Fuck the Jews” and “Gas the Jews” and burnt an Israeli flag. As the days and weeks went on, there was a surge in the number of anti-Jewish incidents across Australia.⁴⁶

It is important to note that this immediate increase in celebratory antisemitism took place prior to the Israeli response and its large-scale invasion of Gaza. The Hamas attack unleashed latent antisemitism in certain parts of the south-western suburbs, areas that had long been known to harbour such views.⁴⁷ Virulent antisemitic sentiments are held not only by adults but are also vocalised by students in classrooms. The rapid increase in antisemitism was documented and measured by the ECAJ. When the data from October-November 2023 was compared with the same period in 2022, a 738% increase in antisemitic incidents was noted. Also during this period, one teacher in the south-western suburbs withdrew from participation in this research project, citing the impossibility of teaching about the Holocaust in her school at this time, while others became unavailable for further discussion.

During this period, the ECAJ noted other school-related incidents, such as the “assault and harassment of a group of 13-year-old Jewish girls wearing their Jewish school uniform at Westfield Bondi Junction,” who had food thrown at them by people from a level above. A fast food box landed near them and contained several swastikas etched and drawn on the box.⁴⁸ Julie Nathan, Research Director at the ECAJ, told SBS news that her organisation had seen an “alarming spike” in hate crimes. “Over the years there has been a steady increase in antisemitic incidents in Australia, more than doubling in five years from 230 incidents in 2017 to 478

⁴⁶ Julie Nathan, “Preliminary statistics concerning surge in antisemitic incidents following Hamas atrocities in Israel on 7 October 2023,” Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 15 December 2023, 1. The chant “Gas the Jews” was later revised by New South Wales Police who suggested it was most likely “Where’s the Jews?” <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-preliminary-report-antisemitic-incidents-since-Oct-7-attack-1.pdf>

⁴⁷ See the work of Rutland and Mendes, cited in chapters 1 and 7.

⁴⁸ Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism*, 8.

incidents in 2022. In the week before 7 October, there was one antisemitic incident reported, and in the week after 7 October, there were 37 anti-Jewish incidents.”⁴⁹

The impact of the conflict on school students was explained by Senator Sarah Henderson, who told the Victorian senate that “we have seen an alarming rise in antisemitism here in Australia and around the globe. This is causing deep, deep fear amongst Jewish Australians, including school students who don't feel safe walking to school and university students who hide in the shadows on campus and dare not display symbols of their faith. Whether it's on hateful signs, appalling chants at protests, families in fear of sending their kids to school or shocking attacks on businesses, all Australians must stand up to this abhorrent antisemitism.”⁵⁰

The Australian newspaper reported that “scared Jewish students have shed their uniforms to travel incognito to school, in response to a global surge in hate speech and crimes against Jews during the Israel-Hamas war” and that extra private security guards have been posted at every one of Australia’s 19 Jewish schools. Some parents, the newspaper reported, quoting Australian Council of Jewish Schools executive director Leonard Hain, were “afraid” to send their children to school. “There are instances of children travelling to and from school being yelled at or having anti-Semitic things said to them,” Mr Hain said. “One school has told students they do not need to wear their uniform, so they are not identified as Jewish when travelling to and from school.”⁵¹

Unfortunately for many Jewish students, the antisemitism did not stop at the school gate and was in fact promoted by their own teachers. After a period of sustained silence immediately following the 7 October attack on Israel, the New South Wales Teachers Federation issued a statement on 17 October in which they focused almost entirely on the Israeli response to the attacks.⁵² At the same time, according to *Sky News*, Federation moved a motion “encouraging

⁴⁹ Ewa Staszewska, “As the Hamas-Israel war rages, Islamophobia and antisemitism are rising in Australia,” *SBS News*, 28 October 2023, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/as-the-hamas-israel-war-rages-islamophobia-and-antisemitism-are-rising-in-australia/385jt872y>

⁵⁰ Parliament of Australia, Hansard, Senate, 14 November 2023, Adjournment – Jewish Community, Speaker Senator Sarah Henderson https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=chamber/hansards/27142/&sid=0217

⁵¹ Natasha Bitá, “Scared students ditch uniforms,” *The Australian*, 2 November 2023.

⁵² New South Wales Teachers Federation, “Executive Statement on Middle East Conflict,” 17 October 2023. <https://www.nswtf.org.au/news/2023/10/17/nsw-teachers-federation-executive-statement-on-middle-east-conflict/>

teachers to use their classroom to advocate for the Palestinian side.”⁵³ Writing in a blog for *The Times of Israel*, Philip Mendes described the clearly political position of the New South Wales Teachers Federation, which was silent after the Hamas attack on Israel but strident in the criticism of the Israeli response:

It is shameful that the New South WalesTF and other educator groups have displayed nil anti-racist solidarity with Australian Jews traumatised by the October 7 massacre, and no concern for the specific well-being of their Jewish members and students. It is equally concerning that they seek to promote inflammatory nationalist discourse amongst teachers and students that may result in discrimination against Jewish staff and students. They have failed to meet their basic duty of care to fairly and equitably educate and mentor children and youth over whom they maintain an acute imbalance of power.⁵⁴

The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies believed that the position adopted by Federation had the potential to fuel further antisemitism: “Regrettably, the Federation’s tendentious statement has the potential to exacerbate the alarming surge in antisemitic incidents being experienced by Jewish students at schools across Sydney.”⁵⁵

The war in Gaza had an additional impact on education about the Holocaust in Australia. A conference that had been organised by Yad Vashem and Gandel Philanthropy for mid-2024 had to be cancelled because of a significant lack of teachers who were prepared to participate. A previous conference had attracted well over 100 teachers but organisers in 2024 found that teachers were no longer prepared to attend because of the conflict and due to their beliefs about Israeli actions in Gaza.⁵⁶ Similarly, the board of the History Teachers Association of New South Wales briefly discussed the difficulty of running any Holocaust-related professional development at their 2024 state conference and decided to reject any such proposals.⁵⁷ Also in

⁵³ Tyrone Clark, “New South Wales Teachers Federation under fire for encouraging staff to engage in political protest in support of Palestine,” *Sky News*, 28 November 2023. <https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/nsw-teachers-federation-under-fire-for-encouraging-staff-to-engage-in-political-protest-in-support-of-palestine/news-story/21290128cb77335c2ce089eac9048152>

⁵⁴ Phillip Mendes, “The New South Wales Teachers Federation and their response to the October 7 Hamas Massacre,” *The Times of Israel*, Blogs, 19 December 2023. <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-nsw-teachers-federation-and-their-response-to-the-october-7-hamas-massacre/>

⁵⁵ New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, “New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies responds to the New South Wales Teachers Federation’s statement on the Middle East conflict.” https://www.linkedin.com/posts/nsw-jewish-board-of-deputies_nsw-jewish-board-of-deputies-responds-to-activity-7120910368113135617-oQeB/

⁵⁶ Correspondence with Dorit Reitshtein Raviv and Yael Eaglestein, February-March 2024.

⁵⁷ Correspondence with Jonathon Dallimore, HTA professional officer, March 2024.

the aftermath of 7 October, one major church organisation that had been planning the launch of a new antisemitism program for schools made the decision to withhold the program indefinitely.⁵⁸

Discussion and conclusions

Antisemitism has long been a major issue in Australian schools but only in recent years have serious attempts been made to quantify the extent of the problem by researchers such as Philip Mendes, Suzanne Rutland, Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff.⁵⁹ The ECAJ annual reports and most recently the research by The Blueprint Institute have made clear that antisemitism has infiltrated many Australian schools where it can have a devastating impact on Jewish students and staff and on the culture of the school. Moreover, when antisemitism is tolerated by schools, it naturally flows into the wider community where it has significant consequences for social cohesion, becoming especially visible during periods of conflict in the Middle East.

The research at Deakin by Matteo Vergani et al has obvious implications for teachers who can reasonably predict that during periods of conflict in the Middle East, there will be increased interest from their students in these events and quite possibly expressions of antisemitism alongside support for Palestinians. Antisemitism, like other forms of racism, exists in latent form in classrooms, as it does throughout society, even though the J61 survey by Andrew Markus demonstrates that Australia is, generally, relatively free of explicit antisemitism. However, when conflict flares in the Middle East, there can be major surges in antisemitism as shown by data collected by the ECAJ.

For some teachers, teaching about the Holocaust will continue uninterrupted during outbreaks in the Middle East. Indeed, it would be desirable to address the conflict in the Middle East and provide students with the opportunity to express ideas and ask questions in a respectful environment. Many teachers will seize these “teachable moments” as opportunities for deep, significant and meaningful conversations with their students. Others will find that any discussion of Jews, Judaism and Israel is impossible during such times. Some of these schools will have already experienced the kinds of ongoing antisemitism outlined in this chapter. Often

⁵⁸ Correspondence with Teresa Pirola, October 2023-February 2024.

⁵⁹ Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff, “Antisemitism and Jewish Children and Youth in Australia’s Capital Territory Schools,” *Social Inclusion* 2, no.2 (2014), 47-56.

at the heart of this will be a failure of school leadership to confront the problem of antisemitism in the same way other forms of discrimination might be tackled in those schools.

The evidence from teachers who participated in this research, coupled with data from the ECAJ and The Blueprint Institute and a wide range of media reports, shows that teachers must be able to recognise, confront and teach about antisemitism in their classrooms. Antisemitism was at the heart of the Holocaust and must be a significant part of teaching programs. But teachers and students alike must be able to recognise contemporary antisemitism, discuss its impact and understand just how far it has spread throughout society and classrooms in Australia today.

“The ‘latte line’ is the infamous, invisible boundary that divides Sydney between the more affluent north-east and the south-west. Historically, people north of the line enjoy better access to jobs and education. This has reinforced economic inequality.”

– Somwrita Sarkar, Nicole Gurran and Rashi Shrivastava, University of Sydney, 2024¹

5. Context: Defining the framework

Introduction

Sydney is a divided city. Like many other global cities, it has distinct areas of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, areas that are marked by differences in income, employment, education, health care, ethnicity and religion. This chapter begins by exploring some aspects of Sydney’s demography and suggests links between ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status and the nature of antisemitism in schools in specific areas. Each of these factors plays a key role in creating challenges for Holocaust education across Sydney.

Sydney’s demographic lines of social and economic inequality – between western Sydney and the eastern and northern suburbs – are well documented and clearly evident in Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data. These lines mark changes in the nature of antisemitism and racism, but not its frequency, which cuts across almost all areas of Sydney. Sydney’s north-west (an area distinct from the north shore) appears to be relatively free of antisemitism, a point that can be explained by the specific demographics of the area. Overall, geography, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic inequality are not predictors of the *prevalence* of antisemitism across Sydney but they are likely to be useful predictors of the *nature* of antisemitism, especially when more detailed comparisons are made between the south-western suburbs, the north shore and eastern suburbs.

This chapter provides context to the current research project, examining the unique demographic characteristics of Sydney as they relate to the challenges experienced by educators when teaching about the Holocaust. It provides analysis of a number of key questions from the online questionnaire, beginning with some fundamental questions about the students represented by the data, then examining the background of the respondents themselves. This

¹ Somwrita Sarkar, Nicole Gurran and Rashi Shrivastava, “Our cities are widening the divide between well-off and the rest,” *The Conversation*, 9 May 2024. [Our cities are widening the divide between the well-off and the rest. How can we turn this damaging trend around?](#)

research was concerned with teacher responses to a range of questions, not student responses, so it is important to remember that in this chapter, we are learning about the students through the eyes of their teachers, not directly from the students themselves. Chapter 9, however, provides a snapshot of the students at one New South Wales' high school and their attitudes and responses to learning about the Holocaust through the analysis of pre- and post-teaching questionnaires.

The demographics of Sydney

Ethnically, religiously and socio-economically, there are stark differences between clearly defined areas across Sydney. These glaring lines of demarcation between east, west, north and south have variously been described as the “Red Rooster line,” and the “latte line.”² Researchers at the University of Sydney have described this as a line of demarcation between affluence and inequality:

The “latte line” is the infamous, invisible boundary that divides Sydney between the more affluent north-east and the south-west. Historically, people north of the line enjoy better access to jobs and education, and can capitalise on rising property wealth. This has reinforced economic inequality.³

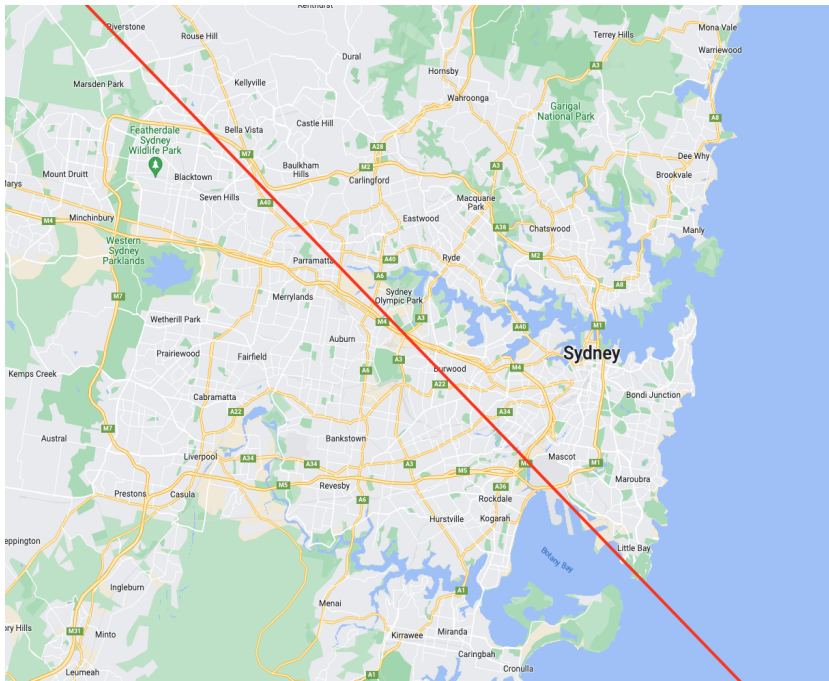
Despite the satirical names, this line recognises the vast differences in socio-economic and educational advantage between the various parts of Sydney, differences that are most obvious when data for religion and ethnicity are compared. At the commencement of this current research project, it was believed that there would be equally clear lines between classrooms in Sydney, delineating a different range of classroom challenges when teaching about the Holocaust in each area. Earlier research by Rutland and Mendes, discussed in Chapter 1, had already suggested that the south-west of Sydney experienced high levels of classroom antisemitism and while this remains true in specific schools in this area, the reality is that antisemitism and racism are much more widespread than anticipated. The range of other significant challenges that arise when teaching about the Holocaust, as revealed by the online

² See Natassia Chrysanthos and Ann Ding, “Food fault lines: mapping class through food chains,” *Honi Soit*, 22 September 2017, [Food fault lines: mapping class through food chains - Honi Soit](#); Ben Knight, “The imaginary line exposing a real Sydney divide,” *UNew South Wales Newsroom*, 19 March 2020, [The imaginary line exposing a real Sydney divide](#); and Chyi Lin Lee, Awais Piracha and Youqing Fan, “Another Tale of Two Cities,” *The Conversation*, 22 June 2018, [Another tale of two cities: access to jobs divides Sydney along the 'latte line'](#)

³ Somwrita Sarkar, et al, “Our cities are widening the divide,” and Ben Knight, “The imaginary line.”

questionnaire, primarily inadequate time, equally do not adhere to socio-economic or geographical boundaries, nor do they reflect cultural, religious and linguistic differences across the city.

Teachers across the city pointed to very similar challenges in their classrooms. Among these challenges was antisemitism, which was seen as a challenge in almost a quarter of classrooms across Sydney. Where teachers differed in the challenges they identified – and these differences



“The Latte Line:”
<https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2020/03/the-imaginary-line-exposing-a-real-sydney-divide1>

are very closely related to geography and demographics – is in the *nature* of antisemitism in their classrooms, not its frequency or incidence.

What has become clear in this research is that antisemitism and racism as classroom challenges when teaching about the Holocaust appear to be concentrated in three main types of schools which themselves are predominantly found in three main regions of Sydney:

- The first of these are independent boys’ and co-ed schools of the eastern suburbs and north shore.
- The second are state schools, boys’ and co-ed, with significant Arabic-speaking student cohorts, found in the west and south-west of Sydney.
- The third group is a relatively small concentration of 3rd and 4th generation Croatian students who closely identify with the far and ultra-right.

The second of these groups had been identified in the research of Rutland and Mendes while the first and third groups had not. The differences between these areas – in diversity, educational outcomes and levels of socio-economic advantage – could not be more pronounced, so it may be surprising they share such clear antisemitic beliefs. However, the nature of antisemitism across these areas differs considerably. In the south-west, antisemitism is extreme, at times violent and decidedly eliminationist in its attitudes to Israel and Jews. In the east and north, antisemitism is “casual,” relies on traditional stereotypes of Jews, is often intended as a joke and may be tolerated by schools as “banter,” although more recent examples from social media go well beyond this level.⁴ In the west, where it is based on Croatian nationalism, it reflects a sense of cultural, racial and perhaps religious superiority. The explanation for these different forms of antisemitism lies, at least in part, in their demographic differences which are explored below.

The converse of these generalisations is the north-west corridor, a line of comparatively new suburbs that stretch from Chatswood to Rouse Hill and approximately follows the North West Metro line. These suburbs differ from the rest of Sydney in a range of ways and, perhaps as a result, leave the schools in the area relatively free of antisemitism. A significant portion of the population, 40.4%, was born overseas, compared with 38% for Greater Sydney, with most of these people coming from India, Philippines, UK, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Compared with other parts of Sydney, relatively few migrants to north-western Sydney are from African or Middle Eastern countries.⁵ The overwhelming majority are fluent in English – only 2.8% report being non-fluent, much lower than any other part of western Sydney.⁶ On average, household incomes are 21% higher than across Sydney generally and 35% of the population have tertiary qualifications, compared with 28% across Sydney.⁷

Writing in *The Conversation*, University of New South Wales researcher Sukhmani Khorana noted the emergence of this area, with Castle Hill at its centre, in the 2021 ABS data:

⁴ See Chapter 4, Antisemitism in Australian schools, for examples of these forms of antisemitism.

⁵ IdCommunity, *The Hills Shire Community Profile*, 2021. <https://profile.id.com.au/the-hills/birthplace?WebID=210>

⁶ New South Wales Parliament, *New South Wales Electorate Profiles*, 2021. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Pages/New-South-Wales-Electorate-Profiles-2021-Census-Cultural-diversity.aspx>

⁷ Urbis Norwest Quarter, 2021. <https://norwestquarter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Urbis-Norwest-Market-Outlook-.pdf>

[Statistics] reveal suburban clusters in the major cities where ethnic groups have a critical mass, median incomes are higher than the state and national average, and tertiary education rates are on the rise (examples include Girraween and Castle Hill in New South Wales).⁸

The higher level of educational attainment, the higher incomes and the lack of migrants from Africa and the Middle East, set this area apart from the rest of Sydney generally and especially from other parts of western Sydney. Put simply, it has neither imported antisemitism from the Middle East or North Africa, nor does it to any significant extent experience the old, established Anglo-Celtic antisemitism of the eastern and northern suburbs. The relatively higher levels of education and income also negate antisemitism, which has been shown to be more pronounced in areas of relative disadvantage regardless of the ethnic and religious background of the population.⁹

Western Sydney

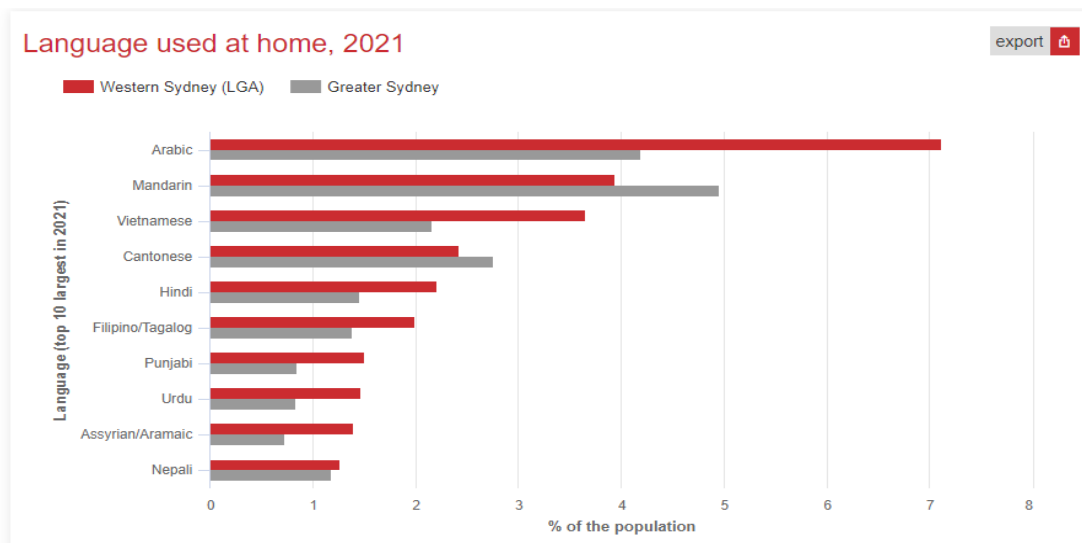
Western Sydney is one of the most ethnically diverse parts of Australia. This is reflected in the composition of schools in the area, which have significant numbers of LBOTE students.¹⁰ Data from the ABS shows that, when compared with Greater Sydney, western Sydney has far more diversity with large numbers of Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Cantonese speakers. Many of these people describe themselves as being non-fluent in English at a far greater rate than for other parts of Sydney. ABS data shows that in the Fairfield and Cabramatta Local Government Areas, for example, well over 20% of the population are not fluent in English.¹¹ These statistics have important implications for teaching and learning in Sydney's western suburbs which are explored below.

⁸ Sukhmani Khorana, "Census data shows we're more culturally diverse than ever. Our institutions must reflect this," *The Conversation*, 29 June 2022. <https://theconversation.com/census-data-shows-were-more-culturally-diverse-than-ever-our-institutions-must-reflect-this-185575>

⁹ See for example the work of Stephanie Doebler at the London School of Economics, "The relationship between religion and racism: the evidence," *LSE Blog*, 28 April 2016. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/religion-does-not-cause-racism-deprivation-and-insecurity-do/>

¹⁰ idCommunity, Western Sydney Community Profile, 2021. [https://profile.id.com.au/cws/ancestry#:~:text=Dominant%20groups&text=English%20\(476%2C834%20people%20or%2018.3,171%2C170%20people%20or%206.6%25\)](https://profile.id.com.au/cws/ancestry#:~:text=Dominant%20groups&text=English%20(476%2C834%20people%20or%2018.3,171%2C170%20people%20or%206.6%25))

¹¹ Parliament of New South Wales, New South Wales Electorate Profiles, 2021. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Pages/New-South-Wales-Electorate-Profiles-2021-Census-Cultural-diversity.aspx>



(<https://home.id.com.au/demographic-resources>)

South-western Sydney

South-western Sydney has been treated independently here from the rest of western Sydney as it was the area identified by earlier research by Rutland and Mendes as being an important centre of classroom antisemitism. Their research was focused on schools with significant Muslim populations, most of which are located in suburbs in the Canterbury-Bankstown and Liverpool LGAs. As the following chapters will show, the earlier research presented a disturbing but accurate picture of classroom antisemitism perpetrated predominantly by male Muslim students.

ABS data for 2021 shows that Islam is the major religion in this area with almost 24% of the population against an average across Sydney of a little over 6%. Islam is also the fastest growing religion in the area, with an increase of over 15,000 adherents between 2016 and 2019, well in excess of any other religion. While English was the dominant language spoken at home (39%) Arabic was the preferred language at home for 13.1% of the population compared with an average of 4.2% for the rest of Sydney.¹²

Suzanne Rutland notes that “In Sydney, most Muslims live in the more working class southern and western areas, where annual incomes are much lower (Kabir, 2008¹³) and property is much

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sydney South West, 2021 Census. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/127>

¹³ N.A. Kabir, “Are young Muslims adopting Australian values?” *Australian Journal of Education* 52, no.3 (2008): 233.

less expensive... They face problems of low education levels, unemployment and other issues relating to adjustment to Australian society. Thus, while Muslims and Jews live in the same cities, they have minimal social interaction in neighbourhoods and schools.”¹⁴ This geographical division between Muslims and Jews within Sydney fuels distrust between the groups and “decreases the potential for knowledge and understanding between the groups, and exacerbates Muslim children’s negative feelings towards Jews and the Holocaust...”¹⁵

The most revealing statistics come from the New South Wales Department of Education, which show that in 2022, schools in Sydney’s south-west and west had by the far the greatest percentage of students with a language background other than English. Of these non-English languages, the largest single language spoken by LBOTE students and/or their parents/carers was Arabic with 40,929 enrolments (13.5% of all LBOTE students).¹⁶ In educational achievement, the area lags behind the rest of Sydney: 59.5% of the population have completed Year 12 or the equivalent, compared with 65% for greater Sydney. This lower level of educational achievement is reflected in income, with 5% of the population earning \$2,000 gross per week or more compared with the average for greater Sydney of 8.9%.¹⁷

These figures for education and income are important in attempting an explanation for the high levels of reported antisemitism in this area. Some research, which is explored in Chapter 8, suggests that the link between religion and antisemitism is less strong than the link between education, income and antisemitism. Research in this area must consider that the Muslim population is not a homogeneous group and that students expressing antisemitism in the classroom may themselves be experiencing marginalisation and alienation in the wider society. These themes have been taken up by researchers such as Larissa Allwork in her discussion of Muslim youth and their engagement with Holocaust education.¹⁸ Nevertheless, on the basis of the data that has been collected for this research, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Muslim boys in the south-west of Sydney are more likely to express antisemitic views in class

¹⁴ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education,” 227.

¹⁵ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education,” 228.

¹⁶ New South Wales Government Education, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, *Diversity in New South Wales Schools*, (2024), 3. <https://data.cese.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/schools-language-diversity-in-nsw/resource/8babd84f-fef9-4c93-9997-cc7a5c6d09a0>

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sydney South West, 2021 Census. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/127>

¹⁸ Larissa Allwork, “Holocaust education and contemporary anti-semitism,” *History and Policy*, 29 November 2019, <https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/holocaust-education-and-contemporary-anti-semitism>

than their counterparts in many other parts of Sydney. Whether this is because of their ethnicity, religion, socio-economic position or other demographic factors will require further research.

North shore and eastern suburbs

It is equally difficult to escape the conclusion that many boys from the eastern suburbs and north shore also express antisemitic views in class, though for reasons that cannot be explained by lower educational attainment and lower family income. While there was a clear expectation at the start of this research project that there would be a concentration of antisemitism within the south-west, the more affluent areas of Sydney were not expected to provide such high levels of reported antisemitism, nor some of the more extreme examples.

The north shore and eastern suburbs are strikingly different to the rest of Sydney for a number of reasons:

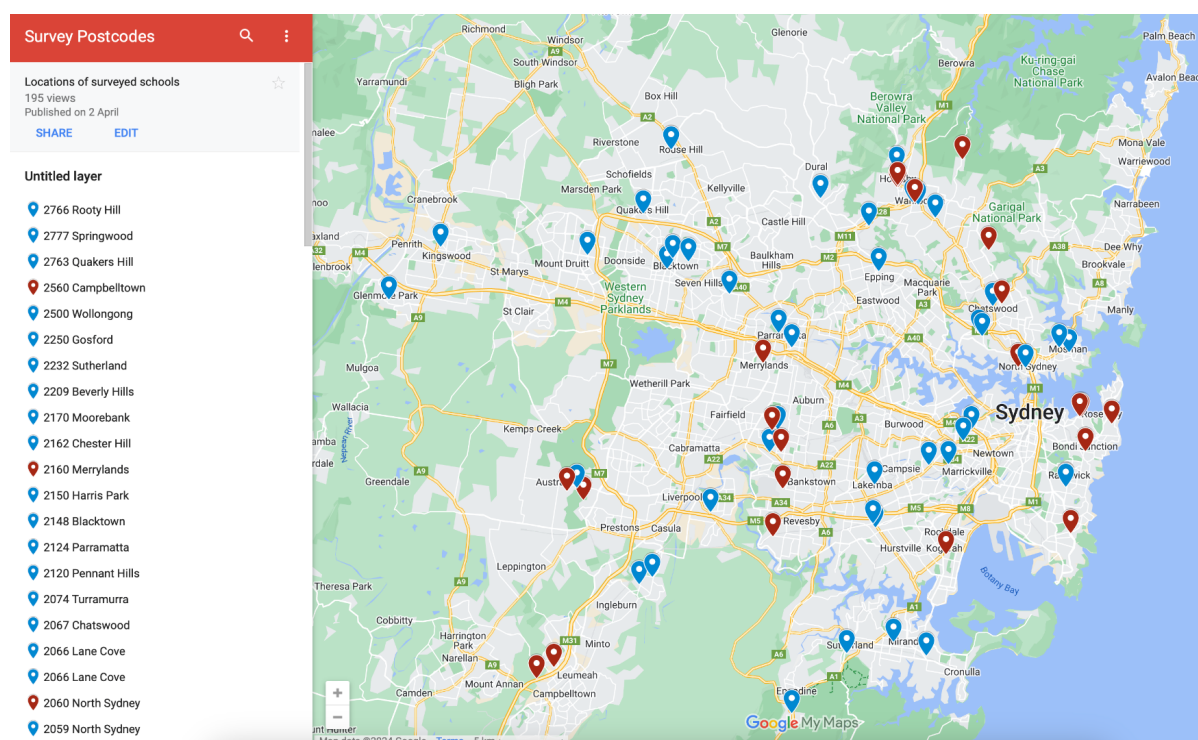
- A high number of independent schools.
- Most of the population (66%) were born in Australia
- A high level of education, with 23% at tertiary level
- Predominantly English and Australian ancestry (over 50% combined)
- Mainly no religious affiliation (38%) or Catholic (20%) or Anglican (10%)
- Income levels well above the rest of Sydney¹⁹

At the beginning of this research project, it was expected that incidents of classroom antisemitism and racism would closely parallel the distinct socio-economic dividing line that runs through Sydney, with a greater level of racist incidents in the south-west and west partly as a reflection of socio-economic factors. The reality, based on mapping the incidents of racism and antisemitism uncovered by this research, has been entirely unexpected. The map below shows the area covered by this research, with each pin representing a teacher who responded to the questionnaire or a school-based act of antisemitism verified by the ECAJ.

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sydney – North Sydney and Hornsby, 2021 Census, <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/121> and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Sydney – Eastern Suburbs, 2021 Census, <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/118>

Mapping the classrooms

Early in this research project, it was decided to map each of the responses using Google Maps.²⁰ This allowed a visual representation of each teacher and their school and the specific challenges they were facing. Schools were mapped according to the postcode data supplied by teachers in the questionnaire. It was anticipated that the map would reveal a concentration of antisemitism and racism in specific areas of Sydney that had been identified by earlier research. Each of the drop pins on the map represents the response of one teacher to the questionnaire. Multiple pins represent multiple responses from the same school. Red pins indicate that the teacher has identified racism or antisemitism or both as classroom challenges. Additional pins have been added to the map based on information taken from the ECAJ 2022 report into antisemitism in Australia where that information relates to schools and where the school and its location can reasonably be identified.



The map confirms that a representative geographical spread of schools across Sydney was achieved by the research method. When each drop pin is clicked, it reveals basic information about the school and the specific challenges faced by each teacher in their classroom. Antisemitism and racism certainly occur in the classrooms in the areas anticipated in Sydney's

²⁰ https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1CgiF5wW-LcwpRIT-Xd-2p1l_AiU&usp=sharing

south-west. But it is much more widespread than initially expected, particularly in the eastern suburbs and north shore.

Clearly racism and antisemitism are not confined to areas of social and economic inequality. Indeed, the more affluent north shore and eastern suburbs would appear to be overrepresented on the basis of population and responses to this research project. However, Sydney's demographics do provide important clues to the nature and origins of antisemitism. In the south-west, the antisemitism is closely linked to a significant Muslim population with its origins in the Middle East and North Africa. At its heart is an anti-Israel narrative that has become increasingly vocal and violent in its demands since 7 October 2023. In the eastern suburbs and north shore, lacking the cultural diversity of greater Sydney, traditional Anglo-Celtic antisemitism proliferates, relying on well-worn cultural tropes and stereotypical representations of Jews.

The north-western corridor, however, provides possible demographic explanations for its apparent lack of antisemitism through its unique characteristics:

- Limited Middle Eastern and North African migration
- Higher incomes
- Higher education
- Lower Anglo-Celtic population

Working together, these factors help to explain an apparent absence of antisemitism in schools in the north-western corridor, but also suggest explanations for the presence of antisemitism in other areas.

For any schools, community groups or governments wishing to implement programs to counter antisemitism, these are important considerations. A “one size fits all” approach to developing education programs will have limited impact on such a diverse range of students. Antisemitism programs, like any educational program, must recognise the diversity of learners and respect their backgrounds, working within appropriate cultural frameworks. Ethnicity, religion, cultural background and above all, gender, must be considered carefully when addressing antisemitism.

Who are the students?

The demographic diversity of Sydney schools was accurately captured by the data in this research with regard to language groups, religious affiliation, type of school and gender. No attempt has been made to link the teacher responses to individual school socio-economic data, although this has been done in a broad sense. This may well form a future line of enquiry, as previous studies conducted in European countries have found links between socioeconomic status and negative classroom behaviours.²¹ For the purposes of this research, the focus was on the background of the students and their geographical location in Sydney. The plotting of schools on a live Google Map revealed important factors in regard to classroom antisemitism and racism which will be discussed later in this chapter.²²

Slightly over 50% of the students represented by this study come from state secondary schools, with Catholic systemic, independent Catholic and independent Anglican schools also well represented. There were no responses received from teachers at either Jewish or Islamic schools. This was a major disappointment as it represents a significant knowledge gap in the context of this research. Each of these school types might be expected to encounter quite specific challenges in teaching the Holocaust, challenges which are substantially different to the challenges explored later in this thesis. In attempting to explain this absence of Jewish and Muslim schools, it had been suggested that teachers in these schools are perhaps less active in professional organisations such as the History Teachers Association of New South Wales and the several private Facebook groups that support History teachers in this state. However, correspondence with the HTA suggests this may not be the case and other factors, not explored in this current research, seem to be responsible.²³ Jewish and Muslim students did, however, form a significant part of the student body at a number of schools. Where the composition of the student body – based on identified language and religious groups – appears relevant to the data and its interpretation, it has been noted in this chapter and elsewhere in this research.

The type of school seemed to have only limited influence on the range of challenges encountered when teaching about the Holocaust with one notable exception. Teachers in

²¹ See for example the work of Gunther Jikeli, Georges Bensoussan and the Living History Forum, all of which were examined in Chapter 1.

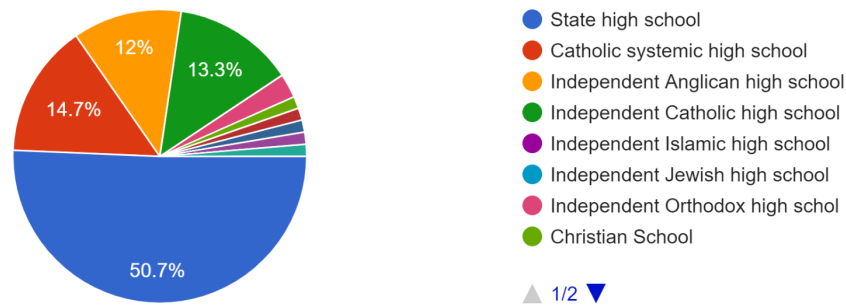
²² https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1CgiF5wW-LcwpRIT-Xd-2p1I_AiU&usp=sharing

²³ Email correspondence with HTA (New South Wales) Professional Officer, Jonathan Dallimore, 14 November 2023.

independent religious (Anglican, Catholic and Uniting) boys and co-ed schools were significantly more likely to state that antisemitism was a classroom challenge. This was particularly the case on the north shore and eastern suburbs of Sydney, where the majority of these schools are concentrated.

8. Type of high school or college

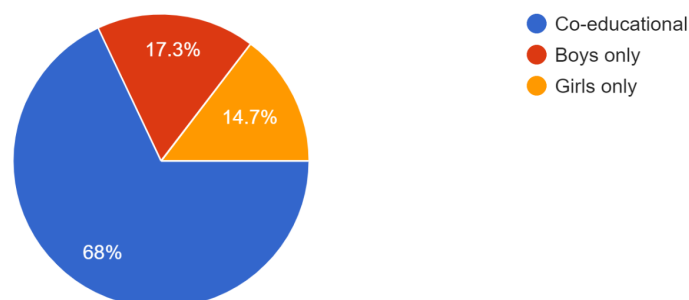
75 responses



Most students in this research attend co-educational schools. The smaller but significant numbers who attend single sex schools provide important points of comparison in the data, especially when considering the responses that point to student antisemitism as essentially a male phenomenon. The finding that all-girls schools are almost completely free of racism and antisemitism – at least insofar as they can be categorised as classroom challenges – is explored in Chapters 7 and 8.

9. Gender of your school's students

75 responses



Language groups in the respondents' schools were, as expected, very diverse across most of western Sydney and less diverse on the north shore and in the eastern suburbs. Diversity was substantially lower in rural and regional areas. On Sydney's north shore, few teachers reported

that there were significant language groups at their school other than English, and the religious groups were mostly restricted to mainstream Christian religions: Anglican, Uniting and Catholic. In Sydney's north-west, the state high schools showed significant diversity, with teachers making comments such as "Highly multicultural - too many to list." Significant language groups included Tagalog, Punjabi, Hindi and Arabic. In the non-state schools, there was less diversity with Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese and Hindi being the significant non-English language groups and mainstream Christian religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism as significant religious groups. In the west and south-west, there was enormous diversity in the language background of students, with teachers listing Arabic, Cantonese, Croatian, Dari, Farsi, Maltese, Mandarin, Maori, Turkish, Tongan, Samoan, Serbian and Vietnamese and other languages.

No attempt has been made to categorise or list these language groups as for the most part they appear to have no relevance to the focus area of this research, that is, challenges in Holocaust education. The exception is where a specific group might clearly be correlated with particular behaviours or outcomes. This has been the case where student antisemitism and racism have been mapped and shown to be, predominantly, an issue with schools with either a large male Arabic-speaking population or, equally so, in independent religious schools with high male Anglo-Australian populations as noted above.

No attempt has been made to categorise the various religious groups represented by this research. Students belong to a wide variety of religions. This diversity is most striking in DoE schools and, as might be expected, less apparent in religious schools. There were exceptions to this, however: One teacher, from an independent Anglican school, described the student cohort as "Jewish, Hindu, Chinese Christian, Korean Christian,"²⁴ while another, from a state school, said that the majority of their students "identify as Anglican, but most of them are not regular in attending church."²⁵

Who are the teachers?

The online questionnaire received responses from 75 teachers, with a number of these teachers volunteering detailed responses later in the research project. The result was a combination of

²⁴ Online questionnaire (2017), independent Anglican, co-ed school, northern Sydney.

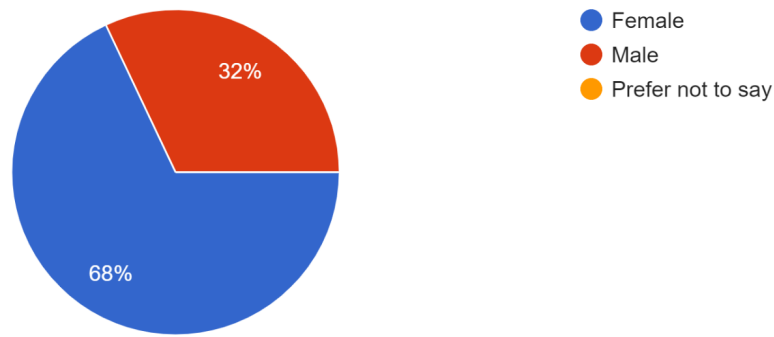
²⁵ Online questionnaire (2016), state co-ed school, southern Sydney.

quantitative and qualitative data that in almost all respects provides an accurate sample of Sydney's schools, teachers and students.

Most teachers who responded to this research were female. There was a clear imbalance between genders. While many schools may have more females on their History and English teaching staff, the extent of the imbalance in this research was surprising. Gender is unlikely to play a part in meeting the challenges of teaching the Holocaust; teaching experience, particularly in the subject area of History, is likely to be far more important.

1. Gender

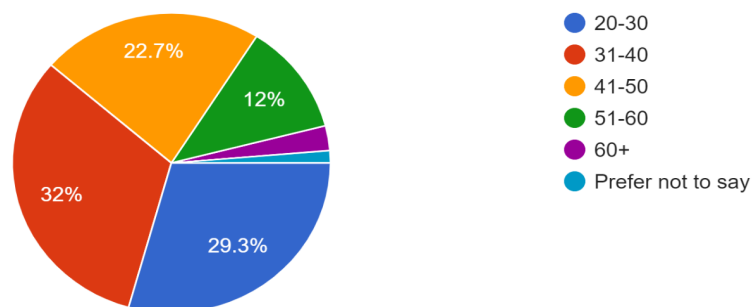
75 responses



There was a mix of age groups that generally reflected the ages of teachers in most schools with the possible exception that older teachers were a little underrepresented and beginning teachers overrepresented. Age, to the extent that it correlates with teaching experience, is an important consideration when discussing classroom challenges and it is noted in Chapter 7 in the section on student engagement.

2. Your age

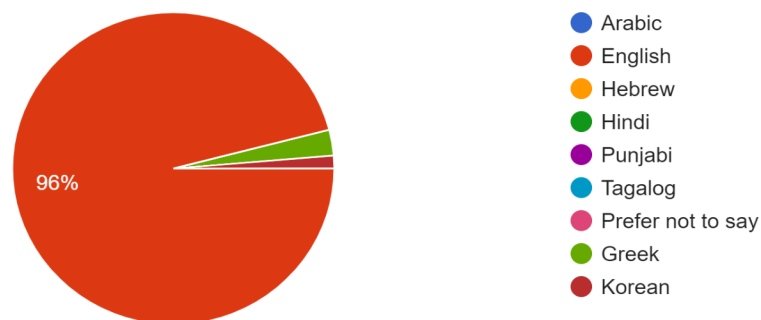
75 responses



Information on the language background of teachers was sought as this might have had an impact on their relationship with students if that language background was shared. The diversity of language backgrounds in students was not matched by their teachers who almost exclusively (96%) listed English as their first language. In religious affiliation, there was

3. Your first language

75 responses



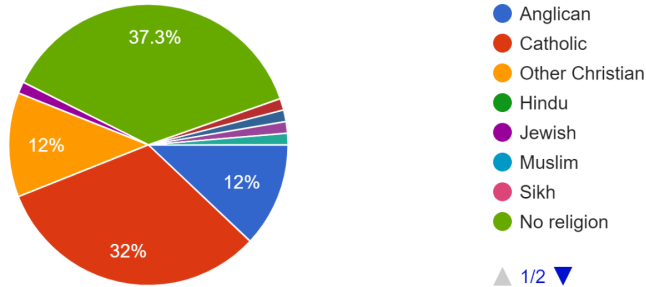
greater diversity amongst teachers, although again, the diversity amongst students was far greater. The largest group said they had no religion, perhaps surprising considering the number of religious schools included in this research.

Perhaps the most important data from teachers was the number of years they have been teaching. It might be expected that the more teaching experience a teacher has, the less classroom challenges they might face. Only two respondents were in the first year of teaching and they listed a number of challenges when teaching about the Holocaust. The first said “Access to technology within the school, Insufficient time to cover key areas, Limitations in content knowledge, Students upset by graphic material,” while the second said “Limitations in content knowledge, Students upset by graphic material, Students de-sensitised to resources.”²⁶ That both teachers listed “limitations in content knowledge” as a challenge is not surprising as

²⁶ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney state co-ed school; Online questionnaire (2016), regional state co-ed school.

4. Your religion

75 responses

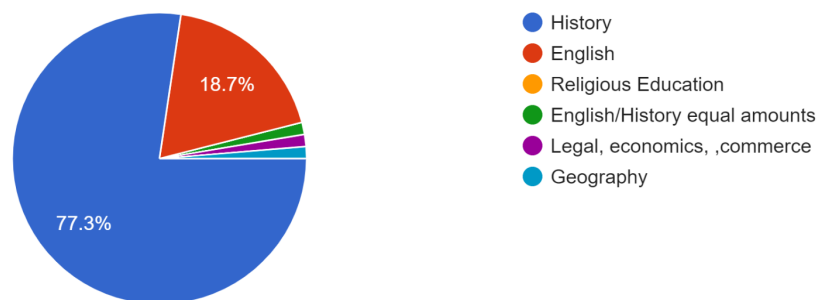


the breadth of content knowledge required of History teachers is at times breath-taking. Neither of these teachers, however, listed student behaviours as a challenge.

Content knowledge was potentially also a problem for those respondents who were teaching about the Holocaust but were not History trained. In Chapter 7, in the section on student engagement, several case studies of non-History teachers are discussed. A significant number of teachers in this research (18.7%) were English trained and were using Holocaust-themed texts in their classrooms. One teacher was Geography trained, another was Legal Studies trained. The majority of respondents (77.3%) were, as expected, History trained.

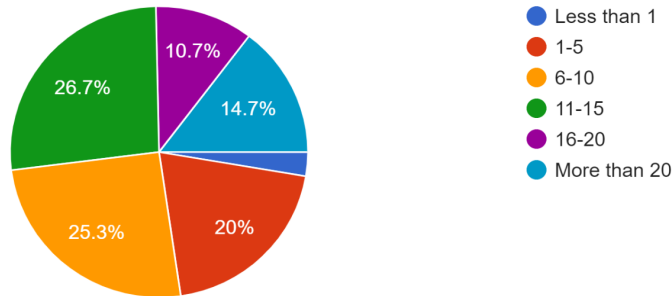
6. What is your main teaching subject?

75 responses



5. How many years have you been teaching?

75 responses



Discussion and conclusions

It is clear from this research that the enormous demographic diversity of students across western Sydney is not repeated in other areas, that is, the southern, northern and eastern suburbs. While it would be inaccurate to describe the north shore and eastern suburbs as monocultural, they certainly lack the wide range of student background that can be found elsewhere in Sydney. The diversity of student backgrounds was expected to present a unique set of challenges for Holocaust education in the western suburbs, but this was not the case. The problems confronting teachers are common to all areas of Sydney with one notable exception, the related problems of antisemitism and racism, which were confined to specific areas and types of schools.

The apparent lack of classroom antisemitism through the north-western corridor is deserving of further study, targeting specific schools in the area. If the results to come from this current research are continued and supported in a more detailed follow-up study, then there are possible clues that can be explored in school-based programs to counter antisemitism. These clues are possibly linked to the unique demographic characteristics of the area but other factors could also be at play. These factors possibly include the important aspect of the knowledge and ideas about Jews, Judaism and the Holocaust students bring with them to the classroom, and what their sources for this knowledge and ideas might be. For previous generations of students, film, television and conversations at home might have played a significant role in shaping their perceptions of the Holocaust prior to encountering the topic at school. For the current generation, social media will most likely have played a similar role and possibly created some unhelpful misunderstandings about the Holocaust. To some extent, this information is available

from the Gandel survey and from pre- and post-teaching surveys.²⁷ However, there is great need for substantial research on the sources of knowledge about the Holocaust – and also about the preconceptions and perspectives – that students bring with them to the classroom and how teachers can best work with these sources of knowledge. There may well be a very close link between the information and ideas students bring from home and the demographic/ethnic background of their families.

The diversity of students in this research was not matched by an equally diverse cohort of teachers represented by this study. Almost all listed English as their first language and described themselves as having no religious affiliation. This was not the expectation at the beginning of this research project; anecdotally, there was evidence that many teachers in Sydney were from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. It will become clear that the background of the teacher has little impact on the range of challenges they face in teaching about the Holocaust. The exception to this is the History teaching experience of the teacher. Those with limited experience in teaching generally or specifically History, may be hampered by a lack of content knowledge.

²⁷ Steven Cooke, Donna-Lee Frieze, Andrew Singleton and Matteo Vergani, *Gandel Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness in Australia Survey*, (Deakin University and the Gandel Foundation, 2022).
<https://gandelfoundation.org.au/gandel-holocaust-survey/>

“...the crucial problem is how to anchor the Holocaust in the historical consciousness of the generations that follow.”

– Yehuda Bauer, 1978¹

6. Teaching about the Holocaust – planning challenges

Introduction

Drawing on the data from a small number of questions in the online questionnaire, this chapter focuses on some fundamental aspects of teaching about the Holocaust: why teach about this difficult topic (aims); what content should be covered; how many hours are dedicated to it; teacher confidence and professional development. Under each of these subheadings, the raw data is provided and explanations offered. The responses from many teachers make clear that they think deeply and with great clarity about teaching the Holocaust and that it holds a special place in the curriculum for a range of reasons. What is less clear is how successful teachers are in aligning aims, content and available hours. There is, at times, a disconnect between teachers’ intentions in teaching about the Holocaust, the content they choose to include and the hours that are available in their classrooms. Human rights and anti-racism objectives featured prominently amongst teacher aims but in some cases, the content that was selected for inclusion by these teachers was less than suitable for achieving the stated aims, with a number neglecting to cover the origins and course of Nazi antisemitism or life after the Holocaust for European Jewry.

This chapter commences by exploring this problem; Chapter 10 will offer some possible solutions. Despite this problem, students in almost all the classrooms included in this research were engaged or highly engaged by their study of the Holocaust, even when significant classroom challenges arose. The responses from a small number of teachers who reported disengagement are discussed in some detail.

Aims in teaching about the Holocaust

In Chapter 1, a range of reasons for teaching about the Holocaust, suggested by non-teachers, academics and non-government organisations, were explored. This diversity of responses and ideas is also reflected in those offered by teachers across Sydney, the majority of whom have

¹ Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (University of Washington, 1978), 45.

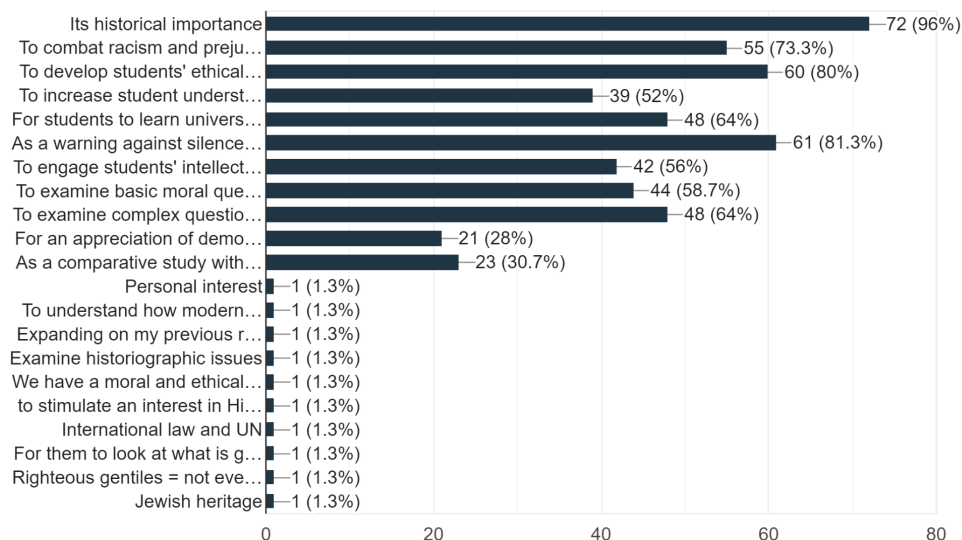
thought deeply about why they teach this difficult and sometimes emotionally charged topic. Many of the reasons given by teachers revolved around the perceived need to directly add to students' moral and ethical development through a study of the Holocaust, as well as the inclusion of civics and citizenship that has permeated previous iterations of the History syllabus in New South Wales.

Respondents to the online questionnaire were asked: "Apart from syllabus requirements, are there any other reasons why you chose to teach the Holocaust?" This question made two assumptions: firstly, that because the Holocaust is a syllabus requirement in mandatory Stage 5 History, all schools would in fact be teaching about it; and, secondly, that there would be additional reasons for teaching this topic. The first assumption proved false. A significant number of schools, despite the Holocaust being a topic for Stage 5 History, do not include it in their teaching and learning programs. This was the case in 10 schools, or 13.3% of the respondents. Each of these schools did, however, teach about the Holocaust in other subject areas: Elective History, Modern History and English. Their choice to not teach this topic in mandatory Stage 5 History is difficult to understand and was not made clear by their other answers in the questionnaire.

The second assumption proved more accurate. Most teachers have a range of reasons for teaching about the Holocaust and do not do so simply because it is prescribed by the syllabus. Teachers were able to select more than one reason, and most selected at least six or seven different reasons. This in itself raises questions about the extent to which teaching about the Holocaust can satisfy so many potentially competing aims. Is it possible to teach this topic for its "historical importance," as 96% of respondents said, and for it to also be an effective tool in "combating racism and prejudice" (73%), developing "understanding of civics and citizenship" (52%), and as "a warning against silence and indifference" (81%)? Other reasons included: "to develop students' ethical and moral frameworks" (80%); to learn "universal lessons" (64%); to "examine basic moral questions" (59%); to "examine complex questions about power and authority" (64%); and for "an appreciation of democratic values" (28%). There is possibly no other topic in History that is required to be so flexible in bending to the various aims and requirements of educators in their classrooms.

24. Apart from syllabus requirements, are there any other reasons why you chose to teach the Holocaust?

75 responses



One teacher, however, rejected all other aims in teaching about the Holocaust and said that he taught the topic purely for its historical importance:

I think the Holocaust needs to be taught as history, not to expressly impart 'moral lessons' which are notoriously difficult to 'draw out' of history. I would argue that teaching the Holocaust is not necessarily a uniquely powerful vehicle for raising and examining the issues outlined in the list above. This can be done through a study of revolutions, colonisation, and, if done well, the Australian constitution.²

This view removes from the Holocaust any unique ability to transform students morally and ethically and suggests that History as a whole, when taught well, has this power. It is a view grounded in von Rankean empiricism that, while not popular amongst the respondents to this research, still has a great deal of support and suggests that History as a discipline is a powerful civilising force. In teaching the Holocaust in this way, the moral and ethical lessons for students become self-apparent without the teacher making any explicit connections between

² Online questionnaire (2016), south coast state co-ed school.

choices by individuals during the Holocaust and those made by individuals in the modern world, including ourselves.

Most likely, this teacher was unaware of the views of historian Nicholas Kinloch, who presented a similar argument in 1998. Writing in *Teaching History* for an audience of British History educators, Kinloch recounted a discussion about the Holocaust he had with a group of History teachers:

[They] saw it as perhaps the critical event of the twentieth century. All of them believed that there were important moral, social and perhaps spiritual lessons to be drawn from a study of the Shoah. Even at their least vehement, these teachers seemed to believe that studying the Nazi genocide would improve students ability to recognise, and react appropriately to, similar events should they ever happen again.³

Kinloch's view is that the Holocaust should be taught in schools, "but I do not think that History teachers will really do so effectively until we have removed from it its quasi-mystical associations and clarified our own objectives. I think we have to start and end with what happened and why; with the Shoah as history."⁴

A teacher's aims in teaching about the Holocaust matter because those aims will, in large part, determine the content and the pedagogical strategies that will be used in class. This will, as Alice Pettigrew has noted, also impact "the meaning – or otherwise – that their students may be able to derive. Without an answer to the question, 'Why teach about the Holocaust?' on what basis should a teacher determine what content to include?"⁵ It would appear from this research that most teachers have thought deeply about why they are teaching about the Holocaust, but have perhaps not thought equally deeply about the content and pedagogy that is required to meet their stated aims.

³ Nicholas Kinloch, "Learning about the Holocaust: moral or historical question?" *Teaching History* 93 (November 1998): 44.

⁴ Kinloch, "Learning about the Holocaust," 46.

⁵ Alice Pettigrew, "Why teach or learn about the Holocaust? Teaching aims and student knowledge in English secondary schools," UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, 2017. https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1542661/1/Pettigrew_Why%2520teach%2520or%2520learn%2520about%2520the%2520Holocaust%2520AP.pdf

The teachers who responded to the questionnaire in this current research clearly believed that it is possible to teach about the Holocaust's historical significance and also address moral, ethical and civics' issues – 96% of them do both. In this, they are closely aligned with Geoffrey Short, who believes that “the Holocaust does contain useful lessons, not only for individual students, but for the educational system as a whole.”⁶ But Short does not engage with the problem that Pettigrew highlights above: our aims in teaching about the Holocaust, will influence, perhaps even determine, our strategies and content.

Content

It should be possible for teachers to select content and strategies that will meet both aims, but analysis of the data from the questionnaire suggests that teachers may be struggling to do so. One of the questions asked teachers what aspects of the Holocaust they covered in class. They were provided with a long list of potential aspects, from antisemitism, through pre-war Jewish life, Nazi anti-Jewish legislation up to memorialisation and denial.

For teachers to address the issues of civics, morality and ethics, it would be desirable to examine the actions of rescuers and perpetrators and the inaction of bystanders to illustrate the choices that were made at all levels by individuals. The data, however, suggests that this is not happening in all classrooms. A majority of teachers, over 90%, cover antisemitism, Nazi ideology and propaganda, and the extermination camps. But when considering resistance (64%), rescuers (37%), and the response of other nations (48%), the numbers are disturbingly low. It seems unlikely that students will understand the moral and ethical choices that were made during the Holocaust if they do not study rescue, resistance or responses. Indeed, the potential messaging that comes from a narrow selection of content is that Jews did not resist; that rescue was not a choice; and that the Holocaust happened to a group of faceless, nameless people who simply ceased to exist by 1945.

Hours

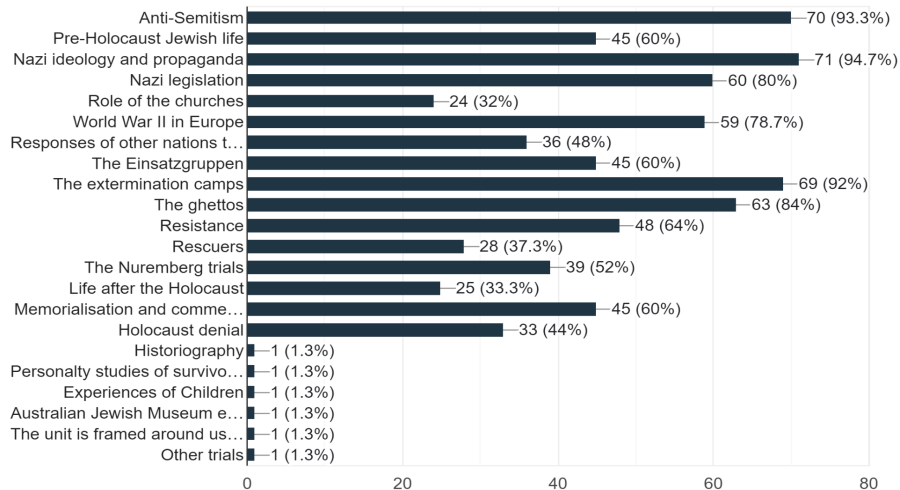
The multitude of aims that teachers have in teaching the Holocaust might suggest they dedicate significant time to this topic. And for many this is certainly the case. In a syllabus that is overflowing with prescribed content, almost half of the respondents spend ten or more hours on the Holocaust. This is well in excess of the expectations held at the start of this research,

⁶ Short, “Lessons of the Holocaust,” 277.

when three to four hours was seen as the most likely time that teachers would be able to find for the Holocaust.

16. In your principal area of teaching, what aspects of the Holocaust do you cover in class? (Please select all that are relevant to you.)

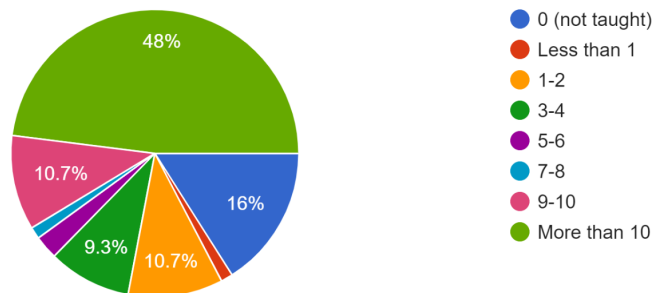
75 responses



Of those teachers who were either not teaching about the Holocaust in mandatory Stage 5 History, or did so for just 1-2 hours (13 teachers in total), only three also reported that antisemitism was a classroom challenge. Therefore it can be confidently stated that teachers, on the whole and with few exceptions, are not avoiding Holocaust education because of the antisemitic attitudes of their students. Indeed, when those teachers who noted antisemitism as a classroom challenge are examined closely, ten of them spend five or more hours on the Holocaust and six of these will spend at least ten hours on the topic. These teachers are spending well over the required time on the Holocaust, in spite of and perhaps because of, their students' antisemitic behaviours.

13. For how many hours is the Holocaust taught in Stage 5 (Mandatory) History in your school?

75 responses



Very few teachers were able to find the time required to teach the Holocaust as thoroughly as one respondent, who was spending 20 indicative hours on the Holocaust in Year 10:

We teach this topic in Yr10 for a whole term at 2hr/wk. We start w [sic] briefly looking at the ancient/medieval roots of anti-Semitism & Germany in 1920s. Then significant time is spent on early SA/Nazi action against Jewish Germans; mechanisms of anti-Semitism (laws, street violence, media, exclusion etc); ghettos; experiences in concentration camps; how ppl survived; legacy; remembrance; assessment is research on Yad Vashem's list of righteous gentiles & assessing if ordinary non-Nazi Germans were innocent/bystanders/ responsible; visit to Sydney Jewish Museum.⁷

Using this approach, it may be very possible to achieve the twin aims of historical knowledge and moral/ethical development discussed earlier, but for most schools the required hours are simply unavailable and choices will need to be made about what aspects of the Holocaust to include and what to ignore. Where teachers already have solid content knowledge, they will be better able to make these decisions. This research did not seek to “test” teachers on their knowledge of the Holocaust, but it did ask them about their professional development in this area, and the level of confidence with which they approach the topic.

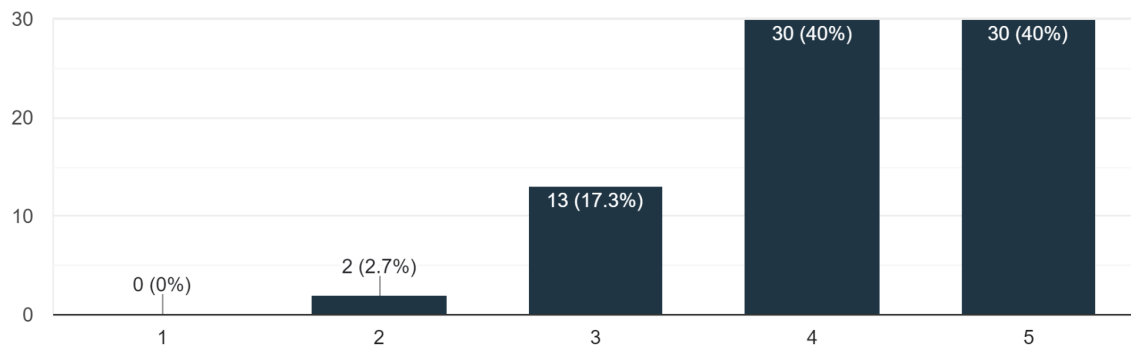
⁷ Online questionnaire (2016), southern Sydney state co-ed school.

Teacher confidence and professional development

Using a Likert Scale, respondents were asked how they rated their own confidence in teaching about the Holocaust. Confidence was rated as high or very high by 80%; only two teachers rated their confidence as low or very low and just 17% put their confidence at neither high nor low.

23. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your confidence in teaching the Holocaust?

75 responses



On the question of professional development, and whether respondents had undertaken any specifically Holocaust-related training, 35 teachers out of 75 responded negatively. This was surprising for a number of reasons: firstly, as discussed in the methodology section, the respondents to this questionnaire were, on the whole, actively engaged in their professional teaching networks such as the HTA and various private Facebook groups; secondly, the high levels of confidence in teaching about the Holocaust would suggest that teachers had undergone additional training or study in this area. This might at first indicate that the levels of confidence were perhaps overstated; that teachers should not have been as confident as they indicated. But the degree of thoughtfulness behind many of the responses and the detail in the answers, point to a group of teachers who do know their subject quite well, and may have undertaken their own self-guided learning, but perhaps could develop their specific classroom pedagogy when teaching about the Holocaust.

Those who had not completed any Holocaust-specific professional development did not offer any explanation for this. However, a number of teachers had received a great deal of professional development and reported favourably on its impact on their classroom practice. One teacher explained that he completed a significant amount of professional development:

I attended a lot of professional development through the History Teachers Association early in my career, and then later attended quite a number of courses run by the Sydney Jewish Museum. I then completed via correspondence two courses – ‘The Holocaust - An Introduction (I): Nazi Germany: Ideology, The Jews and the World’ and ‘The Holocaust - An Introduction (II): The Final Solution’ – through Tel Aviv University and Yad Vashem. These all gave me greater content knowledge of the topic and greater frameworks to teach the history in a deeper, conceptual and challenging way rather than presenting simplistic interpretations that didn’t do much to challenge student thinking.⁸

This teacher, working in a partially selective school, offered detailed responses to all questions and had thought deeply about tailoring his lessons to both mainstream and selective classes. His level of content knowledge was high and though he identified the classroom challenges he had encountered, he was able to deal with them quickly.

A number of teachers rated the professional development received at the Sydney Jewish Museum very highly. One teacher, from regional New South Wales, said that she had “found working with the Jewish Museum in Sydney has deepened my field of knowledge and helped to engage my students at a deeper level. I have encouraged History teachers coming through to undertake courses through the Jewish Museum and we hold these courses in high regard.”⁹ Echoing these sentiments, another teacher, from south-western Sydney, said:

I was lucky enough to complete the two day course at the Sydney Jewish Museum on how to teach the Holocaust, which was extremely valuable and I try to pass on what I learnt to others. But this is the only course that I have seen that’s been offered to teachers. Teaching the Holocaust can be quite tricky – you want to make sure you do it justice whilst giving students the correct information and not leaving out important content. There needs to be a lot more out there for teachers, especially in regards to classroom challenges relating to antisemitism.¹⁰

A third teacher also pointed to the level of expertise available at the Sydney Jewish Museum:

⁸ Email questionnaire and correspondence (2023), western Sydney state co-ed school.

⁹ Email questionnaire and correspondence (2023), regional state co-ed school.

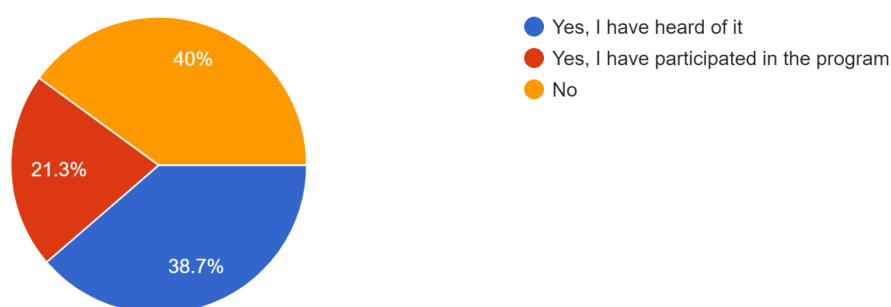
¹⁰ Email questionnaire and correspondence (2023), south-west Sydney state co-ed school.

I built resources in consultation with education officers at SJM, Marie Bonardelli and Dr Ari Lander and have remained in contact with them. Additionally, it is a subject that one constantly learns from so I never see myself as being someone who knows everything about the Holocaust. Certainly today it is even more important to teach it due to the rise of antisemitism and racism in general both here and abroad.¹¹

A significant number of teachers had received professional development through Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and research centre in Israel. This course for Australian teachers, sponsored primarily by Gandel Philanthropy, provides teachers with 120 hours of Holocaust study in Jerusalem. The course is content-heavy but includes sessions dedicated to resources and pedagogy. In this current research, 16 teachers, or 21.3% of the group, had completed the Yad Vashem program; thus they were over-represented in the data. This creates a number of

27. Are you aware of the Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem?

75 responses



issues for data analysis which is discussed in the methodology section. The importance of professional development, including courses at the Sydney Jewish Museum and Yad Vashem, is discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

Student engagement

There was some anticipation that a correlation would exist between confidence levels and professional development, but this did not materialise. There was, however, a clear correlation between teacher confidence and student engagement. When asked to describe their students' responses to lessons on the Holocaust, teachers overwhelmingly selected responses such as “they

¹¹ Email questionnaire and correspondence (2023), regional Catholic systemic girls' school.

are keenly interested” (76%), “interested and generally engaged” (72%) and “they always want to spend more time on the topic” (60%). These high levels of student interest in the topic were not unexpected and mirror reports and anecdotal evidence from other researchers. David Lindquist, for example, has described the Holocaust as “perhaps the most compelling topic studied in American schools today [2007]:

Many students state that their study of the event is the most intensive and meaningful investigation in which they are involved during their academic careers. Teachers who include the subject in their courses often find that their students want to spend large amounts of time immersing themselves in studying the event.¹²

Overwhelmingly, despite the range of challenges encountered in classrooms, this was also the experience of educators who took part in this current research project.

Only three teachers reported that their students lacked engagement or were disinterested in learning about the Holocaust. The reasons for this lack of interest are suggested by responses to other questions from these teachers. The first respondent was a young teacher with less than 5 years of classroom experience, who nonetheless rated their confidence in teaching about the Holocaust as high.¹³ They had received no professional development in Holocaust education and were relying on school-developed booklets and textbooks. Clearly they were aware of the limitations imposed on them by geography – “Being a regional school, it becomes harder to access resources that schools in cities would have access to” – and their distance from Sydney made it difficult and expensive to access the Sydney Jewish Museum. This teacher reported that some students were engaged, but most were disinterested. It is worth noting that this teacher’s content selections began with Nazi ideology and propaganda and did not include the history of antisemitism or pre-war Jewish life. Omitting these topics creates a very real risk of dehumanising the victims of the Holocaust.

The second teacher to note disengagement said that lack of student interest in the topic was a problem and that students were desensitised to Holocaust resources.¹⁴ They explained the lack of student engagement by suggesting that their “students struggle to understand the impact it

¹² Lindquist, “A necessary Holocaust pedagogy,” 23.

¹³ Online questionnaire (2017), regional state co-ed school.

¹⁴ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney Catholic systemic co-ed school.

has on people – they have never been exposed to life trauma and lack empathy.” This teacher did take students to the Sydney Jewish Museum, each year, and had completed some professional development at the museum. Their teaching resources were limited to film, novels and documentaries and they did not cover pre-war Jewish life as part of their Holocaust study.

The third teacher had been teaching less than five years and History was not their main subject specialisation.¹⁵ They described their students' responses to learning about the Holocaust as “No different to their response to any other topic, mostly disengaged and uninterested.” Amongst their long list of identified classroom challenges were: access to appropriate resources; access to technology within the school; insufficient time to cover key areas; lack of professional development, limitations in content knowledge; and lack of student interest in the topic. They rated their confidence in teaching this topic as low. They had never taken their students to the Sydney Jewish Museum and had undertaken no professional development in this area. Their main teaching resources were a school-developed booklet, a textbook and online survivor testimony from Yad Vashem. They did not cover pre-war Jewish life as part of their Holocaust study.

What conclusions can be drawn from these three teachers' responses? Is there any overlap in their responses that might suggest reasons for their students' disengagement?

- Each was teaching in a school that could be described as challenging, with a low socio-economic ranking and low achievement across the school in standardised testing. But other schools in this current research would also fit this description.
- Two of the three teachers were relatively inexperienced, with less than five years in the classroom; the third was teaching out of his subject specialisation, so all three could be said to be inexperienced as History teachers.
- Only one of the three had completed any professional development and this was on genocide, not specifically the Holocaust, at the Sydney Jewish Museum. The other two had no professional development in this area.
- None of these teachers included pre-war Jewish life as a topic in their study of the Holocaust.
- School-developed booklets were used by two of the three. The third was using film, novels and documentaries.

¹⁵ Online questionnaire (2017), western Sydney state co-ed school.

- Only one of the three took students to the Sydney Jewish Museum.

Based on these points, it is possible to suggest that teacher experience in dealing with this difficult topic, coupled with their lack of specific professional development, may have played a role in the negative experiences of students. Their inability to thoroughly humanise the topic may also have been influential, which is reflected in the comment noted by the first teacher that their “students struggle to understand the impact it has on people.” On this basis, perhaps the most salient point is that none of these teachers included pre-war Jewish life as an aspect of their Holocaust studies in class. This lack of appreciation for the human aspect of the Holocaust in their approach could also be exacerbated by their resource choices: school-developed booklets, textbooks, film and documentaries. Only one said they used survivor testimony in the classroom.

So while it may be possible to offer explanations for the small number of disengaged classrooms, it is perhaps even more valuable to ask the question, why are so many students highly engaged by this topic?¹⁶ This elevated level of engagement was one of the most striking features of the current research. Students across Sydney and New South Wales, regardless of school system and geographical area, want to study the Holocaust and are generally more engaged with this topic than all others in History. One teacher from a very diverse school said that despite her lack of content knowledge and professional development in this area, “students are generally engaged in all learning related to the Holocaust. It seems to be the only topic that evokes any empathy from Stage 5 learners.”¹⁷ Another teacher agreed that the Holocaust was seen differently to other subjects by students: “Despite some students being disinterested/opposed to studies of a similar nature (e.g. Refugees to Aust or Aust Aboriginal ppl [sic] fight for rights), there was genuine interest & empathy for Jewish ppl of Holocaust.” But perhaps the best summary of these comments came from a teacher in an all-girls Catholic school on the north shore, who said “of all the units I teach this is the topic that students always talk about – even years later.”¹⁸

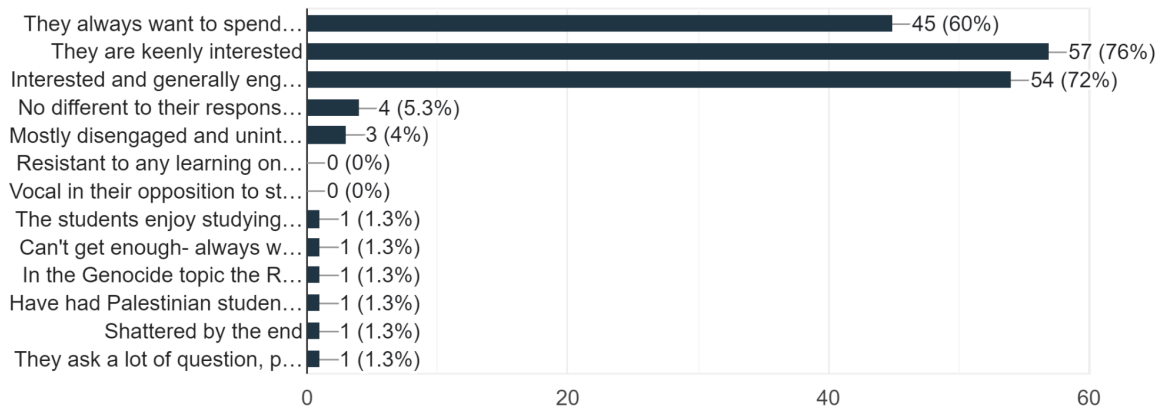
¹⁶ There is no extant research-based evidence to suggest probable reasons for the high level of student engagement in Holocaust education, however a study conducted by Kearney, et al, suggests a possible explanation. Working with a group of PhD students, researchers set tasks based on the viewing of Holocaust documentaries. They found that the level of engagement and the depth of student responses increased markedly because of the emotional magnitude of the Holocaust documentaries viewed by students. The heightened emotions, they found, served to focus student attention on the tasks. See: Kerri S. Kearney, Bernita Krumm, Robin L. Hughes and James W. Satterfield, “Organized for Genocide: Student Reactions and Learning From Use of Emotive Documentaries on the Holocaust,” *Journal of Management Education* 37, no.3 (2012): 342–366.

¹⁷ Online questionnaire (2017), south-west Sydney state co-ed school.

¹⁸ Online questionnaire (2017), southern Sydney state co-ed school.

21. How would you describe your students' responses to lessons on the Holocaust? (Tick as many as necessary)

75 responses



The comments by some teachers allow consideration of the reasons for this consistently high level of engagement in learning about the Holocaust. Personal, emotional and human connections seem to play a significant role. One teacher said that “the children are always blown away by hearing survivors at the SJM and are deeply affected by the whole topic. It ignites a passion for History and discovering more for themselves.”¹⁹ Another teacher, from a Catholic systemic school in western Sydney, had made a conscious decision to humanise the topic, partly in response to students entering the class with an unhealthy fascination with Hitler:

The vast majority of students are very keen to learn about the Holocaust. I am concerned at times that this interest comes from a fascination with the Nazis and Hitler. I have found a way of combating this is by spending some time deconstructing ‘who were the Jews before WWII.’ It is a really important part of students valuing Jewish life before the Holocaust, in order to know what is lost under the Nazis.²⁰

This teacher also noted that racism in the classroom was a challenge but despite this, her students “always want to spend more time on this topic, are keenly interested, and generally engaged.”²¹

¹⁹ Online questionnaire (2016), northern Sydney Catholic systemic co-ed school.

²⁰ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney Catholic systemic co-ed school.

²¹ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney Catholic systemic co-ed school.

Other comments suggested that students saw study of the Holocaust as a highlight of their year. “The students that I teach are always very keen to get through all other content and get onto The Holocaust,” said a teacher from southern Sydney:

They are very eager to find out about that time period, what happened and who was involved. They sometimes struggle to understand the logistics behind what happened (how a single person could have such a massive impact on others and history itself), but are always so interested to learn more!²²

Despite spending more than 10 hours on the Holocaust, one teacher from an independent Christian school in western Sydney said that the “Holocaust is always a topic that captures the students’ attention. It often times is the reason why students in Year 10 select Modern History for Year 11.”²³

Perhaps the most interesting comment came from one of the three teachers at a north shore independent school to report antisemitism as a significant classroom problem: “Even students who are reported to express anti-semitic views outside the classroom are highly engaged in this topic.”²⁴ This teacher described their students as “keenly interested” and “generally engaged” despite saying that their classroom included “students who are desensitised to resources and are reported to be engaged in anti-semitism/racism outside the classroom.” These comments raise questions about the usefulness of Holocaust education in countering antisemitism and should be viewed in the context of the later discussion about school culture and the ability of Holocaust education to make a meaningful contribution to students’ moral development.

A further indication of the popularity of studying the Holocaust came from a series of student surveys conducted at one of the schools in this study.²⁵ A group of 42 students were asked at the beginning of their Elective History study in Year 9, which topic are you most looking forward to studying? Almost 60% said it was the Holocaust, with ancient warfare a distant second at 21%. At the end of the course, 100% of these students said that they were looking forward to learning more about the Holocaust the following year in the mandatory Stage 5

²² Online questionnaire (2017), southern Sydney state co-ed school.

²³ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney independent Christian co-ed school.

²⁴ Online questionnaire (2017), north shore independent boys’ school.

²⁵ The pre- and post-teaching questionnaires at this school are the focus of Chapter 9. The school has been completely de-identified in accordance with Human Ethics committee approval to use the questionnaires in this research project.

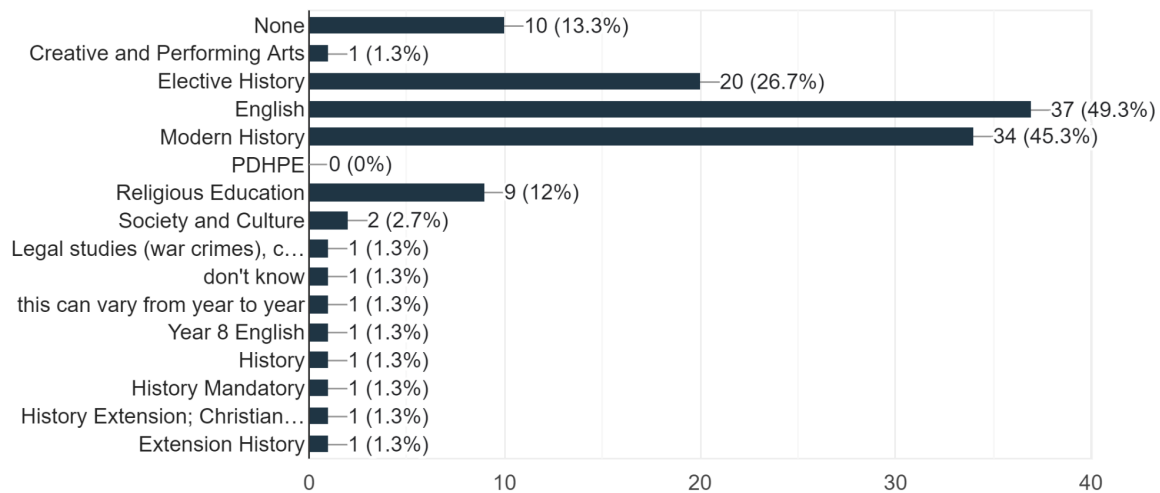
History course. In a pre-test of 170 Year 10 students at the same school, conducted before students had commenced their study of the Holocaust, all but five said that study of the Holocaust was an important aspect of their learning, with 95% of students saying they wanted to learn more about the Holocaust. The majority of these Year 10s, when surveyed later in a post-teaching questionnaire, believed that their study of the Holocaust had been important and meaningful. Some focused on the human aspects of the Holocaust while others made strong connections between their classroom study and the talk from a Holocaust survivor at the Sydney Jewish Museum. However, some comments reflected possible misunderstandings or a need for teachers to re-emphasise certain aspects of the Holocaust and there was a small group for whom the topic had no special importance. Overwhelmingly, however, the comments from these students were of a similar vein to the responses made by teachers in this research project: that student engagement in learning about the Holocaust is high and often greater than for other topics.

Teaching in areas other than History

Not all respondents to the questionnaire were History teachers. A surprising number (13 teachers) were English-trained but were either teaching History as part of their teaching load or were teaching about the topic in English because of related studies, using texts such as *Hannah's Suitcase*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* or *The Book Thief*. Only ten teachers said that their schools were not teaching the Holocaust in areas outside of History. This has important implications for organisations such as the Sydney Jewish Museum and Melbourne Holocaust Museum, who offer professional development for teachers of the Holocaust. These courses have been constructed with a variety of teaching subject areas in mind and, apart from History teachers, cater also to teachers of English and Religious Education.

14. In which other subject areas is the Holocaust taught in your school?

75 responses



The results of Question 14 reflect the high likelihood the Holocaust will be taught in a number of areas beyond History in any school. To the question “In which other subject areas is the Holocaust taught in your school?” approximately half of respondents listed English (49%) and Modern History (45%), with significant numbers indicating Elective History (26%) and Religious Education (12%). The Holocaust was also being taught in History Extension, Legal Studies, Society and Culture and Drama.

The variety of responses to this question was encapsulated by this teacher:

In English, Stage 4 and 5 students study Holocaust themed texts as well as an Area of Study (Prejudice) which incorporates opportunities for Holocaust lessons, at the discretion of individual teachers. Scripture is taught with some lessons investigating Anti-Semitism [sic] and the Holocaust.²⁶

This was in addition to the more than 10 hours spent on the Holocaust in Stage 5 mandatory History and excursions to the Sydney Jewish Museum each year. It is worthwhile noting that this school, with a significant Jewish population, did not list racism or antisemitism as issues

²⁶ Online questionnaire (2016), northern Sydney state co-ed school.

in the classroom, yet surrounding schools, state and independent, have experienced significant issues in this respect.

Likewise, a detailed response from a teacher at an Anglican school showed the importance of integrating the study of the Holocaust throughout the school.²⁷ In addition to teaching about the Holocaust for 3-4 hours in mandatory Stage 5, the school also created a Stage 4 unit called Letters from the Holocaust which “looks at historical documents as well as fictional representations of the Holocaust.” The teacher described the wide range of texts that are being used in the school: “Texts such as *The Book Thief*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, extracts from *Maus* (for enrichment only), picture books such as *Rose Blanche* and *The Terrible Things* are all incorporated into the unit. Resources from the Jewish Museum in Sydney are central to this unit.” Such an approach, however, created some challenges for teachers: “Time is an issue when teaching this topic in English. Giving adequate historical background before doing a textual analysis is time consuming, but essential. Violent TV shows and films have desensitised children to the horrors of the Holocaust.” But the biggest challenge this teacher said she faced was her own content knowledge. There was no mention of racism, antisemitism or student disengagement in their original responses to this research project, but later correspondence revealed one instance that was dealt with quickly.²⁸

In one school, English and Religious Education were the only subjects where students in Stage 5 would encounter the Holocaust, as it was not taught in Stage 5 mandatory History. This placed a special responsibility on these teachers to “get the history right,” even though this was not their main teaching area. The respondent described their approach thus: “English, through the text *Hana’s Suitcase*. This is a month to six weeks’ worth of work as we need students to understand the context of the Holocaust. We complete a film study in Year 10 looking at the film *The Boy in the Stripped pajamas* [sic]. Students also attend the Jewish museum for Religious Education.” While one of this school’s text choices was definitely problematic, on the whole there was a serious attempt to teach the topic well.

Discussion and conclusions

Having clear aims when teaching any topic in any subject is extremely important. Without setting clearly achievable aims, it becomes difficult to plan units of work, to create lesson

²⁷ Online questionnaire (2017), north-west Sydney Anglican co-ed school.

²⁸ This correspondence is explored in Chapter 7.

outlines and to select strategies. It also becomes difficult to measure the efficacy of teaching practice. When those aims are far more abstract than simply asking students to recount information, dates and events, it is even more important to develop a clear rationale for teaching. Teachers who responded to this research project have thought deeply about what they are trying to achieve. They have considered the importance of Holocaust education in engaging students' intellectual curiosity, in learning universal lessons and in increasing student understanding of civics and citizenship. Virtually every respondent saw a reason to teach about this topic beyond syllabus requirements and its historical significance. One of the two dissenters provided a reasoned argument, cited earlier in this chapter, arguing that "the Holocaust is not necessarily a uniquely powerful vehicle for raising and examining the issues outlined in the list above."

The problem for some of the respondents to this research is that their stated aims in Holocaust education do not align with the content aspects of the Holocaust they have chosen to study, nor with the teaching resources they have chosen to use. There is something of a disconnect between aims and practice. In seeking to satisfy aims that might broadly be categorised as human rights' based, it is essential to focus students' attention on Jews in the Holocaust as living beings, not simply as statistics or victims. A large number of respondents (30) do not teach about pre-war Jewish life, to which the question must be asked, how can students understand the magnitude of loss, if they do not appreciate the diversity of Jewish life prior to the Shoah? Shulamit Imber, former pedagogical director at Yad Vashem, has perfectly summarised this view: "Meaning is not gleaned from piles of bodies or statistics, but rather in the individuals, families and communities that were each worlds in and of themselves. This is what people can empathise with. This is what they can take with them into their own lives."²⁹ Without developing the empathy that can only come from knowing real people and real communities, teachers and their students will not be able to achieve their stated human rights-related aims.

The same is true for the many teachers who do not teach about life after the Holocaust. Only 25 teachers included in their Holocaust study the Jewish return to life post-World War II. Clearly, if we do not focus much of our attention on living Jews, before, during and after the Holocaust, we are teaching our students only about those Jews who perished in the Nazis' mass murder. We show

²⁹ Shulamit Imber, "Safely in, Safely out," *Yad Vashem Magazine* 95 (Summer 2021), 30. <https://www.yadvashem.org/magazine-featured/safely-in-safely-out.html>

them horror and sadness, but provide no sense of the scale of the loss and no sense of the strength of a people to survive. We provide no possibility of humanising the victims and we provide no opportunity for classroom conversations about antisemitism here and now, and its impact on individuals and communities.

Time is of course a factor in deciding what to include and what to leave out. Teachers will not be able to cover all aspects of the Holocaust in any depth, though many seem to do so at a superficial level. One teacher, who spent 3-4 hours on the Holocaust, said they cover the following topics: Antisemitism, pre-Holocaust Jewish life, Nazi ideology and propaganda, Nazi legislation, World War II in Europe, responses of other nations to Germany's persecution of the Jews, the extermination camps, the ghettos, resistance, memorialisation and commemoration and Holocaust denial. While this is an impressive list, it has to be wondered how students can possibly gain any depth of understanding from so many aspects of study in so little time. For those teachers who spend 9-10 or more hours on the Holocaust, the choices are a little easier and the aspects of study can be treated in more depth.

Finally, it must be recognised that student engagement in this area of History is almost universally high. Across all geographical areas and all school systems, regardless of demographics, students were seen by their teachers as being engaged or highly engaged in learning about the Holocaust. This was true even in classrooms where racism and antisemitism were reported as challenges.

“Many of our students are of Middle Eastern background and I have decided not to teach The Diary of Anne Frank this term to my Year 9 Elective History class because of their views on Jewish people in the Israeli-Palestine conflict. I feel it is not the right time to engage in the topic to gain any positive feedback.”

– History teacher, western Sydney, October 2023¹

7. Learning about the Holocaust – classroom challenges

Introduction

It should come as no surprise that in a crowded syllabus with insufficient time to cover any topic in depth, almost 60% of respondents to the online questionnaire said that time was a significant classroom challenge when teaching about the Holocaust. Other challenges included students being desensitised by graphic material, students upset by graphic material and access to survivors. These were all challenges that were anticipated before this research began, yet the expectation that classrooms with students from traumatic backgrounds would constitute a significant challenge for teachers of the Holocaust, did not materialise. These students were not well represented by the data. Antisemitism and racism were challenges in almost one quarter of schools represented by this research. The extent and nature of the problem varied between schools, and most teachers continued their teaching of the Holocaust despite the challenge. However, in at least one school, antisemitism was so great a challenge that teaching of the Holocaust was discontinued after the attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023.²

This chapter provides analysis of a number of key questions from the online questionnaire, focussed on various aspects of learning about the Holocaust. The main focus of this chapter is the range of challenges that teachers confront when teaching about the Holocaust. Few of these challenges appear in classrooms when teaching about other topics (with the possible exception of Indigenous rights and freedoms), highlighting the unique position that teaching about the Holocaust has in the History curriculum.

Classroom challenges

Almost all teachers who responded to this questionnaire listed a number of challenges that they face when teaching about the Holocaust. Only eight teachers said they experience no

¹ Email correspondence, October 2023.

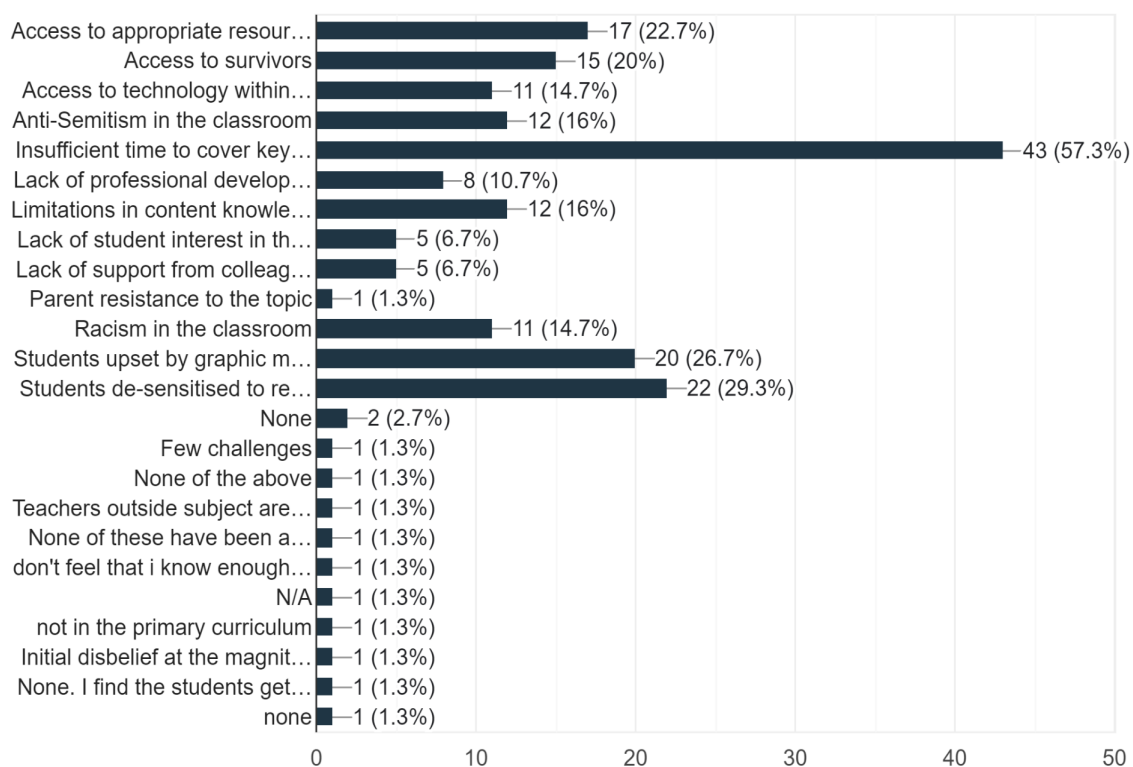
² Email correspondence, October 2023.

challenges; interestingly, two of these teachers do not teach about the Holocaust in the mandatory Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10) course, the focus of this study. The other six teachers spend more than 10 hours on the Holocaust, which is perhaps a reflection of their students' engagement, their own interest in the topic and therefore the lack of specific classroom challenges.

The 67 teachers who said they did experience challenges, on average, identified 2.7 challenges each; some listed three or four, a small number listed just one challenge. These challenges, in order, included time, students desensitised to resources, students upset by graphic material, access to resources, access to survivors, antisemitism and racism.

19. What challenges have you faced in your teaching of the Holocaust?

75 responses



Time

Almost 60% of respondents said that there was insufficient time to cover key areas of the Holocaust. The syllabus in New South Wales does not specify how long should be spent on the Holocaust in the mandatory Stage 5 History course, but many teachers will allocate 9-10 or more hours on this topic. While this is a generous amount of time in a History syllabus of just

100 hours in Stage 5, it barely covers the key aspects of the Holocaust, especially when the diversity of source material and resources are considered.

Teachers must make a choice in the content they will deliver and, in many classrooms, the research areas they will encourage students towards. In Chapter 6, the data from the question on content was explored, showing that most teachers will attempt to cover at least 12 different aspects of the Holocaust. Even some teachers who spend less than three hours on the Holocaust try to cover a wide range of aspects. It is, of course, impossible to deal with any of these aspects in any depth in the hours available, so teachers must make decisions about which of these they can do concurrently.

One teacher said that time was his biggest issue but he then offered a possible solution:

Unfortunately, based on time we never get up to the Nuremberg Trials. Therefore, next year I will teach the Holocaust backwards, starting with Nuremberg first. My aim is that through this type of study it will create more student-based inquiry-style research to answer the questions that will arise in teaching the topic this way.³

Such an approach may shift the focus from the victims of the Holocaust to the perpetrators, and may also leave little time to consider aspects fundamental to understanding the Holocaust, such as antisemitism. But it does reflect the efforts of teachers to create programs that end with a sense of closure for students.

In a regional school, time was also cited as an issue but there were also logistical considerations at play when developing programs:

I really find it difficult to give it the time it deserves and to show the intricacies in the popularity and effect of Nazi ideology and its continual impact that makes this more than just a 'bad thing evil people did' event, a one off. That and working with the school calendar to organise excursions.⁴

³ Online questionnaire (2017), regional independent boys' school.

⁴ Online questionnaire (2017), regional state co-ed school.

For regional schools like this one, almost 300 kilometres from Sydney, the opportunity to visit the Sydney Jewish Museum is one that is highly valued but seldom able to be achieved. The school only occasionally visits the museum because of limitations imposed by the school leadership. Regional schools may well find that an excursion to the Sydney Jewish Museum will cost students several hundred dollars each, while the school must bear the expense of casual staff to replace those teachers on the excursion. By comparison, schools in the Sydney metropolitan area can run such excursions as day trips, using public transport, at a much reduced cost.

When the Holocaust is taught in subject areas other than History, the issue of time becomes even more acute. An English teacher from an independent school highlighted this problem, saying that it was important but difficult to find the time to build historical knowledge before starting a novel study.⁵ So while History teachers may be able to dedicate 9-10 hours to the Holocaust, English teachers are likely to have far less time available for the context of Holocaust-related texts. Few schools appear to have successfully integrated study of the Holocaust across multiple subject areas and year groups so that context and historical background are taught just once. No respondents to the questionnaire suggested this was the case at their school.

Students upset by resources

A significant number of teachers said that some of their students were upset by the resources being used in class during Holocaust lessons. In some cases, these teachers also noted others in their class were desensitised to the resources and lacked empathy, highlighting the variety of possible student responses to lessons on the Holocaust but, more importantly, also the importance of selecting resources carefully to suit specific cohorts. Paul Salmons, one of the United Kingdom's most experienced Holocaust educators, commented on this challenge when reviewing the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust exhibition:

There is a potential for real harm when we teach the Holocaust. We need to be sensitive to the emotional impact that this subject can have on young people. We need strategies for

⁵ Online questionnaire (2016), north-west Sydney independent co-ed Anglican school.

moving students without traumatising them, for ensuring they understand the enormity of the events without titillating or horrifying them with graphic images.⁶

One teacher from a school with significant issues of antisemitism and racism, said that “It’s really important not to shock students with graphic material – this is something I think most teachers do to ‘engage’ students but tends to have the opposite effect.”⁷ Another teacher said that “The challenge is probably my unwillingness to show the images. In the genocide topic we don’t feel it necessary to promote such images.”⁸ This reluctance to show graphic images is entirely appropriate. Most educators recognise that beyond the damage that can be done to students, the effect is also to dehumanise the victims of the Holocaust, presenting them as nameless piles of bodies who engender no sense of empathy in students. Echoing this view, one teacher was critical of his colleagues, saying that “Some teachers do not have a broad understanding of ethics of displaying deceased people and do not match detail to appropriate images for age groups.”⁹

These findings echo the results of the HEDP study which found that in England, a number of teachers were concerned that their teaching about the Holocaust had the potential to traumatise their students. One teacher told an interviewer:

You want to shock, you want to make an impact, but you don’t want to upset people too much . . . I mean, they do get upset, and then you’ll sit and the bell will go and you say, ‘Off you go.’ And I don’t like sending them out in that kind of a mood. I feel very guilty...

The study concluded that teaching about the Holocaust had the potential to impact pastoral relationships with students and could be confusing in the role that teachers are supposed to play in teacher–student relationships.¹⁰

Students with traumatic pasts

Teaching the Holocaust – or any other genocide or violent history – to students with traumatic pasts is a highly specialised field, but one which has seen very little detailed research. At the

⁶ Paul Salmons, “Moral dilemmas: history, teaching and the Holocaust,” *Teaching History* 104 (September 2001): 38.

⁷ Online questionnaire (2017), south-west Sydney state co-ed school.

⁸ Online questionnaire (2017), inner-west Sydney state co-ed school.

⁹ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney state co-ed school.

¹⁰ Kay Andrews, et al, *Teaching About the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools: An empirical study of national trends, perspectives and practice* (University of London 2009), 95-96.

commencement of this research, it was expected that a number of teachers would raise this as an issue and it was one of the driving factors in undertaking this project. Yet, despite the number of families who have arrived in Sydney from conflict zones around the world over the past decade, there was a clear absence of teachers noting that they had to approach this topic carefully because of their student's traumatic backgrounds.

Only one teacher mentioned the difficulty of teaching the Holocaust to students with traumatic pasts, while another noted an expected intake of refugee children that may impact their students' empathy for others in society.¹¹ The issue of dealing with students who are upset by graphic resources becomes doubly important when those students bring with them to the classroom highly traumatic pasts. Many schools in western Sydney, particularly but not exclusively state schools, have significant numbers of students who have come to Australia from conflict zones around the world. One teacher said that the presence of these students was a reason to not teach about the Holocaust too deeply: "My students come from largely refugee or refugee-like backgrounds. As a result, we discuss the topic of the Holocaust but don't delve too deeply into it to avoid triggers of PTSD."¹² Her students' backgrounds were reflected in the language groups she listed in the questionnaire – Arabic, Farsi, Pashtun, Dari, Vietnamese and Chinese – and the extent of their past traumas resulted in History classes spending just a few minutes on the Holocaust.

This was perhaps unfortunate because, handled appropriately, learning about the Holocaust can possibly have a cathartic effect for students with traumatic pasts. In a study of students in an inner-London school, Jessica Kempner found that refugee students could be far more engaged than their non-refugee peers. She wrote that:

The Holocaust was well received by all students learning about it. Through looking at refugee students in mixed classes, and exploring their behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement with the subject it was clear that refugee students were far more engaged on all levels.¹³

¹¹ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney state co-ed school; Online questionnaire (2017), western Sydney Catholic systemic co-ed school.

¹² Online questionnaire (2017), western Sydney state co-ed school.

¹³ Jessica Kempner, "Classroom culture and cultures in the classroom: engagement with Holocaust education in diverse schools," *Holocaust Studies* 29, no.2 (2023): 291.

Kempner noted, however, that when interviewing these students about their experience in learning about the Holocaust, “historical traumas... were brought to the surface. In one instance, a student stated that they did not want to talk about their learning as it was too sad for them, as it brought back memories of stories her parents had told her of her life.”¹⁴ Another student, Kempner found, “used empathetic language when discussing what she had learnt in her studies, particularly when discussing the experience of the victims and travel. It was clear that this student was dealing with emotional distress from making her own comparisons.”¹⁵ Clearly teaching about the Holocaust to students such as these with traumatic pasts is a highly problematic area. Some teachers will decide that the risk of additional trauma for the student is too great while others see the potential for students to come to terms with their own past while learning about the Holocaust. Certainly the presence of the Holocaust as a mandatory topic in Stage 5 History in New South Wales creates an imperative for teachers to understand how they can best teach this topic to students with traumatic pasts. For one teacher, the expected addition of refugee students from Syria offered a possibility that her class as a whole might develop more empathy for the victims of the Holocaust: “They really don't see the effects of it [the Holocaust]. They don't understand war, trauma, torture etc. However we are seeing an influx in Syrian refugee students at our school so this may change in the near future.”¹⁶

In approaching this challenge of teaching about the Holocaust to classes with refugee students, the work of both Elke Gryglewski and Yehuda Bauer is invaluable. Both educators emphasise the importance of respecting the background of their students (and their students’ families) and incorporating their perspectives into lessons on the Holocaust.

Students desensitised by resources

Contrasting with the previous challenge, a significant number of students appear to be desensitised to the resources being used in some classrooms.¹⁷ Several teachers reported that some of their students struggle to see the victims of the Holocaust as real humans rather than as two-dimensional figures from history. A teacher from a school in Sydney’s south said that she has sometimes found “a rare lack of empathy. I never use gratuitous images, yet on rare

¹⁴ Kempner, “Classroom culture,” 285.

¹⁵ Kempner, “Classroom culture,” 285.

¹⁶ Online questionnaire (2017), western Sydney Catholic systemic co-ed school.

¹⁷ It would be interesting to know more detail about what kinds of resources teachers are using and how they understand that their students are desensitised to them, but these threads were not examined by the current research.

occasions I have students who fail to make any connection nor see any relevance.”¹⁸ Another teacher said “Students are desensitised in that they do not view people in history as human beings, rather as nameless faces that they ‘have’ to learn about.”¹⁹ The reason for this desensitisation, according to a teacher from an independent school, “is possibly because violent TV shows and films have desensitised children to the horrors of The Holocaust.”²⁰ This view was supported by another teacher who said that “too much actual visual stimulus and atrocities seem to switch the students off from doing assigned tasks.”²¹ Finally, one teacher from a school on Sydney’s north shore made a connection between desensitisation and antisemitism: “Students who are desensitised to resources are reported to be engaged in antisemitism/racism outside the classroom.”²²

The challenge for teachers, then, is to select content and resources that will “cut through” the lack of empathy and desensitisation that may have taken hold amongst their students. In doing this, it is important to consider once again the need to re-humanise the victims of the Holocaust, to start any study of the Holocaust with antisemitism and pre-war Jewish life, spend time on resistance and rescue and to conclude with a focus on the return to life of the Jewish people. Throughout, the voices of victims and survivors must form a central component of the resources selected for use in class.

Content knowledge and professional development

A significant number of teachers (12 teachers or 16% of the sample) recognised that one of the classroom challenges they faced was a lack of content knowledge, an area that was explored in more detail in the previous chapter. This is something that History teachers, especially early in their career, are quite used to as most university courses cannot possibly hope to fully prepare students for all the topics they will be teaching. However the problem is particularly acute when teaching about the Holocaust, not simply because there is an extraordinary amount of information to digest, but more because students will ask so many questions about so many diverse aspects of the Holocaust. Teachers can go some way towards anticipating a few of these questions by thorough preparation before starting a Holocaust unit. Chapter 10 offers an approach that focuses on the ‘big questions’ students are likely to ask, but most of the content

¹⁸ Online questionnaire (2017), southern Sydney state co-ed school.

¹⁹ Online questionnaire (2017), northern Sydney state co-ed school.

²⁰ Online questionnaire (2016), north-west Sydney independent Anglican co-ed school.

²¹ Online questionnaire (2016), north coast state co-ed school.

²² Online questionnaire (2017), northern Sydney independent Anglican boys’ school.

knowledge required to teach this topic will be accrued through experience and professional development.

Surprisingly, only four of the teachers who said they had limited content knowledge also nominated a lack of professional development as a challenge. The courses offered by the Sydney Jewish Museum and the online modules from Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Facing History, all offer teachers the opportunity to radically improve their content knowledge and their pedagogical approach to teaching about the Holocaust. Eight teachers in total said that lack of professional development was a classroom challenge.

The impact of professional development on the efficacy of teaching about the Holocaust is examined in detail in Chapter 11 and demonstrates that significant professional development has the potential to increase teachers' positive impacts on their students. The problem for the providers of professional development, such as Yad Vashem and the Sydney Jewish Museum, is reaching teachers and informing them of the professional development that is available. State schools are under-represented in professional development run by both organisations, despite the problems of racism and antisemitism experienced in some state schools, and the proven value that participation in these courses provides for teachers.

Access to survivors

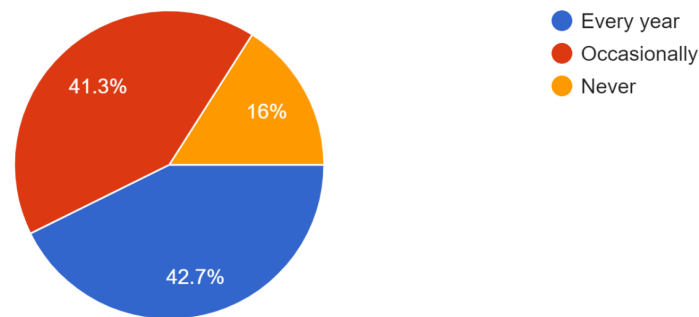
There is almost universal recognition amongst teachers who have taken groups to the Sydney Jewish Museum that a conversation with a Holocaust survivor is one of the most memorable experiences a student will have during their schooling. It is unusual in History to place so much value on first-hand accounts of historical events, with the exception being topics involving First Nations peoples, but the large number of respondents who regularly take students to the Sydney Jewish Museum suggests there is high value placed on this experience.

Of the 15 teachers, or 20% of respondents, who said that access to survivors was a classroom challenge, the majority were from metropolitan Sydney schools with ready access to public transport. Therefore, if access to survivors is a challenge, these teachers are effectively saying that organising excursions at their school is the problem (as it is neither practical nor desirable to bring survivors to most schools).

This is unfortunate, and a significant loss for students. No research has been conducted in Australia into the impact that speaking with Holocaust survivors has on students. Anecdotally, there is a great deal of evidence that the depth of emotional connection between speaker and

26. Have you and your students visited the Sydney Jewish Museum?

75 responses



audience is such that students are left with life-long impressions of the survivor's story and their resilience. Teachers and students regularly speak of the meeting with a survivor as the high point of their time in high school History lessons. In Germany, however, there has been some in-depth research conducted about the level of trust between a survivor and his student audiences in the ten different high schools he visited. The study found that a high level of trust was built between survivor and students, which facilitated greater learning:

Listening to the survivor, the students acquired new perspectives on the Holocaust, which enhanced their knowledge taught in History class. For example, the survivor informed the students about the history of Lithuania during World War II. They gained insights into everyday life in the ghettos, where selections and death were omnipresent. Students paid attention to his explanations about the conditions of survival which he believed depended on luck or fate. This new information was not questioned or doubted.²³

A female student was quoted in the study, emphasising the level of trust she had with the Holocaust survivor:

²³ Anja Ballis and Lisa Schwendemann, "In any case, you believe him one hundred percent, everything he says.' Trustworthiness in Holocaust survivor talks with high school students in Germany," *Holocaust Studies* 28, no.2 (2022): 12.

Because you know, okay, this is a reliant [sic] source, because he experienced it himself and will not tell baloney. And of course, the teachers do not tell baloney either, but they did not experience it, they just have their information from some sources too and that is why [...] in any case, you believe him one hundred percent, everything he says.²⁴

Writing in the Victorian History Teachers Association magazine, *Agora*, Matthew Muscat summed up the importance of students meeting a Holocaust survivor and hearing their story:

Incorporating face-to-face Holocaust testimony can be an enriching experience for the presenter (survivor), students and the teachers present. The testimony brings a first-hand perspective to students that they would not experience solely from regular classroom activities and readings. It can bring deeper knowledge and understanding of the horrors and tragedies of the past, while at the same time demonstrate to students the triumph of the human spirit, courage and empathy.²⁵

Similarly, Simon Holloway has also stressed the importance of humanising the story of the Holocaust, a thread which has run through this research as a means of ensuring student engagement and developing empathy: “As a ‘witness to history’, survivors are uniquely capable of impressing upon students the immediacy of their experiences. By presenting a human face they are also able to portray the Holocaust as a story of individuals, not of numbers.”²⁶

The opportunity of meeting a Holocaust survivor personally and hearing their story is not universally available to students in New South Wales and, sadly, we are gradually entering a post-survivor world, where no Holocaust survivors will be available to speak with students. Recent advances in technology may make engagement between survivors and students more accessible for students, even after the survivor generation has passed. At the Sydney Jewish Museum, the Reverberations exhibition has ensured that the stories of a number of survivors, including Eddie Jaku, have been preserved in a format that allows students to ask questions of the survivors.²⁷ The exhibition utilises an interactive holographic-type format that allows

²⁴ Ballis and Schwendemann, “In any case, you believe him one hundred percent,” 12.

²⁵ Matthew Muscat, “Using Holocaust Testimony in the History Classroom,” *Agora* 52, no.2 (2017), 65.

²⁶ Simon Holloway, “Survivor Testimony in Holocaust Education,” *Agora* 58, no.2 (2023): 30.

²⁷ Sydney Jewish Museum, “Reverberations: A Future for Memory,” <https://sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au/exhibition/reverberations/>

visitors to ask a wide range of questions of survivors. Similarly, the Shoah Foundation at the University of Southern California has recorded in this format over 25 personal testimonies from survivors and has made a number of these available through the iWitness program.

The question for teachers is, will these “holograms” be a satisfactory substitute for the emotional connection that is rapidly forged between survivors and students in a museum setting? If learning about the Holocaust is to be meaningful and if it is to achieve at least some of the aims teachers set for themselves, then students must be emotionally connected to the people who experienced these events. How effective new technology can be at engaging students remains to be seen and is yet another potential area for future research. This work has already commenced in Germany, with the authors of the study cited above noting at the end of their article that “we will continue to investigate the effects of the survivor testimony in schools. Since fall 2020, we observe how students interact with a digital 3D version of the Holocaust survivor testimony we investigated in this paper.”²⁸

Access to appropriate resources and technology

Eleven teachers (or 14% of respondents) said that access to technology was a classroom challenge, although they did not explain their response to this question. Yet, they were effectively making two comments. Firstly, that their schools or their students did not have the necessary equipment and infrastructure to access the many online Holocaust resources, a problem that falls outside the scope of this current research. Or, secondly, they were suggesting that they are perhaps unaware of the great variety of print resources for Holocaust teachers, such that online resources are almost unnecessary.

Similarly, the teachers who had difficulty accessing appropriate resources for their students – 17 teachers or 22% of the group – may have been unaware of just how much material is available to teachers or, perhaps, their student cohorts may have had very specific needs. If there is a problem with Holocaust resources, in print, online and on film, it is that the quantity is quite overwhelming. Many of these resources are suitable for Stage 5 History with no modification, unless teachers are seeking resources for students with additional learning needs.

²⁸ Ballis and Schwendemann, “In any case, you believe him one hundred percent,” 16.

Racism and antisemitism

Of all the challenges noted by teachers, racism and antisemitism are perhaps the most difficult to deal with in a classroom situation. These twin related issues may only rarely or even never appear in classes until the Holocaust is taught, at which time latent antisemitism and racism amongst the student body appear. Some teachers will choose to judiciously ignore offhand comments and, possibly, speak with the student involved at a later time. Others will be concerned that any antisemitic comments might spread within the classroom and will seek to shut down perpetrators immediately. A small number of teachers see antisemitic comments as opportunities, a chance to tease out the substance and background of their students' comments and engage them in a conversation. The nature and tone of antisemitic and racist comments may vary between classrooms. In some cases, students will repeat well-worn tropes and stereotypes; in other classrooms the comments may have a violent undertone and could be best described as "eliminationist." The comments from teachers who responded to the questionnaire, and the detailed responses provided by others in the qualitative component of the research, reflects this diversity of experiences with antisemitism and racism in the classroom.

In the online questionnaire, 18 teachers nominated racism, antisemitism or both as classroom challenges when teaching about the Holocaust. This represented 24% of the sample. Such a high figure was not expected at the start of this research. The demographics underpinning the incidence of antisemitism was also unexpected: this research demonstrated that antisemitism in Sydney schools is concentrated in specific areas:

1. The independent religious (Anglican, Catholic, Uniting) boys' and co-ed schools of the eastern suburbs and north shore. Eight schools were represented in the data, six of which were reported to have classroom challenges of racism and antisemitism. Independent girls' schools in these areas did not list antisemitism or racism as classroom challenges.
2. Co-ed and boys' schools in south-western Sydney with high populations of Arabic-speaking students. Five of the six boys' and co-ed school in south-western Sydney that were identified as having a large population of Arabic speaking students reported that antisemitism and racism were classroom challenges. Other schools in this area that did not have a large population of Arabic-speaking students did not list antisemitism and

racism as classroom challenges. The few girls' schools with large numbers of Arabic-speaking students did not list antisemitism or racism as classroom challenges.

3. Antisemitism occurs in other schools and in other areas but with less frequency and generally without discernible underlying factors such as gender, language or religion. The exception is one Catholic systemic school in western Sydney with a significant body of students who identified as Croatian. This is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

For at least one teacher, from a state school in western Sydney, teaching about the Holocaust during the conflict between Israel and Hamas had become impossible:

I think I may have been wearing rose-tinted glasses, or the current events in Israel have had a huge impact, but I would say there is increased antisemitism since I completed the survey initially. Many of our students are of Middle Eastern background and I have decided not to teach *The Diary of Anne Frank* this term to my Year 9 History Elective class because of their views on Jewish people in the Israeli-Palestine conflict. I feel it is not the right time to engage in the topic to gain any positive feedback.²⁹

This teacher did not initially list antisemitism as a classroom challenge when she completed the online questionnaire. As she pointed out, she may then have been “wearing rose-tinted glasses” or perhaps there was no apparent antisemitism present in her classroom at the time. At that stage, she was a first-year teacher who may have been quite attuned to the many challenges confronting new teachers. By October 2023, however, her view had changed substantially and she was not prepared to teach about the Holocaust with a Year 9 Elective History class, usually a group that is more academic and less likely to exhibit disruptive behaviours.

Other teachers reported less extreme examples of antisemitism. At one school in Sydney's south, the teacher said that she had “recently had swastikas drawn but [these] may be connected to American politics,” a reference to the US presidential race.³⁰ At another school, the experienced teacher with significant professional development in Holocaust education, said that “at times there have been comments of a racist or antisemitic nature. The comments have not been particularly sinister or prolonged and the student(s) do not necessarily realise they are

²⁹ Email correspondence, October 2023, western Sydney state co-ed school.

³⁰ Online questionnaire (2017), southern Sydney Greek Orthodox co-ed school.

being 'racist'. Therefore, this revelation forms part of their education on the subjects of antisemitism and racism.”³¹ This is another example of a teacher using classroom antisemitism as a “teachable moment,” something he was able to do because of his extensive teaching experience and his professional development at Yad Vashem. Conversely, another teacher chose not to engage with antisemitism but succeeded in ending the comments immediately: “Only on a very rare occasion do I encounter students with denialist/racist attitudes. However, they are aware they are in the minority and more often than not keep it to themselves rather than openly promote or share the attitude. More often students (and myself) get quite upset/emotional when reading some of the graphic accounts.”³² This teacher reflected later that the nature of his student cohort, which included a significant Arabic-speaking population and a mix of selective and non-selective students, meant that he was not prepared to try and have conversations about antisemitism as they might not be productive.³³

One Catholic systemic school in western Sydney provides great insight into two issues: the specific nature of continuing Eastern European antisemitism in Australia and the methods by which teachers may be able to address this challenge. This particular school’s student body is predominantly Catholic, English-speaking, with over 40 different ethnic groups. Students of Central and Eastern European heritage, such as Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, are the most numerous according to the three respondents. Incidents of antisemitism in the classroom emanating from students with Croatian heritage are said to be common.³⁴ These students, who are at least three generations removed from the post-World War II migration of displaced persons from Eastern Europe, continue to espouse the same antisemitic tropes and fallacies that were common amongst their grandparents and great-grandparents who arrived in Australia between 1945 and the 1960s.

In attempting to explain the antisemitism emanating from Croatian students in this particular school, and admittedly employing a degree of speculation based on extensive reading of the current literature, it is difficult to look past the history of Croatian migration to Australia post-World War II and the nature of Australia’s vetting of possible fascist immigrants. A recent

³¹ Online questionnaire (2016), western Sydney state co-ed school.

³² Emailed responses (2017), western Sydney state co-ed school, partially selective.

³³ Emailed responses (2017), western Sydney state co-ed school, partially selective.

³⁴ Western Sydney, Catholic systemic co-ed school. Initial responses from these three teachers were provided during the online questionnaire stage in 2016 and 2017. Follow-up responses were received via email during 2023 from two of the teachers and a third teacher provided further information to additional questions via email in 2023.

publication by Jayne Persian, *Fascists in Exile*, details the many flaws in Australia's post-World War II migration intake from Yugoslavia generally and specifically Croatia, which allowed potentially thousands of war criminals to enter Australia. Persian then connects this to the emergence of several Ustaša-linked right wing groups in Australia.³⁵ The Ustaša in Croatia had collaborated with the German occupying forces, embraced Nazi ideology and actively participated in massacres of Jews. They were deeply antisemitic, ultra nationalist and fervently anti-communist, and they carried these views with them to Australia.

On arrival in Australia, generally as displaced persons, the right wing Croatians began to dominate “the organisational structure of Croatian diaspora life, including Catholic organisations such as Caritas, that were ostensibly set up for the welfare of new arrivals.”³⁶ According to Persian, Croatian migrants were “essentially forced to ‘fall in line’ with Ustaša mythology” in order to access the “social capital” that diaspora organisations provided. Their ideology in Australia was substantially the same as it had been during wartime in Croatia: repeating antisemitic tropes, revering senior Ustaša leaders and supporting fascist leaders, past and present.³⁷

Suzanne Rutland has written that, once in Australia, “they established branches of the antisemitic organisations they had belonged to in Europe, such as the Hungarian Arrow Cross and the Croatian Ustaša Fascist Movement. These became politically active in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly the Ustaša. By the mid-1960s the two groups had coalesced regarding their antisemitic agenda.”³⁸ That agenda has changed little for some in the Croatian diaspora. Writing in *The Age*, Ben Schneiders and Simone Fox Koob, claimed that:

It is clear that a minority of Croatians in Australia still choose to celebrate Croatia's fascist past. They range from young people performing stiff-arm salutes at the soccer, to people controlling some of the community's most important institutions – its community centres and soccer clubs. Ustaša flags were also observed at anti-lockdown protests during the pandemic.³⁹

³⁵ Jayne Persian, *Fascists in Exile: Post-War Displaced Persons in Australia* (Routledge, 2023).

³⁶ Persian, *Fascists in Exile*, 100.

³⁷ Persian, *Fascists in Exile*, 105.

³⁸ Suzanne Rutland, *Routledge History of Antisemitism*, eds. Mark Weitzman, Robert J. Williams and James Wald (Routledge, 2023), 80.

³⁹ Ben Schneiders and Simone Fox Koob, “‘Symbols of hate’: The lingering afterlife of Croatian fascism in Australia,” *The Age*, 11 June 2023.

Western Sydney University researcher Drew Cottle agrees, pointing out that “These groups were extremely successful in creating and continuing a hegemonic Croatian identity within the migrant Croatian community who believed they were exiled from their stolen country.”⁴⁰

Data maps from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and based on 2011 census figures show that this school is located in the centre of the area where most of Sydney’s Croatian community live today.⁴¹ Immediately after World War II, the Yugoslavia-born population in Australia quadrupled from 5870 in 1947 to 22,860 in 1954. Many migrated under the post-war Displaced Persons Scheme (which peaked in 1958) and a significant number of those were ethnic Croatians who moved into areas of western Sydney that, at the time, were predominantly rural. At the 2021 census, there were 164,362 Australian residents of Croatian descent.⁴² Data from the 2016 Census shows that the major religious affiliation amongst the Croatian-born was Catholic, hence the significant numbers of students with Croatian heritage at this school.⁴³ The link between Croatian nationalism and racism and antisemitism was obvious during a football match between Sydney United (formerly Sydney Croatia) and Macarthur FC in 2022, when fans of United loudly interrupted the welcome to country, made Nazi salutes and chanted far right songs.⁴⁴

Three teachers from this school responded to the original online questionnaire. One of these said that insufficient time was the only challenge she faced in teaching about the Holocaust, while the other two described other significant issues. The second teacher said that “Access to survivors, Anti-Semitism in the classroom, Insufficient time to cover key areas, Racism in the classroom” were her main challenges. She expanded on this response to say that “The majority of the students are fascinated and have a keen interest in exploring the Holocaust as a historical study in Stage 5. I have noticed in the section of Anti-Semitism some students (minority) have

⁴⁰ Cited in Schneiders and Fox Koob, “Symbols of hate,” confirmed via email correspondence with Drew Cottle, December 2023.

⁴¹ Australian Census 2011 demographic map.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Australian_Census_2011_demographic_map_-_Inner_Sydney_by_POA_-_BCP_field_1066_Croatian_Total_Responses.svg

⁴² DFAT Country Briefs – Croatia. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/croatia/croatia-country-brief>

⁴³ Dept of Home Affairs, Community Information Summary - Croatia-born.

<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-croatia.pdf>

⁴⁴ AFP, “Australian soccer club fined after fans make Nazi salutes at match,” *Times of Israel*, 4 November 2022. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/australian-soccer-club-fined-after-fans-make-nazi-salutes-at-match/>

had their perspectives shifted regarding personal prejudice towards Jews. i.e. stereotyping- all Jews are rich and money hungry.”⁴⁵

The third teacher provided much more detail in her response:

The vast majority of students are very keen to learn about the Holocaust. I am concerned at times that this interest comes from a fascination with the Nazis and Hitler. I have found a way of combating this is spending some time deconstructing who were the Jews before WWII. It is a really important part of students valuing Jewish life before the Holocaust, in order to know what is lost under the Nazis.

Some of the students of Eastern European heritage have very strong opinions towards why Jews were targeted by the Nazis, i.e. greedy, economically exploitative. They ‘buy into’ negative stereotypes. Leading into the idea that Jews brought German actions upon themselves. Some students also attempt to relate Nazi policies towards Jews to the policies of the far right today in countries such as Croatia towards immigration and multiculturalism.⁴⁶

One of these three teachers volunteered to provide more detailed responses to follow-up questions, during which the nature of antisemitism in the school and her responses to it were explored in detail. This experienced teacher has over 15 years in the classroom and extensive professional development in Holocaust education, including 120 hours study through Yad Vashem and courses with the Sydney Jewish Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This background is important when considering both her awareness of racist comments and the effectiveness of her response to examples of deep-seated antisemitism in her classroom.

When asked about the presence of racism or antisemitism in the classroom, she said that both were an issue. “When deconstructing source materials related to Nazi antisemitic propaganda, some students would indicate in small group discussions that the stereotypes of Jews by the Nazis were ‘accurate,’ that is, Jews were money hungry, controlled the economy and had considerable political influence.” Moments like these are not uncommon in classrooms as this

⁴⁵ Online questionnaire (2016 and 2017).

⁴⁶ Emailed correspondence, 2023.

research has shown. How teachers respond, and how they are supported by school leadership, will determine whether the comments become normalised and accepted. This teacher did not let the comments pass.

When comments such as these arise, as a teacher I would attempt to bring students back to what ‘evidence’ we have of such claims, eg Jewish population in Germany in the 1930s, historic persecution of the Jews throughout Europe, the origins of political parties in Germany in the 1930s. Although for the majority of the class, such antisemitic claims could be logically deconstructed and proven to be highly ‘inaccurate’ through the use of other forms of historical evidence, for a minority of students their personal beliefs remained largely unchanged.⁴⁷

One of the key points in the section on professional development is that teachers who have undergone extensive training at institutions such as Yad Vashem or the Sydney Jewish Museum see antisemitism in the classroom as an opportunity for a “teachable moment,” a chance to engage students in a discussion about their preconceived ideas. This teacher was certainly doing this, despite the resistance of some students and the refusal of a small number to consider an alternate viewpoint. At other times in this classroom, she said:

Racism and antisemitism were also encountered with a minority of students when discussing the Nazi pursuit of racial purity through the nationalistic Aryan ideal. A very small minority of students would express their belief that the Nazis pursuit of racial purity was ‘important to the national strength and future of Germany’. The same students would also then comment on how Australia should ‘stop multiculturalism’ from various nations and force people to assimilate and ‘learn English’ because Australian society and the suburbs they live in are in decline because of newly arrived migrants. As a teacher I brought students back to the fact that ‘we have all (or our familial lineage) come from somewhere, including them.’⁴⁸

Again, the teacher’s refusal to allow these comments to pass unchallenged prevented the antisemitism and racism from becoming an acceptable part of the classroom discourse. She was prepared to confront the students with a logical argument. This teacher’s success in preventing

⁴⁷ Emailed responses, 2023.

⁴⁸ Emailed responses, 2023.

racism from taking root in her classroom was reflected in the reaction of the majority of students when such comments were made:

The vast majority of students were shocked by the minority students' comments, as seen in their facial expressions and audible gasps and shaking of heads. Often the minority were male students of a Central or Eastern European heritage, who exhibited high degrees of sexism and macho behaviour alongside their racial biases. Therefore, there were few students who would actively speak up against the minority, for fear of negative social repercussions.⁴⁹

Comments such as these point to a great need for student support, teaching students how to respond to racism and antisemitism by their peers. At this school, it would appear there may be less need for school-wide anti-racism programs, but more for targeted interventions and programs to support students as upstanders. For teachers too, professional development in dealing with very specific forms of antisemitism, racism and hyper masculinity would seem to be required. As this teacher pointed out, the majority of her students approach the topic of the Holocaust with great interest, empathy and compassion:

In my experience it is a very vocal male minority in the classroom that use such learning spaces as an opportunity to publicly express their ultra-nationalistic and hyper-masculine ideas. On further discussion with students, these ideas come from 'dinner table discussions' with their fathers, grandfathers and uncles. Recent family trips 'home' to the country of ethnic heritage (e.g. contemporary Croatia) would exacerbate and intensify the ultra-nationalistic, racially based narratives amongst such students.⁵⁰

The views expressed by these students of Croatian heritage closely mirror the antisemitic views that arrived with their grandparents and great-grandparents post World War II. That their antisemitism is still so strong after three and four generations in Australia is troubling in the extreme and suggests the depth of feeling and animosity towards Jews held by the descendants of the Ustaša, far right and ultra-nationalist Croatians who migrated to Australia in the 1940s and 1950s. "Third-generation Croatian-Australians may or may not know the fascist record of Ustaša in power in wartime Croatia," said Drew Cottle. "Ustaša's history is mythologised. This

⁴⁹ Emailed responses, 2023.

⁵⁰ Emailed responses, 2023.

is part of their lost glorious past in a present where it has no meaning. Symbols, salutes, banners and slogans may be an escape into that Ustaša past. It is the siren call of fascism.”⁵¹ For educators at this school, there is clearly a question of how those students who have heard the call can be reached and their deeply embedded antisemitism challenged.

One possible route is to examine the work of Elke Gryglewski at Wannsee House in Berlin. The education team at Wannsee House developed a program that deliberately seeks to engage with young people by recognising and valuing the history they bring with them to the class. Seminars may start with a session during which pupils are able to speak to the group about their own family history or the history of the country from which their parents or grandparents immigrated. While these stories may not be directly connected to the history of National Socialism, they are important nonetheless and there may be important similarities that can be drawn out by educators. Students of a Palestinian background may, for example, wish to speak about their own family’s experience of dispossession and migration; Turkish students might talk about their understanding of feeling like outsiders, or *Ausländer*, in German society. Educators are able to tailor their lessons and seminars to specific groups and select documents for study that refer directly to the countries of origin of many of the students. According to Gryglewski:

These may be documents related to Nazi racial theories which refer to Asians, or documents about Turkish Jews or Jews from Arabic countries who were deported to death camps from Germany and the occupied European countries. Experience, when working with pupils from Turkish and Arab-Palestinian backgrounds and using this methodology, gives different results from those often contended about this target group. It has been found that young people from these backgrounds do not reject learning about the Holocaust: on the contrary.⁵²

The rationale behind these strategies is that if young people from diverse backgrounds see that their own history is being acknowledged and valued, they will be prepared to engage with the history of National Socialism which might otherwise have felt irrelevant to them.⁵³ Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer has expressed this same philosophy quite succinctly:

⁵¹ Cited in Schneiders and Fox Koomb, “Symbols of hate,” confirmed via email correspondence with Drew Cottle, December 2023.

⁵² Gryglewski, “Teaching about the Holocaust,” 44.

⁵³ Gryglewski, “Teaching about the Holocaust,” 44.

If you want to teach about the Holocaust to Palestinians – as difficult as that might be – you have to start with the Nakba. When I teach African-Americans, I begin with slavery. When I talk to Rwandans, I begin with discussing the genocide in that country. You have to start with the perspective of the class. That is just good teaching.⁵⁴

As Gryglewski says, “Many educators will be surprised as to how receptive to other perspectives students become once the history of ‘their people’ is no longer excluded from the history being taught.”⁵⁵ The experience of the education team at Wannsee House has important implications for educators in parts of Sydney where research suggests there is resistance to learning about the Holocaust. But to ensure there is genuine respect for the history their students bring to the classroom, teachers will need to juggle the time demands of a crowded curriculum and receive support in developing strategies for managing the segue from student-centred history to Holocaust history.

One of the factors that sets Gryglewski’s work apart is that the students she worked with come to Wannsee House for a few hours or perhaps a full day. They are not in a normal classroom setting where the expectations of teachers are quite different. Nonetheless, her appreciation of the learner’s background is an important strategy that can be employed in most classrooms and is a sentiment that is also seen in the work of Debora Hinderleiter Ortloff. Focusing on the “conflicts and compromises presented by the demands to have both robust Holocaust education and multicultural education,”⁵⁶ Ortloff examined a number of *Realschulen* and *Hauptschulen* in the state of Bavaria; the more academic, and much less multicultural, *Gymnasien* were not included in the study.⁵⁷ Approved History textbooks were analysed and interviews conducted with 58 teachers from both urban and rural areas. Ortloff established that a “coupling” had taken place in these schools, where the curriculum and teaching strategies had connected multicultural education to Holocaust education, resulting in a twin dislocation for non-ethnic German students:

In short, teaching about the Holocaust, an event in the past, functions as a distancing mechanism, fulfilling the prescribed discussions of present-day xenophobic violence and other challenges to

⁵⁴ Stephen D. Smith, “You cannot teach the Holocaust to Palestinians,” *Times of Israel*, Blogs, 27 November 2013. <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/you-cannot-teach-the-holocaust-to-palestinians/>

⁵⁵ Gryglewski, “Teaching about the Holocaust,” 48.

⁵⁶ Hinderleiter Ortloff, “They think it funny to call us Nazis,” 209.

⁵⁷ The three types of schools in the German education system cater for students’ different career paths. The *Hauptschule* is the most practical and least academic; the *Gymnasium* offers the longest course and prepares students for tertiary study. The *Realschule* sits between the first two and directs students into vocational study.

multicultural living from a comfortable vantage point. At the same time, paradoxically, teachers' discussion of the Holocaust effectively excludes non-ethnic Germans. Non-ethnic Germans are therefore excluded from a multicultural education in multiple ways because of their ethnicity.⁵⁸

Similar points are made by Geoffrey Short who has observed that, while the Holocaust offers educators opportunities to make explicit links between the Holocaust and education for citizenship, there is no reason to suggest that teaching about other genocides would be any less instructive. Indeed, he suggests that "in those parts of the world that are very different politically, culturally and economically from twenty-first century Britain, students might derive more benefit from examining a genocide other than the Holocaust."⁵⁹ In this suggestion he is by no means alone and indeed, a number of teachers who responded to this research project also said that they believed the Holocaust was no more, or less, important than other genocides, and that the citizenship and human rights aspects could be addressed through many topics in history.

Discussion and conclusions

In reporting antisemitism and racism in the classroom, two school types are overrepresented: the first group is co-ed and boys' state schools in south-western Sydney where Arabic is noted as a major language group in the school; the second group is independent boys' and co-ed religious schools on the north shore and eastern suburbs. Both these school groups report antisemitism and racism in the classroom at a frequency beyond other school groupings. There are exceptions in both groups where these challenges have not been reported, but the exceptions are rare.

In the first group, six co-ed or boys' state schools indicated that Arabic was a major language spoken in the school; five of these reported that antisemitism and racism were challenges in the classroom. Two of these schools also noted that a further challenge was the presence of Palestinian students in the classroom, but they did not specify what these challenges were. The two Catholic systemic schools where Arabic was a major language group noted a range of challenges but did not include racism or antisemitism amongst these. These findings reinforce the earlier research of Mendes, Nayler and Rutland about the problems of Muslim antisemitism in south-west Sydney state schools, as well as the findings from the studies conducted in Europe in contrast to studies such as those by Short and Pettigrew which have not found any issues with Muslim students in England learning about the Holocaust. The two girls-only state schools with Arabic as a major

⁵⁸ Hinderleiter Ortloff, "They think it funny to call us Nazis," 211.

⁵⁹ Short, "Lessons of the Holocaust," 286.

language group in this research did not report racism and antisemitism as classroom issues, adding further weight to the discussion about gender and antisemitism which is explored in more detail in the following chapter.

In the second group, the independent religious (Anglican, Catholic, Uniting, Orthodox) boys' and co-ed schools of the eastern suburbs and north shore, seven schools were represented in the data. Six of these were reported to have classroom challenges of racism and antisemitism. Independent girls' schools in the same areas did not list antisemitism or racism as classroom challenges.

By contrast, of 12 Catholic schools, co-ed and boys, only one reported racism and/or antisemitism. It is not clear at this stage of the research why there is such an apparently clear divide in the frequency of classroom racism and antisemitism along religious lines. Further research should seek to elicit more detailed responses from teachers in co-ed settings to understand the different responses and attitudes of boys and girls to antisemitism in their classrooms..

It is apparent that antisemitism is not confined to a specific socio-economic group: the schools with a large Arabic-speaking population are located in an area of low socio-economic status; the independent religious schools are in areas of relatively high socio-economic status. However, there may be links between the nature of that antisemitism and socio-economic status or geographical location, as was demonstrated by the Living History study in Sweden. Teacher experience, professional development and hours spent on the Holocaust made no difference to the reporting of racism and antisemitism in the classroom. The gender of the students appears to be an immensely important determinant in whether antisemitism and/or racism are likely to appear in the classroom or not. The key finding that there are differences in the nature of antisemitism based on where it is manifested (based on geography, ethnicity, religious affiliation and gender, rather than socio-economic status) needs to be followed up with further research to understand the underlying drivers and whether these differences stem from the far right, the far left and/or radical Islamic attitudes. Of particular interest is the seemingly gendered aspect of antisemitism and its implications for constructing effectively differentiated teaching programs that cater for both male and female students.

Other challenges are common across all school systems. Time was a challenge for many respondents as they tried to cover as much of the Holocaust as possible in a relatively short time. As one teacher noted, the Holocaust is "very essential but it risks becoming squeezed out of a very

crowded curriculum or by non-interested colleagues.”⁶⁰ Other teachers said that they found that some of their students had been desensitised to the resources being used while an almost equal number (and often the same teachers) said that their students were upset by the graphic nature of the resources. This reflected the variety of student responses to identical resources that can be seen in any classroom. These are challenges that have been addressed by some of the educators who took part in this study. Decisions are regularly made by teachers about what aspects of the curriculum they will spend additional time on, and what topics they will quickly move over. Only in this way have many teachers been able to find ten or more hours for Holocaust education. As the final chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, the approaches taken by experienced educators show that none of these challenges are insurmountable.

⁶⁰ Online questionnaire (2016), regional state co-ed school.

“The invisibility of the prominent role of antisemitism leading to the Holocaust hindered the potential of teaching and learning about the Holocaust in preventing antisemitism and could, in the worst-case scenario, contribute to antisemitism.”

– Isabella Pistone, et al (2023)¹

8. The drivers of antisemitism in Sydney’s classrooms

This research project has identified a major issue in classrooms around Sydney, a problem that is not confined to the western suburbs but is much more widespread. In Chapter 7, Learning about the Holocaust, it was demonstrated that of the 75 teachers who responded to the initial questionnaire, 18 saw either racism or antisemitism or both as classroom challenges. A further five schools in Sydney have been identified by the ECAJ and published in their annual report into antisemitism; other teachers who were interviewed for the qualitative phase of this current research also raised the issue of classroom antisemitism. This chapter will show that it is possible to make a number of observations about the drivers of antisemitism in classrooms in Sydney and, more broadly, across New South Wales’ schools. Detailed interviews with teachers, media reports and prior research all suggest a number of factors that should be considered in examining the root causes of antisemitism in the classroom. These are, in order of importance: gender, school culture, ethnicity and pedagogy. Other possible factors, which have not been examined in detail by this current research, include religion and social media. This research has also demonstrated that geography and the concomitant factor of socio-economic status, at least in Sydney, are less important in predicting the *incidence* of antisemitism, but may point to the *nature* of that antisemitism.² The area where geography may play a key role is in the north-western corridor, from Chatswood to Rouse Hill, where of the 13 schools included in this current research, none reported antisemitism or racism as challenges in the classroom. There are specific demographic characteristics of this area that may offer an explanation; these are explored later in this chapter.

¹ Isabella Pistone, et al, “Teaching and learning about the Holocaust: a systematic scoping review of existing research,” *Holocaust Studies* 30, no.1(2023): 17

² As outlined in Chapter 5, there is, in Sydney, a very close alignment between where students and their families live and their socio-economic position. Geography is also a factor that applies to minority religious groups whose adherents must live close to places of worship.

The role of gender

The acts of antisemitism and racism uncovered in this research have been overwhelmingly perpetrated by boys. In each case, these acts have provided specific challenges to teaching about the Holocaust because of the disruption they cause to other students' learning. Of the 82 schools covered by all aspects of the current research,³ 23 reported that racism or antisemitism were classroom challenges in Holocaust education; in almost every case, boys were the perpetrators. It was rare (just two cases) for a teacher to mention girls as possible perpetrators and in these cases it was seen as "low level" repetition of stereotypes believed to have been learned in the home environment. As Philip Mendes has explained so succinctly, "Antisemitic sentiment and expressions come almost exclusively from boys. It appears to be a form of male violence which is not mirrored by girls in the same cohort."⁴

This finding has important implications for administrators who are planning to implement school-wide programs to combat racism or antisemitism, and may allow them to tailor such programs more specifically to the needs of boys and girls. There seems little point in educating girls about the dangers of actively engaging in antisemitism when they are rarely responsible for such behaviours. However, there may be very real benefits in working with girls on the role they can play as upstanders, confronting antisemitism when it appears in their peer networks. It is not unusual in schools to provide differing but complementary programs for boys and girls and to offer these programs separately. There may also be a case, in some schools, for considering single-sex classrooms when teaching topics such as the Holocaust which could be likely to trigger a racist response amongst some students. This of course has implications in timetabling for schools and more importantly might also lead to philosophical discussions about the appropriateness of single-sex classrooms, but in some schools, where the problems are deeply entrenched and negative responses can be predicted, it might be a viable alternative to mixed mainstream classes.

It is well beyond the scope of this current research to offer reasons why boys are much more likely than girls to be openly engaged in antisemitic acts. Indeed, there are no extant studies that specifically document this perceived difference between boys and girls and the potential reasons why boys could be more racist than girls. All this current research can do is reveal the

³ This includes the initial quantitative questionnaire, follow-up qualitative questionnaires, media reports and the ECAJS annual reports.

⁴ Philip Mendes, "Antisemitism among Muslim Youth," *ADC Special Report* (May 2008): 2.

extent of the problem as cited by the teachers who responded to the questionnaires. There is, however, a growing body of research that supports quite clearly the findings of this research in identifying the existence of the problem. The Living History study in Sweden, referenced earlier in this work, makes a clear assessment that boys are more likely than girls to express antisemitic sentiments.⁵

The Swedish study examined levels of tolerance and intolerance amongst 10,600 young people living in Sweden. It made distinctions between youth born in Sweden or from immigrant communities, gender and schooling level. The results showed quite clear differences in young people's attitudes towards three groups: Jews, Muslims and homosexuals:

There is a distinctive pattern of sex differences in the attitudes professed towards the different groups. Girls tended on the whole to have a more positive attitude than boys. The overriding pattern found among the boys was that, in round figures, slightly over 60 per cent expressed a predominantly positive attitude whereas approximately ten per cent expressed a high degree of intolerance. Among the girls, 82 per cent may be defined as having a positive general attitude in relation to the minorities named in the questionnaire, and two per cent may be characterised as intolerant.⁶

Other key points to come out of the study were that:

- Intolerance was greatest amongst students in the less academic strands of schooling and was most pronounced amongst boys in this stream.
- The most positive attitudes were found in girls who were in the highest strand of schooling. In this group, only 0.1% expressed intolerant attitudes towards Jews, Muslims and homosexuals. By contrast, 11% of boys in the lowest schooling strand expressed intolerant attitudes.

In Germany, similar results were reported by Dirk Baier, et al, in a 2009 study. Students were provided with a series of statements, such as "I don't think it's terrible that Germans committed so many crimes against the Jews," and asked to express agreement or disagreement. They found that xenophobic and antisemitic attitudes were significantly more widespread among male

⁵ Ring and Morgentau, *Intolerance*.

⁶ Ring and Morgentau, *Intolerance*, 10.

students and that levels of racism declined with the students' level of education – those in the more academically advanced schools, such as *Gymnasia* were much less racist than those in the *Hauptschulen*. The authors reported that: Male ninth-graders hold antisemitic attitudes more frequently than their female peers; 6.4% are very antisemitic, and 10.4% are somewhat antisemitic; for girls, this applies to only 2.1% and 6.3% of respondents, respectively.⁷

This view is supported by Philip Mendes' work, explored in more detail in the section below on religion and, with some limitations, also by the work of Günther Jikeli.⁸ There is, then, a great need for additional study in this area to understand why boys are more likely to be openly antisemitic and racist, at least in the classrooms covered by this research. This racist behaviour is perhaps an extension of the empathy deficit noted amongst boys by van der Graff, et al, as will be discussed in the next chapter, where some explanations are proposed and strategies suggested.⁹ Similar findings were made by Peter Smith, et al, in a meta study of five large cross-national studies of gender differences in bullying. The group examined whether there were significant differences in the rate of bullying or victimhood between males and females through their early teens. The results mirror the findings of van der Graff and the Swedish Living History research in that boys were far more likely than girls to be the perpetrators of bullying and somewhat more likely to be the victims of bullying.¹⁰

This current research project supports the limited but valuable work so far completed in this area. Detailed comments from a teacher at a partially selective¹¹ school demonstrate clearly who were the main perpetrators in his school:

In my experience, acts of racism (including language) have disproportionately been performed by male students. Additionally, at my previous school it would be performed by male students in Years 8, 9 and 10 of a Middle Eastern background who were locally

⁷ Dirk Baier, Christian Pfeiffer, Julia Simonson and Susann Rabold, "Young people in Germany as victims and perpetrators of violence," *Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN)*, 2009, 116.

⁸ Jikeli's work was explored in some detail in Chapter 1.

⁹ J. van der Graaff, S. Branje, M. De Wied, S Hawk, P van Lier, W. Meeus, "Perspective taking and empathic concern in adolescence: gender differences in developmental changes," *Developmental Psychology* 50, no.3 (2014): 881-888.

¹⁰ Peter Smith, Leticia López-Castro, Susanne Robinson and Anke Görzig, "Consistency of gender differences in bullying in cross-cultural surveys," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 45 (2019): 33-40.

¹¹ Emailed correspondence, September-October 2023. This school (western Sydney state co-ed) maintains a partially selective approach to enrolments. Students from within the local area are automatically enrolled. High achieving students from within and outside the local area can apply for inclusion in the school's selective streams. Classes are separated by this distinction.

enrolled (ie. not selective students) and who did not aspire to engage in tertiary education (ie. intended to finish school at the end of Year 10, not go to university, etc.).

This teacher saw a clear link between antisemitic and racist language and behaviour, with the same students “progressing” to increasingly violent acts as they moved through the behaviour management system at the school: “Students who engaged in racist language were often students who engaged in violent behaviour, aside from their racist behaviour, and were more likely to have progressed through our behaviour consequences (eg. after school detentions, suspensions).” This “progression” from racism to violence is one that was also seen at Brighton Secondary College, Melbourne, where the antisemitism went unchecked so that the perpetrators continued to bully some Jewish students until it reached a point of police intervention.¹²

The same experience was noted by a teacher with a very different student demographic:

At my previous school which was Greek Orthodox, students were constantly drawing swastikas on the desk. This is despite me telling classes my husband’s grandparents were in concentration camps during WWII and that I found it deeply offensive. A lot of the far-right extremism also contributed to this e.g. Andrew Tate, Kanye West.¹³

When asked if this graffiti was the work of boys or girls, she replied "Absolutely the boys. That’s what I meant with the right wing extremism – they were all talking about Andrew Tate and Kanye as well.”¹⁴

In a state school in south-western Sydney, another teacher also said boys were consistently the perpetrators of classroom racist behaviours: “I have found it was a lot more common that male students would speak their racist opinions out loud, though that is not to say that female students have never done it. I have witnessed it on a few occasions, but the majority of the time it is male students who verbalise their racism.”¹⁵

¹² Judgement in *Kaplan v State of Victoria (No 8)* [2023] FCA 1092 (hereafter “Judgement”), 21. <https://www.judgments.fedcourt.gov.au/judgments/Judgments/fca/single/2023/2023fca1092>

¹³ Emailed responses, September 2023. Southern Sydney Greek Orthodox co-ed school.

¹⁴ Email correspondence, October 2023.

¹⁵ Emailed responses, September 2023.

To the north of Sydney, a very experienced teacher in a state school also said that antisemitism was perpetrated by boys rather than girls:

While actually teaching this [the Holocaust] there is very little evidence of antisemitism; however in younger students (particularly Year 7 boys) there is an inappropriate fascination with Nazism – symbols, salutes and Hitler and this will come about in classes or if they are exposed to posters about World War 2. Unfortunately it has been largely boys who have been responsible for these incidents – particularly younger boys.¹⁶

In the written judgement in the Brighton Secondary College case mentioned earlier, the judge made reference to the expert testimony of Suzanne Rutland when summing up the role that gender had played in the case:

... research has demonstrated that antisemitic bullying and vilification is much more common in boys of co-educational schools than in girls-only schools. She [Rutland] cites another opinion with which she agrees, that the gender of the students appears to be an important determinant in whether antisemitism and/or racism is likely to appear in the classroom or not... the evidence I have accepted indicates that almost all of the student perpetrators were male, and the main student perpetrators were all male. The student conflict and altercations as revealed by the evidence I have accepted is almost entirely between male students. The BSC records disclose no consciousness of this factor, or of the need – in my opinion an obvious need – to particularly address the drivers of behaviour of and between male students in this respect.¹⁷

Finally, the response from a teacher at a girls-only state school in the eastern suburbs of Sydney highlights the difference between boys and girls in this respect. Teachers from three eastern suburbs schools took part in this research and reports from another two schools, published in the ECAJ 2022 report, were also included.¹⁸ Each of these eastern suburbs schools, with the exception of the girls-only school included in this study, reported antisemitism was a classroom challenge or they had experienced extreme antisemitic incidents amongst their students. The teacher at the girls-only school, who has 20 years' experience in this school, said she had “not

¹⁶ Emailed responses, September 2023. Regional state co-ed school.

¹⁷ Judgement, 235-236.

¹⁸ Julie Nathan, *Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2022*, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 2022.

witnessed any racism or antisemitism amongst the students. In fact they are very sensitive and empathetic on the whole.” Even during the early months of the war between Israel and Hamas in 2023-24, she had not noticed any antisemitism or Islamophobia, but what she had seen was “the absolute abhorrence of war and the students struggling to explain why this is happening. Our students are very receptive and totally engaged in a highly sensitive manner.”¹⁹

Why then was this teacher’s experience, and the experience of a colleague at the same school who also completed the questionnaire, so different to those at other schools in the area? In each of the other four schools, boys were identified as the perpetrators. In all respects other than gender, there was little to separate these schools. Each school contained a significant number of Jewish students. One was a state co-ed school and three were independent religious (Catholic and Orthodox), two of which were boys-only. The major point of difference was gender.

It should perhaps not be surprising that female secondary students appear to be far less inclined to antisemitism than their male peers. Schools are, of course, a reflection of the wider society in which they operate. A survey conducted by Andrew Markus and Crossroads 21, found that women in Australia were significantly less likely to hold negative attitudes towards Jews, and more likely to support measures against antisemitism such as banning Nazi symbols.²⁰ Whether they are more likely to be intrinsically racist is an open question, but there is no doubt that most perpetrators of acts of antisemitism in Australia are males.

The conclusion that must be reached, based on the data in this current research and the research of Jikeli, Mendes, the Living History study authors, and others, is that boys are, at the very least, considerably more likely to be openly racist than girls. Chapter 8 offers some possible explanations for this difference between boys and girls in the context of measured empathy and perspective taking, but the possible environmental and psychological explanations are essentially beyond this current research and move into areas of psychology and sociology.

The role of school culture

One of the most important factors in determining whether antisemitism and racism will impact teaching and learning in a school setting is the culture of the school. This culture, according to

¹⁹ Emailed responses, September 2023, and email correspondence October-November 2023. Eastern suburbs state girls’ school.

²⁰ Plus 61J Media, 2021, "Plus61J survey on attitudes to Israel, Jews and antisemitism," 17. <https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/file.xhtml?fileId=17530&version=1.1>.

education researcher Michael Fullan, can be defined as the guiding beliefs, attitudes, expected behaviours and values evident in the way a school operates.²¹ Peterson and Deal provide a definition that highlights the often invisible nature of school culture, which they say is the “underground stream of values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals,” built up over time, that influence daily behaviour and actions of everyone at the school and set the context for student learning.²²

While the culture itself may indeed be largely invisible, or “underground,” the impact of this culture on student wellbeing can be acute and extremely visible. Where there is explicit or implicit tolerance of negative behaviours, including racism and antisemitism, they will flourish. Where there is a serious focus on curbing negative behaviours at all levels within the school, those behaviours may not be eradicated, but they are unlikely to spread throughout the student body as a whole and are unlikely to regularly impact on teaching and learning. This research has demonstrated clearly that schools with strong, proactive programs against bullying, racism and antisemitism will not necessarily be free of these issues, but the issues will not become deeply embedded or systemic. Most importantly, students will feel supported and empowered to react appropriately to negative incidents among their peers.

Moreover, the culture of any school is determined in very large part by the actions – and often the inaction – of the school leadership team: principal, assistant principals and other members of the executive. Culture is also influenced by the parent body and students themselves, but is less influenced by structures outside the school such as government, dioceses and governing boards which will often have a less visible impact on the day-to-day running of a school. Ultimate responsibility for creating and maintaining a discernible school culture, however, lies with the principal. This culture will be manifested in their responses to acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and language from both students and teachers. Where racism and antisemitism are tolerated, and where the consequences for these acts are limited or meaningless, both may proliferate.

In a recent study, Paul Miller has stressed the importance of leadership in creating and maintaining a school culture that is based on equity and fairness, arguing that: “School leaders

²¹ Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (Teachers College Press, 2007), 232.

²² K. Peterson and T. Deal, “How leaders influence the culture of schools,” *Educational Leadership* 56, no.1 (1998): 28–30.

are undoubtedly the single most important factor in promoting and ensuring equity in their schools and/or in addressing equity imbalances and concerns.”²³ In a small qualitative study of five schools (three of which were girls-only), Miller found that

...for school leaders to see and treat anti-racism and inclusion as ‘core business,’ they must first see these issues as important and, second, important enough for their schools to get involved with, whether the government agrees or not. In other words, school leaders have significant agency and autonomy over what their schools prioritise.²⁴

In some cases, however, principals have failed to recognise the presence of racism and antisemitism in the schools, perhaps out of fear that the school’s public reputation might be impacted. Nado Aveling has found that principals generally believe that racism is not a problem at their schools. In a study published in 2007, in which 35 principals were interviewed, she reported that most believed any incidents of racism could be dealt with under the school’s existing behaviour management system or anti-bullying policies. She reached the conclusion “that the majority of the school managers neither noticed the presence of racism in their schools nor did they understand the multiplicities of ways in which racism works.”²⁵ Specific anti-racist policies, she found, were little understood and sometimes principals were not even aware they existed. Most principals were convinced that racism was a form of bullying and that an overarching policy was sufficient to cover all eventualities, regardless of the background of the students involved. In several of the schools that participated in this current research project, no data was collected on incidents of racism or antisemitism. Any such events were described in the student management systems as “non-inclusive language” or simply “disrespecting other students.” Without firm data, it is impossible for principals to know the extent of racism in their school and creates an environment where “plausible deniability” for such incidents is allowed to exist.

In Canberra, research by Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff has also demonstrated the importance of school leadership in responding appropriately to instances of antisemitism. Ben-Moshe and Halafoff conducted focus group interviews of Jewish students and their parents,

²³ Paul Miller, “School leaders leading anti-racism and inclusion: Evidence from schools in England,” *Equity in Education and Society*, 3:1 (2024), 48.

²⁴ Paul Miller, “School leadership,” 49.

²⁵ Nado Aveling, “Anti-racism in Schools: A question of leadership?” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 28, no.1 (2007): 83.

finding that antisemitism was common in Canberra schools. They found that “religious ignorance, insensitivity and intolerance were expressed not only by pupils but also by the schools themselves.”²⁶ Most disturbingly, the authors considered that “the schools while nominally pursuing multiculturalism are insensitive to the religious and cultural needs of the Jewish pupils.”²⁷ Often this was out of ignorance and a lack of understanding about the cultural and religious practices of Jewish students and their parents, rather than deliberate malicious acts.

Research by Gross and Rutland supports the view that, on the whole, school principals would rather not know about racism or antisemitism in their school: “In general, we found that principals tended either to minimise or deny the problem of anti-Jewish feelings, and bullying in general.”²⁸ The lack of accurate record keeping in schools facilitates these denials as it can be almost impossible to quantify the number of incidents that have taken place, however the interviews conducted by Gross and Rutland revealed levels of antisemitism that had not been acknowledged by schools:

In Sydney, one school principal strongly denied that there was any prejudice against the Jewish students in his school. (He perceived even the suggestion as a threat: he could lose Jewish students, who constituted 20-30 per cent of the student body.) Similarly, in Melbourne, the principal of a government school completely denied the existence of antisemitism and was defensive when a Jewish educator broached the subject with her.²⁹

By refusing to even acknowledge the existence of antisemitism in their schools, these principals have taken a major step towards condoning the actions of students who engage in antisemitic behaviour. One of the examples provided earlier in this research shows the importance of school leadership in creating a culture of tolerance towards antisemitism. Two teachers at the same school completed the initial online questionnaire in this research while a third provided detailed responses to a series of questions.³⁰ Additional follow-up questions were also answered by the third teacher. Each one of these teachers saw antisemitism and racism as

²⁶ Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff, “Antisemitism and Jewish Children and Youth in Australia’s Capital Territory Schools,” *Social Inclusion* 2, no.2 (2014): 52.

²⁷ Ben-Moshe and Halafoff, “Antisemitism and Jewish Children,” 54.

²⁸ Zehavit Gross and Suzanne Rutland, “Combating antisemitism in the school playground: An Australian case study,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no.3 (2014): 14.

²⁹ Gross and Rutland, “Combating antisemitism,” 14.

³⁰ Online questionnaire (2016) and emailed responses, September 2023. Independent Anglican co-ed school.

serious issues at the school but the third teacher, who is Jewish, also pinpointed the depth of the problem. He said that racist comments are “widespread and common. The school leadership, as far as I’m aware, pretends this does not happen.” Leadership was, according to this teacher, “reactive when forced,” indicating that the leadership had to be pushed to take action against antisemitic incidents and did not initiate positive behaviour programs. When asked about the culture within the classroom, and the reaction of other students to antisemitic comments, the teacher said “Other students clearly understood that this behaviour [antisemitism] was wrong, but generally found enjoyment in the whole situation. I think this is in line with the school culture, which largely buries its head in the sand.” When he removed a student from the classroom for antisemitic behaviour (making Hitler salutes to the Jewish teacher), the teacher found himself “admonished” by the school leadership. There were no consequences for the student.

A second example of reactive leadership with limited success at removing antisemitism came from a Catholic systemic school in western Sydney.³¹ This school was discussed at length in Chapter 6 when reference was made to its student body comprising many students from the former Yugoslavia, particularly Croatia. The teacher was largely effective at dealing with antisemitism in her own classroom, but commented that there was a group of students who could not be convinced about the lack of evidence for their racist and antisemitic views. She said that there were no school-wide programs to counter antisemitism or racism and that leadership was largely “reactive, that is, it addresses individual issues and students in a belief that racism is not a big/school-wide problem.” However, for new migrant and refugee arrivals at the school, the deep seated racism was a major problem: “Racism towards students of newly arrived migrant heritage was addressed through school leadership through the pastoral care structures, ie, year coordinators would discuss with the individual student, call home, issue an afternoon detention etc” but there was no overarching plan for students that made clear what was acceptable behaviour and language within the school and wider society.

In a north shore school, a very experienced teacher who is also a Gandel graduate, noted several antisemitic incidents that were poorly handled by school leadership.³² During an excursion to the Sydney Jewish Museum, she said that one of her boys had “dropped some money and a student from another school went to help and pick it up, and another boy called out ‘You're

³¹ Emailed responses and correspondence, September-October 2023.

³² Emailed responses, September 2023. Northern Sydney Catholic systemic boys’ school.

such a Jew.’ The student was from [a Jewish school].” In a second incident, during a school rugby match against a Jewish school, a group of her school’s boys were yelling antisemitic slurs. “On both instances,” the teacher said, “the Principal apologised and the students involved had to write letters, but nothing really sunk in, I think, and in neither case was I as the History Coordinator invited to share my views! It was viewed as a ‘boys will be boys’ thing rather than racism.”

A series of disturbing examples in a north coast school provides another case that demonstrates the importance of school leadership, and especially the principal, in dealing effectively with antisemitism as soon as it appears. Nazi swastika graffiti at the school was removed promptly when it was reported, but other forms of antisemitism went unchecked. Jewish students were consistently harassed and jokes about Hitler and the Holocaust were made in their presence. A Year 7 Jewish student was harassed by another student from the same year group and, when requested to stop, he made a gun gesture with his fingers and thumbs and pretended to shoot, saying "Shoot the Jew! Shoot the Jew!"³³

The school culture was such that the principal and staff were unable to recognise that these comments, and their failure to act on them, were both extremely damaging to the students and, quite possibly, in breach of the Racial Discrimination Act. There were regular discussions between parent and principal, but no action was taken. Even when matters were escalated to the bishop and diocesan leadership, the school could not seem to appreciate the depth of the problem. As a parent noted, “Teachers didn’t get that these jokes were hurtful.”³⁴ Over the period of twelve months that these and other incidents took place, the school failed to act effectively to implement its duty of care to the students, indicating a culture that was unable to recognise antisemitism or act to prevent its perpetuation.

The students who had been the victims of these acts ultimately left the school as there had been no attempt at cultural change either at the school or at a diocesan level. After transferring to a new school, one of these students again received antisemitic comments from a fellow student. But in contrast to the previous experience, the new school immediately embarked on a process of restorative justice to resolve the issues and successfully ensured they were not repeated. This swift response provides an example of how a positive school culture will not stop all acts of

³³ Nathan, *ECAJ 2022 Report*, 46; north coast Catholic systemic co-ed school.

³⁴ Email correspondence, October 2023.

racism or antisemitism, but it will prevent them from spreading through the student body and becoming normalised behaviour.

The comments from a teacher at a school in south-western Sydney also support the view that the level of commitment from school leadership to eradicating racism plays a significant part in maintaining a culture within the school that allows effective teaching of topics such as the Holocaust to take place in a safe environment for all students. He described the school leadership team as “proactive in the messaging, reactive in responding to student behaviours.” The school provided positive messaging at assemblies, individual interventions, targeted programs and parent interviews, and while in this teacher’s view, “generally speaking they seem to have marginal effects. They probably have the best impact on students in the middle – students who wouldn’t otherwise exhibit racist behaviour unless others (who were committed racists) were around and started the ball rolling.”³⁵

The result of this level of commitment from leadership was that the teacher could only recall one “clear and explicit” example of antisemitism in his classroom over 13 years of teaching in the school: “A Year 10 student of Middle Eastern background (I believe Lebanese) had very strong views about the ‘deservedness’ of what happened to the Jews in the Holocaust. My immediate response was disgust and anger at the views expressed, though without acting with those emotions I just shut it down. Given the composition of the class, I did not want to invite debate or discussion nor did I want to validate those opinions as being welcome for discussion in the classroom.”³⁶ The reaction of the teacher, and the absence of any repeat instances of antisemitism in his classroom, suggests that the school was successful, not in eradicating antisemitism and racism totally, but in ensuring it did not become normalised in the school.

Another teacher in a diverse school north of Sydney provided a further example of leadership that works actively to prevent racism taking root.³⁷ In her classrooms, she said there is very little evidence of antisemitism except amongst Year 7 boys where there is some fascination with Hitler, swastikas and Nazi salutes. When asked how other students in class responded to such incidents, she said that “students who are not part of the group make their disapproval clear by not joining in and expressing their shock at these views.” The reactions from peers to

³⁵ Emailed responses, September 2023. South-west Sydney state co-ed school.

³⁶ Email correspondence, October 2023. South-west Sydney state co-ed school.

³⁷ Emailed responses, September 2023. Regional state co-ed school.

antisemitism provides a useful barometer of the class and school culture regarding negative behaviours and language. In this case, and others, the shock expressed by other students suggests that such behaviours have not become normalised. At this school, there are clear responses to racism and consistent proactive messaging. “There are incidents of racism at times which are regarded seriously and treated through the discipline process,” she said. “There are also school Positive Behaviour for Learning lessons which will be directed at respect for others when needed.” Also part of the school strategy are “regular messages from senior leaders about respectful behaviour at the weekly whole school assemblies. Weekly PB lessons will focus on issues around culture and racism; generally twice a term this will be the focus. [There is also an] annual celebration of Harmony Day.” The whole school approach here provides an avenue to deal with instances of antisemitism while also ensuring there is constant messaging about its impact on other students and wider society.

In an independent Anglican school, leadership also took a proactive approach. The teacher interviewed said that the “Australian Schools where I’ve worked in the past have been very inclusive and bullying based on race, fairly rare. I hope this doesn’t change.”³⁸ But at the same time as she was completing the questionnaire, there was a noteworthy incident:

Up until this year, I could honestly say that I’ve never experienced antisemitism in the schools where I’ve worked and I’ve been teaching for 25 years – mostly in Anglican schools. However, earlier this year I overheard a student in Year 8 call another student ‘Jewish’ as an insult and today I heard the same thing. The first time I recorded the incident on Edumate and talked to the student individually because I thought he might not have understood the seriousness of the comment or the context. Today, I wasn’t sure who made the comment so I talked to the whole class about how calling someone “Jewish” in an insulting way is not acceptable – I also mentioned all the amazing Jewish people I could think of – including Jesus – and told them that calling someone ‘Jewish’ is always a compliment. I plan to talk to our Head of Years 7-9 about it tomorrow because if antisemitism is increasing at the moment, that’s something we want to take very seriously.

The teacher did in fact raise the issue with the head of the junior school. She described the incident in detail, the previous rarity of such events, and wondered “if the current war between

³⁸ Emailed responses and correspondence, September-November 2023. North-west Sydney independent Anglican co-ed school.

Israel and Hamas is fuelling some antisemitism? Could we watch out for this with Year 8 and perhaps proactively address this issue?” she asked the senior teacher. The school currently has no programs specifically targeting antisemitism but the teacher described the school as “big on being inclusive” and said that “the curriculum content covers anti-racism very thoroughly – most English novels have that as a key theme. History content also covers that idea fairly extensively.”

That one or two antisemitic comments triggered an email exchange between staff says a great deal about the culture of this school. Firstly, the teacher dealt with it effectively in class, secondly there was a call for a proactive response to the incident, and thirdly the incidents stood out as aberrations. There would seem to be limited opportunities at this school for such incidents to become normalised as part of the school culture and to morph into a far more serious level of antisemitic behaviour.

A further example of positive school culture comes from a school in south-western Sydney.³⁹ When asked if the teacher had ever encountered antisemitism or racism in the classroom while teaching about the Holocaust, she responded “Absolutely!” But her classroom response fitted into the whole school approach to racism described above, which meant lessons were able to proceed without further interruption: “Students tend to mention common stereotypes associated with Jewish people (relating to money or being uptight) and laugh about them with their friends. In response to these comments, I tell students that this is one of the reasons why we learn about the Holocaust in the first place and we discuss Hitler’s attitudes towards people who were different. I also tend to talk about stereotypes of other groups of people and how we mustn’t just agree/share stereotypes just because others have said them.”

This teacher’s school is not unique in the area: there is great diversity in its student population which reflects the wide range of cultures in south-western Sydney. This diversity is seen as an opportunity by school leadership:

Due to my school being such a melting pot of cultures, we take every opportunity we can to showcase the beliefs, traditions, language and customs of our different cultures. This includes a massive celebration for Harmony Day and recognition of various other cultural

³⁹ Emailed responses and correspondence, October-November 2023. South-west Sydney state co-ed school.

days/events throughout the year (NAIDOC Week, Samoan/Tongan Language weeks, etc). Our school leadership is one of the driving forces behind these celebrations, therefore quite proactive when it comes to that. However, I would say that when individualised instances of racism occur, they can be quite reactive, but I feel that this is necessary to try and prevent escalation.

The final example of positive school leadership comes from the eastern suburbs of Sydney (also discussed under the subheading of gender earlier in this chapter.)⁴⁰ Each of the other schools in this area included in this research has experienced sometimes extreme levels of antisemitism but this school has not. A significant reason for this is the absence of male students, but the teacher, who has been at the school for 20 years, also noted that “as a public high school we have a strong tradition of Harmony Days and celebrations of First Nations Peoples. There also is a wide cross section of backgrounds at the school; no dominant religion or ethnicity.” There is a whole school approach to celebrating multiculturalism and “countless programs and initiatives dealing with racism. Occasionally whole year groups take part in programs from external providers that target bullying, racism etc.” These external programs include Courage to Care, which relies on stories of great personal courage to inspire social harmony and upstander behaviour. This school also recognises the religious diversity of its students and offers prayer spaces and activities for Christian, Jewish and Muslim students. In Special Religious Education classes, students may choose from Islamic, Catholic, Combined Christian or Jewish classes. And amongst the wide range of extracurricular clubs offered by the school, one of the longest running is the Jewish Club.

Schools which have proactive leadership are not free of racism and antisemitism. But they do not allow it to spread and become normalised. The range of schools cited are good examples of this. In the north shore school cited earlier, however, antisemitism has become normalised and part of the school culture, as it has in other schools, including Brighton Secondary College. This Melbourne state school is an extreme example of what can happen if racism and antisemitism are not taken seriously and are allowed to spread.

The details of the case have been explored in the earlier chapter on antisemitic incidents in Australian schools, but in the context of this chapter, it is important to note that the role of the

⁴⁰ Emailed responses, October 2023. Eastern suburbs state girls' school.

principal was made very clear in the judgement delivered by Justice Mortimer. The judge was explicit in her criticisms of the principal who allowed a culture of antisemitism to build at the school with limited consequences for the growing group of perpetrators. This antisemitic culture at the school made teaching about the Holocaust highly problematic and extremely stressful for Jewish students at the school. The principal played a key role “in terms of the implementation of policies, the setting of standards of behaviour in students, and the setting of standards, tone and culture in terms of how staff at a school behave, react to various circumstances and deal with student behaviour.”⁴¹

The judge found that antisemitism was “endemic” amongst the lower year levels at the school and that the principal did not attempt to address the issue.⁴² To counter the culture of antisemitism, the judge accepted the testimony of an expert witness that a range of strategies could have been implemented. These strategies included:

- guest speakers at assemblies (eg, those with powerful stories connected to the Holocaust), followed up in pastoral care lessons with prepared resources;
- reinforcement of messages delivered through posters or banners around the school;
- requiring staff to be hyper-vigilant for antisemitic taunts and harassment;
- restorative justice approaches; and
- warnings about possible expulsion as a consequence for repeated behaviour.⁴³

Such strategies as outlined by the judge provide a template for a potential course of action amongst other schools where antisemitism makes teaching about the Holocaust problematic. Where no action is taken by the school, and a culture of tolerance for antisemitism develops, the judge pointed out that antisemitism may “spread at times to larger proportions of the student population, either because of a herd mentality amongst the friendship groups of the student perpetrators, or because of particular events, like the teaching of *Maus*.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Judgement, 83.

⁴² Judgement, 83.

⁴³ Judgement, 83.

⁴⁴ Judgement, 106.

Pedagogy as a contributor to antisemitism

It may seem more than a little counterintuitive that teaching about the Holocaust might actually lead to an increase in antisemitism. But there is a growing body of research and anecdotal observation that suggests poor pedagogy might reinforce Jewish stereotypes, develop empathy for perpetrators and even create a belief amongst students that Jews somehow contributed to their own fate in World War II. This section of the current research considers the empathy deficit amongst students that follows from failing to recognise the origins of antisemitism and variety of Jewish life prior to, and after, the Holocaust, when teaching about this topic. Also considered is the impact on student outcomes that might flow from problematic text choices, such as *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*.

In a detailed scoping review of existing research, Pistone et al examined how antisemitism is considered in teaching and learning about the Holocaust. This is a most fundamental question, as antisemitism is regarded as the root cause of the Holocaust, so to ignore this factor is to essentially leave the reasons for the Holocaust unexplained for students. The study found that “In 43% of the included TLH⁴⁵ studies, antisemitism was not mentioned at all or was only mentioned in passing or briefly addressed. Further, in evaluating educational outcomes, it is uncommon to evaluate outcomes that relate to antisemitism.”⁴⁶ Instead of antisemitism, there seemed to be a far greater emphasis on human rights, racism or homophobia, a pattern the authors suggest “could indicate an expectation that the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust is not only tied to Jews but to other groups as well.” The impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish people, then, is more likely to be instrumentalised so that it can be used as an “educational resource to arouse empathy concerning how other groups are suffering today, but rarely to counter or prevent antisemitism.”⁴⁷ The danger inherent in this approach to Holocaust education is, the study authors warn, that students may well not understand the role of antisemitism in the Holocaust and the dangers of its continuing presence in society today:

The invisibility of the prominent role of antisemitism leading to the Holocaust hindered the potential of TLH in preventing antisemitism and could, in the worst-case scenario, contribute to antisemitism.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ TLH = teaching and learning about the Holocaust

⁴⁶ Isabella Pistone, et al, “Teaching and learning about the Holocaust: a systematic scoping review of existing research,” *Holocaust Studies* 30, no.1(2023): 17.

⁴⁷ Pistone, et al, “Teaching and learning about the Holocaust,”17.

⁴⁸ Pistone, et al, “Teaching and learning about the Holocaust,”17.

Writing in *The Atlantic* in May 2023, Dara Horn made the claim that: “The bedrock assumption that has endured for nearly half a century is that learning about the Holocaust inoculates people against anti-Semitism. But it doesn’t.” She went on to say that “I have come to the disturbing conclusion that Holocaust education is incapable of addressing contemporary anti-Semitism. In fact, *in the total absence of any education about Jews alive today*, teaching about the Holocaust might even be making anti-Semitism worse.” Horn presents a convincing case that Holocaust education, delivered in inappropriate ways with misplaced emphasis, can actually distance students from the rich diversity that is Jewish culture in the past and the present.⁴⁹ A number of the schools included in this current research have, despite their stated aim of teaching to counter racism and antisemitism, constructed teaching programs about the Holocaust that would appear to have shifted emphasis away from Jews as humans and have inadvertently constructed a picture of Jews as faceless victims of the Holocaust, exactly as described by Horn.

Horn’s argument is this: if educators do not consider the long history of antisemitism, from ancient times to the present, then the Nazi ideology that led to the Holocaust remains inexplicable. Moreover, if educators do not spend some time reconstructing pre-war Jewish life, then Jews cannot be seen by students as humans. And if study of the Holocaust ends in January 1945 with the liberation of Auschwitz, then Jews as resisters, survivors and as part of a continuing living culture are lost to students. Walking through the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Centre, Horn was critical that educators there “had made a conscious decision not to focus on the long history of anti-Semitism that preceded the Holocaust, and made it possible.” But she is even more critical that the museum, in trying to develop empathy amongst students, tries to present Jewish victims of the Holocaust as “normal,” as just the same as the students viewing the exhibition:

Then there was the word normal. More than 80 percent of Jewish Holocaust victims spoke Yiddish, a 1,000-year-old European Jewish language spoken around the world, with its own schools, books, newspapers, theaters, political organizations, advertising, and film industry. On a continent where language was tightly tied to territory, this was hardly “normal.” Traditional Jewish practices—which include extremely detailed rules

⁴⁹ Horn, “Is Holocaust Education Making Antisemitism Worse?” [my emphasis]

governing food and clothing and 100 gratitude blessings recited each day—were not “normal” either.

Horn asked one museum educator, “if the whole point of Holocaust education is to ‘humanize’ those who were ‘dehumanized,’ why do most teachers introduce students to Jews only when Jews are headed for a mass grave?”⁵⁰ A longitudinal study carried out in Hungary highlights the importance of humanising the victims of the Holocaust but even more importantly, humanising Jews in the present. The study showed that students who were exposed to a series of interventions involving Jewish volunteers were more likely to improve their understanding of Jews and Judaism and were more likely to question their own prejudices about Jews.⁵¹

The perceptive comments made by Horn about the flaws in Holocaust education are mirrored by the stated philosophy of educators at Yad Vashem and can also be seen in the approach taken by many teachers who are part of this current research, particularly those whose work will be highlighted in Chapter 10. Despite the major time limitations, many teachers of the Holocaust in Sydney spend significant time on both the history of antisemitism and pre-war Jewish life. Both these topics are essential if students are to understand both the reasons why Jews were targeted by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, and the scale of what was lost in the Holocaust. Antisemitism as a distinct topic was taught by almost 94% of teachers. Pre-war Jewish life was taught by just 60%. This last figure is troubling: if students are not introduced to the richness and diversity of pre-war Jewish life, from the smallest shtetls to the largest cities, they will have no concept of what was lost in the Holocaust. Even more disturbing is that only 33% of teachers spend any time on life after the Holocaust. It would seem that Dara Horn’s complaint is well-founded in many classrooms. The first time many students will be introduced to Jews is as victims of the Nuremberg Laws and the last time students will see them is through photographs from Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen. Such an approach does nothing to humanise Jews, either in the past or the present.

For the many teachers who do not include pre-war Jewish life in the classes, and the much smaller number who do not start their teaching with the history of antisemitism, there is a very real risk that their students will not take meaning from their lessons and that the prime objective

⁵⁰ Horn, “Is Holocaust Education Making Antisemitism Worse?”

⁵¹ Bori Simonovits and Rachel Suranyi, “‘The Jews Are Just Like Any Other Human Being.’ An Attempt to Measure the Impact of Informal Education on Teenagers’ Views of Intergroup Tolerance,” *Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics* 5, no.4 (2019): 79-109.

in many History classrooms – genuine empathy – will not be achieved. Herein lies a very real problem for classrooms where antisemitism is already an issue. Teaching about the Holocaust will not “fix” antisemitism. Students who are using racial slurs against Jewish peers, drawing swastikas and making Hitler salutes, have already heard about the Holocaust. They have already acquired some knowledge about it. But they have not taken any meaning from their knowledge. Just learning about the Holocaust simply increases their racist vocabulary and provides a new target for their racism. Poor pedagogy, then, has the potential to actually increase antisemitism in the classroom. For the teacher in a diverse classroom, with behavioural issues and problems with racism, the temptation is to skip over the Holocaust as quickly as possible and move onto “safe” ground, to a topic that is unlikely to provoke racist outbursts in class or a wave of swastika graffiti around the school. But inadvertently, they have perhaps made the problems in the classroom worse and even reinforced the stereotypes students brought with them to the classroom.

Those stereotypes can be further reinforced through the text and source choices made in some classrooms. The idea that poor pedagogical choices might lead to an increase in antisemitism was encapsulated in a response from a teacher in a school a little south of Sydney when she discussed the use of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* in her classroom:

I think it [*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*] reinforces antisemitism in students. It moves the focus to portraying Germans, even those who participated, as equal victims of a few nasty people. It often comes with comments suggesting that the Jewish response to the Holocaust is overly complaining as others died as well. While none of them have come out and supported Holocaust deniers, some are ready to argue that media responses to historical accounts are part of a global Jewish conspiracy to gain sympathy and power.⁵²

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, both the film and the novel, have become emblematic of the poor choices that can be made when teaching about the Holocaust. The text has been hugely popular in schools around the world due to its highly engaging narrative, structure and plot, and the simplicity of its approach to dealing with complex issues. It is, above all, extremely accessible for a range of reading/viewing abilities which makes it an easy choice for diverse classrooms. But as a History text and as an introduction to the Holocaust, it is exceedingly

⁵² Emailed responses, October 2023. Regional state co-ed school.

problematic. In the context of this current research, the text is considered here because, as highlighted by a number of teachers around Sydney, it has the potential to contribute to serious misunderstandings about the Holocaust and ultimately lead to antisemitism within the classroom. It illustrates the very real possibility that poor text choices might make teaching about the Holocaust counter-productive to the objectives described by teachers in previous chapters.⁵³

Michael Gray pointed to these problem areas soon after the release of the film.⁵⁴ He explained that there were solid practical reasons for teachers to turn to either the book or the film as an introduction to the Holocaust: “With heavy teaching loads and a lack of Holocaust expertise, many practitioners may see *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as an easy, popular or even reliable way of teaching the subject.”⁵⁵ This is especially the case in diverse classrooms where educators must find texts that are accessible and engaging for a wide range of reading abilities. And the offer of a film to watch after students have completed their reading is often an attractive “carrot” to dangle in front of a class of reluctant readers. But despite the appeal that this presents to teachers, Gray says the text in both forms is highly problematic and best avoided:

As a consequence of the problematic misconceptions that it appears to generate, its historical inaccuracies and skewed moral message, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* appears to be a curse and not a blessing for Holocaust education. Responding to its popularity and limiting its negative impact on adolescents is an important challenge for the future of Holocaust education.⁵⁶

In 2016, two years after Gray’s work was published, the Centre for Holocaust Education at UCL conducted a detailed study into the use of the text in English schools and identified similar issues. In 2022, it conducted another study to understand if the messaging about the problems with the text was having an impact on its use in English schools. They found that 35% of schools across England still use either the book or the film or both.⁵⁷ The Program Director at the Centre for Holocaust Education, Ruth Anne Lenga summed up the problems with the book:

⁵³ See for example, Chapter 6 under the subheading “Aims in teaching about the Holocaust.”

⁵⁴ Michael Gray, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas: A Blessing or Curse for Holocaust Education?” *Holocaust Studies* 20, no.3 (2014): 109-136.

⁵⁵ Gray, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas,” 131.

⁵⁶ Gray, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, 133.

⁵⁷ Centre for Holocaust Education, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas,” (2022).

[https://holocausteducation.org.uk/research/the-boy-in-the-striped-pyjamas-in-english-secondary-schools/#:~:text=A%20recent%20UCL%20Centre%20for,26%25%20used%20the%20film\).](https://holocausteducation.org.uk/research/the-boy-in-the-striped-pyjamas-in-english-secondary-schools/#:~:text=A%20recent%20UCL%20Centre%20for,26%25%20used%20the%20film).)

The potential for giving young people the impression that ordinary Germans were in some way ‘victims’ of the Holocaust is insensitive and dangerous. With the rise in antisemitism, such as it is in this country, and that so often manifests through trivialisation, distortion and denial of the Holocaust, this book could potentially do more harm than good.⁵⁸

The first study conducted by the Centre for Holocaust Education involved a quantitative study of over 8,000 students and a qualitative study through 44 interviews. The second study was a survey of over 1,000 teachers and 134 group interviews. Focus group interviews with 44 students further revealed a number of ways in which historical inaccuracies within the film served to introduce and/or reinforce significant misunderstandings and misconceptions about this history, most notably the mistaken perception that ordinary Germans were largely ignorant of the atrocities taking place in the Holocaust. The centre warned that “when teaching young people about the Holocaust it should therefore be treated with extreme caution; we have seen that it can perpetuate a number of dangerous inaccuracies and fallacies about the mass murder, not least that in some way ordinary German citizens were equal ‘victims’, and that only Hitler (or a small number of senior Nazis) was responsible for what took place.”⁵⁹

These warnings are well-founded, as demonstrated through the comments by History teachers in and around Sydney. A recent poll conducted on the private History Teachers in New South Wales Facebook page asked a simple question: “Does your school, in any subject or year level, use the film or novel form of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*?” Respondents had three options: “Yes,” “No,” or “Used to but have removed it.” A large number of teachers (137) responded to the poll, with 34% saying yes, 50% saying no, and 16% saying it had been removed from the school.⁶⁰

Those respondents who left comments on the Facebook page, and those who discussed the text in their responses to this current research, mirrored closely the ideas expressed by respondents to the English study and echoed their fears about the impact of the book and film. They did, however, note that it had some positive qualities. One teacher, who was unhappy that her school

⁵⁸ Centre for Holocaust Education, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas,” (2022).
<https://holocausteducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfHE-Research-Data-Release-3-The-Boy-in-the-Striped-Pyjamas-.pdf>

⁵⁹ Centre for Holocaust Education, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas.”

⁶⁰ *History Teachers in New South Wales (Secondary Schools & TAFE)*,
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1429707913949675>

had discontinued using the text, said that there were several positive outcomes of using the text: “Great for teaching the unreliable narrator. The novel is very engaging for students – they find the topic fascinating, the language is easy. Film is very engaging.” But the same teacher also saw one negative that came out of using the text: “Students drawing swastikas on desks.”⁶¹ Another teacher believed that the text was a useful tool in countering racism: “While I haven’t encountered antisemitism in my classrooms as there are very few Jewish people in our area or stories about them, racism is an issue that we encounter and this can be one way to challenge those underlying assumptions that underpin racist ideologies.”⁶²

Each of these responses came from teachers who had undertaken significant professional development at the Sydney Jewish Museum and were aware of the text’s limitations, but they believed they were equipped to deal with these shortcomings in the classroom. This belief was shared by a third teacher who said the text provided opportunities for activating students’ knowledge of the Holocaust: “I’ve used it in History because students wanted to see it, and then ripped it apart. We discussed what the problematic issues in the text are, and students responded to a question about the responsibility of authors to maintain historical integrity and accuracy when taking inspiration from historical events.”⁶³ Such an approach, however, as noted by the UCL study, requires a very solid base of historical understanding amongst students:

A vocal minority of teachers suggested that they, ‘only use *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* to be critical of it as a form of Holocaust representation’, but as Ruth Anne Lenga has pointed out, ‘Even if used solely to identify the errors and mistruth inherent within it, students would need to already have established sound historical, evidence-based knowledge to be able to do that. With time for teaching this subject being a major challenge in schools across the country, this would, in many cases, simply not work.’⁶⁴

A fourth teacher, who had also completed professional development through the Sydney Jewish Museum, provided a range of perceptive comments about the pedagogical problems associated with the text. She had noted various issues and, despite the text still being used in the English

⁶¹ Emailed responses, November 2023.

⁶² Emailed responses, November 2023.

⁶³ Emailed responses, November 2023.

⁶⁴ Centre for Holocaust Education, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas.”

faculty at her school, she had convinced her History colleagues to discontinue use of the book in their subject:

While there is definitely an increase in student engagement, I feel that the overall impact of the movie on students' ideas of the Holocaust is not worth it. Students start to talk about how the Germans were also victims. It moves the focus of the Holocaust away from the Jewish people and onto Germans. I think that overall, it made the students less sympathetic to Jewish victims of the Holocaust.⁶⁵

This teacher also found that she had to correct a range of student misunderstandings about the Holocaust and, disturbingly, students would hold on to some of these misunderstandings, even after the teacher attempted to correct them:

Students start talking about the innocence of most German people regarding the Holocaust and start to argue that they were also victims. They believe that high-ranking Nazis worked in complete secrecy from their families and were often forced into these roles. Students believe that the families of these men are therefore also victims once it was discovered their loved one's roles. Finally, there are a great deal of comments about how even if 'normal' Germans knew about the Holocaust, they were against it but were too afraid for their lives to do anything about it. I would teach a lesson afterwards on Rudolph Hoss [sic] and his family. I pointed out the obvious faults in the story, especially around the "innocence" of Bruno. We would look at the Jung folk [sic] and the Hitler Youth. Students would continue to argue the elements of the story and try to tell me it was a true story.⁶⁶

Such problems are sometimes lost on teachers, who feel the text is a benign yet effective way to introduce the Holocaust to students. One teacher from regional New South Wales said that she "thought it was engaging and interesting, and a good way to see a perspective of the period with an age appropriate text. The backlash that seems to be springing up against it seems like an overreaction to me."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Emailed responses, November 2023.

⁶⁶ Emailed responses, November 2023.

⁶⁷ Emailed responses, November 2023.

Teaching in a school north of London, England, Michael Gray found that “most students had either read the book or watched the movie of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, which led to a deeper and more informed discussion around the challenges and opportunities that it provides.” Gray was teaching an elective course for high achieving senior boys, which he noted were important factors to consider when reviewing his research. He found that “a minority of students both comprehended and accepted that using the Holocaust to draw an equivalence between a Jewish child gassed at Auschwitz and the suffering of the Commandant was neither appropriate nor ethical.” Yet despite this, his criticisms of the text were sometimes met with remarks such as “It’s just a film, sir!”⁶⁸

Ultimately, it is perfectly reasonable that students would view *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as “just a film” or “just a book.” But teachers, on the other hand, should be very much aware that their text choices have enormous powers to influence their students, often in quite subtle ways. When choosing fictional texts as part of a study of the Holocaust, it seems more than a little counter-productive to select texts that lessen our empathy for the Jewish victims, that increase empathy for the perpetrators, and finally may result in increased antisemitism in classrooms.

Geography, culture and socio-economic factors

Antisemitism as a challenge to Holocaust education is not impacted by geographical lines or socio-economic status in Greater Sydney or in regional New South Wales, with the exception of north-west Sydney. This is clear from the online map created as part of this research project and discussed in Chapter 4.⁶⁹ Teachers across Sydney reported racism and antisemitism in their classrooms. Approximately one quarter of responses indicated that racism and antisemitism were classroom challenges to teaching about the Holocaust. The premise that underpinned this research – that south-western Sydney would show a greater concentration of schools with classroom antisemitism as a challenge – was not borne out by the evidence.⁷⁰ The reality is that antisemitism, as discussed in Chapter 6, is a problem in classrooms in three key areas:

⁶⁸ Michael Gray, “Unfettering Holocaust education: opportunities for constructing a sophisticated understanding in the classroom”, *Holocaust Studies* 29, no.2 (2023): 251.

⁶⁹ https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1CqiF5wW-LcwpRIT-Xd-2p1l_AiU&usp=sharing

⁷⁰ This premise was based on the earlier research of Rutland (2010) and Mendes (2008).

1. Boys and co-ed state schools in south-western Sydney where there is a high proportion of Arabic speakers. State girls' schools, including those with a high proportion of Arabic speakers, do not appear to have similar problems with antisemitism.
2. Boys and co-ed independent Christian schools on the north shore and in the eastern suburbs. Again, girls' schools in these areas did not appear to have problems with antisemitism.
3. One co-ed Catholic systemic school in western Sydney which has a significant population of students who identify as Croatian. (No responses were received from neighbouring state and independent schools.)

If there are any conclusions to be drawn about the geography of antisemitism in Sydney schools, it may be that north-western Sydney is relatively free of this challenge, at least in classrooms. This comparatively new, aspirational area, defined approximately by a triangle joining Chatswood, Blacktown and Windsor and following the Metro North West line, has a diverse population and an absence of any single dominant religious group. It has only a very small Jewish population (just 0.01%), such that most students in the area will never knowingly encounter a Jewish person. How this area differs demographically from other parts of Sydney may help to explain its apparent lack of antisemitism and racism.

A significant portion of the population, 40.4%, was born overseas, compared with 38% for Greater Sydney, with most of these people coming from India, Philippines, UK, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Compared with other parts of Sydney, relatively few migrants to north-western Sydney are from African or Middle Eastern countries.⁷¹ The overwhelming majority are fluent in English – only 2.8% report being non-fluent, much lower than other parts of Sydney.⁷² On average, household incomes are 21% higher than across Sydney generally and 35% of the population have tertiary qualifications, compared with 28% across Sydney.⁷³

The higher level of educational attainment, the higher incomes and the lack of migrants from Africa and the Middle East, set this area apart from the rest of Sydney generally and especially

⁷¹ .idcommunity profiles, The Hills Shire Community Profile. <https://profile.id.com.au/the-hills/birthplace?WebID=210>

⁷² Parliament of New South Wales, New South Wales Electorate Profiles: 2021 Census – Cultural diversity. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Pages/New-South-Wales-Electorate-Profiles-2021-Census-Cultural-diversity.aspx>

⁷³ Urbis, Norwest Quarter. <https://norwestquarter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Urbis-Norwest-Market-Outlook-.pdf>

from other parts of western Sydney. Put simply, it has neither imported antisemitism from the Middle East or North Africa, nor does it, to any significant extent, experience the old, established Anglo antisemitism of the eastern and northern suburbs. The relatively higher levels of education and income also negate against antisemitism.

In those areas where antisemitism was clearly identified as a classroom issue, it is possible to consider the nature of antisemitism and how it may vary across Sydney. In the eastern suburbs and north shore of Sydney, with significant Anglo-Celtic populations, it is “mainly motivated by classical racial antisemitism” and deep-seated stereotypes of Jews.⁷⁴ Gross and Rutland found in their 2014 study that students “referred mainly to the accusation that Jews were greedy and money-grabbing.”⁷⁵ In south-western Sydney, the earlier work of Suzanne Rutland and Philip Mendes, and the responses gathered for this research, confirm that there is a dominant strand of antisemitism that can be best described as “eliminationist.” It is at times violent in its rhetoric, its demands and intent, and has become more violent since the Hamas–Israel war began on 7 October 2023.⁷⁶ The focus of antisemitism in this region is that Israel has no right to exist, as it was founded on land stolen from Palestinians, and that Jews are perpetrating a genocide against the Palestinians.

In her interviews with teachers from south-western Sydney and the coordinators of anti-racism programs, Rutland was told that:

Muslim students often expressed an admiration for Nazism and Hitler; some drew swastikas on their desks and had posters of Hitler. They also made statements in class such as ‘Hitler did not go far enough.’ Many also believe that the Zionists cooperated with Hitler during the Holocaust in order to create a pretext to take Palestine from the Arabs.⁷⁷

Jewish teachers at these schools have been harassed by Muslim students and many elected to conceal their Jewish identity for fear of ongoing intimidation or violence. Rutland provided a number of examples of this fear amongst teachers. “One said, ‘I am not able to come out—I want my students to know I am a person like anyone else, just flesh and blood.’ Another, almost

⁷⁴ Gross and Rutland, “Combatting Antisemitism,” 18.

⁷⁵ Gross and Rutland, “Combatting Antisemitism,” 18.

⁷⁶ Chapter 4 documents this rapid rise in antisemitism since 7 October 2023.

⁷⁷ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education?” 232.

in tears, said this: ‘I am terrified that the students will find out that I am Jewish. I am very ashamed to say this.’”⁷⁸

The violence inherent in the language of students in the south-west of Sydney contrasts with the more casual Anglo antisemitism of Sydney’s north shore and eastern suburbs, where the perpetrators come from a higher socio-economic stratum, tend to be better educated and attend private religious (Christian) schools. The demographics in this area, discussed in Chapter 5, suggest that this form of antisemitism stems from older established Anglo-Celtic families. In these areas, the antisemitism seems to be confined to the repetition of stereotypes and age-old tropes, a form of classical antisemitism that relies on reworkings of stories about Jewish greed, power and control. Holocaust jokes were reported by a number of teachers and some suggested elements of anti-Zionism were problematic. Gross and Rutland, in their 2008 study, reported a several incidents in schools that reflected this form of Anglo antisemitism:

At one high school in Sydney in 2009, one of the boys said, without any prompting: ‘... if you are Jewish you are teased. They call you stingy. They throw five cents at you. Or they throw money on the ground and call out ‘who is the Jew?’ Or they will say: ‘That’s a Jew nose.’ They say something about *payot* [sidelocks]. Then they have a *brit* set [circumcision set]. Or they take scissors and go like this [demonstrating scissors cutting with his hands]: ‘do you want another *brit*?’⁷⁹

This and other examples cited by Gross and Rutland show a distinct form of antisemitism that differed clearly from the Muslim antisemitism of south-west Sydney.

Is it possible to account for this difference in the nature of antisemitism across Sydney? The schools on the north shore and in the eastern suburbs, almost entirely, attract students from an affluent upper-middle and upper professional class. Many students come from old, well-established families. Their values and lifestyles reflect those of the Protestant, Uniting, Presbyterian and Catholic school founders. Within these schools and families, is the potential for a core of religion-based antisemitism that materialises in the comments and behaviours noted above. Similar issues have been found in state schools in these areas. By contrast, the schools in the south-west examined in this research have large Muslim student populations who

⁷⁸ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education?” 233.

⁷⁹ Zehavit Gross and Suzanne Rutland, “Combating antisemitism in the school playground: An Australian case study.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no.3 (2014): 318

come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and whose families are often relatively recent arrivals to Australia.

While it is possible to make some tentative, generalised comments about the role of religion in antisemitism, based on feedback from teachers and other recent research, no firm conclusions can be drawn from the available evidence. Indeed, when examining the role of religion, in some respects the evidence from this current research project might appear contradictory: Many schools across western and south-western Sydney have significant Muslim student enrolments, but not all report antisemitism as a challenge when teaching about the Holocaust.

In England, research by Stefanie Doebler at the London School of Economics has demonstrated that religion on its own is an unlikely driver of antisemitism and racism and that racist attitudes amongst European Muslims are more likely to be a factor of low education, socio-economic deprivation, older age and insecurity.⁸⁰ This view may go some way to explaining why some schools in south-western Sydney with large Muslim student populations experience antisemitism, while others with similar demographics do not. However, it does not help to explain antisemitism on Sydney's north shore or eastern suburbs, where wealth and privilege set these areas apart from the rest of Sydney.

The work of Philip Mendes on western Sydney Muslim youth is important in this context. Mendes explored the correlation between socio-economic status, religion and antisemitism. He also, critically, did not consider Muslim youth as a homogenous group, identical in beliefs and outlook, but rather examined them on the basis of ethnic background. A further useful step would be to also consider the various strands of Islam present in western Sydney, the country of origin of students and their parents, and the education level of parents and grandparents.

Economic status would appear in Mendes' work to be at least as important as religion as a factor in antisemitism. He points out that:

The students in this cohort come from the lowest socio-economic stratum. Many students are from refugee backgrounds. Some families exist on Temporary Protection Visas without work and live off handouts. Most parents are on low wages, unemployed or working in the

⁸⁰ Stefanie Doebler, "The relationship between religion and racism," London School of Economics, Blogs, 28 April 2016. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/religion-does-not-cause-racism-deprivation-and-insecurity-do/>

‘black’ economy to supplement welfare benefits. The schools are typically underfunded, low achieving and have poor morale.⁸¹

Mendes’ work mirrors the findings of Stefanie Doebler that the socioeconomic status of students and their families will have at least some level of impact on their receptiveness to antisemitic ideas and tropes.

More recent work from Daniel Bowen and Brian Kisida would also appear to confirm these conclusions. While their research focused on connections between participant education levels and religious tolerance, demographic data highlighted in Chapter 4 would suggest a strong correlation between education and income. They found that “lower levels of education cultivate negative responses when exposed to ‘others,’” and that less educated respondents tend to have higher levels of misperception and more negative views of immigrants. These participants were also less likely to change their views in spite of the information they received during the study.⁸²

Discussion and conclusions

Antisemitism in the classroom is an issue that should, indeed must, draw a response from teachers and from school leadership. Most of the teachers included in this chapter, and throughout this research project, have made some attempt to confront classroom antisemitism, although not always successfully and not always with support from their school leadership. Some of the more successful approaches have been discussed in this chapter and others will be examined in more detail in Chapter 10 when exemplar teaching programs are considered.

If teaching about the Holocaust leads to an increase in antisemitic behaviour – graffiti, taunts, bullying, stereotyping and even violence – then there is most likely a problem with both school culture and pedagogy. The two are often inextricably linked. Even the best educators will struggle to teach effectively in a school that does not respect diversity, does not protect all its students equally, and does not take seriously its duty of care to the entirety of the student population. This was apparent in some of the examples provided in this chapter. Equally, poor

⁸¹ Mendes, “Antisemitism among Muslim Youth,” 4.

⁸² Daniel H. Bowen and Brian Kisida, “Never Again: The Impact of Learning About the Holocaust on Civic Outcomes,” *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 13, no.1 (2020): 82.

pedagogy may influence student perceptions of the Holocaust and Jews, creating a negative impression of Jews only as victims and as somehow complicit in their fate.

Teaching about the Holocaust carries with it special responsibilities because, put simply, students do not just learn *about* the Holocaust, they also learn *from* the Holocaust, regardless of whether this is the teacher's intention or not. The lessons they take from their study of the Holocaust will depend very much on the environment in which they are learning (school and classroom culture) and the pedagogical choices made by the teacher. Teachers who include substantial work on pre-war Jewish life, antisemitism, and the post-war return to life of Jewish survivors, are much less likely to encounter ongoing issues with racism and antisemitism in their teaching programs on the Holocaust. Equally, sound pedagogical choices in text and sources, and avoiding problematic choices like *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, will contribute to a much more positive understanding of Jewish people in the Holocaust and beyond.

Some aspects of Holocaust education, of course, go beyond the choices made by educators. Teachers rarely have any influence over the composition of their classes and, while it would almost certainly negate most issues with antisemitism, they are obviously unable to exclude boys from their classes. They cannot influence the demographics of their schools and classes. And they certainly have no responsibility for the preconceived ideas and biases their students bring to the classroom. Teachers can, however, with support from colleagues and school leadership, influence the ideas with which students leave their classroom.

“The aim of the educator must be to ‘see’ the victim as an individual rather than as a statistic, and to communicate this idea to students. Doing so allows for empathy with the victims, as they become real people with human identities and aspirations.”

– Shulamit Imber, Yad Vashem¹

9. The value of pre- and post-testing students

Introduction

Pre- and post-teaching questionnaires are a long-standing strategy for teachers to assess the knowledge and understanding with which students commence and complete new topics, yet there is little evidence to suggest that this strategy is used widely in Holocaust education. From over 70 schools that are represented in this research project, only one school engaged in pre- and post-testing of students.² Teachers in this case study sought to measure the effectiveness of their Holocaust teaching programs in developing students’ knowledge of the Holocaust and the impact they had on student empathy for “others” in society. They did this by asking students to complete online questionnaires prior to starting their study of the Holocaust and then again at the end of the unit.³ Boys and girls enter secondary classrooms, especially in Stage 5, with significantly different levels of empathy. This provides a major challenge for teaching about the Holocaust if one of the aims of teaching about this topic is to develop in students a social conscience and awareness of human rights’ issues. This chapter confirms the previous discussions that teaching about the Holocaust may not lead to increased empathy for minority groups in society if the focus is not firmly on the Jewish victims as individual humans. Studies in Germany and Poland confirm the results of the pre- and post-teaching questionnaires discussed in this chapter, namely that teaching about the Holocaust without carefully selecting content, resources and pedagogy, will not achieve the aim of instrumentalising the Holocaust for human rights and tolerance. In addition, the questionnaires provide support for the belief that meeting a Holocaust survivor is a key step in developing student empathy; whether virtual technologies will prove an effective substitute in a post-survivor world requires much more research.

¹ Shulamit Imber, “How we approach teaching about the Shoah” (2013), <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/pedagogical-philosophy.html>

² The school has been completely de-identified as required by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Sydney.

³ See Appendix iii for the questions used by the school.

The small History faculty at the school in this case study has five teachers, two of whom have completed the Gandel program at Yad Vashem. The school is co-educational, socio-economically diverse, and part of a large system. Students spend around five weeks studying the Holocaust in mandatory Year 10 History and about 10 weeks in the Year 9 Elective History course. (Only about 15 students out of a cohort of over 170 take the Elective History course.) In 2022, the faculty conducted pre- and post-teaching questionnaires of Year 10 students to allow teachers to gauge the effectiveness of their Holocaust program. The student responses to these questionnaires form the basis for this chapter. The program is described as “Choiceless Choices” to reflect the impossible decisions that had to be taken by Jews across Europe in the Holocaust. The expression was coined by Lawrence Langer, a foremost scholar of Holocaust literature, to “describe a situation where every action had a consequence that was often life and death and where decisions had to be made between one abnormal result and another in the crushing reality of life in the Holocaust.”⁴

Teachers at this school used a backward mapping model to develop their program, focusing on the moral and ethical development of students ahead of detailed content knowledge. Backward mapping in this case involved asking questions about students’ current ability to empathise with others and their ability to make sound ethical and moral decisions in their lives. The stated aim of the program was to “re-humanise” the victims of the Holocaust, whose identity was stripped away by the Nazis, and to encourage students to see the victims as humans. As Shulamit Imber has said:

We believe that the aim of the educator must be to "see" the victim as an individual rather than as a statistic, and to communicate this idea to students. Doing so allows for empathy with the victims, as they become real people with human identities and aspirations. The empathy created allows students and teachers to more meaningfully discuss the Holocaust, as students can relate more easily to human beings than to two-dimensional, black-and-white pictures or numbers in a list. Once empathy is created, educators can tailor their lessons to the emotional and cognitive level of the students.⁵

⁴ Lawrence Langer “The Dilemma of Choice in the Death Camps,” *Centerpoint: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 4, no.1 (1980): 53–59. Cited in <https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/EducationalPhilosophyInTeachingTheHolocaust.pdf> A copy of the teaching program is included as Appendix ii.

⁵ Imber, “How we approach teaching about the Shoah,” 2013.

As this chapter will show, however, creating empathy amongst students, especially boys, is no easy task, and requires careful planning of all aspects of the unit including content, strategies, resources and assessment. By the end of this unit, it was hoped that student responses to the online pre- and post-teaching questionnaire would demonstrate a greater awareness of, and empathy for, the “other,” that is, marginalised groups within our own society. To achieve this aim, the focus of the unit from the beginning was on individuals, the choices they made, and the choices that were taken from them. Analysis of the post-teaching questionnaires revealed that not all these aims were successfully achieved.

After a brief introduction, the first lesson for these students began with silent reading of biographical cards from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.⁶ Each card tells the story of an individual victim of the Holocaust, generally someone of a similar age to Year 10 students, and it was hoped that these stories of specific people would immediately begin the process of engendering empathy within the class. During a subsequent think-pair-share activity, where the information from the reading was shared with peers, students were able to build up an understanding of the varied experiences of Jews and other groups during the Holocaust, the geographical and temporal spread of the Holocaust, and the impact on individual lives.

The end point of the unit, after laying down an extensive contextual base over several weeks, was on the decisions made by the *Judenräte* in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. Students were asked to consider, not solve, the ethical and moral dilemmas faced by the *Judenräte* on a daily basis. It was this section of their study that teachers hoped would have the greatest impact on students as teachers sought to engage them in increasingly complex moral and ethical issues. As part of their unit on the Holocaust, students also visited the Sydney Jewish Museum, where they listened to a Holocaust survivor, toured the museum and participated in a seminar on resistance. This excursion was voluntary and though most students chose to attend, a significant number of male students did not. The implications for this are discussed later in this chapter.

Pre-testing students on their knowledge of the Holocaust was considered an important first step in this unit. There is a large body of research evidence that demonstrates the importance of

⁶ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/landing/en/id-cards>

teachers knowing their students.⁷ This is summarised in the work of the Eberly Centre at Carnegie Mellon University, which has found that:

Students come to the classroom with a broad range of pre-existing knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes, which influence how they attend, interpret and organize in-coming information. Since new knowledge and skill is dependent on pre-existing knowledge and skill, knowing what students know and can do when they come into the classroom or before they begin a new topic of study, can help us craft instructional activities that build off of student strengths and acknowledge and address their weaknesses.⁸

In a comprehensive review of pre-instruction testing, Pan and Carpenter found that “answering questions about to-be-learned information benefits learning of that information. These benefits apply across fairly simple materials, such as paired associates, to more complex materials, such as reading passages, videos, and live lectures.”⁹ However, their work did not consider the impact of pre-testing on the development of empathy. This single example of one New South Wales’ secondary school suggests that while the pre-testing may have contributed to students’ increased knowledge of the Holocaust, it had little impact on students’ levels of empathy. Geoffrey Short, however, highlights the potential for pre-testing to influence teaching directions during a Holocaust unit. In two studies, one in England and another in Toronto, Canada, Short spoke with teachers about the assumptions their students had about Jews and the Holocaust. To ensure that students do not take the wrong messages from their study of the Holocaust, Short said that “it is essential that before they commence work on the topic, teachers set out to explore and, if necessary, to challenge their pupils’ perceptions of Jews and Jewish culture. Not to do so is to invite the failure of all subsequent teaching.”¹⁰ Yet, in the English study, only 2 out of 34 teachers carried out any pre-testing and in Toronto, none of the 23 teachers did so. In this current research project, none of the 75 teachers who responded to the online questionnaire said that pre-testing was part of their Holocaust program. Clearly more work is needed on the value of pre-testing students prior to commencing study of the Holocaust

⁷ S.C. Pan and S.K. Carpenter, “Prequestioning and Pretesting Effects: a Review of Empirical Research, Theoretical Perspectives, and Implications for Educational Practice,” *Educational Psychology Review* 35, no.97 (2023): 1-40; Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Elizabeth Ligon Bjork, “Pretesting Enhances Learning in the Classroom,” *Educational Psychology Review* 35, no.3 (2023): 88.

⁸ Eberly Center, Carnegie Mellon University:

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/priorknowledge.html#:~:text=There%20are%20several%20different%20methods,prior%20courses%20and%20experiences%2C%20etc>

⁹ Pan and Carpenter, “Prequestioning and Pretesting Effects,” 1.

¹⁰ Short, “Failing to Learn from the Holocaust,” 456.

if it is to be used as one strategy in developing students' levels of empathy, a key aim of the teachers in this small study.

Each one of these pre-existing components, particularly knowledge and attitudes, was considered important to the pre-test conducted at this school. Teachers were interested in discovering what their students knew, so they could adjust content accordingly, but also what potential biases students might be bringing to the classroom. This particular cohort had very little exposure to Jewish people (only one of their peers was Jewish) and was largely Anglo-European in background. Low level racism – name-calling and stereotyping that students explained as “banter” – was not uncommon amongst the boys.

Ultimately teachers hoped to utilise “student voice” in their review and revisions to the teaching program. There is a large and growing body of evidence that supports the view that utilising student voice is an effective way to build a better understanding of how students learn and what factors may impact their learning. In the context of the current research project, the inclusion of pre- and post-teaching data provides a unique opportunity to listen to student views regarding one of the more important topics they will encounter in Stage 5 History and to measure the effectiveness of the pedagogies utilised with this cohort. The research on the importance of student voice has been effectively summarised by McCourt and Griffiths for the New South Wales Department of Education in an online article, “Capturing and Measuring Student Voice.” They found that, following Hattie (2009),

Student feedback helps to make teaching and learning more visible and this can lead to discussion and debate among teachers about their teaching practice. In response to student feedback, teachers may develop new perspectives on what and how they teach and make improvements as a result.¹¹

This was certainly the aim at this secondary school, where teachers were keen to use analysis of the questionnaires to review and refine their practice.

¹¹ B. McCourt and K. Griffiths, “Capturing and Measuring Student Voice,” *Learning Curve* 15 (2016), <https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/educational-data/cese/2016-capturing-and-measuring-student-voice.pdf>; John Hattie, *Visible Learning* (Routledge, 2009).

Alison Cook-Sather, in summarising the work of Lodge (2005), explored the different forms that student voice can take, and ways in which teachers and schools can make use of this voice. Four types of voice are identified by Cook-Sather: “Quality control; students as a source of information; compliance and control; and dialogue.” In the current example of student voice, students become “sources of information, their perspectives are listened to and then improvement is either done to them or the students provide important information for teachers to act upon.”¹² As such, the listening by teachers here is genuinely designed to enact change: In the short term, lessons can be adjusted based on what students already know (pre-testing) and in the longer term, the following cohorts of students should encounter revised approaches to teaching and learning based on post-teaching questionnaires.

Student voice is considered to be one of the best ways to measure student engagement.¹³ While it is possible to measure student engagement by collecting objective data on behavioural indicators such as attendance or homework completion rates, listening to student voice can provide a better understanding of student experiences.¹⁴ Student voice can be particularly useful for measuring emotional and social engagement which may not be directly observable by teachers or through other methods.¹⁵

There are, however, limitations with student surveys like the one in this case study, and McCourt and Griffiths found that “despite confidential administration ...students may not always answer honestly and therefore survey data may not reflect actual behaviour and perspectives.”¹⁶ Cowan and Maitles raised similar concerns about their own study of 238 students aged 12-13 in 2003. They felt that there was potential for students to “give what they perceive as the politically correct answer.”¹⁷ They also identified the risk that “the class teacher can have an influence which can lead to distortions.”¹⁸ These risks are mitigated, however, by the fact that “student surveys can be given to a large and diverse sample of students at relatively

¹² Alison Cook-Sather, "Sound, Presence, and Power: 'Student Voice' in Educational Research and Reform," *Curriculum Inquiry* 36 (2006): 22.

¹³ D. Willms, 2014, "Student engagement in New South Wales secondary schools: Findings from the Tell Them From Me pilot," (The Learning Bar, 2014).

¹⁴ James Appleton, et al, "Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument," *Journal of School Psychology* 44 (2006): 427–445.

¹⁵ J.A. Fredericks and W. McColskey, "The measurement of student engagement: A comparative analysis of various methods and student self-report instruments," in *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*, eds. S. Christenson, A. L. Reschly and C Wylie (Springer, 2021), 763–782.

¹⁶ Appleton, et al, "Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement," 431.

¹⁷ Paula Cowan and Henry Maitles, "Does addressing prejudice and discrimination through Holocaust education produce better citizens?" *Educational Review* (May 2007): 120-21.

¹⁸ Cowan and Maitles, "Does addressing prejudice and discrimination," 121.

low cost, making it possible to gather data over several waves and compare results across schools.”¹⁹ Peterson et al found that “data from student surveys and questionnaires is in fact highly reliable due to the large number of students responding.”²⁰ In the high school that is the focus of this case study, any potential confounding factors which may have arisen from different class dynamics and different class teachers were mitigated by the size of the cohort, a sample size of 170 students. The original data set, on which this de-identified data set is based, collected email addresses so that when completing the questionnaires, students knew that their responses could be identified. This may have led some to express more socially acceptable views when answering some of the questions.

Comparison of the two sets of responses from before and after the Holocaust unit (five weeks in length) demonstrated consistency and a limited impact from any potential variables. The potential confounding factors include group dynamics within and between classrooms, the impact of the classroom teacher and peer relationships. These factors are, in a sample of this size, unlikely to have a significant impact on the research, in the context of the very specific conclusions about pedagogy that have been drawn from the data. However, following the recommendations described by La Trobe University, additional data sources should be used in future research of this nature to “cross-verify or refute interpretations that might be made based solely on the basis of one source of data.”²¹ It should also be noted that the intention of this high school study was to gather information for the class teachers and to inform their future pedagogical approaches to teaching about the Holocaust. The study was not conducted with the controls and limitations that might be expected in a more formal research setting.

What did the pre-teaching questionnaire reveal?

At the start of this unit, student responses demonstrated that they already knew quite a lot about the Holocaust and were able to put it into the broad historical context of World War II in Europe. Just over 70% had definitely heard about the Holocaust, 67% were able to recognise the definition of genocide and 63% knew antisemitism was a form of prejudice against Jews. Most however had limited understanding of what the Holocaust was, generally ascribing the

¹⁹ Fredericks & McColskey, “The measurement of student engagement.”

²⁰ K.D. Peterson, C. Wahlquist and K. Bone, K “Student survey for school teacher evaluation,” *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 14, no.2 (2000): 135-153.

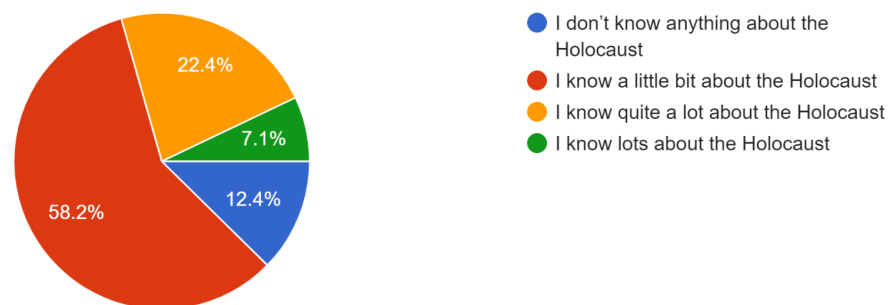
²¹ La Trobe University 2015, “Student feedback: A guide to interpreting survey results to improve teaching and learning.” Others to have written extensively on this topic include Cook-Sather and Groundwater-Smith: S. Groundwater-Smith, “Student voice: Essential testimony for intelligent schools,” in *From practice to praxis: A reflexive turn: The selected works of Susan Groundwater-Smith* (Routledge, 2017).

blame to Hitler or Germans lead by Hitler. This focus on Hitler as the major, even sole perpetrator of the Holocaust was a commonly held belief and one that was not unexpected, particularly given the extent that this view has permeated the rest of society. Some students demonstrated misunderstandings that could be corrected during teaching: One believed that Hitler had bombed the Jews in 1941 causing many deaths, while another described the Holocaust as ethnic cleansing. Some students clearly had seen or heard about the Holocaust more than others and provided quite detailed responses.²²

When asked to describe the extent of their own knowledge of the Holocaust, 35% said that they knew either “lots about the Holocaust” or “quite a lot”. The overwhelming majority said that they knew just “a little bit.” Students did not, on the whole, overstate their knowledge and were quite realistic about what they did know. This was reflected in the subsequent responses.

16. Pick one statement from the list below that you think best describes how much you know about the Holocaust.

170 responses



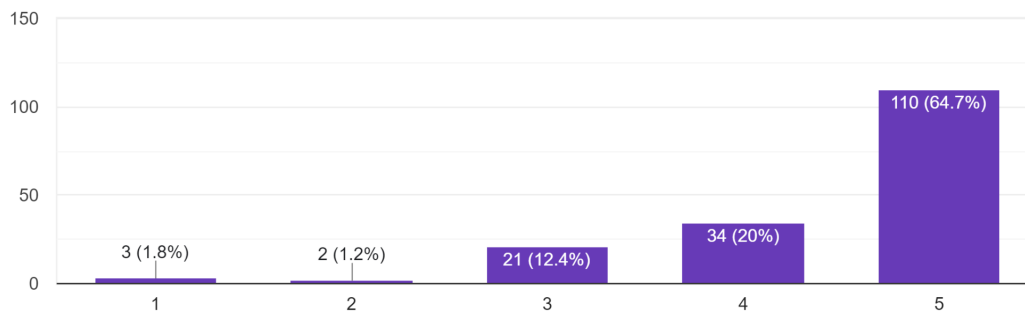
As a starting point for a unit of work, the questionnaire demonstrated that students already had a sound context from which teachers could work. The overwhelming majority of students knew that the Holocaust took place in the 1940s (83%) and that the victims were Jews. Most (68%) knew that approximately 6 million Jews died in the Holocaust but almost half believed that the majority of victims came from Germany. Only 5% of students said they were not interested in learning about the Holocaust, a surprisingly low figure given that over 5% of this cohort often appeared disengaged from learning about anything at school.

²² As requested by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Sydney, no quotes from students have been included in this chapter to ensure they and the school remain unidentified.

In terms of attitudes and beliefs, the questionnaire was equally revealing. Students were given a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 equalled strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement with a series of questions. Even before their formal study of the topic, students were well aware of the potential connections between the Holocaust and racism and prejudice. Most (84%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “Young people should learn about the Holocaust so they understand where racism and prejudice can lead,” while almost 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Young people should learn about the Holocaust to stop something like that from happening again.”

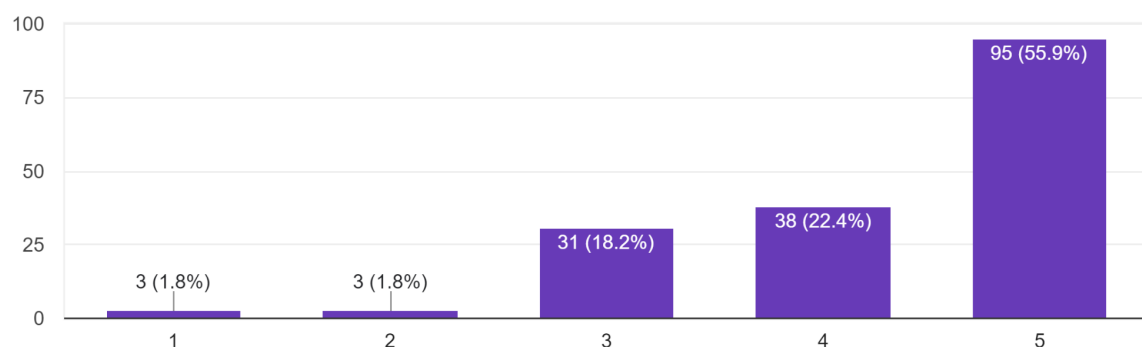
19. Young people should learn about the Holocaust so they understand where prejudice and racism can lead

170 responses



18. Young people should learn about the Holocaust to stop something like that from happening again

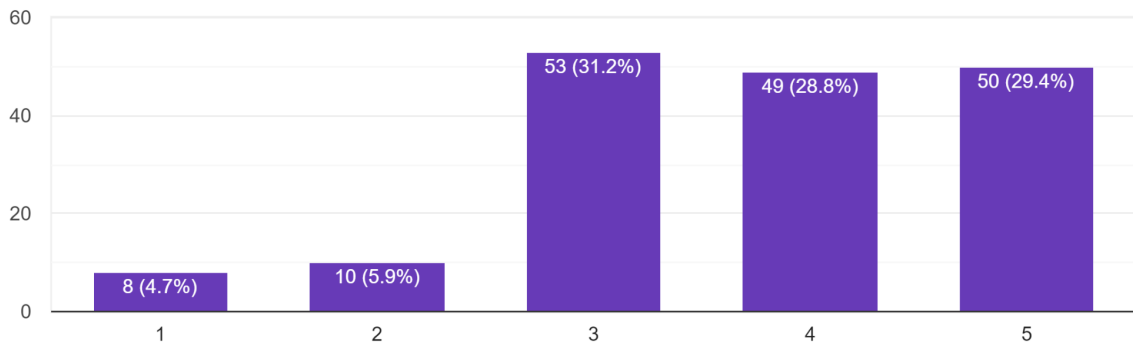
170 responses



Students were also asked a question about possible links between studying the Holocaust and then feeling empowered to stand up for other students who may be bullied. They were much less certain about the possible connection between learning about the Holocaust and standing up against bullies.

21. Young people should learn about the Holocaust so that they will be more likely to stand up for people who get picked on/bullied

170 responses



Post-teaching results

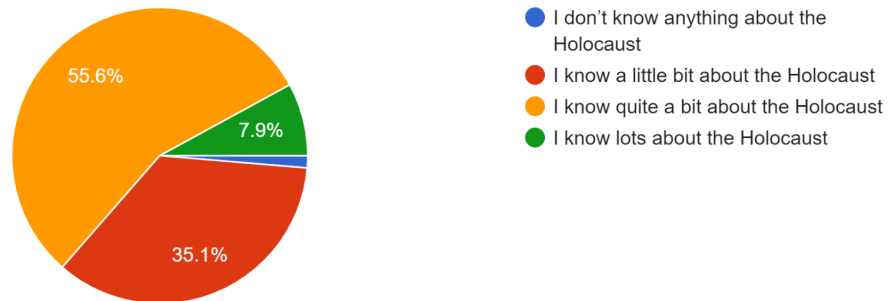
At the conclusion of the 5-week teaching program, students completed the same questionnaire. The expectation was that student knowledge about the Holocaust would have improved substantially and that there would have been an attitude shift amongst those students who saw limited value in learning about the Holocaust. The results did not always meet this expectation.

Every student now knew that Jews were the principal targets of the Holocaust; some also mentioned other groups that were targeted by the Nazis and their collaborators. Previous answers to this question had included some responses that were quite vague and several variations on “I don’t know.” After teaching the unit, 94% of students knew that the Holocaust took place in the 1940s (up from 83%); 90% knew what antisemitism is (up from 63%) and 83% now recognised the definition of genocide (up from 67%). Overall, content knowledge had been effectively learned and retained by the majority of students.

Students were again asked to estimate their own knowledge of the Holocaust. Just over 63% said they now knew either “quite a bit about the Holocaust” or “I know lots about the Holocaust,” a substantial increase from the pre-test level of 35%.

13. Pick one statement from the list below that you think best describes how much you know about the Holocaust.

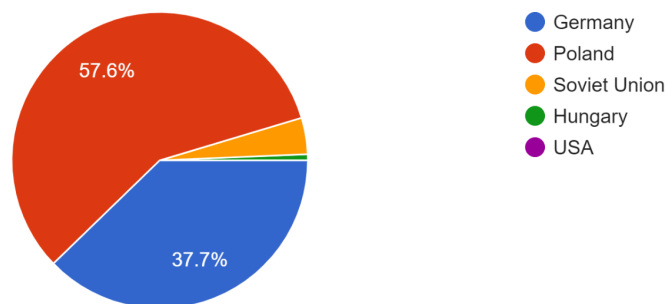
151 responses



Some misconceptions remained however. A substantial number (37%) still believed that most victims of the Holocaust were from Germany, but this was a decrease from the previous figure of 46%.

11. From which country did the largest number of people murdered in the Holocaust come from?

151 responses



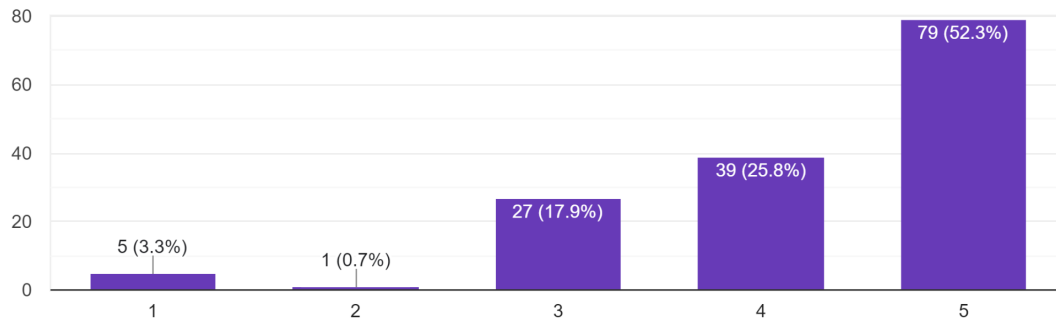
Many students retained their belief that Hitler alone was responsible for the Holocaust. There was, however, a significant number of students who said responsibility lay with the Nazis and their collaborators and some also referenced bystanders as being in part responsible. Some students were now able to develop their ideas much further and gave detailed responses that recognised the role of the military and the general German population.

The expected attitudinal shift was not seen. Students largely retained the same views with which they had commenced the Holocaust unit. To the question “Young people should learn about the Holocaust to stop something like that from happening again,” 78.1% agreed or

strongly agreed, a very slight decrease on the previous figure of 78.3%. When asked if “Young people should learn about the Holocaust so they understand where prejudice and racism can lead,” 88.7% of students agreed or strongly agreed. The previous figure was 84.7%.

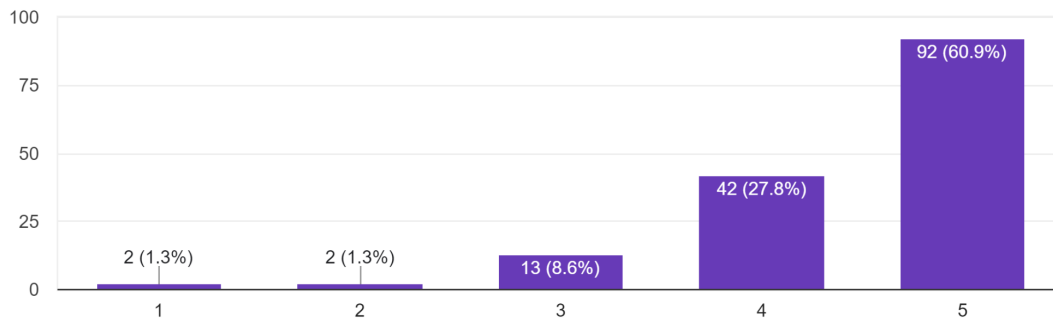
15. Young people should learn about the Holocaust to stop something like that from happening again

151 responses



16. Young people should learn about the Holocaust so they understand where prejudice and racism can lead

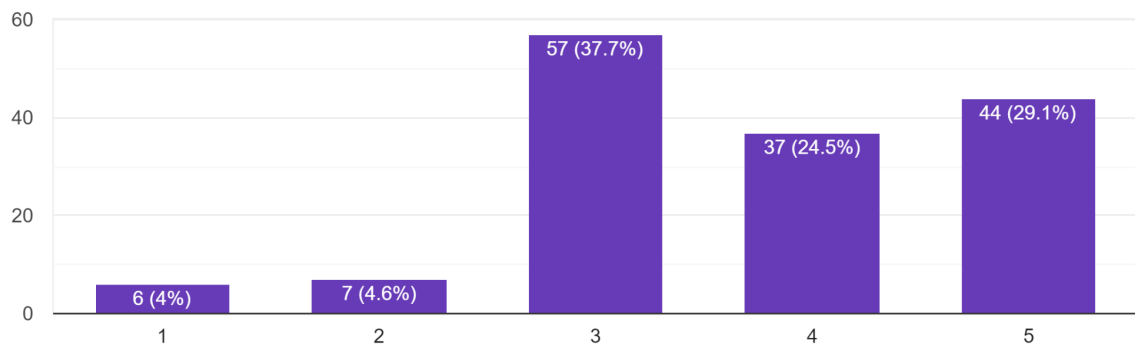
151 responses



When asked whether “Young people should learn about the Holocaust so that they will be more likely to stand up for people who get picked on/bullied,” 53.6% agreed or strongly agreed compared with 58.2% prior to the Holocaust unit.

18. Young people should learn about the Holocaust so that they will be more likely to stand up for people who get picked on/bullied

151 responses



The final question in the post-teaching questionnaire asked students if they believed their study of the Holocaust had been important and what ideas they had taken from it. Some students thought deeply about what they had learned and its relevance for them, stating that the Holocaust is an important aspect of the past from which we can learn valuable lessons. Some students pointed to the large amount of content that had been covered during their study, but did not lose sight of the primary intent which had been to rehumanise the victims. One student in particular was concerned about the post-Holocaust world, a reflection on the importance teachers saw in continuing the study of the Holocaust beyond 1945. They reflected on the fact that true justice had never been received by the Jewish people. Other students kept their responses more succinct, offering ideas that focused on prejudice and racism and where these can lead. But not all students agreed that their study of the Holocaust was important, though these dissenting voices were very much in the minority.

Emphasising the importance of experiential learning, a number of students said that their excursion to the Sydney Jewish Museum was the most important part of their study, citing their meeting with a survivor as extremely important to them and suggesting that only in this meeting did they come to understand the extent of the Holocaust.

In reviewing the teaching program, teachers considered they had been reasonably successful in teaching the essential facts of the Holocaust, but less successful in reaching a relatively small number of students and creating attitudinal change. The question had to be asked, then, why was this unit largely successful in teaching content knowledge, but failed to make any

measurable impact in some students' prior attitudes? There was a clear correlation between continuing negative attitudes towards learning about the Holocaust and gender. All of the negative comments made in response to the final question – Do you think your study of the Holocaust last term was important? What lessons or ideas have you taken away from this study? – came from boys. They said that it was not important, or that they did not take much away from it, or that they already knew everything about the Holocaust.

Previous chapters have shown that in the current research, acts of antisemitism have been almost exclusively perpetrated by boys. The male students who responded negatively to this questionnaire were not necessarily antisemitic but their responses suggested a high degree of apathy, indicating that attempts to humanise their study of the Holocaust had not been successful. The gendered differentiation in responses to this question were also mirrored by responses to other attitudinal questions. On the Likert scale question “Young people should learn about the Holocaust so they understand where prejudice and racism can lead” each of the strongly disagree and disagree responses came from boys. On the question “Young people should learn about the Holocaust so that they will be more likely to stand up for people who get picked on/bullied,” all but two of the 13 strongly disagree and disagree responses came from boys. When the pre-teaching questionnaire responses were examined later for gender, it was the boys who had, even then, almost exclusively provided negative responses.

Viewed more broadly, the questionnaires showed that prior to commencing the Holocaust unit, girls were already demonstrating high levels of empathy. Little change was observed in their empathy levels because they were starting from an already high point. Boys showed less empathy in the pre-tests and most of those with lower empathy levels were unmoved by learning about the Holocaust.

For teachers in a co-ed, mixed ability classroom, it can be difficult to “reach” the small number of students, typically boys, who are unable to make personal connections, struggle to openly experience empathy and feel challenged when asked to express emotions. There is limited research that attempts to explain the differences between adolescent boys and girls in emotional development, particularly the impact this has in a school setting, but the work of van der Graff, et al, is noteworthy. In a 2014 study, they found that there were significant differences in the emotional development of boys and girls, particularly in perspective taking and empathetic concern. At age 13, the study found there was little difference in the level of perspective taking

but by age 15, girls had increased significantly and boys had actually decreased.²³ In terms of empathetic concern, the results diverged even more between boys and girls:

Girls had higher levels of empathic concern than boys had, and, in concordance with the literature, this difference was stronger than that for perspective taking (e.g., Davis & Franzoi, 1991; Hoffman, 1977). Girls' levels remained stable during adolescence, and boys reported decreasing levels until age 16 years and a slight increase thereafter.²⁴

Van der Graff, et al, also found that the difference between girls and boys was even more pronounced for boys who were physically more mature. They “reported lower levels of empathic concern than did their physically less mature peers at ages 15 and 16 years.”²⁵ The authors suggested a number of reasons for these differences, including more advanced maturation in the cerebral cortex in girls and the impact of social expectations on boys progressing through puberty. This would suggest that, to some extent, the differences between boys and girls cannot easily be avoided in the classroom. As the authors point out:

A particularly noteworthy finding of the current study is the temporary decrease in boys' empathic concern (and the slight dip in perspective taking) in mid adolescence. It is important for parents, teachers, and other people working with adolescents to take these developmental changes into account, as they might affect adolescents' social interactions and the extent to which they show prosocial behavior.²⁶

Similar results were also found by Daniel Bowen and Brian Kisida in their study of 865 students from 15 different schools in a research partnership with the Holocaust Museum Houston. They reported that the females in their control group “exhibited significantly higher levels of pro-civic dispositions and, therefore, appeared to have less room for growth on these measures.” With this in mind, they noted certain paradoxes in the results: females were more likely to donate to the Anti-defamation League as a result of learning about the Holocaust, but also exhibited a decrease in religious tolerance and civic obligation.²⁷

²³ J. Van der Graaff, et al, “Perspective taking and empathic concern in adolescence: gender differences in developmental changes,” *Developmental Psychology* 50, no.3 (2014): 885.

²⁴ Van der Graaff, et al, “Perspective taking and empathic concern,” 885.

²⁵ Van der Graaff, et al, “Perspective taking and empathic concern,” 885.

²⁶ Van der Graaff, et al, “Perspective taking and empathic concern,” 887.

²⁷ Daniel H. Bowen and Brian Kisida, “Never Again: The Impact of Learning About the Holocaust on Civic Outcomes,” *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 13, no.1 (2020): 82

Stanford professor Wendy Chu has observed that as boys get older, they begin to demonstrate emotional stoicism and self-sufficiency as a way to oppose the association between femininity and the need or desire for emotional closeness.²⁸ Researchers at both Berkeley and Harvard have made a number of suggestions that offer some scope for change in diverse classrooms. Writing for Berkeley's *Greater Good Magazine*, Vicki Zakrzewski summarised some of the strategies teachers could adopt with boys who have become less empathetic and emotionally disconnected.²⁹ She argues that teachers who cultivate students' social-emotional skills in the classroom:

Send a message to boys that emotions are not unnatural or something to suppress, while experiencing positive relationships with teachers throughout adolescence will help boys stay connected to their emotional and relational sides. However, it is the responsibility of the teacher to both approach the boys by expressing interest in their lives outside the classroom and to maintain the relationship. Most importantly, teachers have to be genuine in their relationships with boys. If a boy thinks that the teacher is only reaching out to improve the boy's academic success, then the boy will pull away.³⁰

Harvard has launched an entire online program for helping teachers engender empathy amongst their students.³¹ They cite a range of benefits in encouraging students to become empathetic, including more classroom engagement, higher academic achievement, lower likelihood of bullying and less aggressive behaviours and emotional disorders.³² The program suggests a number of strategies to promote empathy within schools and classrooms: teachers are asked to model empathy themselves and when a student is upset, reflect back on his feelings or the rationale for his behaviour before redirecting the behaviour. They should be clear in their expectations and establish specific guidelines for unacceptable language and behaviours. As well, they should ban slurs or hurtful language like "that's retarded" or "he's so gay," even

²⁸ Interviewed by Vicky Zakrzewski in "Debunking the Myths about Boys and Emotions," *Greater Good Magazine* (Berkeley, December 2014).

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/debunking_myths_boys_emotions

²⁹ Zakrzewski, "Debunking the Myths about Boys and Emotions."

³⁰ Zakrzewski, "Debunking the Myths about Boys and Emotions."

³¹ Making Caring Common Project, Harvard University, <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/research-initiatives/caring-schools-network>

³² "How to Build Empathy and Strengthen Your School Community," Harvard University, <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/how-build-empathy-strengthen-school-community>

when said ironically or in jest, and teachers and school leaders should intervene if these comments are heard. Confirming the earlier discussion in Chapter 7 about the importance of school culture, leadership should address culture and climate as a priority, with regular data collection focussed on these issues. Many schools do not collect specific data on racism, antisemitism, bullying or sexism, electing to record such incidents in vague terms such as “non-inclusive language.” Without this data, it is impossible to know the extent of the problem and equally impossible to chart a way forward.

Ultimately, educators like those at the school in this case study, must ask what aspects of these suggestions from Harvard, Berkeley and other institutions can be incorporated into their own teaching programs in an attempt to reach those students, largely boys, who have become emotionally detached from the human aspect of the Holocaust. This is certainly an area for professional development, ideally at the pre-service level, but an aspect of teaching from which all educators would potentially benefit. One area of essential change that became apparent in post-teaching discussions after the questionnaire responses were reviewed was that not all teachers had spent significant time on either pre-war Jewish life or the return to life post-WWII. As has been demonstrated earlier, this is an essential step in the rehumanising of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. To ignore this area creates a risk that students will not fully empathise with the victims as they will have limited understanding of the scale of the loss.

Analysis of these student questionnaires confirm the results established by Bilewicz, et al, when they surveyed the results of questionnaires conducted in Poland and Germany. While the context is substantially different to this current research – Germany as the principal perpetrator nation and Poland as the site of all extermination camps – there is a remarkable similarity to the impact of Holocaust education on students. In a 2015 study cited by Bilewicz, et al, five classes of 9th grade students in Germany were given pre- and post-teaching questionnaires. In this case, the questionnaires were designed to examine student attitudes towards Europe, tolerance, antisemitism and xenophobia. The researchers noted that there were no observable increases in levels of tolerance or decreases in antisemitism or xenophobia. The authors reported in the study that:

While this topic is – according to the curriculum – meant to foster maturity and responsibility in social and political aspects of democratic life, factually it seems to leave

students with the impression that the goal of History lessons is to teach or suggest pre-assembled communication patterns.³³

Students in the German study expressed the view that they felt expected to talk about the Holocaust in a “socially desired manner.”³⁴ The authors note that a more empathetic approach to teaching about the Holocaust, rather than one that emphasises national guilt, may be more effective in achieving the stated aims of human rights and tolerance in Holocaust education:

Psychological studies and case studies of media effects seem to converge in their suggestion that creating chances to empathise with humanised victims might be less aversive and potentially more effective than creating a sense of vicarious guilt around the Holocaust.³⁵

The Polish study cited by Bilewicz, et al, seems to confirm the view that identification with individuals will likely lead to greater empathy amongst students. In a 2007 study, “narratives about moral exemplars proved to be effective in overcoming... obstacles. When the encounter was preceded by a meeting with a Polish heroic helper..., intergroup contact had a positive effect on young Poles’ attitudes toward Israelis and Israelis’ attitudes towards Poles.”³⁶ Interestingly, similar results were found in a 2016 study in the context of the Armenian genocide, a genocide officially denied in Turkey. The study demonstrated that “an exposure to narratives about Turks who helped Armenians in 1915 increased Turks’ willingness to engage in contact with Armenians and improved their attitudes towards them.”³⁷

In their conclusions to the review of these two studies, Bilewicz et al suggest that “current Holocaust education fails to reduce antisemitism and promote tolerance among students.”³⁸ They suggest a number of alternative pedagogical strategies that emphasise empathy through greater focus on victims’ experiences, use of moral exemplars, such as the righteous among the nations, and greater use of local histories.³⁹ Each of these strategies is suitable, and most likely essential, for use in New South Wales’ classrooms, including an emphasis on local histories

³³ Michael Bilewicz, et al, “How to Teach about the Holocaust? Psychological Obstacles in Historical Education in Poland and Germany,” in *History Education and Conflict Transformation*, eds. Charis Psaltis, Maria Carretero, Sabina Cehajic-Clancy (Palgrave, 2017): 174.

³⁴ Bilewicz, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 174.

³⁵ Bilewicz, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 183.

³⁶ Bilewicz, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 185.

³⁷ Bilewicz, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 185.

³⁸ Bilewicz, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 188.

³⁹ Bilewicz, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 188.

and Australian connections to the Holocaust. This can be achieved through an examination of post-WWII migration histories or by engaging with local Jewish communities.

In seeking to increase student empathy, the revised program for Choiceless Choices at the case study school now contains a fuller section on pre-war Jewish life and a link to survivor testimony resources at Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).⁴⁰ A further point that was discussed was attendance on the excursion to the Sydney Jewish Museum: This was not a compulsory excursion and each of the boys who had been quite negative in the post-teaching questionnaire had chosen not to participate in the excursion. They had not, then, had the opportunity of meeting and listening to a Holocaust survivor. Excursions such as this cannot be made compulsory due to their significant cost for many schools, especially those outside metropolitan areas, but the question must be asked, how might the experiences of these boys have been impacted by hearing the testimony of a Holocaust survivor?

As Suzanne Rutland has pointed out, when educators include the personal story of a survivor, “not only do students understand the evils of racism... such stories provide hope because of the Holocaust survivors’ courage and determination.” She adds that “meeting with survivors can help students to value their own lives more,” but notes the potential problem that such meetings may also lead to students invalidating their own personal sufferings when compared with the Holocaust experience.⁴¹ Writing in *Holocaust Studies*, Marcus et al, have recognised the pivotal role that Holocaust survivors play in developing empathy amongst students and the challenges that will be faced in a post-survivor world. It could be argued that for students in regional high schools without the means to travel to a capital city, we are already in a post-survivor world where access to those who experienced the Holocaust first-hand is almost impossible.

Understanding the Holocaust as affectively difficult history provides pupils the opportunity to develop historical empathy. In particular, interacting with a live Holocaust survivor has been considered a foundational means through which to develop that empathy; the living survivor in the present becomes the vehicle for identifying with the historical traumas of the

⁴⁰ <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/video-testimonies.html> and <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-reflections-testimonies>

⁴¹ Rutland, “Genocide or Holocaust Education,” 238.

past. However, the shift to virtual survivor testimony raises questions about Holocaust education's capacity to foster empathy through new means.⁴²

For the students who took part in these questionnaires, and declined the opportunity to travel to the Sydney Jewish Museum, what "new means" might have been used to develop empathy? Marcus et al provide a number of possible solutions, including the use of virtual survivor testimony. For young people well accustomed to spending significant time on virtual experiences, this provides a valuable opportunity, one requiring further research into the emotional connections that can be forged between viewer and virtual survivor, connections that are so clear when students meet living survivors.

Discussion and conclusions

Teachers in this case study proved very effective in developing students' knowledge of the Holocaust. On each of the knowledge-based questions, there was a demonstrable increase in the correct responses provided by students. Given the thoroughness of the teaching program and its duration, and the training that two of the five teachers had previously received, this should come as no surprise. However, in a school where teaching about the Holocaust is seen as an opportunity to challenge students' social attitudes and views on human rights, there was only limited impact on students' empathy.

Girls, starting the unit with already high levels of empathy, showed little change. Boys, starting with significantly lower levels of empathy, also showed little change. Teachers were unable to "reach" a core group of male students who appeared resistant to making any human or emotional connections to the victims of the Holocaust. Their decision to not attend the excursion to the Sydney Jewish Museum meant that they did not meet with a Holocaust survivor and they finished the 5-week program without having made any meaningful connections between their study and their contemporary world.

If the Holocaust is to be harnessed in the fight against intolerance, racism and antisemitism – and this certainly appears to be the aim of governments around the world – then how can educators effectively reach all their students? This current research project has already canvassed a number of possibilities which rely on educators' abilities to humanise the victims

⁴² Alan S. Marcus, et al, "Holocaust education in transition from live to virtual survivor testimony: pedagogical and ethical dilemmas," *Holocaust Studies* 28, no.3 (2022): 282.

and survivors of the Holocaust. In a post-survivor world, this will become increasingly difficult. But as the German and Polish studies cited in this chapter demonstrate, and as was explored in detail in Chapter 7, simply teaching about the Holocaust without reference to the long history of antisemitism, the diversity of pre-war Jewish life, resistance and life after the Holocaust, will not have an impact on students' attitudes to "others" in society and their ability to prioritise human rights in their lives. The two educators whose programs are analysed in the next chapter have both attempted to develop detailed approaches to teaching the Holocaust that encapsulate this aim of doing so much more than simply teaching *about* the Holocaust.

“[The aim is to] *shift students’ perspectives from casual or indifferent antisemitism/racism to one that confidently asserts humanism, where they feel they can challenge acts of racism in everyday life.*”

– History educator, Sydney 2023¹

10. Successful teaching programs

There are certain commonalities shared by successful Holocaust teaching programs. Success in this context means that the programs have met their stated aims; increased student engagement with the process of learning in the classroom; increased knowledge of the Holocaust; and developed empathetic connections to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and, by extension, marginalised groups in our own society. Measuring success in an education setting is never without its problems, particularly when it is difficult history that is being taught. Rebecca Hale, from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, has made the point that “when exploring the impact of Holocaust education, educators first need to reflect on what they want students to achieve after learning about the Holocaust and how they will determine if these aims have been met.”² Yet, some of these aims may be difficult to measure, a point that is taken up towards the end of this chapter in the discussion about impact research and the need for randomised controlled trials. Overall, educators seek to affirm that their students understand the relevance of learning about the Holocaust and its connections to their own place in a 21st century multicultural society. This chapter seeks to explore the processes by which two experienced educators have endeavoured to meet these success criteria in their teaching of the Holocaust. While both teachers have undergone significant professional development in this area and have written detailed programs that are then shared within their faculty, the two schools are quite different. The first is a regional co-ed state school and the second is an independent Catholic boys’ school in Sydney. Responses were received from the schools from November 2023 to February 2024.

There are some important points of difference between the approach taken by these two educators and the teachers at the school discussed in the previous chapter, differences which may ultimately lead to improved student outcomes particularly with regard to a human rights’

¹ Emailed responses, October-November 2023.

² Rebecca Hale, “It made me think how I should treat others and how I should help people who need it’: The complexities of exploring the impact of Holocaust education,” *Oxford Review of Education* 46, no.6 (2020): 791.

focus in the classroom. Establishing and measuring the level of success achieved by these two educators is an area for future research, as neither has conducted the type of pre- and post-testing of students discussed in the previous chapter. This overview of their teaching programs relies on teacher observations and their own comments about the efficacy of their teaching, a necessarily subjective process.

Case study 1³

One of these points of difference with the school in the previous chapter is immediately obvious: there is a clearly articulated aim in the teaching program that is shared by all teachers in the faculty. “All teachers are provided with the *Why Teach About the Holocaust* brochure from UNESCO prior to teaching the unit,” according to the respondent.⁴ “This is then used in the initial discussion with students around why the unit is being taught.” Simply providing a common document to all teachers does not, of course, mean that it will be read and implemented, but this is ensured through discussions at faculty meetings prior to commencing the unit of study. In the case study reviewed in the previous chapter, there was a common teaching program but there was no clearly articulated common aim towards which all teachers worked.

The UNESCO document used in this case study outlines a number of reasons for teaching about the Holocaust, including “that it is essential to learn about the Holocaust to better understand the causes of Europe’s descent into genocide; the subsequent development of international law and institutions designed to prevent and punish genocide; and that the careful comparison with other examples of mass violence may contribute to the prevention of future genocides and mass atrocities.”⁵ It adds that “Examining this history can heighten the awareness of the danger of genocide in the contemporary world and bring to the fore an appreciation for individual rights and universal values.” This would suggest that the teaching program takes a universalistic approach, using the Holocaust to teach about rights and values in the modern world while studying the actions and motivations from the past. This idea of instrumentalising the

³ See Appendix iv for the teaching program used in this case study.

⁴ *Why Teach About the Holocaust*, UNESCO, Paris 2013.

https://www.google.com/url?q=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_db6750d2-9d42-4f86-beee-bc94a83c0405?_%3D218631eng.pdf%26to%3D23%26from%3D1&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1715131614609309&usq=AOvVaw1ezEBwi4Fxx3KN1qab3jyM

⁵ UNESCO, *Why Teach About the Holocaust*, 3.

Holocaust is problematic if not handled well and has been discussed previously with a focus on the essential content for instrumentalising the Holocaust with human rights in mind.

The content choices made at this school, as explained by the respondent, support the stated aims: “Our starting point is the historical context and continuity of antisemitism. Given my context (predominately white, lower-middle class, secular) I begin with a broad overview of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.” This recognition of the teacher’s personal context, and its impact on understanding the Holocaust, extends to also recognising what knowledge and ideas his students bring to the classroom. He pointed out that this approach “allows students to better understand what is meant when talking about Jewish people and highlights the historical grounds for prejudice against them, while also acknowledging that the Holocaust was exceptional, but not the exception, as to how Jews have been treated. Additionally I find it helps students understand the actions (or lack thereof) taken by Jewish communities once the Nazis came to power.”

Concluding the unit, connections are made to current world events, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the students’ next unit of work on the position of First Nations peoples in Australia up to the present. “My end point is with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” the teacher said. “I propose that this was largely in response to the horrors of the Holocaust, and is a segue into the next unit – the mandatory Rights and Freedoms topic in New South Wales Stage 5 History.” Making these connections is vitally important according to many researchers, including Jennifer Rich, Director of the Rowan Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Rowan University:

A skilled teacher can, and should, make connections between the Holocaust and other genocides and mass atrocities by looking at recurring historical themes including – but not limited to – racism, xenophobia and nationalism.⁶

In making these choices of content and scope, the school is implementing the recommendations from Yad Vashem.⁷ The unit of work begins with such basic questions as “who are the Jews?”

⁶ Jennifer Rich, “Why legislation is needed to make Holocaust education more prominent in public schools: 5 questions answered,” *The Conversation*, 30 January 2020. <https://theconversation.com/why-legislation-is-needed-to-make-holocaust-education-more-prominent-in-public-schools-5-questions-answered-130681>

⁷ Shulamit Imber, “How we approach teaching about the Shoah,” (2013). <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/pedagogical-philosophy.html>

before moving onto the history of antisemitism and pre-war Jewish life. These teaching points are intended to both humanise the victims of the Holocaust and to provide some explanation for the Nazis' deep-seated hatred of the Jews. The final topic in the program, After the War, focuses on Jewish liberation from concentration camps; Displaced Persons camps and migration patterns; Post-war trials; connections to Australia; and what happened to Jews after the war (creation of Israel). There is also a post-unit reflection titled "Can we learn from the past – other genocides (e.g. Rwanda, Cambodia)." Again, this reinforces the connections to the present day world and increases the possibilities students will see their study as relevant and significant.

The content in this program differs significantly from many other Holocaust teaching programs in that it is heavily focused on the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust, rather than taking a perpetrator-centred approach. To paraphrase Dara Horn, students in these classrooms do not see Jews only as dead victims of Nazism. They see the variety and richness of pre-war Jewish life and the multitude of responses to the Holocaust, both during and after World War II.⁸ The program's section on Australian connections is especially important in establishing significance and relevance for students. Teachers will examine not only post-war Jewish migration to Australia but also this nation's involvement in the war crimes' trial of a key perpetrator of the massacre at Serniki in the Ukraine.⁹

The inclusion of Australian connections in the study of the Holocaust is important as it is one of the changes included in the new History syllabus for New South Wales. The syllabus to be implemented from 2027 includes the bullet point: "The impact of the Holocaust: Jewish survivors in Australia."¹⁰ This wording provides a further opportunity for educators to make meaningful and significant connections for their students and to give immediate relevance to the topic.

This diverse content, and the considerable time devoted to what could be described as foundational work, is quite deliberate, as the teacher explained: "Given my students' context and background they often struggle with the idea of a large group of people being well

⁸ Horn, "Is Holocaust Education Making Antisemitism Worse?" (discussed in detail in Chapter 8).

⁹ Peter Kohn, "Shoah Trial Revisited," *Australian Jewish News*, 2 November 2021.

<https://www.australianjewishnews.com/shoah-trial-revisited/>

¹⁰ New South Wales Education Standards Authority, *History 7–10 Syllabus*, September 2024.

<https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au>

integrated into a society, and yet still being viewed as ‘the other.’” This aim is clearly visible in the teaching program, which spends the first week at least on moving from “What is a Jew,” through the “History of Antisemitism,” and then “Pre-War Jewish Life.” Key words that appear through this section highlight the importance of humanising the victims of the Holocaust: “Empathetic understanding,” “community,” “ongoing cross-generation impact,” and “variety of experiences.”¹¹

Towards the end of the unit, when students often have many complex questions to ask, the humanity of the Holocaust is again emphasised:

The response from most students once we get to the Nuremberg Laws is ‘why didn’t they just leave’. My students have little prior-knowledge/understanding of the history or geography of Europe, requiring extra time to be spent unpacking that many Jews did in fact leave (just not far enough away) and the socio-historical reasons why many felt that leaving was either not possible, or not necessary.

To round off the unit and answer the students’ many questions, the teachers spend considerable time on liberation, DP camps, war crimes trials and the creation of the State of Israel. The key words again stress empathy, personal experiences of survival and rescue and ultimately the links between the Holocaust and self-identity and bullying.

Foregrounding the voices of survivors throughout the unit is extremely important to these teachers, despite the geographical challenges that are entailed for regional schools such as theirs. They go to great lengths to ensure that students make human connections with those who were targeted for destruction by the Nazis:

Survivor voices are essential. In the past I have taken students on a day-long excursion to a presentation with Courage to Care when they have visited the Gold Coast. I also use the USC Dimensions in Testimony virtual Holocaust survivor. Students that choose Modern History also go on an excursion to Sydney where they visit the Sydney Jewish Museum. Due to cost and distance, this is not possible for Stage 5 classes. With the recent opening of

¹¹ See Appendix iv

the Queensland Holocaust Museum in Brisbane this is now being explored as a way to incorporate survivor voices into the teaching program.

Whether the use of digital testimony – be it online video testimony or “holographic” images – is as affective as meeting a survivor in person is questionable but largely unavoidable. The use of new technologies is quickly taking over from the generation of Holocaust survivors who have been an indispensable part of museum visits for many years. Students consistently report that meeting a survivor is a highlight of their excursion to Holocaust museums, but as the generation of survivors becomes smaller each year, educators will need to explore the alternative options.

Underpinning the delivery of this topic is the philosophy of Yad Vashem: “Safely-in, safely-out.”¹² According to the respondent, “Lessons are planned and delivered to allow students time to unpack what they have learnt and to discuss how it has made them feel. Different strategies have been used for different classes – journals, exit notes, class discussions etc.” These differentiated strategies allow students to debrief after each lesson, either on their own through journaling or collectively as a class. Post-lesson debriefing is an essential component of the “safely in, safely out” philosophy. Bilewicz, et al, have made the point that the “only risk in empathy-based education could concern students’ psychological reactions to extreme acts of suffering.”¹³ They cite a study of 854 young visitors to Auschwitz that found that 13% of them developed secondary post-traumatic stress disorder while also increasing their empathy for Jews and Jewish victims of the Holocaust.¹⁴ Careful selection of resources and monitoring of students and their reactions are important aspects of Holocaust education for teachers in both the case studies in this chapter. Two key components at the conclusion of this unit highlight the importance of the survivor voice and harnessing the Holocaust for human rights. Survivor Eddie Jaku, in an interview for the *7:30 Report*, and a Ted-Ed video “Lessons from Auschwitz,” complete the unit with both resources stressing the need to learn from the Holocaust and apply those lessons to society today.¹⁵

¹² Echoes and Reflections Partnership. <https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Guidance-for-Bringing-Students-Safely-in-and-Safely-out-of-Holocaust-Learning.pdf>

¹³ Michael Bilewicz, et al, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 184.

¹⁴ Michael Bilewicz, et al, “How to Teach about the Holocaust?” 184.

¹⁵ The 7.30 Report interview is available on the program’s Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ABC730>; <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/lessons-from-auschwitz-the-power-of-our-words-benjamin-zander>

One of the dangers of teaching about the Holocaust, when it is done badly, is that it can reinforce the same stereotypes promoted by the Nazis and could actually lead to an increase in antisemitism.¹⁶ The teacher in this case study is clearly aware of that danger: “The overarching aim of this unit is to explain what happened, without inadvertently justifying the antisemitism of the Nazis. Looking at propaganda is a key part of the learning sequence, but it is done in a way that focuses on unpacking and disproving the stereotypes in order to prevent accidental reinforcing of prejudice.” This process involves a critical examination of the propaganda in light of the understanding that has already been achieved regarding European Jews prior to World War II so that students are aware of how disconnected the propaganda is from reality.

The resource list developed by this school is clearly aligned with their stated purpose of humanising the victims of the Holocaust. Even when students are unable to hear directly from survivors, the testimony of those impacted by the Holocaust is still easily accessible, as explained by the respondent:

The use of the Yad Vashem video toolbox has been excellent.¹⁷ It provides high-quality, targeted educational materials that are well received by students. They are usually used as an introduction to a concept, as well as an end-of-topic summary of the whole unit. The USC iWitness database is outstanding.¹⁸ Students use this to research Holocaust testimony, and it can be easily adapted to suit the needs and ability of students. For some classes I use this as a teacher-driven activity showing snippets from different survivors to highlight the common experiences, and the key differences. For other classes I have students conduct their own research.

This student research ultimately leads into a summative assessment task¹⁹ that is focused on the progression of antisemitism in Europe under the Nazis. Students use the USC Pyramid of Hate²⁰ as a starting point and complete a series of tasks that require engagement with a range of sources on antisemitism and resistance. The task is deliberately accessible to a range of student abilities and provides opportunities for high achieving students to be effectively challenged, particularly in the two written components of the task.

¹⁶ Dara Horn, “Is Holocaust Education Making Antisemitism Worse?”

¹⁷ <https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-videos/video-toolbox.html>

¹⁸ iWitness, USC Shoah Foundatio. <https://iwitness.usc.edu/home>

¹⁹ The assessment task is contained in the teaching program and included in Appendix v.

²⁰ USC Shoah Foundation. <https://sfi.usc.edu/education/pyramid/exercise.php>

By the end of the unit, and often quite early on, students may be asking questions about the creation of Israel, the ongoing Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict and possible connections to the Holocaust. Gandel graduates are typically well-equipped to deal appropriately with these questions and many will take the opportunity to develop student understanding of the complexities of these issues. In this school, however, it would appear those opportunities are generally avoided:

Students interested in this topic are encouraged to choose Modern History for Year 11 and 12. Discussions around the creation of Israel often arise at the end of the Holocaust topic; I generally attempt to refocus the class around the Holocaust. When pressed I explain that the Holocaust did not cause the creation of the state of Israel, but that the events of WW2 as a whole, made its creation more likely.

This apparent reluctance to engage too deeply with contemporary issues in the Middle East is perhaps a reflection of the diversity of views within the faculty. While all teachers are said to support the teaching program as a whole, “There are occasionally divergent views when it comes to the current situation in Israel & Palestine,” according to the respondent. It is a little unfortunate, however, given the focus of this program on post-Holocaust events, as a discussion of the reasons for the creation of Israel, and the debunking of certain myths, might have been appropriate at this point. The second case study in this chapter reveals an alternative approach to this issue.

The responses from this teacher suggest that, overall, the school is satisfied that their program meets the needs of students and the aims set by the faculty. Those programming aims were described by the teacher as:

- A focus on survivors and the individual experiences of each victim and survivor.
- An explanation of the causes of the Holocaust, without any reinforcing of prejudice or victim blaming.
- Debunking common myths about the lack of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.
- An appreciation for the methods used by historians to uncover the past, and a resultant rebuttal and defence against Holocaust revisionism/denial.

It is important to note that there is no visible human rights' agenda in the aims, However the UNESCO document with which all teachers commenced the unit does explicitly claim a human rights' agenda. When viewing the program, and especially noting its heavy focus on pre- and post-war Jewish life and responses to the Holocaust, it would seem that each of these aims above have been successfully met. Foremost amongst these aims, and the critical component of any Holocaust teaching program, is the humanisation of those targeted by the Nazis. The assessment task provided in the program acts as an effective means of determining if the aims of the teaching program have been achieved. The task asks students to engage with the Pyramid of Hate activity developed by the Anti-Defamation League in the USA, combining their factual knowledge of the Holocaust with their understanding of the impact of Nazi actions on individuals.²¹ The pyramid task does this by asking students to view survivor testimony and drag and drop icons of survivors to the appropriate level of a pyramid that begins with prejudiced attitudes and ends with genocide. This combination of actions and impacts, encourages students to develop empathy for the victims and to understand, ultimately, the consequences of their own choices in language and actions. There are, of course, questions to be asked about how successful the unit of work and the assessment task are in achieving this, questions which are considered at the end of this chapter.

Case study 2²²

A similar aim can be seen in the second case study from another experienced educator who has undergone extensive professional development in Holocaust education. She explained that her aim in teaching about the Holocaust, in a school that has experienced ongoing issues with student antisemitism, was to “shift students’ perspectives from casual or indifferent antisemitism/racism to one that confidently asserts humanism, where they feel they can challenge acts of racism in everyday life.” She was not, however, overly confident in the impact her teaching had on students: “It’s a 6 week program in Year 10, and we’re combatting a lifetime of embedded indifference or casual racism. But I’d like to hope we make them think twice.” Her comment mirrors the views of Rebecca Hale, who has suggested that “educators should reflect on how far a programme is addressing attitudes, skills or knowledge young people already possess and... look to challenge and develop students beyond their pre-existing notions.”²³

²¹ Anti-Defamation League. <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/pyramid-of-hate.pdf>

²² See Appendix vi for the teaching program for this case study.

²³ Rebecca Hale, “It made me think how I should treat others,” 794.

To try and achieve this aim, the teacher said, the school has constructed their program to “start with the present, and end with the present. It is important that students understand the ongoing nature of antisemitism and scapegoating. It’s a circular narrative approach which helps students understand where the hatred has come from and why it is still alive today.” The program begins with a discussion of what students already know about the Holocaust and Judaism and what they would like to know, with the teacher mind-mapping responses. Key terms are explained at this stage before beginning the unit’s focus on antisemitism with an examination of a picture gallery of antisemitism from www.alphahistory.com.²⁴ Antisemitism continues as a thread throughout the unit and as an explanation for the emergence of the Holocaust in Germany at this time. Historiographical questions are explored in more detail at the end of the unit when the Browning/Goldhagen debate is examined along with memorialisation and Hollywood portrayals. Antisemitism is again examined in the final two aspects of the unit when students engage with the question “could the Holocaust happen again” and the issue of Holocaust denial. The circular nature of the program, and the continued focus on antisemitism, is coupled with an equally clear focus on survivor voice, to ensure that students become increasingly aware of the human impact of the Holocaust and the relevance it holds in today’s society.

Central to the program is the voice of survivors. The teacher described their voices as “the pivot point for the unit, and the main focus of the assessment task. Also, to make it more personal, we visit the Sydney Jewish Museum.” When asked to list key strategies, the teacher again highlighted the importance of survivors to the program: “Humanisation of Jews and other victims. Focusing on their (ordinary) lives prior to the Holocaust. [In this school] there is, for want of a better term, casual antisemitism, and so it was important that the students perceived this as a human issue.” Researchers and experienced educators have consistently pointed to the need to focus on the voices of survivors to highlight not only the human aspect of the Holocaust, but also the range of responses throughout the period of Nazi persecution of European Jewry. As the teacher explained, “The voice of survivors to illustrate each stage of the Holocaust so they were not merely seen as victims. To show resistance and humanity.” This is clear from one of the opening statements of the program, which states that “The Holocaust happened to people, by people. It is not a series of statistics.” Statements such as this are important, as in the vast majority of schools, many of the teachers using programs will not be History-trained

²⁴ Alpha History, “Holocaust Graphics.” <https://alphahistory.com/holocaust/holocaust-graphics/>

and many will not have undertaken professional development in Holocaust education. There should be clearly articulated statements that assist them to understand the underlying principles of the teaching program and the reason why certain approaches have been adopted by the program writer.

This focus on survivor voice seems to be an absolutely essential approach and one that all teachers would readily embrace to emphasise the humanity of the Holocaust. Yet as this teacher reported, not all teachers in her faculty were initially convinced: “Some teachers wanted to focus more on the perpetrator perspective – from a populist view, thinking it would engage students more (‘Nazi glamour’). However, we were able to talk them down from this ledge.” A perpetrator-centred approach does have some appeal for students, especially adolescent boys who often seem to be fixated on Hitler and his actions. In order to appeal to this section of a class, teachers can fall into the trap of spending too much time on the perpetrators and too little on the victims. The approach taken in this case study seems to have given sufficient time to the perpetrators so that students have appropriate context for their learning, but clearly prioritises the voice of the survivors over the often self-exculpatory testimony of the perpetrators.

In addition to these classroom strategies, the program also presents certain aspects of the Holocaust as problems or dilemmas, reflecting the number of higher achieving students in the school who need the challenge of an additional, moral and ethical, dimension to their study of the Holocaust. The teacher found that “the use of dilemmas, as advocated by Yad Vashem, was very helpful, particularly when dealing with life in the ghettos. It helped students to understand the moral complexities.”²⁵

In their selection of resources, the school carefully matched these to the stated desired outcomes, relying on the extensive website of “Echoes and Reflections” for dilemmas and a

²⁵ The use of dilemmas in Holocaust education is encouraged by a number of organisations, including the Holocaust Education Trust, Facing History and Echoes and Reflections. While teachers generally recognise the importance of this strategy in the classroom and its ability to engage students in serious discussions, there is little hard data to support its use. There is a clear need for further work on understanding the process by which a dilemmas-based approach to Holocaust education contributes to student learning and the development of empathy. See: Holocaust Education Trust, “Dilemmas, Choices and Responses to the Holocaust,” <https://www.het.org.uk/exploring-the-holocaust/dilemmas-choices-and-responses-to-the-holocaust>; John K Roth, “In the Shadow of Birkenau: Ethical Dilemmas during and after the Holocaust” (2005), https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication_OP_2005-04-04.pdf; Facing History and Ourselves, “Ethical Dilemmas in a Time of Genocide,” <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/ethical-dilemmas-time-genocide>; and Shulamit Imber, “How We Approach Teaching About the Shoah,” Yad Vashem, <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/pedagogical-philosophy.html>

range of source material.²⁶ The school utilised survivor testimonies from a museums and also incorporated “drone footage from Auschwitz-Birkenau as this helps students to understand the scale of the Holocaust.”²⁷

One significant point of difference between the two approaches in these case studies is the teachers’ response to questions about the creation of Israel and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, especially since the Hamas attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023 and the Israeli response in Gaza. Earlier, in Chapter 7, two teachers noted that they were quick to shut down any post-Holocaust discussions as they might lead to conflict in the classroom. Both teachers were concerned that their students would not be able to maintain respectful, balanced debate about the current situation in Israel and Gaza. The views of the teacher in the first case study in this chapter seemed to echo these concerns. The teacher in this second case study, however, was far less reluctant to engage in discussions about the contemporary situation in the Middle East. When asked how she responded to questions about the Middle East conflict, she said that she would typically begin with the Biblical origins of the conflict, “to show this is an ongoing conflict, millennia long and the ethics of the claims involved.” She would also ensure students were aware of the “the impact of western imperialism and manipulation where appropriate and, for older students, look at the rise of Nineteenth Century nationalism and the impact on European Jewry along with the rise of Zionism and the expansion of the Israeli state since 1947.” But when it came to the issue of the current situation in Gaza, she was less assured of her response:

This is a tricky question. I cannot justify on any level what is currently happening to Palestinians, but neither do I condone antisemitism. Iran is clearly involved, exacerbating the situation. What would I say to students? That this piece of land has clear historical, cultural and religious significance for two groups of people, which has been complicated by interference from other parties over time. Beyond that, it would depend on the question, and the student cohort.

Clearly teachers must, and generally do, know their students’ ability to conduct a respectful, balanced and informed debate, and will adjust their approach to the “tricky questions” accordingly. However, it should be noted that some classrooms will be more invested in Middle

²⁶ <https://echoesandreflections.org/>

²⁷ BBC News, “Auschwitz Drone Footage.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=449ZOWbUkf0&t=1s>

East politics than others and the family, religious and ethnic backgrounds of students will play a part in the passion they bring to conversations like these. The Anti-Defamation League provides teachers with a useful scaffold for approaching this conversation in class, but for some teachers, the lack of respect for alternative opinions in their classroom is such that even a highly-structured approach such as this would be impossible.²⁸

Finally, the form of assessment used in the second case study requires some consideration. As part of the unit's formative assessment, students were asked to reflect on the impact learning about the Holocaust had on them personally: "As an exit ticket evaluation at the end of the unit, we do a Project Zero 'I used to think/But now I think/And so I'll do' protocol."²⁹ We wanted students to come away with something actionable about themselves in line with the considered antisemitism focus of the program." This strategy, developed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is designed to encourage students to reflect on their thinking about the Holocaust and explore how and why their thinking may have changed. The importance of actionable change is also seen in the later stages of the program when students consider the ways in which "different countries have held themselves accountable (or not)." This is a worthwhile task to gauge the effectiveness of teaching but it is not without limitations. Positive actions may not necessarily follow from student surveys, despite the students' best intentions. This is especially the case some time after the teaching has concluded. Longitudinal studies are required to ascertain the impact Holocaust education has on students' actions when the respondent claims to have experienced some important change in their views towards others in society.

The summative assessment that concludes the unit again brings survivor voice to the fore, with students asked to create a 3-4 minute talk about the significance of "Holocaust survivor stories and how they can help us to gain an understanding of the nature of the Holocaust." Students must use survivors to explain changes in the nature of the Holocaust, including at least two different survivors and at least two different aspects of the Holocaust from the Nuremberg Laws through to liberation. Tasks such as this are well differentiated and are accessible to a range of student abilities, encouraging students to challenge themselves. The stated aim of

²⁸ Anti-Defamation League, "10 Ways to Have Conscientious Conversations on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," (12 October 2023), <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/10-ways-have-conscientious-conversations-israeli-palestinian>

²⁹ Project Zero, "I used to think... Now I think..." Harvard Graduate School of Education. https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/1%20Used%20to%20Think%20-%20Now%20I%20Think_2.pdf

rehumanising the victims of the Holocaust is clearly achieved by this task, but again questions should be asked about its impact on student thinking and their actions.

Discussion and conclusions

Each of the two approaches considered in this chapter has sought to humanise the victims of the Holocaust, both those who perished and those who survived. They have done this in subtly different ways, using different strategies and assessment. However, neither of these two schools has conducted pre- and post-teaching testing of students in order to assess the efficacy of their teaching programs, so we are left to rely on the teachers' comments and observations. This points to a real need for Holocaust educators – those seeking to go beyond simply imparting knowledge – to spend some time developing tools to effectively measure the real impact they have on their students. Empathy, tolerance and social conscience can and, indeed, *must* be measured if one of the key aims of Holocaust education is to foster a respect for human rights amongst students. There seems little point in repeating the refrain “Never again” as a reason for teaching about the Holocaust if educators are unsure of how effectively they contribute to this outcome. As the case study in the previous chapter shows, knowledge on its own is insufficient to engender empathy and encourage students to care about others in society, either in the past or in the present.

These points were explored in some depth by Rebecca Hale. She has claimed, correctly, that:

Sentiments... where students reflect on what the Holocaust means to them and the attitudes and actions it galvanises, are probably not unusual. However, studies which explore the nature and magnitude of this impact in a systematic way are few and far between and leave many questions unanswered. For example, it remains unknown whether students' good intentions... become concrete actions. It is also unclear how far Holocaust education instils new attitudes and behaviours or taps into existing inclinations.³⁰

Certainly, in the example given in the previous chapter, students made a variety of statements about the impact learning about the Holocaust had on them, but there was little change seen in empathy or tolerance towards “others” in society. Potential positive actions sometime in the future were not assessed. To measure for lasting impact, Hale has suggested there is a pressing

³⁰ Rebecca Hale, “It made me think how I should treat others,” 788.

need in Holocaust education for randomised controlled trials that consider both content knowledge acquisition and attitudinal shifts.³¹ There is a significant gap at present in our understanding of how, and even if, Holocaust education impacts students. Given the significant time and public funding that is expended on Holocaust education in Australian states, it seems reasonable that there should be greater understanding of the impact these resources have on students. Hale makes very clear that:

We need to admit that research conducted to date has only provided limited and potentially fallible information about the impact of Holocaust education. It is imperative that as we move forward, the methods used are sound and systematic, and they enable educators and policymakers to talk about impact based on firm evidence rather than intuition.³²

Despite these problems, the aspirations of the teachers responsible for the case studies in this chapter would seem to align with the findings of a Canadian study reported in 2010. The research found that participants “reporting strong knowledge of the Holocaust are more likely to describe contemporary anti-Semitism as a problem, and somewhat more likely to be concerned over genocide, *but somewhat more divided in their views on certain aspects of diversity.*”³³ Knowledge of the Holocaust, according to the authors, “appears to have less bearing on opinion with respect to some questions around societal diversity.”³⁴ This “may have less to do with the impact of Holocaust education than the ways that people learn about and understand issues of diversity.”³⁵ Similarly, a survey conducted for the Echoes and Reflections Partnership found that “when measuring overall civic engagement, students with Holocaust education were less likely to be active; however, when explored further, other factors such as political interest, student status (full vs. part-time), and age were better predictors of civic engagement.”³⁶ As the author of the Canadian study points out, “an exclusive focus on knowledge of facts and *gures* may not provide a broader comprehension of the Holocaust and the lessons to which it gives rise.”³⁷ It is precisely these lessons *from* the Holocaust that many educators, including those in these case studies, seek to reinforce.

³¹ Rebecca Hale, “It made me think how I should treat others,” 789.

³² Rebecca Hale, “It made me think how I should treat others,” 800.

³³ Jack Jedwab, “Measuring Holocaust knowledge and its impact: A Canadian case study,” *Prospects* 40, no.2 (2010): 286. [My emphasis]

³⁴ Jedwab, “Measuring Holocaust knowledge,” 286.

³⁵ Jedwab, “Measuring Holocaust knowledge,” 286.

³⁶ Echoes and Reflections Partnership, US College Survey (2020), 4. <https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/College-Survey-Summary-Article-September-2020-a.pdf>

³⁷ Jedwab, “Measuring Holocaust knowledge,” 286.

It is possible, however, to make some comments on these two schools on the basis of the research literature and what is *likely* to be happening in these classrooms. In each of these schools, there is a strong foundation built by spending considerable time on the roots of antisemitism and pre-war Jewish life. Survivor voice appears consistently throughout both programs and forms a key aspect of the assessment task in case study 2.

Both schools attempt to humanise the victims of the Holocaust, those who survived and those who perished. Each foregrounds the stories of survivors. Neither of the schools in these case studies could be said to focus on the rescuers and those designated Righteous Among the Nations, though each clearly makes reference to this group of people. In terms of developing socially responsible students – those who are prepared to become ‘upstanders’ when confronted with social injustice – this may be an essential feature of students’ education about the Holocaust that has not been fully exploited in these two programs. The Facing History organisation has recognised this likelihood and has structured many of its programs around the impact of individuals who stood up for others during genocides and social upheaval.³⁸ There is, however, no research that can confirm teaching about rescuers is more likely to engender empathy amongst students. This is despite some studies showing a range of positive short term outcomes in students from their study of the Holocaust. Indeed, the results of the Echoes and Reflections study cited above are highly encouraging. In a survey of 1500 college students, they found that:

Those with Holocaust education are significantly more likely to agree that people should learn about the Holocaust in order to:

- recognize the dangers of antisemitism (27% more likely),
- stand up for those who are being discriminated against (20% more likely), and
- stop something similar from happening again (21% more likely).³⁹

It is particularly salient that the Echoes and Reflections survey focused on college-educated students. As Daniel Bowen and Brian Kisida have found, there is a striking correlation between

³⁸ Facing History and Ourselves, “Holocaust and Human Behavior,” <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/holocaust-human-behavior>

³⁹ “US College Survey,” conducted by Lucid Collaborative and YouGov in 2021. <https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/College-Survey-Summary-Article-September-2020-a.pdf>

household levels of parental education and the benefits that students derive from lessons on the Holocaust:

Students with college-educated parents particularly benefit from these lessons, demonstrating greater respect for civil liberties and a higher probability of donating to charities that support human rights on our behavioural measure. The impacts on middle school students and those from less-educated households, however, are mixed. They demonstrate increases in historical content knowledge, but report lower levels of religious tolerance as a result of the treatment.⁴⁰

Further research in this area is required to establish the key components of a Holocaust teaching program that will lead to increasing empathy amongst students and also to develop a process for measuring student empathetic development. At present, it is difficult to be sure of the efficacy of any teaching program beyond its ability to impart content knowledge. The greatest difficulty, of course, is knowing whether any changes in student attitudes towards tolerance can be sustained over more than a few weeks. Longitudinal studies, that examine attitudes and actions over a period of years rather than weeks are needed here.

⁴⁰ Daniel H. Bowen and Brian Kisida, "Never Again: The Impact of Learning About the Holocaust on Civic Outcomes," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 13, no.1 (2020): 82.

“One does not teach the Holocaust as much as one confronts it.”

– David Lindquist, 2007¹

11. The role of professional development in meeting classroom challenges

When challenges are encountered in the classroom – the kinds of challenges discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 – teachers may respond in a variety of ways. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the ways in which teachers who have completed intensive training at Yad Vashem through the program sponsored by Gandel Philanthropy, or at the Sydney Jewish Museum, respond to incidents of antisemitism in the classroom. As will be seen, significant professional development has the potential to increase teachers’ impacts on their students. Graduates from the Gandel program at Yad Vashem seem to be less likely to make some of the mistakes that have appeared elsewhere in this research, namely setting unrealistic classroom goals and failing to adjust their content to suit those goals. They are also more likely to recognise antisemitism in the classroom and respond appropriately to it. Little research has been done specifically on the efficacy of Holocaust-related professional development for teachers. Specific questions related to the aims of professional development, the knowledge and skills it provides for teachers, and how it translates into classroom practice and student outcomes, have seldom been asked by researchers. There has been research, however, on the impact of professional development for teachers more broadly.

David Lindquist has highlighted the unique position of the Holocaust as a topic for study at secondary level, pointing to the essential need for professional development if it is to be taught well:

The axiom ‘You can’t teach what you don’t know’ carries considerable truth within its simple logic, and the corollary statement ‘You can’t teach what you don’t know how to teach’ should also be acknowledged as central to any instructional situation. While both statements are true concerning the teaching of any subject, teaching the Holocaust involves unique demands, pressures, and potential pitfalls that make both caveats critical as teachers

¹ David H. Lindquist, “A Necessary Holocaust Pedagogy: Teaching the Teachers,” *Issues in Teacher Education* 16, no.1 (2007): 21.

consider the if, the what, and the how of Holocaust education as well as the moral implications that arise from any meaningful and appropriate study of the event.²

There is a solid body of research that supports the view that appropriate professional development leads to more effective teaching and learning in the classroom. Corey Harbaugh has noted that when selecting professional development, “teachers want answers and examples of how to deliver the complex content of the Holocaust while dealing with the reality of limited classroom time.”³ Jennifer Lemberg and Alexander Pope take this further, pointing out that, “Recent research confirms the value of professional development that sharpens teachers’ understanding of their interest in and relationship to teaching about the Holocaust.”⁴ In a highly specialised area of teaching, professional development can be designed to provide “practical guidance and support [so that] teachers will be better equipped to integrate the Holocaust into their curriculum and to engage their students in meaningful and effective ways.”⁵ According to a 2023 meta study of professional learning, “Analysis of these studies suggest that training, ongoing coaching, collaborative Continuous Professional Development (CPD) promote student skills and learning and frequent CPD over a long duration appear to be most beneficial.”⁶ However, the study noted a significant gap in the research literature: “No large-scale study comparing the effectiveness of different workplace learning opportunities was identified. Future research could focus on comparing the effectiveness of different PD approaches and their impact on students’ learning.” This gap needs to be addressed if school leaders are to make valid assessments of which professional development to fund for their teaching staff.

Similar gaps appear in the work of John Hattie, whose “mega study”⁷ became the basis for his book *Visible Learning*.⁸ He suggests that there is an effect size of .35 that is gained from teacher

² Lindquist, “A Necessary Holocaust Pedagogy,” 21.

³ Corey Harbaugh, “Informed Pedagogy of the Holocaust: A Survey of Teachers Trained by Leading Holocaust Organisations in the United States,” in *As the Witnesses Fall Silent*, Gross and Stevick (editors), 2015, 377.

⁴ Jennifer Lemberg, and Alexander Pope, *Becoming a Holocaust Educator : Purposeful Pedagogy Through Inquiry*, Teachers College Press (2021). 115

⁵ Stefania Manca, Juliana Elisa Raffaghelli, Albert Sangrà, “Participating in professional development programmes or learning in the wild? Understanding the learning ecologies of Holocaust educators.” *British Educational Research Journal* (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3927>

⁶ O.M. Ventista and C. Brown, “Teachers’ professional learning and its impact on students’ learning outcomes: Findings from a systematic review,” *Social Sciences & Humanities* 8, no.1 (2023). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291123001705?via%3Dihub>

⁷ A meta study of existing meta studies.

⁸ John Hattie, *Visible learning for teachers: maximizing impact on learning* (Routledge, 2012).

professional development, which places it approximately in the middle of his table of effect sizes.⁹ As always with Hattie's research, however, it is valuable to dig a little deeper into his data to determine the usefulness and reliability of the meta studies on which his work is based. In this case, the effect size for professional development is based on some valuable secondary school studies in Maths and Science classrooms in addition to less useful studies of early childhood teachers, community trainers and care-givers.¹⁰ There is no specific data from Humanities' classrooms in his research and indeed, studies of specifically humanities-based professional development are difficult to locate elsewhere.

The lack of data around specific Holocaust professional development programs is also an issue for the comprehensive programs supported by the HET in the United Kingdom: Beacon Schools in England and Vision Schools in Scotland.¹¹ Both programs support excellence in Holocaust education and their resources are underpinned by the ongoing research at the Holocaust Education Trust. Anecdotally, there is a great deal of evidence that both programs are transformative in their ability to make meaningful change in the way that the Holocaust is taught in participating schools. Unfortunately, there has been no longitudinal study to demonstrate the efficacy of either the Beacon Schools or Vision Schools programs, which makes the following study particularly noteworthy.

In 2015, *Teachers College Record* published the results of a randomised controlled trial of the efficacy of a five-day teacher training program conducted by the US organisation Facing History and Ourselves. The program was concerned with teachers who were delivering a Holocaust-related program and specifically examined whether teachers' participation in professional development translated into meaningful impacts on their students. It was found that there were moderate impacts for students in multiple domains, even though approximately half of the teachers did not fully implement the program.¹²

⁹ John Hattie, Global Learning Database, <https://www.visiblelearningmetax.com/Influences>

¹⁰ John Hattie, Global Learning Database, Professional Development, https://www.visiblelearningmetax.com/influences/view/professional_development_programs

¹¹ <https://holocausteducation.org.uk/transform-your-school/> and <https://www.uws.ac.uk/research/vision-schools-scotland/> and <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/61050/html/> and <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=STND&u=usyd&id=GALE%7CA743006300&v=2.1&it=r&aty=shibboleth>

¹² Dennis Barr, et al, "A Randomized Controlled Trial of Professional Development for Interdisciplinary Civic Education: Impacts on Humanities Teachers and Their Students," *Teachers College Record* 117 (February 2015): 38.

Those teachers who had completed the five-day program with Facing History and then implemented the program in the classrooms, showed “significantly greater self-efficacy in all eight assessed domains, more positive perceptions of professional support, satisfaction and growth, and greater personal accomplishment.”¹³ The effect on students was equally clear, with students demonstrating stronger skills for “analysing evidence, agency, and cause and effect on a historical understanding performance measure; greater self-reported civic efficacy and tolerance for others with different views; and more positive perceptions of the classroom climate.”¹⁴

Not all the results from the study were positive in terms of gains in civics and tolerance. The authors reported that for some civic learning variables, including “justice-oriented civic responsibility, tacit racism, deliberation convictions and practices, and the students’ role in creating an open classroom climate,” no significant gains were found. As a result, they say, “the overall findings related to civic attitudes and behaviors paint a mixed picture.”¹⁵ Some of the results appeared somewhat contradictory, with no main effects for racist attitudes while intervention students still held more tolerant attitudes about others with views dramatically different from their own.¹⁶ Clearly, as the authors acknowledge, there is a need for further study to assess the impact of professional learning – such as Facing History, or the Gandel program at Yad Vashem – on students’ attitudes and tolerance of other groups, especially when those groups hold views different to their own.

One further point should be made about professional development: each of the teachers whose comments are included in this chapter took part in professional development, either through Yad Vashem or the Sydney Jewish Museum, voluntarily. A review of the recent research by Mary Kennedy for Michigan State University has demonstrated that the impact of professional development is far greater when teachers take part of their own volition. “The differences in program effectiveness when studies compared groups of volunteers as opposed to groups of non-volunteers remind us of the role of teachers’ own volition in improving their practices.” As she points out so succinctly, when teachers’ professional development is decided by school

¹³ Barr, “A Randomized Controlled Trial,” 34.

¹⁴ Barr, “A Randomized Controlled Trial,” 2.

¹⁵ Barr, “A Randomized Controlled Trial,” 35.

¹⁶ Barr, “A Randomized Controlled Trial,” 35.

leadership, “*Attendance is mandatory but learning is not.*”¹⁷ Participants in the Gandel program, Sydney Jewish Museum programs and in the Facing History study cited above, all took part voluntarily and often at some expense to themselves. The effectiveness of these programs in developing teachers’ ability to effectively teach about the Holocaust is in part derived from the high levels of the motivation amongst the participants.

The comments collated from Gandel graduates support the findings of the Facing History study in respect to teachers’ positive perceptions of professional support, satisfaction and growth, and greater personal accomplishment. This current research, however, has not been concerned with measuring student perceptions and achievement, but it would certainly be interesting to ascertain the impact of the Gandel and Sydney Jewish Museum programs on student outcomes as they relate to civics, racism and specifically antisemitism.

At the commencement of this research project, professional development was not considered one of the key areas for investigation. There was an assumption that those teachers who had completed substantial professional development would see fewer challenges in their classrooms and their teaching would proceed relatively smoothly. However, as the detailed responses were received, it became apparent that this was an area deserving of further examination. The genesis of this section, then, lies in one particular response from a Gandel graduate who completed the online questionnaire:

At times there have been comments of a racist or antisemitic nature. The comments have not been particularly sinister or prolonged and the student(s) do not necessarily realise they are being 'racist'. Therefore, this revelation forms part of their education on the subjects of antisemitism and racism.¹⁸

That this teacher saw racist or antisemitic comments from students as an *opportunity* rather than a *problem* was an important thread to follow in the research. Was his attitude a result of the professional development he had received during almost three weeks of intensive training at Yad Vashem? Would other teachers who had participated in the program, or received other significant professional development, respond in similar ways? Chapter 7 has already explored

¹⁷ Mary Kennedy, “How Does Professional Development Improve Teaching?” *Review of Educational Research* 86, no.4 (2016): 978.

¹⁸ Online questionnaire (2016).

the relationship between teacher confidence and professional development. This section will consider how detailed courses such as that offered by Yad Vashem through Gandel Philanthropy equip teachers to deal with classroom challenges and deliver quality Holocaust education.

The data shows a clear link between substantial professional development and the ability to respond effectively to the classroom challenges of racism and antisemitism. Gandel graduates and those who have completed professional development at the Sydney Jewish Museum are no less likely to encounter racism and antisemitism in the classroom. In fact, they are slightly *more* likely to encounter and recognise these challenges. Of 16 Gandel graduates who responded to the questionnaire, five have encountered racism and/or antisemitism in the classroom. But their responses to the questionnaire suggest they are better equipped to deal effectively with these challenges and may even see them as opportunities for student development and growth. The possibility that Gandel graduates, as a result of their training, are more attuned to antisemitism, and recognise it immediately, should not be discounted. It is quite possible that some other teachers in this study have failed to recognise antisemitic comments and have dismissed them as “normal classroom banter.” Gandel graduates are unlikely to do this. This view is supported by the work of Suzanne Rutland, who in a 2010 study interviewed eight teachers about their experiences of teaching about the Holocaust in schools with a predominantly Muslim population in south-western Sydney. Six of the teachers were graduates of the Gandel program at Yad Vashem. Rutland said that “The six who undertook the programme at Yad Vashem chose to do so because of the anti-Jewish feelings and misunderstandings of the Holocaust they encountered in their schools.”¹⁹

The follow-up questions supplied to Gandel graduates as part of this research project asked them to elaborate on some of the ideas contained in the original questionnaire and then asked specific questions about their professional development. That the Gandel graduates were over-represented in this research (Gandel graduates represented 21% of teachers who completed the original questionnaire) is an indication of their willingness to be involved in projects that support Holocaust education. That they were willing to also be part of follow-up interviews is further proof of this.

¹⁹ Rutland, “Creating Effective Holocaust Education Programs,” 80.

Aims in teaching about the Holocaust

Gandel graduates had a range of personal reasons for teaching about the Holocaust beyond simply the syllabus requirements. One said that it was his personal background that motivated him, as his “father was German, grandmother's father was Jewish,” and that he believed that it is an important lesson from history.²⁰ Similarly, a teacher from Sydney’s north-west said that she was teaching the Holocaust because “My Grandfather was part of the Resistance in Holland during WWII.”²¹ Another specifically saw antisemitism as an important reason to teach about this topic: “Seeing lives and cultures destroyed because of antisemitism and fear has always given rise to anger and action within me. I think the words of Martin Niemöller are telling and we have to speak up in our society when we see injustices. I could literally write an essay here but won't.”²² These personal connections are important as they support the thesis put forward by Sophie Gelski that second generation emotional knowledge is an important influence in determining not just what topics and content teachers will select, but also the way in which they will impart knowledge.²³

The human rights’ perspective that was so prominent in teaching aims from non-Gandel graduates was less visible in these responses. Only two listed human rights’ related aims: “Combat racism” and “To ensure that the memory is kept alive and in a broader sense, to ensure students become better, more empathetic global citizens.”²⁴ What figured more clearly was the human aspect of the Holocaust, with some graduates offering quite detailed reasons for teaching about the Holocaust:

This historical event is significant from any and every standpoint. Not only does it provide opportunity to procure ethical education and discussions to students, but it also allows the opportunity to talk about motivators, and the choices made. It opens up opportunities to discuss cultures and differences, as well as acceptance, resilience, honour and integrity. Apart from all of that, we need to understand the world and context in which such a travesty could happen, so that we can help to create a world in which it can't.²⁵

²⁰ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

²¹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

²² Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

²³ Sophie Gelski, “The Missing Paradigm,” PhD thesis, Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, 2010.

²⁴ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

²⁵ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

Another teacher expressed her frustration that, prior to her study at Yad Vashem, her students seemed to miss the key human aspects of the Holocaust: “I always wondered why students could learn about the Holocaust without truly empathising. They would write things like ‘Hitler was mean to the Jews’ in an essay after all attempts to have them understand the scale of what occurred. I wanted to learn how to reach them.”²⁶

Gandel graduates were well aware that student engagement in the topic was something that could be utilised in class:

It’s a period of time the students tend to be really interested in and having taught texts linked to the Holocaust for about 15 years, this is the one area where they don’t need to be encouraged to read the texts or do wide reading because they are initiating it. Also, I think in teaching the Holocaust there is a wealth of human experience to consider which allows for many entry points and in-depth consideration of the human story as befits a study of literature.²⁷

Ultimately though, it was personal connections and factors that motivated them to spend time on this topic:

Hosting the *Courage to Care* exhibition for many years opened my eyes to another perspective of Holocaust education. Organising a student tour entitled ‘Battlefields and Holocaust History Tour,’ which visited Krakow, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Warsaw and Berlin also increased my interest and desire for more knowledge of the Holocaust. However, the more I read and taught the topic, I felt I had reached a plateau in my knowledge and hence applied for the Gandel program.²⁸

Overall, Gandel graduates were trying to achieve less varied aims than non-Gandel graduates in their teaching about the Holocaust and they often had clearer personal connections to the topic. (Non-Gandel graduates tended to have a wider range of aims, some of which were unachievable in the time frame they had indicated and by using the content they had listed.) These strong personal motivations have the potential to make their lessons more clearly

²⁶ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

²⁷ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

²⁸ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

structured and content and pedagogy more engaging. But it did not make them less likely to encounter classroom challenges.

Content

Non-graduates often begin the Holocaust programs with the rise of the Nazi party. They may include the origins of Nazi antisemitism but are unlikely to teach about pre-war Jewish life. In contrast, all but one of the Gandel graduates included pre-war Jewish life as a starting point for the Holocaust. One teacher explained this in detail:

I generally start with a stimulus text that highlights the core idea that I want to draw out of the focus text so that, without the immediate Holocaust story, we are focusing on the human experience and then introduce them to the historical context, starting with the Jewish community prior to the Holocaust.²⁹

Other teachers echoed this starting point: “We start with an introduction to Jewish history, customs etc before we start on the Holocaust,”³⁰ while another explained why this was so important: “We start with an introduction to Jewish history, customs etc before we start on the Holocaust. ‘See the people’ - we always look at culture and society prior to 1933. Students must see people, not victims.”³¹

Not all took this approach, of course, with one teacher explaining that the first lesson was largely about establishing what students already know about the Holocaust: “Introductory lesson seeing what the students know, and discussing why we teach the Holocaust. Watching a Yad Vashem video, but also carefully monitoring the reactions as this influences some of the resources each teacher uses. The students are asked what they know about the Holocaust, what images come to mind.”³²

Dealing with antisemitism in the classroom

One teacher from a Catholic girls’ school in regional New South Wales (the only teacher from a girls’ school to note any form of racism in the school), said that he had encountered some low level stereotyping that stemmed from students’ lack of prior knowledge about Jews and

²⁹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

³⁰ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

³¹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

³² Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

Judaism and probably also from conversations at home. This teacher had undertaken extensive professional development at the Sydney Jewish Museum and continued to be in touch with two of their former educators:

You have to explore the comments otherwise it does not allow for growth. As Head of Department this is certainly something that I push across all History classes. Additionally, this is why I have Dr Lander [Dr Ari Lander from Sydney Jewish Museum] come and talk to our students. Usually I have him look at the *Einsatzgruppen* and camps as they are particularly sensitive areas. Also, I am able to have discussions with him regarding potential racism or lack of understanding that might have occurred in classes and he can target lectures towards this. That way students are hearing these things from multiple voices to unpack why people harbour racism or misunderstanding.³³

He added that “The thing is regarding the Holocaust, it is too dark to engage with safely prior to students being in Year 10. I think it can be generational as well. When I was in school we never learnt about the Holocaust, also until the recent iteration of the syllabus there was not an opportunity to build a specific case study around the Holocaust. Over time, understanding and empathy should increase.”³⁴ Another teacher also described in detail the undercurrent of antisemitism in his classroom:

Not as overt as that. Sometimes a sense that what is being taught is from a very particular perspective – this usually comes from Muslim students. I deal with this in a number of ways. The first is to draw a clear distinction between what we are studying with the Holocaust, and current geopolitical issues that might involve Israel and Palestine. The second is to find a common ground that students can see a shared perspective in - I find this often comes in the form of the importance of religion. One exercise I do is to have the images of Tommy on the walls and students choose one that has significance to them – I often find Muslim students choose the image of Tommy praying.³⁵ The last is to have this discussion openly and frankly in class in a safe environment. If a student wants to raise issues I always treat

³³ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

³⁴ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

³⁵ *Tommy: to Tommy, for his third birthday in Terezin, 22 January 1944*, is an illustrated children's book. It was written in the Terezin Ghetto by Bedřich Fritta for his son, Tommi. Published by Yad Vashem, 2010.

their questions as valuable - but am mindful to steer us all in the right direction and to come back to the sources, the facts, the testimony etc.³⁶

This kind of clearly articulated response to classroom questions that might lead to explicit antisemitism was unique amongst Gandel graduates and reflects their high level of content knowledge and confidence in teaching this topic. Teachers of course vary in their responses to antisemitism in the classroom. One teacher, when asked about challenges, said:

I taught a Year 10 student whose father described himself as a Neo-Nazi. That student struggled with the content and decided not to attend the excursion to the Holocaust Museum. I didn't challenge his beliefs at the time and didn't directly seek to alter his view but I pushed on with the content and kept it as evidence based as I could when discussing it with him. In the end he said he was confused by the different versions of truth he was hearing at school and home. He is now a teacher at my school, and happily teaches the Holocaust program so I guess it worked in the end.³⁷

Here the relationship between teacher and student is vital in challenging the student's preconceived ideas. There is an evidence-based approach to learning about the Holocaust that moves the student into an uncomfortable position, but does not force him into a corner from where he feels compelled to defend his prior convictions. Antisemitism acquired from home can be difficult to manage in class, as another teacher pointed out, saying that he had experienced "Superficial stuff from students...'sick' jokes etc. ...seldom well informed...easily modified...more difficult if 'learned' from parents...My dad says....fingers crossed that 'evidence' will out!." His approach, like the first example, was to maintain an evidence-based approach. He did, however, add that antisemitism was "More concerning coming from teachers & School Executive...you can't trust so&so (parent!) she is a Jew! You can't believe reports from Israel."³⁸

For most of the Gandel graduates, overt antisemitism was not an issue in their classrooms and they were well equipped to deal with the "difficult" questions that often arise during learning about the Holocaust. Helping teachers to answer these difficult questions is an important aspect

³⁶ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

³⁷ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

³⁸ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

of the Yad Vashem program. One teacher said that “I have had students ask questions emerging from misconceptions and things they've heard in the media. The circumstances were more around them wanting to check what they know rather than challenging the material being discussed in class.”³⁹ Another said that they had received “Occasional comments along the lines of 'why didn't they fight back' or apportioning blame to Jews for not assimilating more throughout history.”⁴⁰ In each of these cases, the content knowledge provided as part of their professional development allowed the teachers to engage in a meaningful way with the questioners rather than simply dismissing them.

Detailed comments made by two teachers, both at western suburbs' schools, provide a contrast in responses to classroom antisemitism. The first teacher was from a Catholic systemic school and had completed the Gandel program at Yad Vashem as well as teacher training days at the Sydney Jewish Museum. The second teacher was not a Gandel graduate and had not completed professional development at the Sydney Jewish Museum, but he had done extensive online study through the websites of Tel Aviv University and Yad Vashem. Both teachers were working in schools where antisemitism had the potential to be an issue in the classroom but were able to manage this in quite different ways.

The Yad Vashem graduate said that racism was an issue in the school and had especially impacted new arrivals from overseas in the school. When learning about the Holocaust, she said that some of the students with antisemitic views “had their perspectives shifted regarding personal prejudice towards Jews.”⁴¹ This teacher, following Yad Vashem's approach, had commenced the Holocaust unit with antisemitism and pre-war Jewish life, providing an opportunity to explore the stereotypes of Jews that were a foundational aspect of the Holocaust, and to address the stereotypes held by her students. She adopted an evidence-based approach which was effective in countering the stereotypes held by some of her students. Importantly, she provided students with an opportunity to air their ideas and have their preconceptions tested.

The second teacher, working in an extremely diverse state high school in south-western Sydney said that he had only encountered racism in his classroom on one occasion, despite it being a

³⁹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁴⁰ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁴¹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

problem elsewhere in the school: “My immediate response was disgust and anger at the views expressed... I just shut it down.”⁴² Given the potential volatility of the environment in which this teacher worked, he chose to shut down the comments and not allow any discussion to take place. Rather than seeing this incident as an opportunity to challenge preconceived ideas, he was concerned that it might escalate into an uncontrolled argument. Both of these teachers made valid choices based on their knowledge of their students, particularly their background and their ability to have a reasoned and informed debate about difficult topics. The first teacher, however, made a decision that was, in the long term, more likely to have a deeper impact on her students.

The reaction of other students in both classes would suggest that antisemitism had not become normalised or accepted behaviour in either class. The second teacher commented that:

For the most part, in the incident described above, there was next to no engagement from other students. I think that the opinions voiced were so offensive to the majority of other students that they did not want to engage with them. For other students, I think they wanted to see what the reception was of these types of comments and, when rejected and repudiated, they did not attempt to push the topic further. I think these responses were more a reflection of the students’ values than the school culture.⁴³

Interestingly, he did not believe the professional development he had completed had prepared him to deal with antisemitism: “I don’t think these courses did much to prepare me for confronting antisemitism or racism in the classroom.” But his detailed content knowledge, revealed through his questionnaire responses, and long standing in the school, had contributed to a positive classroom culture.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the Gandel course at Yad Vashem had clearly equipped the first teacher for dealing with classroom antisemitism and she was able to draw on the explicit teaching on this topic to engage with her students.

The question for educators, when faced with classroom antisemitism, is whether to ignore and discuss with the student later; engage in a rational debate at the time; or to shut the comments down immediately. As each circumstance, and each cohort, is different, it is difficult to suggest

⁴² Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁴³ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁴⁴ Email correspondence, September-October 2023.

that one strategy or another is always likely to be the most effective, but in terms of long term change for the students involved, and the rest of the class, the second response is likely to produce the most positive change. Two points are clear, however: firstly, completely ignoring antisemitism or racism in the classroom is not an option. It must be confronted in some way. And secondly, teachers who have undergone substantial professional development are more confident in their ability to engage, confront and provoke change within their students.

Other challenges

Like other teachers, those who have undertaken extensive professional development also confront a range of other challenges in the classroom, many of which were addressed by the Gandel program. One teacher said that their students' lack of prior knowledge of Judaism "and very shallow understanding of Christianity" were their most pressing challenges. "I teach in a VERY mono-cultural, lower-middle class, generally agnostic, vaguely Christian, area," she said. "A big part of this unit is getting students to empathise with the 'other'." A number said that time and the "overwhelming content demands" were the biggest challenges.⁴⁵

The comments from one Gandel graduate from Victoria reflected the impact of the 2020 ministerial directive on Holocaust education (discussed in Chapter 3). "My challenge was that the KLA refused to really incorporate it until the Minister for Education made a public statement that it would be taught despite little mention in the curriculum." She added that "there was also some push back on my wish to introduce Jewish life first before moving onto the Holocaust. I wanted them to understand what being Jewish means in order to understand what was lost. We got there in the end."⁴⁶ Similarly another teacher said that in her faculty, the "older teachers had taught the Holocaust from the perspective of the Nazis." When she wanted to shift the emphasis to a Jewish perspective, "it came with some push back, but the change was for the best."⁴⁷

Other History faculties adopted a more clearly collegial approach to teaching about the Holocaust, with one teacher reporting that in his school, "Each teacher and each class deals with the Holocaust in slightly different ways. We try to tailor our teaching strategies/tasks to each class but have core points that must be covered." As in other schools, these teachers were

⁴⁵ Online questionnaire (2016).

⁴⁶ Emailed correspondence, October 2023.

⁴⁷ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

faced with difficult questions at times: “The most common question is ‘why?’ which is always a tricky one to answer and the discussion always turns to white supremacist groups (especially in Australia). We run very open, supportive lessons on the Holocaust and ensure students' questions are answered to the best of our ability. We receive very positive feedback from students and parents.”⁴⁸

Overall, the greatest challenge for these teachers, and one they appear to have been well-equipped to deal with, was the sensitive subject matter that is an essential part of Holocaust education. In this respect, the philosophy of Yad Vashem was clearly being applied by teachers. “I think the challenge is to sensitively walk students into a dark and traumatic place, have them understand those horrors and then safely navigate a way back out. I don't intentionally do that with any other topic.”⁴⁹ The philosophy at play here, “safely in, safely out,” is repeated often in the Yad Vashem program, stressing that the welfare of students is paramount. As one teacher explained, “It can be emotional and it can be challenging having students who might find the content distressing – this is where it is invaluable to have the ‘safely out’ tools at the ready.”⁵⁰

Perhaps the most unusual challenge recounted was from a teacher at an independent girls’ school on the north shore, who said “I did once have a Year 7 student, who knew very little about the Holocaust, who told me at the start of a unit that her grandfather had fought with the German army on the Eastern Front. I had asked students about any contacts or prior knowledge they had. Using the 'safely in and safely out' approach, I was able to change my approach to aspects of the unit to support her through the class.”⁵¹

In some cases, the “safely in, safely out” approach becomes even more critical. This is certainly the case when students themselves have been exposed to life-threatening situations and may well have been impacted by PTSD. One teacher explained this clearly:

Some students who have experienced trauma will always provide challenges, especially if they have experienced emotional or physical abuse or bullying. Seeing the context and end goal contributes to a safe place for hard discussions, so a teacher must make it clear from

⁴⁸ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁴⁹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁵⁰ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁵¹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

the start. Clear parameters before starting, opportunity to 'leave and breathe' if needed, and a trusting relationship between teacher and student all help in tricky circumstances. I have never had a child leave and not return. Debriefing is especially important if a student does need to leave for a moment.⁵²

Finally, one teacher pointed out that while “‘Safely in, safely out’ is the single most important teaching ethos that Yad Vashem gave me,” he was confident that “there is no blueprint for this though - it is important to develop what this means and how this works in the classroom based on the context of what you as a teacher are teaching about the Holocaust.”⁵³

Acquiring the tools required to compassionately and empathetically deal with students in these situations is an essential part of teacher professional development in Holocaust education. Each of the Gandel graduates interviewed for this research project had thought deeply about the welfare of their students, the nature of the content and teaching resources to be used in class, and the importance of bringing their students safely out at the end of each lesson in the Holocaust unit. The reality is that teachers who have not undergone similar training may not have the necessary tools nor even recognise the trauma their students may be experiencing.

Effectiveness of the program

Gandel graduates almost universally praised the program for its ability to prepare them to deal effectively with a range of classroom challenges when teaching about the Holocaust. The overall satisfaction of Gandel graduates with the program was measured in a 2017 evaluation of the program conducted by Einat Bar-On Cohen for Yad Vashem. The evaluation showed that consistently well over 90% of participants said they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the program. Respondents to the evaluation described the program using expressions such as “amazing,” “brilliant,” “profound,” “unique,” “fantastic,” “life changing,” “I couldn't speak too highly about it,” “some of the most amazing days of my life,” “transformational,” “the best professional quality,” “the most important professional experience up to this point,” “the program is a work of pedagogical genius.”⁵⁴

⁵² Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁵³ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁵⁴ Einat Bar-On Cohen, “Report into The Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators,” Research and Evaluation Group, 2017, 8-9.

In the current research project, there was only one minor dissenting comment that the program was not sufficiently pedagogically-focused and contained perhaps too much content. Overwhelmingly, however, Gandel graduates believed that content knowledge led to improved confidence and the ability to tailor lessons to their students' needs.

When asked how well the program had prepared them to teach about the Holocaust, one teacher was clearly enthusiastic about its impact:

Very much. Having learnt about suggested approaches and the wealth of resources available, I felt that I had a depth of understanding which enabled me to be flexible with my approach based on the needs and responses of the students. Yad Vashem helped me to understand the importance of allowing time for that process and the need to give time for the feedback, reflection and debriefing at the end of every difficult session. I probably rushed aspects of that before. Yad Vashem also reinforced what I had learnt through other Holocaust PLs about the importance of survivor testimony and the Jewish voice. This also means allowing time for victims to speak the unspeakable.⁵⁵

Another teacher stated that “The more I know the more I feel confident & equipped to face challenges while remaining sensitive to the topic & the naivety of many students,”⁵⁶ while another also commented on the importance of content knowledge gleaned from Yad Vashem: “The course expanded my knowledge and provided strategies on how to run and deal with questions/challenges. We run teacher sessions each year for all staff teaching the Year 10 History course and ensure that we all approach the teaching of the Holocaust in a supportive but educational way.”⁵⁷ This view was echoed by a recent Gandel graduate who said that “Deep subject and pedagogical knowledge allow a teacher to choose the right path for their class, taking into consideration all limitations. There are so many options for delivery and content that there really is something for everyone.”⁵⁸

There were some reservations, however, but generally they were qualified and relatively minor: “As far as rebutting ‘lamb to the slaughter’ tropes about Jewish people and the Holocaust, really well. I think that more generally, the Yad Vashem mantra that the Holocaust should not (must

⁵⁵ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁵⁶ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁵⁷ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁵⁸ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

not?) be used as a vehicle for teaching broader issues (such as racism or bullying more generally) makes it challenging to get some students (and other staff) to see the relevance of learning about the Holocaust today.”⁵⁹ A different reservation was expressed by a teacher from an inner western Sydney school who said that “I honestly wish it had been more applicable to the classroom. From an academic point of view it was fantastic but there weren't as many opportunities for classroom activities and sharing of participant resources as I would have liked.”⁶⁰

Lastly, the humanising aspect of the Yad Vashem approach was emphasised by one Gandel graduate who said that the course had “changed my perspective, gave me much more in-depth knowledge of the Jewish perspective and moved my teaching in a new direction. As a specialist in 20th century conflict, I too focused on the Nazis and forgot about the people it was happening to.”⁶¹ This focus on victims, survivors and resisters is an integral aspect of the Yad Vashem philosophy and an important part of teaching about the Holocaust as a means to counter antisemitism.

The impact of learning about the Holocaust

The impact of the Gandel program on graduates was part of Einat Bar-On Cohen’s evaluation. She found that 99% of respondents said that the program had an impact on them and 96% said that the program had an impact on their students. Some of the respondents shared their views on how the program had impacted their students, with comments such as: “They've been more curious and inquisitive as they've asked me about the experience;” “The programme allowed me to add a lot of depth, variety and perspective to my teaching of the Holocaust, and gave me the confidence to present the topics in a passionate and informed manner, I have been able to create resources that embrace the pedagogy of before, during, after and create resources and lesson plans that are used by my colleagues across several subjects;” “They have been shocked and surprised at the extent of anti-Semitism in the world and they have really had to contemplate the role of guilt and innocence when it comes to the treatment of Jews during World War Two and after.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁶⁰ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁶¹ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁶² Bar-On Cohen, “Report into The Gandel Holocaust Studies Program,” Yad Vashem, 21-22.

During this current research project, a number of graduates described in some detail the impact they saw Holocaust education had on students. Virtually all respondents to this current research, including those who had not completed significant professional development, noted the high or very high levels of engagement experienced by students when studying the Holocaust, but Gandel graduates were better able to articulate the specific impact that this topic had on their students.

A number of teachers noted that their students were able to make real world connections to what they had studied: “Yes, [learning about] the Holocaust has been profoundly helpful in enabling students to look at issues ethically and promoting empathy. Students see the importance of learning about it as a unique historical event but also the connections to how they live their lives and engage with people today.”⁶³ Another teacher pointed out that studying the Holocaust “broadens their social and cultural literacy, some of the language used by the Nazis can be seen in contemporary propaganda (Russia and Ukraine) and helps build empathy. All of those I think. I also think it is essential to developing their emotional maturity.”⁶⁴

Not all agreed, however, with one teacher explaining that students could struggle to see the Holocaust as a real event in history: “Hmm, that's tricky. The better students get it, but the Holocaust (I think) has become almost surreal/myth to many students and they think that Germany has done well in dealing with it so it's not really an issue any more. We do look at contemporary issues of antisemitism (as well as here in Australia) but I'm finding increasingly that it's become too mythologised to be taken literally. I found the dilemmas approach very helpful in managing this to make it more concrete, but it's still tricky.”⁶⁵

In terms of student engagement, there was universal agreement that studying the Holocaust was inevitably one of the most engaging topics students will encounter at school. One teacher said that “even the most obstreperous student responds positively given the right sequence of learning. Provide a survivor testimony and I have never seen an unmoved, or unchanged, student. It might not be immediate but deep learning takes hold, and future choices do reflect that learning.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁶⁴ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁶⁵ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

⁶⁶ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

The final comment should perhaps be left to a teacher from a state school in the inner western suburbs, who described why she had taken part in the Gandel program who had previously been unable to engender empathy amongst her students for the victims of the Holocaust. Having completed the course at Yad Vashem, she felt that students would benefit from a study of the Holocaust only if it incorporated experiential elements: “Learning about it has an impact if it is combined with other learning opportunities like visits to the Jewish Museum, the Holocaust Museum, meeting survivors or descendants, examining testimonies and other evidence etc.”⁶⁷

Discussion and conclusions

The comments provided by Gandel graduates to this research project, the earlier evaluative work conducted by Einat Bar-On Cohen and the important study of the impact of Facing History on teachers and students by Dennis Barr, et al, all point to the importance of professional development in increasing teacher efficacy in the classroom. If Holocaust education is to be a tool in civics and citizenship, with a special focus on decreasing antisemitism in classrooms and society more broadly, then teachers must be suitably equipped to deal with the concomitant challenges that come with such broad aims. This research project has shown clearly that the overwhelming majority of teachers are not content to simply teach *about* the Holocaust. They also teach *through* the Holocaust. In this, Holocaust education is vastly different to teaching about any other topic in history. To do so requires detailed content knowledge, confidence in meeting sometimes confronting challenges, and a range of teaching strategies that value the knowledge, experiences and history of their learners.

In a profession that includes many thousands of History teachers, plus many more English and Religion teachers who also teach about the Holocaust in their classrooms, the challenge for the Gandel program and for Holocaust museums is to reach a critical mass of teachers so that substantive change in teaching practice can take place across all states and territories. The impact that one or two Gandel graduates can have in one school is substantial, but there are many schools – most notably public secondary schools – where teachers have not heard of the program. How then to reach the large numbers of teachers who might benefit the most from such a program? The answer can only lie in Holocaust education permeating teacher training programs at universities, where beginning teachers can be provided with the skills and the

⁶⁷ Emailed responses, September-October 2023.

confidence to take new-found knowledge into their classrooms. Undergraduate teacher training programs are the first and final opportunity to reach large numbers of teachers before they enter the workforce and potentially become lost to the reach of experienced educators, professional organisations such as the HTA and groups such as Gandel Philanthropy and the Sydney Jewish Museum.

“There is no empathy without curiosity, no respect without knowledge, no other way to learn what Jews first taught the world: love your neighbour. Until then, we will remain trapped in our sealed virtual boxcars, following unseen tracks into the future.”

– Dara Horn, *The Atlantic*, May 2023¹

Conclusions

This research project began with the belief that classroom antisemitism was confined to a few schools in the south-west of Sydney and that the vast majority of schools in Sydney were able to teach effectively about the Holocaust, free of damaging racist comments from students. Challenges no doubt existed, it was posited, but these challenges would be confined to the often confronting content, time constraints and supporting students from traumatic pasts. While this description may be true for many classrooms, the reality proved to be quite different for a large proportion of the teachers who took part in this research. Some teachers have to limit the time they spend on the Holocaust due to racist interruptions or they simply do not teach the topic at all because of the animosity towards Jews expressed by some of their students. It is, of course, sadly ironic that the very attitudes that teaching about the Holocaust is meant to challenge — intolerance, racism, bullying — can be the reason why some teachers cannot teach about this at all.

Key findings of the research

By drawing on the experiences of over 75 classroom teachers from Sydney and regional New South Wales, and applying both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, this research project has created new understanding across a range of areas relevant to Holocaust education. The research has found that the nature and extent of antisemitism in Sydney schools is much more widespread than previously understood, confirming the presence of three dominant forms of antisemitism in Sydney schools, only one of which (Muslim antisemitism in the south-west) had been previously documented. Gender plays an important role in acts of antisemitism, with almost all acts of antisemitism in classrooms recorded in this study perpetrated by boys. These findings are supported by research from a number of other studies in Sweden, Belgium and Germany. Strong, proactive school leadership and teacher professional development play integral roles in preventing the spread of antisemitism and racism in schools. Equally, weak

¹ Horn, “Is Holocaust education making anti-semitism worse?”

leadership may also allow antisemitism and racism to become entrenched and normalised in a school.

Without a clearly articulated rationale and aims, and carefully selected content and pedagogies to match, Holocaust education is unlikely to have any impact in developing students' empathy, tolerance and compassion for others and will therefore fail to satisfy government and community aspirations for creating a more cohesive society. This problem is exacerbated by the mistaken belief that the Holocaust is being taught to all students in all schools, with 16% of respondents to the questionnaire saying they do not teach about the Holocaust in the mandatory Stage 5 History course. In each Australian state and territory, the lack of a firm direction, clear rationale and mandated hours creates problems for educators who wish to teach about the Holocaust. Yet despite this, student engagement in learning about the Holocaust is almost universally high, with all but two teachers saying their students are consistently interested in the topic and want to learn more about it.

A roadmap towards effective teaching about the Holocaust can be created by examining the programs and assessment tasks developed by highly accomplished teachers and valuing the role that professional development plays in improving classroom practice. A number of schools in this research project have shown that, regardless of all other factors, good teaching, proactive leadership and programs of substantial professional development can prevent antisemitism and racism from becoming a force within schools.

Antisemitism has long been a major issue in Australian society but only in recent years have serious attempts been made to quantify the extent of the problem in schools by researchers such as Philip Mendes, Suzanne Rutland, Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff.² This research project has clearly shown that not only is antisemitism a major problem in a diverse range of Sydney classrooms, but also that two school types are overrepresented: the first group is co-ed and boys' state schools where Arabic is noted as a major language group in the school; the second group is co-ed and boys' independent religious (Christian) schools. Both these school groups report antisemitism and racism in the classroom at a frequency beyond other school

² Mendes, "Antisemitism among Muslim Youth;" Rutland, "Creating Effective Holocaust Education Programmes;" Danny Ben-Moshe and Anna Halafoff, "Antisemitism and Jewish Children and Youth in Australia's Capital Territory Schools," *Social Inclusion* 2, no.2 (2014): 47-56.

groupings. There are exceptions in both groups where these challenges have not been reported, but the exceptions are rare.³

In the first group of schools, six teachers from co-ed or boys' state schools indicated that Arabic was a major language spoken in the school; five of these teachers reported that antisemitism and racism were challenges in the classroom. Two of these schools also noted that a further challenge was the presence of Palestinian students in the classroom, but they did not specify what these challenges were. These findings reinforce the previous research of Mendes and Rutland about the problems of Muslim antisemitism in Sydney government schools, as well as the findings from studies conducted in Europe cited earlier. The two girls-only state schools with Arabic as a major language group did not report racism and antisemitism as classroom issues, adding further substance to the discussion about gender and antisemitism.

In the second group, there were 12 schools described as independent Anglican or Christian that were co-ed or boys only. Of these, six reported racism and/or antisemitism. These six schools, were located in the upper north shore and the eastern suburbs. These areas have a very different population demography to the rest of Sydney and are more likely to hold conservative, right-wing views and to be influenced by antisemitic rhetoric. They also have a significant Jewish population in the area, unlike the south-west and west of Sydney.

By contrast, of 12 Catholic (independent and systemic) schools, co-ed and boys, only one reported racism and/or antisemitism. It is not clear at this stage of the research why there is such an apparently clear divide in the frequency of classroom racism and antisemitism along religious lines. Similarly, the two Catholic systemic schools where Arabic was a major language group also raised different challenges but did not include racism or antisemitism. Further research should seek to elicit more detailed responses from teachers in co-ed settings to confirm whether the racism and antisemitism they noted is emanating from boys, girls or both. On the evidence compiled by this research, girls were responsible for antisemitic or racist comments in only two schools, and in these cases, teachers reported that it was "low level" or "casual" antisemitism that involved the repetition of familiar antisemitic tropes.

³ The differences between schools were discussed in some detail in Chapter 7.

A third, previously unreported form of antisemitism, was uncovered in a single school from western Sydney. The co-ed Catholic systemic school has significant student enrolments from the Croatian diaspora in the area, a group that migrated to western Sydney immediately after World War II. The level and nature of antisemitism emanating from boys from the Croatian community was particularly troubling for the teachers from this school who were involved in this research. They noted that antisemitism among these boys was deeply ingrained and could not be challenged by any of their classroom strategies. As Chapter 7 demonstrated, there are ongoing connections between pockets of the Croatian community in this area and right-wing Croatian ultra-nationalists, evidenced by continued problems of extremism amongst the supporters of Sydney United Football Club, a team closely associated with the Croatian diaspora. The movement has its roots in the former Ustaša members who escaped Croatia after World War II and migrated to Australia, engaging in widespread terror activities in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, their influence can be seen in the antisemitic and white supremacist ideology of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren that becomes so apparent when the Holocaust is being taught in this school.

When antisemitism and racism do appear in schools and classrooms, school leadership will play a major role in preventing its spread or allowing it to become an entrenched part of the school culture. A number of examples have been explored where school leadership was clearly proactive in preventing any form of racism and, when incidents did occur, reactive in delivering firm consequences. The most noteworthy example of this was an independent Christian school in the north-west of Sydney, where two incidents of antisemitic name-calling resulted in a flurry of activity to ensure that these acts of racism did not become normalised. Conversely, the inaction at Brighton Secondary College in Melbourne was provided as an extreme example of how racism will flourish in a situation where school leaders chose to deny, deflect and ignore claims of racism even when there is mounting evidence of a deeply ingrained problem. Unfortunately Brighton Secondary is not unique: a number of schools in Sydney and in regional areas were identified through this research as also having significant problems of student antisemitism that could, at least in part, be ascribed to the leadership of the school. Sustaining this culture of denial and deflection is the schools' management of student databases that use euphemisms for incidents of racism and antisemitism. Terms such as "non-inclusive language," when used to describe acts that are clearly racist, allow schools to deny they have a problem with racism until legal action is taken or media reports surface.

In those schools where antisemitism is entrenched, teaching about the Holocaust can be highly problematic and can in fact lead to an increase in antisemitic acts. A number of teachers noted that this was the case, particularly with young boys, when studying texts such as *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Justice Mortimer's judgement in the Brighton Secondary College case discussed exactly this problem with the teaching of *Maus*. That teaching about the Holocaust could lead to an increase in antisemitism might seem counterintuitive, yet this research has shown that this is a definite possibility. Poor pedagogy has the potential to reinforce Jewish stereotypes, develop empathy for perpetrators and lead students to believe that Jews somehow contributed to their own fate in World War II.

Effective Holocaust education demands much from teachers, but also, potentially, yields more in student gains. This research has demonstrated conclusively that if Holocaust education is to be effective, it must humanise the Jewish victims and survivors by highlighting the richness of pre-war Jewish life, by foregrounding Jewish voices and by showing the variety of Jewish responses to the Holocaust. There are several challenges to achieving this, however, challenges that are unique to teaching about the Holocaust. Some are specific to multicultural classrooms, such as the potential presence of students with traumatic backgrounds, while others, such as antisemitism and racism, occur across a range of school systems, religions and language groups.

Other challenges are common across all school systems. Time was a challenge for many respondents as they tried to cover as much of the Holocaust as possible in a relatively short time. As one teacher noted, the Holocaust is "very essential but it risks becoming squeezed out of very crowded curriculum or by non-interested colleagues." Other teachers said that they found that some of their students had been desensitized to the resources being used while an almost equal number (and often the same teachers) said that their students were upset by the graphic nature of the resources. This reflected the variety of student responses to identical resources that can be seen in any classroom.

Despite these challenges, a majority of the respondents (58.3%) still manage to teach about the Holocaust for 9-10 hours or more in the mandatory Stage 5 History course, a remarkable achievement given the many other topics that are competing for class time in an overwhelming syllabus. The importance placed on this topic by teachers is reflected in the engagement of their students. Only two teachers of the 75 respondents said that their students were disinterested

and disengaged. (One of these said that their students were disinterested in every aspect of school.) Most respondents described their students as “keenly interested” and “generally engaged” with one teacher from a co-ed state school observing that her students “always want to spend more time on this topic.” So, while there are some significant challenges in teaching about the Holocaust in Sydney schools, this high level of student engagement and interest across almost all school types and geographical areas provides some measure of confidence that educators are achieving their aims in Holocaust education.

If positive change in student attitudes is to occur, the research makes clear that a well-defined set of aims and a rationale must be in place before the teaching program is constructed. Thus far, syllabus writers in Australia and particularly in New South Wales have not considered this to be a priority. They have not made clear why the Holocaust is to be taught and what impacts on students they seek from its inclusion in syllabi. The reality, of course, is that governments and curriculum designers demand much of Holocaust education. It is expected to be an antidote to racism, bigotry, intolerance and antisemitism, yet no government in Australia has provided educators with a clear rationale or set of aims on which Holocaust teaching and learning programs can be developed. The literature, especially the work of Totten and Feinberg, makes clear that without a rationale it is extremely difficult to construct a program that will achieve the aims demanded by government. Chapter 7 highlighted this problem and demonstrated that despite their best intentions, some teachers have created programs that represent a serious disconnect between aims and content.

In writing about the place of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom, Andy Pearce succinctly summed up a problem that equally afflicts the schools in this research project: “Ambiguity over aims and confusion over rationale are the hallmarks of the history of the Holocaust in the curriculum. One might say that uncertainty as to why the Holocaust should be taught has led to much drift and dawdle...”⁴ One of the key findings of this current research is that the aims in teaching about the Holocaust must be clearly articulated before a program is written and well before pedagogical strategies are developed. There are several potential aims that will influence the decision to include this topic in a teaching scope and sequence and each will require a different approach in the classroom. Yet the state curricula and the national curriculum all fail to articulate *why* the Holocaust is to be studied. Victoria includes details

⁴ Andy Pearce, “The Holocaust in the National Curriculum after 25 years,” *Holocaust Studies* 23, no.3 (2017): 233.

about aims in the framework released by the Victorian Department of Education, but not in the History curriculum. Without clearly articulated aims, it is difficult for teachers to construct programs, since to a large extent the aims will determine the content, strategies, and resources. The question of why certain content should be included in the curriculum is always an important one, especially when including the Holocaust, since it will impact what aspects of the topic are taught and the strategies that are employed by teachers in the classroom. This, then, will impact the meaning that students take from their lessons. Those who construct the state curricula must ensure that teachers are aware of the intent behind inclusion of the Holocaust in the curriculum. Is it because of the topic's intrinsic historical importance or are there issues of morality, ethics, racism or citizenship that are considered at least equally important? In implementing the ministerial directive about Holocaust education, the Victorian Department of Education clearly believes that both aims are vital aspects of a well-constructed Holocaust program. Other states will need to be equally clear in articulating their aims.

Having clear aims when teaching any topic in any subject is extremely important. Without setting clearly achievable aims, it becomes difficult to plan units of work, to create lesson outlines and to select strategies. It also becomes difficult to measure the efficacy of teaching practice. When those aims are far more abstract than simply asking students to recount information, dates and events, it is even more important to develop a clear rationale for teaching about the Holocaust. Teachers who responded to this research project have thought deeply about what they are trying to achieve. They have considered the importance of Holocaust education in engaging students' intellectual curiosity, in learning universal lessons and in increasing student understanding of civics and citizenship. Virtually every respondent (73 out of 75) saw a reason to teach about this topic beyond syllabus requirements and its historical significance. One of the two dissenters provided a reasoned argument that "the Holocaust is not necessarily a uniquely powerful vehicle for raising and examining the issues outlined in the list above." They believed that other important events in world history could also achieve these aims.⁵ Further research in this area is required to establish the key components of a Holocaust teaching program that will lead to increasing empathy amongst students and also to develop a process for measuring this empathetic development. At present, it is difficult to be sure of the efficacy of any teaching program beyond its ability to impart knowledge.

⁵ Online questionnaire (2016), south coast state co-ed school.

Further research

There are a number of areas that have been identified by this project as essential for further research. The first centres on the gender of students: How does gender impact empathy development during students' study of the Holocaust and why are girls far less likely to express racist or antisemitic comments during lessons on the Holocaust? This area of potential research has been previously identified in The Living History study in Sweden and in the work of Mendez and Jikeli.⁶ In this current research project, only two respondents suggested antisemitism had emanated from female students. In all other recorded cases, boys were the perpetrators. Part of the explanation for this clear dichotomy between the genders may lie in the different rates of empathy development between boys and girls which was explored in Chapter 9. Girls enter the classroom in Years 9 and 10 with higher levels of empathy which may make them more receptive to forging emotional connections with the victims of the Holocaust. The challenge for educators is to generate a similar response from the boys in their class. Meeting Holocaust survivors offers a potential way forward but this is increasingly difficult as the generation of survivors diminishes. Holographic-type representations may fill this gap, but again, further research is needed to assess the impact this form of learning may have on students. Some groups, such as Facing History, have recognised the potential that may come from a focus on rescuers and "upstanders" in developing empathy amongst students.⁷ There is, however, no current research to confirm that teaching about rescuers is more likely to engender empathy amongst students.

At the same time, the key finding that there are differences in the nature of antisemitism based on where it is manifested (determined by geography, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender and socio-economic status) needs to be followed up with further research to understand the underlying drivers and whether these differences stem from the far right, the far left and/or radical Islamic attitudes.

For educators who believe it is important for students to learn lessons *from* the Holocaust, there is precious little evidence to support the claim that teaching about this topic will lead to long

⁶ Lange, *A Survey of Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions in relation to Teaching about the Holocaust*; Mendes, "Antisemitism among Muslim Youth"; Jikeli, *European Muslim Antisemitism*.

⁷ Facing History and Ourselves, <https://www.facinghistory.org>

term attitudinal shifts. There are very few studies to clearly demonstrate that Holocaust education can achieve the aims that have been set for it by government and many educators. The work of Cowan and Maitles has been considered for the possibilities it offers as a way forward to establish if teachers are able to initiate change in students, and if these changes can be sustained over time.⁸ But to date, there have been no longitudinal studies of secondary students to establish the efficacy of a range of Holocaust programs. The pre- and post-testing of students examined in Chapter 9 is perhaps the only study to have been conducted in Australia to consider the short term impacts of teaching about the Holocaust, but the 5-week timespan was insufficient to understand how a study of the Holocaust in school may translate to developing a more tolerant and compassionate society in the future.

It is evident, however, that if Holocaust education is to be successful, there must be a clear articulation from government, curriculum developers and syllabus writers about why the Holocaust is being taught. Without a clear rationale and set of achievable aims, teachers are in the difficult position of having to select content and construct pedagogical strategies while not knowing how their success is to be measured, their lessons evaluated and even what knowledge should be prioritised. If it is the case that the Holocaust is to be instrumentalised in the fight against intolerance, racism and antisemitism, this will need to be communicated to teachers and future research should consider the most effective ways to achieve these aims. Researchers will need to examine how programs can be developed to humanise victims and survivors, how empathy can best be developed amongst students, and how this might translate to students' attitudes to "others" in society and their ability to prioritise human rights in their own lives.

Future directions

As this research was drawing to a close, The Blue Print Institute released its comprehensive report into antisemitism in Australian schools.⁹ The report highlighted the difficulties many educators face in their classrooms and the desperate need for professional development to assist teachers in recognising contemporary antisemitism, talking to students about its impact and understanding just how far it has spread throughout Australian society. Antisemitism was at the heart of the Holocaust and must be a significant part of teaching programs. The extent of this problem in Australian society became glaringly apparent in the hours and days after the 7

⁸ Paula Cowan and Henry Maitles, "Does addressing prejudice and discrimination through Holocaust education produce better citizens?"

⁹ Downey, et al, *Antisemitism in Australian schools: an examination*.

October 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas. Some teachers who had been part of this research, discontinued their units of work on the Holocaust, others withdrew from the project and a number of professional organisations reduced their exposure to Holocaust education.¹⁰ The impact of the war in Gaza on Holocaust education has been wide-ranging and will likely be felt for at least several years to come. For those teachers who have undergone substantial professional development, this challenge of teaching about the Holocaust in the context of war in the Middle East will not be insurmountable. Some will, in fact, see this as an opportunity for important discussions in their classrooms, directly addressing the conflict in the Middle East and providing students with the opportunity to express ideas and ask questions in a respectful environment. Many teachers will seize these “teachable moments” as opportunities for deep, significant and meaningful conversations with their students.

There are other challenges to Holocaust education that are likely to continue impacting teaching this topic long after calm has been restored in the Middle East. Perhaps the greatest of these impediments is the mistaken belief that the Holocaust is somehow compulsory or mandatory in any state syllabus. This is far from the case. This research showed clearly that while many New South Wales’ teachers spend a great deal of time on this topic, others choose to ignore it completely in the Stage 5 History course where it is a compulsory topic. In other states the situation is similar or even more problematic. It is, then, impossible to know when and where the Holocaust is being taught and in how much depth it is being taught, and the effectiveness of teaching programs. This research project, although it is the first to quantify both the extent of Holocaust education in Sydney schools and the depth in which it is taught, should be seen as a starting point for research into this area and also the changes that must take place if Holocaust education is to satisfy the aims that have been set for it by government.

It is abundantly clear, then, that if Holocaust education is to be productively linked to educating about tolerance, human rights and racism, teachers need to be supported in a number of ways, beginning with mandated hours in which to teach this topic and time to program their lessons. There must be a clear understanding that the primary aim, beyond developing a sound base of knowledge, is to humanise the victims and survivors and to create a sense of understanding of the role played by antisemitism in the Holocaust. This awareness of Nazi antisemitism must also be linked to knowledge about contemporary antisemitism, which could be either taught

¹⁰ Chapter 4 documented the range of impacts that 7 October had on Holocaust education.

separately or in a comparative context. To achieve these aims, Holocaust education should be a meaningful component of teacher education programs and ongoing professional development. And as part of the ongoing research suggested above, teaching programs should be evaluated to ensure they are effective in sensitising young people to antisemitism and in achieving the aims that have been set. Teaching about the Holocaust is vastly different to teaching about any other topic in history. Teachers require a greater depth of content knowledge to answer a constant flow of challenging questions, confidence in meeting sometimes confronting problems, and a range of teaching strategies that places a high value on the knowledge, experiences and personal history of their learners.

Ultimately, the kinds of students and young adults that educators are seeking to produce through their study of the Holocaust are those described by Dara Horn in the quote at the start of this chapter: young adults with intense curiosity for the past, a heightened sense of empathy that translates into respect for others, and a sound knowledge base on which these ideas are based. Despite the many challenges that exist in classrooms, this aim is still achievable through well-constructed programs based on clearly articulated aims, strategically directed professional development, supportive school leadership and inspiring teaching.

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Gelski, Sophie, “The Missing Paradigm.” PhD thesis, Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, 2010.

Mootz, Denis, “Towards a taxonomy: History teachers and History classrooms.” PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney, 2014.

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Appendix i

Holocaust Questionnaires

Teaching the Holocaust in Western Sydney's Multicultural Classrooms

* Indicates required question

Participant Information Statement

Emeritus Professor Suzanne Rutland
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Brennan-MacCallum Building
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
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(1) What is this study about?

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This will involve you answering a range of questions about your own background, the nature of the school in which you teach (DET, faith-based, independent non-denominational; single-sex or co-ed; student population) and your experiences in teaching the Holocaust. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you have the option of selecting "Prefer not to say" or discontinuing your participation in the survey.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

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If you are teaching about the Holocaust in a NSW secondary school or college, your responses to this survey are important and valued.

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This information sheet is for you to keep

1. I have read the Participant Information Statement *

Tick all that apply.

- I agree to participation in this questionnaire.
- Other: _____

Questionnaire

2. 1. Gender *

Mark only one oval.

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

3. 2. Your age *

Mark only one oval.

- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 60+
- Prefer not to say

4. 3. Your first language *

Mark only one oval.

- Arabic
- English
- Hebrew
- Hindi
- Punjabi
- Tagalog
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

5. 4. Your religion *

Mark only one oval.

- Anglican
- Catholic
- Other Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- No religion
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

6. 5. How many years have you been teaching? *

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 1
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- More than 20

7. 6. What is your main teaching subject? *

Mark only one oval.

- History
- English
- Religious Education
- Other: _____

8. 7. Your school's postcode *

9. 8. Type of high school or college *

Mark only one oval.

- State high school
- Catholic systemic high school
- Independent Anglican high school
- Independent Catholic high school
- Independent Islamic high school
- Independent Jewish high school
- Independent Orthodox high school
- Other: _____

10. 9. Gender of your school's students *

Mark only one oval.

Co-educational

Boys only

Girls only

11. 10. Are there significant languages other than English spoken by your school's student population? Please list as many as necessary.

12. 11. Are there significant religious groups within your school's student population? Please list as many as necessary.

13. 12. Is the Holocaust taught in Stage 5 (Mandatory) History in your school? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes.

No.

Other: _____

14. 13. For how many hours is the Holocaust taught in Stage 5 (Mandatory) History in your school?

Mark only one oval.

- 0 (not taught)
- Less than 1
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- More than 10

15. 14. In which other subject areas is the Holocaust taught in your school? *

Tick all that apply.

- None
- Creative and Performing Arts
- Elective History
- English
- Modern History
- PDHPE
- Religious Education
- Society and Culture
- Other: _____

16. 15. Based on your response to the previous question, please give details of Holocaust teaching in your school in subjects other than Stage 5 (Mandatory) History. Please consider subject, stage/year, hours and any other relevant information.

17. 16. In your principal area of teaching, what aspects of the Holocaust do you cover in class (Please select all that are relevant to you.)

Tick all that apply.

- Anti-Semitism
- Pre-Holocaust Jewish life
- Nazi ideology and propaganda
- Nazi legislation
- Role of the churches
- World War II in Europe
- Responses of other nations to Germany's persecution of the Jews
- The Einsatzgruppen
- The extermination camps
- The ghettos
- Resistance
- Rescuers
- The Nuremberg trials
- Life after the Holocaust
- Memorialisation and commemoration
- Holocaust denial
- Other: _____

18. 17. What resources have you employed in your teaching of the Holocaust? (Please select all that are relevant to you.)

Tick all that apply.

- School-developed booklets
- Survivor testimony - printed
- Survivor testimony - digital
- Survivor testimony - in the classroom
- Survivor testimony - at Sydney Jewish Museum
- Textbooks
- Internet sources
- Drama
- Film
- Novels
- Poetry
- Teaching resources from Yad Vashem
- Documentaries (DVD or online)
- Other: _____

19. 18. Which online resources have you found most useful in your teaching of the Holocaust?

Tick all that apply.

- Anne Frank House
- Facing History
- Imperial War Museum
- iWitness
- UCL Centre for Holocaust Education
- USHMM
- Yad Vashem
- Other: _____

20. 19. What challenges have you faced in your teaching of the Holocaust? *

Tick all that apply.

- Access to appropriate resources
- Access to survivors
- Access to technology within the school
- Anti-Semitism in the classroom
- Insufficient time to cover key areas
- Lack of professional development
- Limitations in content knowledge
- Lack of student interest in the topic
- Lack of support from colleagues
- Parent resistance to the topic
- Racism in the classroom
- Students upset by graphic material
- Students de-sensitised to resources
- Other: _____

21. 20. Would you like to expand on your responses to the previous question?

22. 21. How would you describe your students' responses to lessons on the Holocaust? (Tick as many as necessary)

Tick all that apply.

- They always want to spend more time on this topic
- They are keenly interested
- Interested and generally engaged
- No different to their response to any other topic
- Mostly disengaged and uninterested
- Resistant to any learning on the topic
- Vocal in their opposition to studying this topic
- Other: _____

23. 22. Would you like to expand on your responses to the previous question?

24. 23. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your confidence in teaching the Holocaust? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Low ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ High

25. 24. Apart from syllabus requirements, are there any other reasons why you chose to teach the Holocaust?

Tick all that apply.

- Its historical importance
- To combat racism and prejudice
- To develop students' ethical frameworks
- To increase student understanding of civics and citizenship
- For students to learn universal lessons
- As a warning against silence and indifference
- To engage students' intellectual curiosity
- To examine basic moral questions
- To examine complex questions about power and authority
- For an appreciation of democratic values
- As a comparative study with other genocides
- Other: _____

26. 25. Does your school community commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom HaShoah or actively acknowledge the Holocaust in some way? Please give details.

27. 26. Have you and your students visited the Sydney Jewish Museum? *

Mark only one oval.

- Every year
- Occasionally
- Never

28. 27. Are you aware of the Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I have heard of it
- Yes, I have participated in the program
- No

29. 28. Have you undertaken any Holocaust-related professional development? Please provide brief details

30. 29. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the teaching of the Holocaust in your school or more generally?

31. 30. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes - please copy the link below. Then, AFTER you have clicked on the submit button, paste into your browser's address bar
- No

32. 31. Would you like to receive feedback on the results of this survey? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes - please copy the link below. Then, AFTER you have clicked on the submit button, paste into your browser's address bar

No

33. If you answered yes to either Question 30 or 31 above, use the link below to be taken to a different survey site to leave your contact details. This step will ensure the anonymity of your responses. Please click on "submit" before you leave this page.

<https://goo.gl/forms/VHm3gkhCOAGLHhRf2>

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Google Forms

Questions for Gandel Graduates.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. As a graduate of the Gandel Program at Yad Vashem, your experiences of teaching about the Holocaust are possibly quite different to those of non-graduates. The purpose of these questions is to better understand how and why these experiences may be different. There is a lengthy participant information statement below (a requirement of the PhD program at the University of Sydney), followed by a checkbox for your agreement. My questions will probably take you about 10 minutes to complete.

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In what year did you complete the Gandel program at Yad Vashem?

What type of school do you teach in?

What is the postcode for your school?

What is your subject specialisation (History, English, Religion, etc)?

In what year groups have you taught about the Holocaust?

Approximately how many hours would you spend on the Holocaust with this/these year groups?

Beyond syllabus requirements, what is your personal motivation for teaching about the Holocaust?

How do you introduce the topic of the Holocaust? What is the starting point for your teaching program?

Have you ever encountered any antisemitism, Holocaust denial or racism in class while teaching about the Holocaust? If yes, can you describe the circumstances and your response?

Are there any other challenges you have faced that are specific to teaching about the Holocaust? Were you able to effectively deal with these challenges?

Questions on Holocaust Education – Boy in the striped Pyjamas

1. In what year groups/subjects was *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* being used in your school? Was it the film or novel or both?
2. Who made the decision to discontinue this text? Was this decision made individually or at a faculty level? Was there a rationale behind the decision?
3. In your opinion, were there any positive impacts in using *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, especially in terms of student engagement and understanding?
4. Did you observe any short term or long term negative impacts of using this text?
5. Did you find you needed to correct any specific misunderstandings? Was it difficult to do this? Did students tend to hold onto the misunderstandings, despite your efforts to correct?
6. When the text was removed, was it replaced with an alternative film or novel? If yes, what was the replacement?
7. Have you completed any PD on the Holocaust, such as the Gandel program or teacher days at the Sydney Jewish Museum?
8. If yes, do you think this PD equipped you to deal with the issues arising from texts such as *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*?
9. One of the biggest challenges in some schools when teaching about the Holocaust is antisemitism amongst students. Have antisemitism or racism been problems in your classroom? Do you think *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* plays any role in countering or reinforcing antisemitic behaviours and comments amongst students?
10. Are there any other comments you would like to make about *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* or teaching about the Holocaust more broadly?

Questions on Holocaust Education

School demographics:

- Boys, girls or co-ed? _____
- DET, Catholic systemic or independent? _____
- Postcode? _____
- Dominant language/religion groups amongst students

1. Have you read the participant information statement at the end of this Doc?
(Yes/No)
2. Have you encountered any racism or antisemitism in the classroom while teaching about the Holocaust? If so, please describe these incidents, including your response.
3. If so, when these incidents took place, what was the reaction from the other students? Do you think their reaction says something about the school or class culture regarding racism?
4. Outside of your classroom, have there been incidents of racism or antisemitism in your school? How did school leadership respond?
5. Considering any acts of racism or antisemitism in your school, would you say these have generally or even exclusively been perpetrated by male students?
6. If you answered no/nil/na to the questions above, could you offer any ideas why you think your school is free of racism and antisemitism?
7. Would you describe school leadership in this area as proactive or reactive?

8. Are there any school or year group level initiatives in place in your school to deal with racism or antisemitism? How effective have these been?
9. How well do you think professional development of any form has prepared you for teaching the Holocaust generally, and specifically for dealing with classroom challenges such as antisemitism?
10. How do you teach about the Holocaust? Overall philosophy and aims, starting points, focus, content, strategies, resources?
11. How successful have you been in teaching this topic? Do you measure success through formal means, such as assessment tasks, observations such as student engagement, or do you use other methods?
12. Any other comments you would like to add?

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

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- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep

Appendix ii

Year 10 Holocaust Program

Course: Year 10 History — 2022

Unit Title: *The Holocaust*

Year Level: 10

Summary	Resource Overview	Duration				
<p>This unit will introduce students to the Holocaust, beginning with the roots of antisemitism, the rise of the Nazi Party and the growth of the Nazi anti-Jewish legislative framework. Its main focus will be on the ghettos of Eastern Europe, especially Warsaw and Lodz, and the extraordinary choices that residents and leaders of the ghettos had to make on a daily basis. There is a great deal of primary source material from the ghettos that will assist students to engage with these questions and identify with the victims' plight. There are also the letters, memos and decrees of the Nazis. There is the opportunity to contrast these in formal document studies using the attached written document analysis sheets. Consider in your discussions of these documents what the Jews writing in the ghettos are unable to say, because words fail them; and what the Germans will not say, because of the need for secrecy. Students need to read between the lines to establish what is really happening.</p>		<p># Weeks (and hours)</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>Start</td><td>Term 2, week 6</td></tr><tr><td>Finish</td><td>Term 2, week 10</td></tr></table>	Start	Term 2, week 6	Finish	Term 2, week 10
Start	Term 2, week 6					
Finish	Term 2, week 10					

Unit overview	Outcomes	Big Ideas/Guiding Questions
<p>Students will develop broad knowledge of the Holocaust and the context in which it took place across Europe. They will focus on the ghettos of Eastern Europe and the role that the Jewish leadership played in the struggle to survive. The title comes from a key part of this unit, examining the moral/ethical implications of the decision-making process forced upon the Judenrät.</p>	<p>E5.1 applies an understanding of history, heritage, archaeology and the methods of historical inquiry E5.4 explains the importance of key features of past societies or periods, including groups and personalities E5.6 identifies, comprehends and evaluates the usefulness of historical sources in an historical inquiry process E5.7 explains different contexts, perspectives and interpretations about the past E5.10 selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate effectively about the past for different audiences</p>	<p>Big Ideas:</p> <p>Students engage with the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by the Judenrät in ghettos across Europe. (They are <u>not</u> asked to solve these dilemmas.)</p> <p>Guiding Questions:</p> <p>How can we explain antisemitism? What was the role of antisemitism in the development of the Holocaust?</p> <p>What was the Holocaust?</p> <p>How did the Judenrät deal with the ethical and moral dilemmas they encountered on a daily basis?</p>

Catholic Worldview	CLF Connections
<p>Catholic education builds Christ-centred learning communities immersed in the mystery of God's presence. In a sense of adventure these communities nurture the fullness of Christian life for all through Evangelisation, Tradition, Worship, Witness, Community and Service to the Church and world.</p>	<p>Rich Curriculum The teaching and learning strategies in this unit inspire learners and aid in developing confidence in dealing with historical concepts and skills. There are opportunities for individuals to demonstrate creative ICT assessments and differentiated learning in the form of differentiated and adjusted tasks.</p> <p>Culture of learning The unit allows students to explore, experiment and challenge their thinking by identifying the meaning, purpose and the context of historical sources. The unit also provides opportunities for students to select and use a variety of written, visual, and digital forms to communicate about the past.</p> <p>Pedagogy The pedagogy in this unit challenges the imaginative capacities of the learners. They are taught how to use knowledge effectively and develop historical skills in order to gain a deeper understanding about who we are and how we came to be this way. In addition</p>

the pedagogy within this unit utilises a broad range of proven methodologies and well planned multimodal approaches.

Evidence of Learning (AS, OF, FOR)

AOL

Starting ideas: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior/holocaust-bearing-witness>
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/classroom/2021/01/the-holocaust-assessing-responsibility-and-conscience/>

AAL Document analysis sheets, worksheets

AFL Gallery walks, big paper activities, class writing activities

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment, differentiation	Adjustments
<p>1.a A Sense of Community</p> <p>In this discussion-based lesson, students will develop an understanding of what it means to be included and excluded from a social group or community. While the Jews in Germany might not even be mentioned at this point, you or the students may choose to introduce comparisons immediately, depending on background knowledge.</p> <p>1.b Pre-1933 Jewish Life</p>	<p>Discussion and completion of worksheets during discussion.</p> <p>Two worksheets (one on key terms, the other on sense of community) are in the Echoes and Reflections folder.</p> <p>Begin with readings and photographs from Through Our Eyes.</p>	<p>Students from Year 9 EWH will already have knowledge of The Holocaust. Use them as class leaders in discussions etc. Lesson one, therefore, will focus on the concept of genocide, step 7 in the lesson at https://echoesandreflections.org/unit-1-studying-t</p>

<p>Students will develop an understanding of the variety of Jewish experience across Europe prior to the rise of the Nazis. The philosophy is that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students should not see Jews as defined by the Holocaust. ● Students understand that part of the legacy of the Holocaust is the culture that was lost. 	<p>Utilise video from the Yad Vashem archive: https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/video-testimonies.html Yosef Neuhaus - The Vibrancy of the Jewish Community in Lodz before the Holocaust (<i>as Lodz will be a significant focus later in this unit</i>)</p> <p>Conclude this section with video testimony from <u>Echoes and Reflections</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use a range of photos from http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/see-jewish-life-before-holocaust-newly-released-di-180952582/?no-ist OR http://vishniac.icp.org/ (use search tool) ● Use these as stimulus to answer questions: ● <i>What's going on in this photograph?</i> ● <i>What story is the photograph telling? What do you see that makes you say that? What story (or stories) might be left out?</i> ● <i>Who do you think took this photo and for what purpose? What do you see that leads you to this guess?</i> ● <i>Who do you think is the intended audience for this photograph? Why?</i> ● <i>What impact does this image have on you? What does the photographer do to create that image? Consider form and content.</i> ● <i>What do you think we might see if we could look beyond the frame of the photograph?</i> ● <i>Roman Vishniac often wrote text for the photographs he took for the AJDC, or captions were sometimes added years after the images were taken. Often, the images we see online or in a newspaper are accompanied by headlines or text, which can enhance or change our understanding of the image. What text would you add to this image? What impact might the text have on how you interpret the image?</i> ● Class discussion – what ideas about the Jews before WW2 do we get from these images (the idea should be that they're normal!) ● Research PEEL paragraph: Life before the Holocaust 	<p>he-holocaust/?state=open#content then use the biographical cards from USHMM before examining pre-war Jewish life in some detail.</p> <p>(At this point it might be useful to provide a video overview of the Holocaust: https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=0&MediaId=7827)</p> <p>(Q&A through and after the video above took most of the lesson. Valuable questions.)</p> <p>Follow this with discussion based on antisemitism PPT in Step 3 below</p>
<p>2. What is the Holocaust?</p> <p>Students are to develop their own definition and ideas about what the Holocaust is. They need to move beyond the focus on “6 million” and begin to see the individuals.</p>	<p>Students are allocated one card each for silent reading. Discussion with partner about the life and death/survival of their individual.</p> <p>Group discussion builds mind-map on board under headings: Age, location, gender, reason for persecution, treatment, death and survival.</p> <p>Students copy mind-map.</p> <p>At conclusion, students compose their own 6-8 line definition of what the Holocaust was. Share ideas if time.</p> <p><i>In the resources folder, there is a copy of an article on using these cards that appeared in Teaching History.</i></p> <p>Extension activity: if time permits, conduct a gallery walk of the 16 artworks on display. These were created in 2012 in remembrance of the Holocaust. Add a sheet of big paper next to each for a silent written reflection on each one, focusing on how it attempts to graphically capture an aspect of the Holocaust.</p>	

	<p>Biographical cards from USHMM. These are provided as a pdf in the resources folder and can be accessed at: https://www.ushmm.org/teach/teaching-materials/holocaust These are best printed onto cardboard and laminated for student use.</p> <p>Map of Europe in 1939/40</p> <p>Artwork – provided to all Yad Vashem seminar graduates in 2012.</p>	<p>Viewed short film from Yad Vashem on Jewish life before the Holocaust: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7WLk-KVYM4 Then students read through first chapter from <u>Through Our Eyes</u> and completed the four questions at the end of the chapter. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sMcNY_BZbXVkgLxL8wBJTPdcrmiVi_3Gw</p>
<p>3. Antisemitism over the last 2,000 years.</p> <p>The growth of antisemitism following the Roman occupation of Judea, especially the diaspora following the Bar Kochba revolt of 132-136AD. Jews, to the Romans, were trouble-makers because they would not accept occupation by a foreign force. antisemitism during the Middle Ages continues the prejudices that spring from the Romans and early Christians.</p>	<p>Use Powerpoint for note-taking but focus should be on discussion, especially of key texts and images. https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1RV9kNSf-oGhghNU0cYBzodGcyJMGsnG3ikLt7YV-J4M/edit#slide=id.p1Holocaust-Year9 https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1L9RMi5PgE_pv2bd1bSFwAunI_wAzREDGMtGt6ku3SCs/edit?usp=sharing (just the first few sections)</p> <p>At conclusion of Powerpoint, students should compose a short reflective text explaining the growth of antisemitism.</p> <p>Powerpoint on the growth of antisemitism. Gospel of Matthew is included for discussion about the phrase “His blood be on us and on our children.”</p> <p>There is a worksheet of questions that accompanies this Powerpoint. Some questions require thought beyond what is in the Powerpoint.</p> <p>If doing this unit with more capable students, ancient historians such as Josephus could also be used in an historiographical study.</p>	<p>Focus on Kristallnacht: “Focus for the double today (1st July) is on Jewish life before the Holocaust so that we can begin to understand the extent of the loss. We will use the two videos below, one of the maps in N4, and a selection of readings. As you view the video overview of the Holocaust, record your questions for a Q&A</p>
<p>4. The Nazis Come to Power</p> <p>The roots of Nazism, Hitler’s rise to power, the legislative program of the Nazis in the 1930s, culminating in Kristallnacht</p> <p>The Nazis’ use of propaganda</p>	<p>View DVD “Outcast: Jewish Persecution in Nazi Germany, 1933-1938.” This is a 40 minute DVD. Students should summarise the names and impact of the key pieces of legislation from this DVD. There is a worksheet of questions that accompanies this DVD.</p> <p>Echoes and Reflections unit: https://echoesandreflections.org/unit-2-antisemitism/?state=open#content</p> <p>Possible extension unit:</p>	<p>Focus on Kristallnacht: “Focus for the double today (1st July) is on Jewish life before the Holocaust so that we can begin to understand the extent of the loss. We will use the two videos below, one of the maps in N4, and a selection of readings. As you view the video overview of the Holocaust, record your questions for a Q&A</p>

	https://iwitness.usc.edu/sfi/Activity/Detail.aspx?activityID=2893&retainFilter=true	<p>Further Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After viewing the video, Glimpses of Jewish Life Before the Holocaust, and reading the quotes from "Through Our Eyes," how would you describe pre-war Jewish life? 2. Find two ways in which the life of young Jewish children was both similar and dissimilar to your own. 3. Is there any suggestion in the quotes of what would happen in the future? Write about a page in total for these three questions. <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_lwqoEZBiw0OtQPgRSyLf6wz4l9GwdujeSH1tAacuK8/edit?usp=drive_open&oid=114875548161295650398</p> <p>https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/animate-d-map/world-war-ii-and-the-holocaust</p> <p>https://echoesandreflections.org/unit-3-nazi-germany/?state=open#content</p>
<p>5. Optional: Nazi ideology and legislation.</p> <p>This lesson builds on the material from the previous lesson and uses a document study to build a fuller picture of the impact of the legislative program</p> <p>https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch Edward Adler – Survivor, about effects Nuremberg Laws <p>https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?ModuleId=0&MediaId=2711 & Jews of Wurzburg 1933 – 38</p> <p>http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/multimedia.asp#!prettyPhoto Class discussion around which laws are being applied to them.</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1_ED9BflrxOz9yoERec59ZTN5Fv_kqtN5HFPsRDixb84/edit?usp=sharing</p>	<p>Start with the Nazis’ 25 Point Plan from 1920 and conclude with the Kristallnacht Decrees. Focus is on the increasingly harsh legislative program conducted by the Nazis.</p> <p>Big Paper activity. Select 4-6 examples of legislation. Students engage in silent conversation on paper, asking/answering questions, highlighting major impacts of legislation.</p> <p>The full PDFs and Word documents (some quite long) are included with this program, but teachers will need to edit information that is deemed superfluous to classroom needs.</p> <p>For more information on how to conduct a Big Paper activity, go to: http://www.facing.org/resources/strategies/big-paper-building-silent-con</p> <p>Required documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nazis’ 25 Point Plan • April Boycott Decree • Law for Restoration of the Professional Civil Service • Nuremberg Laws • Documents Required to Obtain a Visa • Heydrich’s Kristallnacht orders • Law for the Exclusion of Jews from Economic Life • Hitler’s January 1939 speech 	
<p>6. Nazi ideology and legislation</p> <p>Students are to investigate the impact of Nazi legislation on individuals and families by researching from the Yad Vashem database.</p> <p>USHMM have added this ppt on legislation: https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/USHMM-Time-Line-Activity-Laws-Decrees.pdf</p>	<p>The first part of this lesson is revision from the DVD by recounting the major pieces of anti-Jewish legislation. Use the summary sheet to do this and provide a copy for students. Spend about 10-15 minutes doing this.</p> <p>In the second stage of the lesson, students should go to the Yad Vashem website and research the impact of the laws on individuals. They will need to key in quite specific search terms.</p> <p>Summary sheets from Echoes and Reflections – pages 113-115</p>	

	<p>Website: http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/multimedia.asp</p> <p>Alternatively, use the USC Shoah Foundation website for its video testimony: http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher introduces the next phase of anti-Jewish laws, that is, state sanctioned violence. Students view clip explaining the events of Kristallnacht. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrypuxgCbH4 • Students listen to survivor testimony of the Kristallnacht and record these in their books. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bfjc1wFBIZo&app=desktop, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoFyWU4saOs&app=desktop • 	
<p>7. The outbreak of war</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a timeline of human experience, not simply dates and events <p><i>Why didn't they leave?</i> Exploration of the options open to Jews. Students are assigned a country and research their response to Jewish immigration: Japan, China, Russia, England, USA, Canada, Australia (look into the efforts made by Aboriginal Australian William Cooper, as well as idea for Zionist homeland in Australia – the Kimberley Plan, the Cosgrove Plan), Dominican Republic, Argentina. What does this say about options? Also look at Hitler's Madagascar Plan.</p>	<p>Use the diary entries from children in Germany, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere to explore the impact of the outbreak of war on Jewish communities across eastern Europe.</p> <p>This resource allows students to work from a basic timeline of the conflict (page 55 in the text) to understand the impact on children. Use this as a basis for discussion and aim to generate empathy for victims of the same age as our students.</p> <p>Students could copy or be given the timeline and then asked to juxtaposition the experiences of children during the Holocaust with the key events.</p> <p>This lesson will probably take about 30 minutes, depending on the level of discussion, questions, etc. Some classes can spend an hour or more, especially if they are genuinely developing empathy with the writers.</p> <p>A good activity to finish the lesson is the gallery walk described below.</p> <p>Selected pages from the text <i>Through Our Eyes: Children Witness the Holocaust</i> (Yad Vashem, 2004) The relevant section for this activity is pages 55-65, but this resource is excellent for all aspects of our study.</p> <p>Photographic posters of the Holocaust</p>	

<p>Gallery walk of images of the Holocaust. This might be a good lesson to both do some quick revision and prepare students for the lessons ahead</p>	<p>Students view a series of 17 posters, laid out in chronological order. Each poster has a blank sheet next to it for students to write down any questions, reflections or problems they have with the posters. Should take about 20-30 minutes to view all of them – they need to take their time and read captions. The posters cover the period 1933-45.</p> <p>For detailed instructions on the Gallery Walk as a teaching strategy, go to: http://www.facing.org/resources/strategies/gallery-walk-teaching-strategy Poster Set – <u>To Bear Witness</u> (from Yad Vashem)</p> <p>Butcher’s paper for students to write down and respond to comments and questions</p>	
<p>8. Document Study This lesson allows students to see clearly the transition from exclusion to extermination and the role of ghettoisation. This lesson can be treated as a conventional document study (teacher exposition), focusing on the language and purpose of the documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Heydrich’s Ghetto letter to the Einsatzgruppen b) Hans Frank’s decree for creation of Judenräte. c) Einsatzgruppen Report from Karl Jaeger. 	<p>At the start of this lesson, teacher will need to provide context for period 1939-41: Nazi-Soviet Pact; invasion of Poland; Operation Barbarossa; impact of war on civilians; creation of Judenräte.</p> <p>Work through the three documents in chronological order. https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qzFzhCUeKQh6eLZRkynl3kZWTPdlr9YQCUVtgjwybSM&authuser=0</p> <p>Written document analysis sheets from US Archives – these, combined with a good deal of teacher support and explication, allow students to access the key point in each of the documents.</p> <p>Copies of the three documents in accompanying folder or access at: Heydrich’s Schnellbrief from http://users.stlcc.edu/rkalfus/PDFs/086.pdf</p> <p>Hans Frank’s Judenrat decree from: Noakes and Pridham (1988), <u>Nazism: A Documentary Reader</u>, Volume 3, pp 451-459). PDF in document folder.</p> <p>Karl Jaeger’s Einsatzgruppen from http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/document/DocJaeger.htm</p>	<p>https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1rWXVEvpnr_oOn9wiJLw6PfXYVhBj7ay83Dxz9uqhGPFk/edit</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KRr1b_ET3S_s_o7J57_m1US9rou6SUuBFY_nvu1JSqzn0/edit</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NIZTK_sAMq5_uSuW0OqBwT7zBk7gSeF6_MPMz2XdTf37c/edit</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1usd7Q3aHFb9_ffScaJen6ywfRu1bpvtY_Uri_hlBkAX5c/edit#heading=h.ii4d8exbaso</p> <p>https://www.visme.co/timeline-maker/</p>
<p>9. Life in the Ghettos (i)</p>	<p>Suggested Lesson sequence of activities</p>	<p>https://echoesandreflections.org/timeline-of-the-holocaust/?evtyear=1944&evt</p>

<p>At this point students need a significant historical basis for the assessment task. The readings here provide a solid overview of the ghettos' purpose, locations, impact and the range of activities, both German and Jewish.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brainstorm the word "ghetto." Refer back to Heydrich's ghetto decree from last lesson. Think about contemporary meanings. 2. View the video testimony (Part 1 of Visual History Testimony: The Ghettos) from Ellis Lewin and Joseph Morton. 3. Based on the viewing, discussion questions on p128 of <u>Echoes and Reflections</u>. 4. View the photograph "Jews Crossing the Bridge in Ghetto Lodz," on the intro Powerpoint. 5. Based on the viewing, discussion questions on p128 of <u>Echoes and Reflections</u>. 6. Read together the handout titled "The Ghetto." <p><u>Echoes and Reflections</u>, p125-135 for lesson ideas and strategies. <u>Echoes and Reflections</u>, p139-161 for student handouts. Use those that are most relevant to your class. Video testimony on <u>Echoes and Reflections</u> DVD. Map of the Ghettos of Europe and photographs on Power Point in compliance folder titles "Life in Ghettos – intro Powerpoint." There are also three videos in the compliance folder on the Lodz and Krakow ghettos that should assist in developing student understanding.</p>	<p>month=8&evtday=7&fbclid=IwAR0-gnfeLk_dvyNqMDaMwwwzaNYw6kSAVTiW73NwzuLvTxNAVYOnUW0qwbM</p>
<p>10. Life in the Ghettos (ii)</p> <p>Students view a range of photographs from the Warsaw Ghetto and align these with diary excerpts to gain a personalised understanding of life in the Ghetto.</p>	<p>Use the photographs on the PowerPoint Everyday Life in the Warsaw Ghetto in the same order as they appear in the student booklet. Ensure these booklets are collected at the end of the lesson.</p> <p>With each photograph, discuss the perspective, audience, context, etc, especially with regard to the photographer (a German). Give students the background to the photographs when you consider appropriate. (This is contained in the teacher booklet.)</p> <p><u>Everyday Life in the Warsaw Ghetto</u>, from Yad Vashem. This publication comes with a CD of photographs which are best used in a Powerpoint. Yad Vashem has a series of videos to support this unit. Produced for teachers, they are suitable for use in class: https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-videos/video-toolbox/hevt-warsaw.html</p> <p>You will need to spend some time familiarising yourself with this resource and deciding which images to show and which readings to include. There is time to view and discuss</p>	

	<p>all of them if desired. The following two activities would be very suitable for inclusion with this resource:</p> <p>Learn to Listen/Listen to Learn activity after journal writing from Facing History website: http://www.facing.org/resources/strategies/learn-listenlisten-learn-deve</p> <p>Save the Last Word for Me activity from the Facing History website.: http://www.facing.org/resources/strategies/save-last-word-me</p>	
<p>11. Choiceless Choices (i) – resistance, cooperation and the moral and ethical dilemmas confronting Jewish leadership.</p> <p>This is one of the most important lessons of the unit on the Holocaust as it forces students to confront difficult ethical and moral decisions that were faced by the Jewish leadership of the ghettos.</p>	<p>Working in pairs, students receive one card explaining an impossible choice facing the Judenräte. They do NOT need to answer this question or find a solution. Students DO need to report back to the class, explaining the problem and the moral/ethical dilemmas it presented to the Judenräte. Wherever possible, they should also refer to actual examples where this choice was confronted and explain the decision that was made.</p> <p>PDF of cards (provided as a Powerpoint titled “Judenrät Choiceless Choices student cards.”</p> <p>Internet access</p> <p>Research cards provided from last lesson and present ideas back to rest of class. Remember that there are no solutions to these dilemmas. The idea is to develop empathy in students by exploring real life and death situations.</p>	
<p>11a. The process of destruction 1 The Holocaust by Bullets</p>	<p>Einsatzgruppen Reports https://www.facinghistory.org/holocaust-and-human-behavior/chapter-9/mobile-killing-units</p>	
<p>11b.. The Process of Destruction 2 The Extermination Camps</p>	<p>Auschwitz Album (ppt and booklet)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch drone footage of fly over Auschwitz https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V76jjzo-U4E What do they see/don't see? Why are buildings missing/destroyed. • http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005162. Students compose a structured response which explains the purpose, conditions and outcomes of the death marches. Discussion: There are only 8 surviving photos of the death marches – why? 	

12. Holocaust and Human Behaviour	<p>Why did so many engage in killing? Were they just following orders, or did they embrace it?</p> <p>https://www.facinghistory.org/holocaust-and-human-behavior/chapter-9/reserve-police-battalion-101</p> <p>https://www.facinghistory.org/holocaust-and-human-behavior/chapter-9/matter-obedience</p>	
13. Righteous Among the Nations		
14. Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Idea of resistance: What constitutes resistance? – Discuss different types, eg spiritual, cultural, armed, passive ● Students may view a clip on the Warsaw Uprising and create a newspaper report on the event. http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005188 	
<p>15. Film based activities on <i>Schindler's List</i></p> <p>PRIOR TO THIS LESSON STUDENTS WILL HAVE VIEWED THE FILM, IDEALLY WITHOUT INTERRUPTION!</p>	<p>This lesson will allow students to focus on questions of power –how can power be defined, what are Goeth and Schindler's definitions of power? How does power relate to the ethical and moral decisions made by Goeth, Schindler and the Judenrate?</p> <p>Watch scenes from <i>Schindler's List</i> that highlight symbols of power throughout the film (03:23-04:23) (052:10-053:20) (01:06:50-1:08:13),(01:43:20-01:45:54)</p> <p><i>Schindler's List</i>, Questions of Power worksheet</p>	
<p>16. Film based activities on <i>Schindler's List</i></p> <p>This lesson will allow students to focus on obedience and choice – what choices were open to the soldiers, Schindler, Stern and rescuers of the holocaust victims (gentile and non-gentile)?</p>	<p>Discussion on obedience and choice in <i>Schindler's List</i>. What choices are the characters faced with? Students will make predictions on Stanley Milgram's experiment then watch it. Students then watch excerpt from <i>Schindler's List</i> (01:33:38) and answer the attached question with a class discussion</p> <p>Schindler's List, Obedience and Choice worksheet</p> <p>https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/schindlers-list-study-guide</p>	
<p>17. Film based activities on <i>Schindler's List</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● What Did Oskar Schindler View from the Hill? ● Righteous Among the Nations: Oskar Schindler as a Study Case. How 	<p>Definition and discussion of who is a Righteous Among the Nations. Students will be divided into groups and act as a committee of judges to discuss and decide, using historical documents, whether Schindler should receive the title Righteous Among the Nations. Before beginning, students watch excerpt at 01:08:07 (Schindler horseback riding and girl in the red coat)</p>	

important are moral choices in today's world?	<p><i>Schindler's List</i>, What Did Oskar Schindler View from the Hill? Righteous Among the Nations: Oskar Schindler as a Study Case worksheets and historical documents http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/schindler.asp</p>	
18. <i>Defiance</i>	<p>Study Guide at: https://www.sps186.org/downloads/basic/520020/Teaching_with_Defiance_guide_Video.pdf</p>	
19. <i>Denial</i>	<p>Who denies the Holocaust and why? How can we argue with Holocaust deniers? What is the evidence that the Holocaust actually happened?</p>	
20. Liberation, Nuremberg Trials and Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Show first 10 minutes of Episode 9 of Band of Brothers: Why We Fight – shows liberation of death camps. Discussion as to the reactions of the townspeople. Compare and contrast with original movie film “Civilians at Weimar” http://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file_num=1923 Consider the issues associated with de-Nazification. ● Teacher explains the liberation experience of concentration camps and those still alive on the death marches. ● Examine photos of Liberation (in Folder), compare and contrast differing photos. Why is the man crying when he has been liberated? Why are there children in Auschwitz (usually killed)? Article on children photo: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2926645/Survivors-visit-Auschwitz-day-ahead-70th-anniversary.html ● Nations, International Human Rights Law, the creation of the sovereign state of Israel, war crimes tribunals. ● Discussion of the “fairness” of the Nuremberg Trials – was it “winner’s justice”? ● Teacher explains the contested historical question regarding how much knowledge the German population had regarding the events and different stages of the Holocaust. Students could study an overview of Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband’s new study, ‘What we Knew’ (2006). ● Students examine and debate the moral and historical validity of the five arguments historians have composed in an attempt to understand why the German people allowed the Holocaust to occur. Present simplified version of the Goldhagen/Browning/Kershaw debate ● Memorials – In groups, students research a Holocaust Memorial from around the world. What does it symbolise? Why is it there? ● Critical viewing: Choice of film, eg In Darkness, Defiance, Escape from Sobibor, The Pianist, The Counterfeiters – Film review for accuracy, interpretation ● Should Hollywood be able to make films about the Holocaust or does that trivialise it? ● Examination of treatment of minorities today – could the Holocaust happen again? ● Discussion around Holocaust Denial – lesson ideas in Folder from Echoes and Reflections. Also could discuss Iran’s Holocaust Cartoon Competition: http://www.newsweek.com/opening-holocaust-cartoon-contest-exhibition-tehran-provokes-continued-461286 	

Evaluation

Teachers complete their evaluation at the end of the unit (answer all 4 questions below). It is shared and discussed at PLT and the program is adjusted accordingly for the following year.

Are the diverse needs of students satisfied effectively by the program and identifies curriculum adjustments?

At what level have syllabus outcomes been demonstrated by students?

Have the pedagogical practices employed been effective?

How can the program be modified for future use?

Signature:

Date:

Additional Resources:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRcNq4OYTyE&has_verified=1 USHMM overview, "The Path to Genocide." Comes with a warning about the graphic nature of the images.

<https://www.hdot.org/> Deborah Lipstadt's website on the trial against David Irving, with concise material on many aspects of Holocaust denial.

<http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/2018/educational2018.html> UN resources on the Holocaust.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWneASsotkc> Paul Salmons shows what information can be gleaned from a single artefact. Outstanding short resource that could be used as a scaffold for student research.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/18/opinions/mark-zuckerberg-facebook-holocaust-denial-lipstadt-opinion/index.html> Lipstadt replies to Zuckerberg's decision to allow Holocaust denial on Facebook.

Appendix iii

Year 10 – Knowledge of the Holocaust Questionnaire

Year 10 - Knowledge of the Holocaust

This questionnaire is designed to give your teachers an understanding of what you already know about one of our topics for Year 10, the Holocaust. This will help us to plan our lessons in 2022. We will ask the same questions of you at the end of Year 10 to see how effective our teaching has been and to help us reassess our plans for Year 10 in 2023.

Please take the questionnaire seriously and spend time thinking carefully about your responses. Your names and email addresses are being collected so we can discuss responses with you if necessary.

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

2. 1. What is your gender *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

3. 2. Did you study Elective History in Year 9? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

4. 3. What does 'racism' mean? Please only tick one box *

Mark only one oval.

- Prejudice against people because of gender
- Prejudice against people because of ethnicity
- Prejudice against people because of social class
- Prejudice against people because of age
- Or tick here if you're not sure or don't know
- Other: _____

5. 4. What does 'antisemitism' mean? Please only tick one box *

Mark only one oval.

- Prejudice against poor people
- Prejudice against Jews
- Prejudice against Hindus
- Prejudice against homeless people
- Or tick here if you're not sure or don't know

6. 5. What does 'genocide' mean? Please only tick one box *

Mark only one oval.

- A violent disturbance of the peace (e.g. a riot)
- The accidental killing of one human by another
- The deliberate attempt to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group
- The deliberate killing of one human being by another
- Or tick here if you're not sure or don't know
- Other: _____

7. 6. Have you ever seen or heard the word 'Holocaust' before? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I have definitely heard about the Holocaust
- Yes, I think I've heard about the Holocaust
- No, I don't think I have heard about the Holocaust
- No, I definitely have not heard about the Holocaust

8. 7. Please describe in one or two sentences what you think the Holocaust was. *

9. 8. When did the Holocaust take place? *

Mark only one oval.

- In the 1920s
- In the 1940s
- In the 1960s
- In the 1970s

10. 9. Who were the victims of the Holocaust? *

11. 10. Who do you believe was responsible for the Holocaust? *

12. 10. Approximately how many people died in the Holocaust? *

Mark only one oval.

2 million

4 million

6 million

8 million

13. 11. From which country did the largest number of people murdered in the Holocaust come from?

Mark only one oval.

Germany

Poland

Soviet Union

Hungary

USA

14. 12. Do you think all students should learn about the Holocaust? Why? *

15. 13. In which subjects have you previously learned about the Holocaust? *

Tick all that apply.

- English
- Drama
- Science
- History
- Religion

16. 14. Have you ever learned about the Holocaust outside of school? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

17. 15. If you answered yes in the last question, please tick the box next to your source of information about the Holocaust.

Tick all that apply.

- Film
- Documentary
- Novel
- News sources
- Internet
- Museum
- Survivor talk
- Other: _____

18. 16. Pick one statement from the list below that you think best describes how much you know about the Holocaust.

Mark only one oval.

- I don't know anything about the Holocaust
- I know a little bit about the Holocaust
- I know quite a lot about the Holocaust
- I know lots about the Holocaust

19. 17. Would you like to learn more about the Holocaust? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

20. 18. Young people should learn about the Holocaust to stop something like that from happening again

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Stro Strongly agree

21. 19. Young people should learn about the Holocaust so they understand where prejudice and racism can lead

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

22. 20. The Holocaust is not related to my life because it happened in another country *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

23. 21. Young people should learn about the Holocaust so that they will be more likely to stand up for people who get picked on/bullied

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

24. 22. The Holocaust is not related to my life because it happened so long ago *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

25. 23. Young people should learn about the Holocaust so that they have more sympathy for refugees coming to this country to escape discrimination and murder

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

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Google Forms

Appendix iv

Holocaust Program – Case Study 1

The Holocaust | Stage 5 | History

Summary

Students gain an understanding of the Holocaust and the history of the persecution of Jews. Concepts such as Choiceless Choices, the various roles of bystanders, collaborators and perpetrators, and the various forms of resistance to the Nazi regime, are explored. This topic allows for extension of students through investigation of the ideas of "who owns history" and confronting Holocaust denial. This unit links into various topics covered in Stage 6 Modern History.

Duration

Term 1
Detail: 4 periods per week

Outcomes

History K-10

- › HT5-1 explains and assesses the historical forces and factors that shaped the modern world and Australia
- › HT5-2 sequences and explains the significant patterns of continuity and change in the development of the modern world and Australia
- › HT5-3 explains and analyses the motives and actions of past individuals and groups in the historical contexts that shaped the modern world and Australia
- › HT5-7 explains different contexts, perspectives and interpretations of the modern world and Australia
- › HT5-8 selects and analyses a range of historical sources to locate information relevant to an historical inquiry
- › HT5-9 applies a range of relevant historical terms and concepts when communicating an understanding of the past
- › HT5-10 selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate effectively about the past for different audiences

Key concepts

- Continuity and change: changes in the Jewish community before, during and after the Holocaust
- Cause and effect: reasons for the Holocaust and the impact of it on both Jewish and non-Jewish societies
- Empathetic understanding: understanding the ongoing, cross generational, impact of the Holocaust
- Significance: the importance of the Holocaust as a historical event
- Choiceless Choices - the concept of being forced between two equally undesirable choices

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Reg. Date	Resources
<p>What is a Jew?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the broad concepts and context of the Holocaust and why we study it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of: prior knowledge of Holocaust, what is genocide, why people are persecuted 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video What is a Jew https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCmHd_scHik&feature=youtu.be

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Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Reg. Date	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand what it means to be Jewish Identify attributes of Jews-secular/non-secular, ethnicity, customs, laws 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The path to Genocide handout Video Yad Vashem (www.yadvashem.org/VideoToolbox) Intro to Judaism handout
<p>History of Anti-Semitism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient origins - Deicide, association with the devil, Jews as the anti Christ that undermines society Middle Ages - Blood Libel, Desecration of the host, Jewish badges, Usury Early Modern - Conspiracy theories (link to Jews as the anti-Christ that undermines society) Modern concepts of race 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate origins of Anti-Semitism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient origins - Deicide, association with the devil, Jews as the anti-Christ that undermines society Middle Ages - Blood Libel, Desecration of the host, Jewish badges, Usury Early Modern - Conspiracy theories (link to Jews as the anti Christ that undermines society) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore reasons for distrust of Jews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on identity and the labels we use for people. Explore how these labels are used and the impact of them, along with the differences between the labels we identify with ourselves, and those that others give us. Draw links between the concepts of "race" and the ideas of Charles Darwin 		<p>Handout - History of Antisemitism http://iwitness.usc.edu</p> <p>Teaching the Holocaust-Units 6 &7</p> <p>Teaching the Holocaust: Handout 2.1 Timeline p 20-21</p> <p>Teaching the Holocaust: Handout 2.2 Nuremberg Laws p 22-23</p>

<p>Pre-War Jewish Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secular and Religious ▪ Urban and Rural ▪ Assimilated and Traditional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appreciate the variety of experiences throughout Europe leading up to World War 1. ▪ Understand that Germany was the safest place in Europe for Jews ▪ Recognise the differences between Jews that were secular & religious, assimilated & traditional 		<p>How Was It Humanly Possible? Pages 15-37</p> <p>Echoes and Reflections - Chapter 3</p>
<p>Nazi Germany</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nazi seizure of Power ▪ Persecution of non-Jewish victim groups, especially T4 program ▪ Nuremberg Laws ▪ Marking of Jews - yellow stars to create separation and 'social death' ▪ Policies of Racial Hygiene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How & why Hitler came to power ▪ Self-perception of identity, versus how the state identifies a person. The fact that it didn't matter if an individual considered themselves Jewish, it depended on whether the Nazi regime did. ▪ Explore the aims of the persecution of Jews ▪ Understand the pseudo-science behind the concept of Racial 		<p>Echoes and Reflections - Chapter 4</p> <p>Examples of antisemitism propaganda</p> <p>Animated maps of the Holocaust</p> <p>https://www.ushmm.org/learn/mapping-initiatives/holocaust-history-animated-maps</p>

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Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Reg. Date	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Kristallnacht" ▪ Expropriation ('Aryanisation', robbing the Jews) ▪ Expulsion (forced emigration) ▪ Dachau - the beginning of the camp system 	<p>Hygiene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop empathy with the victims of stereotyping and to relate this to the Jewish experience in Nazi Germany 		

<p>Ghettos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process of ghettoization of Polish Jews ▪ Life and Death in the Ghettos - a general introduction to the establishment of ghettos and the living conditions found there ▪ The establishment of Jewish Councils, their structure and tasks ▪ Case study - Jewish Council - Warsaw (Adam Czerniakow) ▪ Case study - Jewish Council - Lodz (Chaim Rumkowski) ▪ Ethical problems of passing judgment on the past <p>Camps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Nazi camp system ▪ Differences between Work camp / Death Camp ▪ Methods of deportation and transports ▪ Everyday life and conditions in camps ▪ Choiceless Choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community of prisoners - the hierarchy of inmates ▪ Kapos - brutality and solidarity ▪ J&uuml;dische Sonderkommandos&rdquo; (Jewish Special units) ▪ Ethical problems of passing judgment on the past ▪ Death marches ▪ Childern 	<p>Students are shown the film Schindler's List whilst looking at Ghettos, Camps and The Righteous Among the Nations topics. Categorize camps according to location, purpose and size Investigate conditions within the camps</p> <p>Understand the vast different experiences of individuals according to where & when they arrived in the camps Discuss The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas and historical inaccuracies</p> <p>Investigate the role of Jews within the camps</p> <p>Discuss whether Kapos should be held responsible for their actions. Can we (should we?) judge those that act immorally in and attempt to protect their own lives?</p>		<p>Echoes and Reflections - Chapter 5</p> <p>Schindler's List film</p> <p>Map of Ghettos</p> <p>Workshet 5.1 Adam Czerniakow Teaching the Holocaust p 40 Workshet 5.1 Chaim Rumkowski Teaching the Holocaust p 41 Echoes and Reflections - Chapter 6.</p> <p>The Auschwitz Album, collection of images from Auschwitz http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/index.asp</p> <p>Mapping the Holocaust - the following websites provide info on the routes that Jews were transported to the camps throughout Europe</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/06/world/middleeast/mapping-the-holocaust-how-jews-were-taken-to-their-final-destinations.html?_r=0</p> <p>http://db.yadvashem.org/deportation/search.html?language=en Schindler's List film</p> <p>Maps of camp locations and types</p> <p>Symbols used within camps to identify types of prisoners Born in Auschwitz https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/05/woman-tells-of-her-birth-in-barracks-of-auschwitz-birkenau</p>
<p>Righteous Among the Nations & Resistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explanation of award of Righteous Among the Nations ▪ What motivated Gentiles to risk their lives to save Jews? ▪ Why didn't more Jews get saved? ▪ Kindertransport <p>Resistance - passive and active</p>	<p>Case Study - Oskar Schindler</p> <p>Reflection on why Schindler did what he did, what motivated him. Was he a good person?</p> <p>Discussion of the various forms that resistance to the Nazis took - examples of active resistance (Warsaw Ghetto uprising) and passive resistance (maintaining faith)</p>		<p>Echoes and Reflections - Chapter 7</p> <p>Schindler's List film</p> <p>Photos of passive resistance</p>

Content	Teaching, learning and assessment	Reg. Date	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining Jewish identity and faith ▪ Active resistance - Warsaw Uprising 			
<p>After the War</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jewish liberation from concentration camps ▪ Displaced Persons camps and migration patterns ▪ Post-war trials: Nuremberg, various German/Austrian trials, Eichmann, Australia (Serniki) ▪ What happened to Jews after the war ▪ The creation of Israel <p>Post-Unit Reflection</p> <p>Can we learn from the past? Other genocides (eg Rwanda, Cambodia).</p>	<p>Empathize with the liberators and investigate the impact of their experiences</p> <p>Investigation of life after the Holocaust for survivors. Background to establishment of the State of Israel</p> <p>War Crimes Trials and the hunt for the Nazis</p> <p>Links between the Holocaust and self-identity, bullying etc.</p>		<p>War Crimes and the hunt for Nazis</p> <p>http://articles.latimes.com/1993-05-28/news/mn-40823_1_war_crimes-trial</p> <p>http://www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/NAZI-WAR-CRIMINALS-REPORT_2013.PDF Video - The Happiest Man You'll Ever Meet (7:30 Report - Holocaust Survivor Eddie Jaku)</p> <p>http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2017/s4670283.htm</p> <p>Lessons from Auschwitz - The Power of Our Words</p> <p>http://ed.ted.com/lessons/lessons-from-auschwitz-the-power-of-our-words-benjamin-zander</p>

Assessment overview	Adjustments	Literacy & Numeracy Activities
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<p>Complete the video matching activity - Pyramid of Hate 5 marks</p> <p>Find one piece of primary evidence (newspaper articles, photos, survivor statement, etc.) to support each level of the pyramid (total 5 pieces of evidence). You must include the details of where you got each source and a brief description of it. 5 marks</p> <p>Find one example of resistance (either by Jews or Gentiles) towards the treatment of Jews by the Nazis (10 marks). Write 150 words explaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was done ▪ Who did it ▪ What their motivation was ▪ What the outcome was <p>Write a 250 word essay explaining why it was possible for Nazi Germany to move from Level 1 (prejudice towards Jews) to Level 5 (attempted genocide of Jews). (10 marks)</p>		<p>Numeracy</p> <p>Graphing of numbers of Jews in various camps</p> <p>Wansee conference – numeric list of Jewish population by European country</p> <p>Literacy</p> <p>Glossary & definitions</p> <p>Introduction of Hebrew/Yiddish terms</p> <p>Cloze passages</p> <p>Exploration of different meanings of synonyms – murder/killing/execution, Holocaust/Shoah, victim/survivor</p>
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Appendix v

Holocaust Research Task

HIGH SCHOOL - YEAR 10 HISTORY ASSESSMENT

The Holocaust

Task Title : The Holocaust – How Was it Possible?

Task Weight: 25%

Date Issued: Week 4

Date Due Part 1&2: _____ Part 3: _____ Part 4: _____

Outcomes Assessed:

HT5-1 explains and assesses the historical forces and factors that shaped the modern world

HT5-3 explains and analyses the motives and actions of past individuals and groups in the historical contexts that shaped the modern world

HT5-4 explains and analyses the causes and effects of events and developments in the modern world

HT5-6 uses relevant evidence from sources to support historical narratives, explanations and analyses of the modern world

HT5-9 applies a range of relevant historical terms and concepts when communicating an understanding of the past

HT5-10 selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate effectively about the past for different audiences

TASK DETAILS

1. Complete the video matching activity – Pyramid of Hate (next page). *5 marks*
2. Find one piece of primary evidence (newspaper articles, photos, survivor statement, etc.) to support each level of the pyramid (total 5 pieces of evidence).
You **must include the details of where you got each source** and a brief description of it. *5 marks*
3. Find one example of resistance (either by Jews or Gentiles) towards the treatment of Jews by the Nazis (*10 marks*). Write 150 words explaining:
 - What was done
 - Who did it
 - What their motivation was
 - What the outcome was
4. Write a 250 word essay explaining why it was possible for Nazi Germany to move from Level 1 (prejudice towards Jews) to Level 5 (attempted genocide of Jews).
(10 marks)

Year 10 Assessment Task: How Was it Possible?

Name _____ Class _____

Marking Criteria	Marking Scale	Marks
Pyramid of Hate handout (Part 1)	Correctly completes all five levels of the pyramid (5) Four levels correct (4) Three levels correct (3) Two levels correct (2) One level correct (1) Not attempted/Zero correct (0)	/5
Primary Evidence (Part 2)	Five primary sources provided that are correctly linked to each level of the pyramid (5) 4 or 5 primary sources provided, most of which are accurately linked to the levels of the pyramid (4) 3 or 4 primary sources provided OR sources not accurately linked to pyramid OR sources are predominately secondary (3) Sources provided with no link to pyramid (2) Insufficient/inaccurate sources (1) Not attempted (0)	/5
Resistance (Part 3)	Sophisticated explanation of attempted resistance, clearly addressing who was involved, what was done, their motivation and the outcomes of their actions. (10) Detailed explanation of attempted resistance, who was involved, what was done, their motivation and the outcomes of their actions. (8) Explanation of attempted resistance, who was involved, what was done, their motivation. (6) Narrative of resistance, who was involved and what was done. (4) Limited description of resistance, who was involved and what was done. (2) Not attempted (0)	/10
Essay (Part 4)	Demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the processes involved in the persecution of the Jews. (10) Demonstrated an understanding of the processes involved in the persecution of the Jews. (8) Some understanding of the processes involved in the persecution of the Jews. (6) Rudimentary understanding of the processes involved in the persecution of the Jews. (4) Narrative of the processes involved in the persecution of the Jews (2) Not attempted (0)	/10
TOTAL MARK		/30

Teacher Comment:

Name _____

Student Handout Pyramid of Hate Activity

DIRECTIONS: First familiarize yourself with the terminology associated with each level of the pyramid. Then watch the first five brief clips via the link found at <http://sfi.usc.edu/education/pyramid> Draw a line from each interviewee's photo to the level on the pyramid that you think he or she is describing



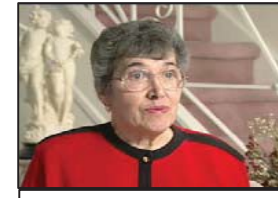
Peter B.



Milton B.



Kristine K.



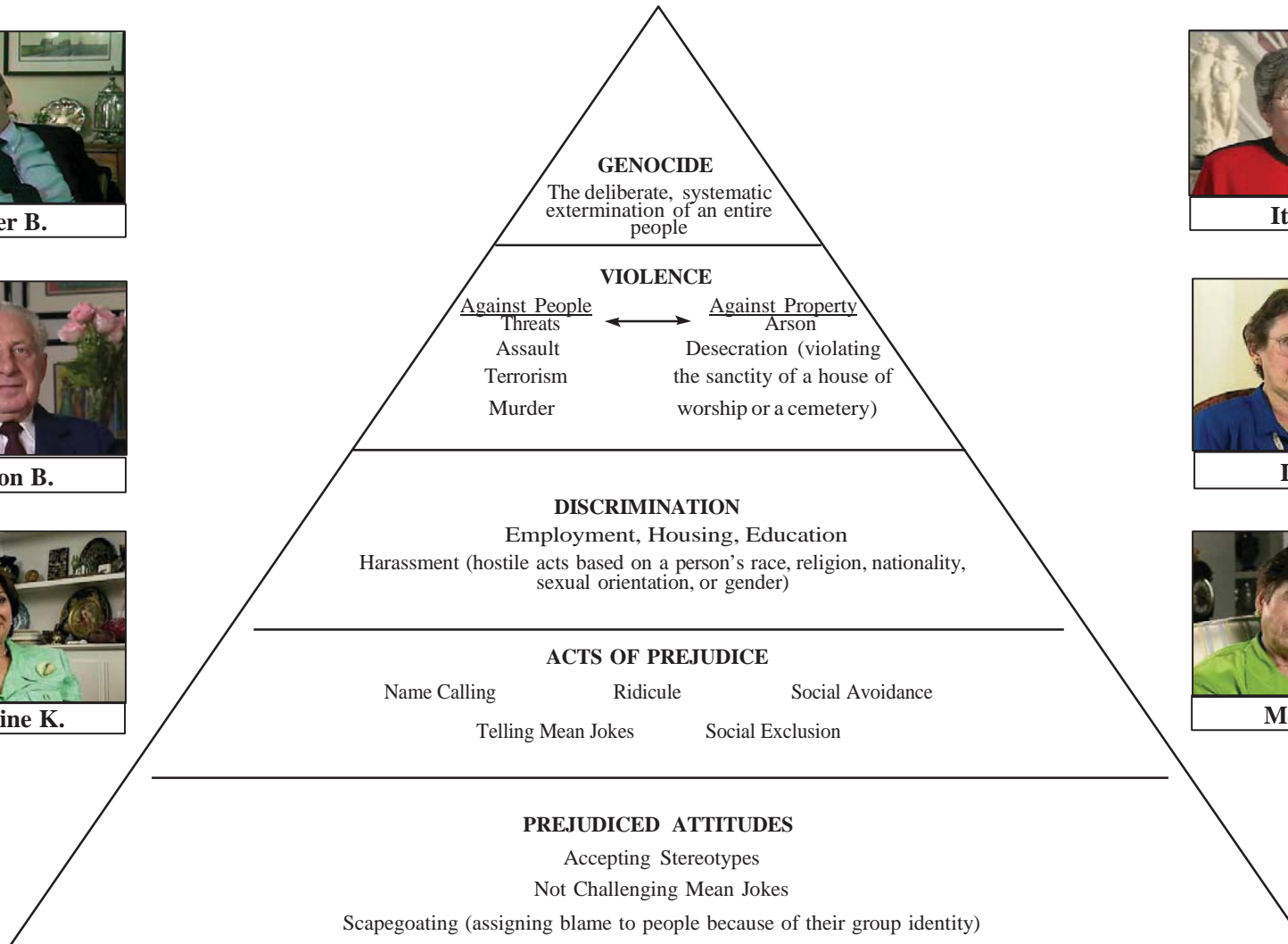
Itka Z.



Lea F.



Mollie S.



The Holocaust – Pyramid of Hate

Task 2: Find one piece of primary evidence (newspaper articles, photos, survivor statement, etc.) to support each level of the pyramid (total 5 pieces of evidence). You **must include the details of where you got each source**. *5 marks*

Level	Source	Description of Source	Where you found it
5. Genocide			
4. Violence			

3. Discrimination			
2. Acts of Prejudice			
1. Prejudiced Attitudes			

Appendix vi

Holocaust Program Case Study 2

DEPTH STUDY SIX: The Holocaust

<p>Unit Focus: This unit focuses on the events that led to and constitute the Holocaust, an examination of its impacts, and how such an event should be remembered. Students will consider how the Holocaust was made possible through a combination of factors, most particularly the long history of antisemitism. They will also be challenged to consider if such an event could happen again, and what was lost, through looking at Jewish communities prior to the war. The unit finishes with a consideration of the impact of the Holocaust, from a personal context, to an international one. Students are also encouraged to reflect on how this event should be remembered, and the growing issue of denial. NOTE: This unit follows the Yad Vashem pedagogy of “safely in and safely out”.</p> <p>Time Allocation: 8 weeks</p>	<p>Outcomes:</p> <p>HTS-1: explains and assesses the historical forces and factors that shaped the modern world and Australia</p> <p>HTS-3: explains and analyses the motives and actions of past individuals and groups in the historical contexts that shaped the modern world and Australia</p> <p>HTS-4: explains and analyses the causes and effects of events and developments in the modern world and Australia</p> <p>HTS-6: uses relevant evidence from sources to support historical narratives, explanations and analyses of the modern world and Australia</p> <p>HTS-7: explains different contexts, perspectives and interpretations of the modern world and Australia</p> <p>HTS-8: selects and analyses a range of historical sources to locate information relevant to an historical inquiry</p> <p>HTS-9: applies a range of historical terms and concepts when communicating an understanding of the past</p> <p>HTS-10: selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate effectively about the past for different audiences</p>
	<p>Working Historically:</p> <p><i>Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and understand historical texts • Use historical terms and concepts in appropriate contexts (ACHHS165, ACHHS183) • Sequence historical events to demonstrate the relationship between different periods, people and places (ACHHS164, ACHHS182) <p><i>Analysis and use of sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify different types of sources • Identify the origin, content, context and purpose of primary and secondary sources (ACHHS169, ACHHS187) • Process and synthesise information from a range of sources as evidence in an historical argument (ACHHS170, ACHHS188) • Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources for a specific historical inquiry (ACHHS171, ACHHS198) • Perspectives and interpretations • Identify and analyse the reasons for different perspectives in a particular historical context (ACHHS172, ACHHS173, ACHHS190, ACHHS191) • Recognise that historians may interpret events and developments differently (ACHHS191) <p><i>Empathetic understanding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret history within the context of the actions, values, attitudes and motives of people in the context of the past (ACHHS172, ACHHS173, ACHHS190, ACHHS191) <p><i>Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask and evaluate different kinds of questions about the past to inform an historical inquiry (ACHHS166, ACHHS167, ACHHS184, ACHHS185) • Plan historical research to suit the purpose of an investigation • Identify, locate, select and organise information from a variety of sources, including ICT and other methods (ACHHS168, ACHHS186)

<p><i>Explanation and communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop historical texts, particularly explanations and historical arguments that use evidence from a range of sources (ACHHS174, ACHHS188, ACHHS192) Select and use a range of communication forms, such as oral, graphic, written and digital, to communicate effectively about the past for different audiences and different purposes (ACHHS175, ACHHS193) 	
<p>Big Ideas: <i>Content:</i> What was the nature, size and scope of the Holocaust? <i>Concept:</i> How could the Holocaust have happened? <i>Context:</i> How should we remember the Holocaust?</p>	<p>Understandings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Holocaust happened to people, by people. It is not a series of statistics The Holocaust was a process of escalating discrimination then oppression before genocide. The techniques of manipulation and genocide were used against the Jewish population of Europe. The Holocaust had a profound impact upon the latter half of the 20th Century and beyond
	<p>Historical Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Continuity and change:</i> The nature of antisemitism – from ancient times to modern. How it remained similar and yet changed <i>Cause and effect:</i> reasons for the Holocaust and the effects both locally and globally. <i>Perspectives:</i> people from the past may have had different views and experiences. For example, Nazi racial policies would be viewed differently by Germans and non-Germans. Also a consideration of Denial. <i>Empathetic understanding:</i> Dilemmas faced by victims, bystanders and upstanders during the Holocaust <i>Significance:</i> the importance of the Holocaust, as a human catastrophe, but also its impact on the world <i>Contestability:</i> how historians may dispute a particular interpretation of an historical source, event or issue, eg whether or not the Holocaust occurred.

Resources		
<p>E-Text – Retroactive Pearson – Year 10 Student Book/Work Book Peter Neville, The Holocaust (Cambridge) http://www.yadvashem.org/ http://www.ushmm.org/ http://sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au/ K J Mason Republic to Reich http://alphahistory.com/holocaust/holocaust-topics/</p>	<p>Gestapo Secret Police Gleichschaltung Holocaust Indoctrination Eugenics Kristallnacht Mischlinge</p>	<p>Schutzstaffel Sonderkommando Sturmabteilung Der Sturmer Judenrat Ghetto Nuremberg Trials De-nazification</p>

Assessment		
<p>Assessment For: PEEL paragraph – Life before the Holocaust Timeline creation – Anti-Jewish laws Extended response – Different phases of Nazi laws Group work: Why didn't they leave? Stangle Interview/Auschwitz Album – Source report Group/Individual research: Aspects of life in the camps Warsaw Uprising: News Report</p>	<p>Assessment As: Nuremberg/Anti-Jewish Laws – brief letter from two different perspectives Worksheets on Kristallnacht Ghetto photos – discussion, dilemmas Group work – ghettos Salitter Report – Comparison/Contrast "Night" extract Death Marches response Holocaust Memorials Research Film review</p>	<p>Assessment Of: Research Essay 25% Students use survivor testimony to link to the bigger picture of the Holocaust.</p>

<p>Liberating Education</p> <p>1 encourages all members of the school community to work to the best of their ability, to realise their potential and to strive for equity and excellence;</p> <p>2 serves the needs of each person, providing teaching and learning experiences that are authentic, relevant, dynamic and creative;</p> <p>3 provides a learning culture that enables students to experience success within a safe and healthy environment;</p> <p>4 provides a holistic education integrating faith with culture and learning while giving an appreciation of the need to strive for the greater good of all society;</p> <p>7 enables students to experience and value a critical awareness of justice and peace issues through the curriculum, service and solidarity learning, environmental practices and the culture of the school;</p> <p>Gospel Spirituality</p> <p>1 lives and grows as a faith-sharing community by fostering a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ;</p> <p>4 models the Gospel values of forgiveness and reconciliation by the manner in which conflict is resolved;</p> <p>Justice and Solidarity</p> <p>1 provides pastoral care that nurtures the dignity of each person as a child formed in the image of God;</p> <p>4 promotes social inclusion and views diversity as beneficial to a liberating education;</p> <p>8 recognises the traditional ownership and cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples of Australia, and welcomes them into its community;</p> <p>Inclusive Community</p> <p>1 develops a curriculum that integrates the themes of justice and peace, underpinned by Catholic Social Teaching;</p> <p>2 adopts prophetic stances in the light of Gospel values and is involved in advocacy for just causes;</p> <p>6 demonstrates a deep respect for and partnership with the environment, promotes eco-justice and works towards a sustainable and regenerative future for all creation;</p> <p>7 recognises that its members are part of a global community and actively supports the development of all humanity;</p> <p>8 nurtures a culture of critical reflection and prayerful discernment in justice and peace issues.</p>			
Cross-curriculum priorities	(✓)	General capabilities	(✓)
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander histories & cultures	✓	Critical & creative thinking	✓
Asia & Australia's engagement with Asia		Ethical understanding	✓
Sustainability		Information & communication technology capability	✓
		Intercultural understanding	✓
Other learning across the curriculum areas		Literacy	✓
Civics & citizenship	✓	Numeracy	
Difference & diversity	✓	Personal & social capability	✓
Work & enterprise			

Content:	Teaching, learning and assessment:	Date Complete
<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking known to unknown • History of anti-Semitism • Life before the Holocaust 	<p>Teaching, learning and assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we know about the Holocaust? What do we want to know? Teacher to mindmap what is known/unknown (could use padlet for Students to create own questions). • Discussion around the terms 'Holocaust', 'Genocide', 'Shoah' – Examine definitions. Similarities and differences? What other genocides are they aware of? (Definitions in Folder) • What do students know about Judaism? Brainstorm shared knowledge. • Use picture gallery from www.alphahistory.com to show the long history of antisemitism in Europe – have students discuss how Jews were represented (eg appearance, the blood myth, judensau) • Use a range of photos from http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/see-jewish-life-before-holocaust-newly-released-digital-archival-180952582/7no-1st OR http://vishniac.icp.org/ (use search tool) • Use these as stimulus to answer questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What's going on in this photograph?</i> • <i>What story is the photograph telling? What do you see that makes you say that? What story (or stories) might be left out?</i> • <i>Who do you think took this photo and for what purpose? What do you see that leads you to this guess?</i> • <i>Who do you think is the intended audience for this photograph? Why?</i> • <i>What impact does this image have on you? What does the photographer do to create that image? Consider form and content.</i> • <i>What do you think we might see if we could look beyond the frame of the photograph?</i> • <i>Roman Vishniac often wrote text for the photographs he took for the AIDC, or captions were sometimes added years after the images were taken. Often, the images we see online or in a newspaper are accompanied by headlines or text, which can enhance or change our understanding of the image. What text would you add to this image? What impact might the text have on how you interpret the image?</i> • Class discussion – what ideas about the Jews before WW2 do we get from these images (the idea should be that they're normal!) • Research PEEL paragraph: Life before the Holocaust 	
<p><i>Nazi rule in Germany 1933-1939 including the implementation of Nazi racial policies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nazi ideology and racial theory</i> • <i>Anti-Semitism in Germany in 1933 – haphazard brutality</i> • <i>Institutional discrimination - banned from various careers</i> • <i>Escalation of discrimination from 1936 – the Nuremberg Laws</i> • <i>Hot terror – Kristallnacht</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher overview Nazi rule in Germany from 1933-1935 • Students examine the range of laws including the (Nuremberg) Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour and the Reich Citizenship Laws. Students use the following websites to view the laws, the graphics created to identify and classify individuals as Jewish or non-Jewish. Websites that may be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007903; http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/nurem-laws.htm. • Watch Edward Adler – Survivor, about effects Nuremberg Laws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oj.php?ModuleId=0&MediaId=2711 & Jews of Wurzburg 1933 – 38 http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/multimedia.asp#prettyPhoto Class discussion around which laws are being applied to them. Other written sources of experiences in folder • Students create a timeline of anti-jewish laws from 1936-1939 using text page 10C (digital timeline - http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline_2/ Instruction in folder). Students should also consider who is being targeted by the laws (note how it ripples out) and note the increasing radicalization. 	

Content:	Teaching, learning and assessment:	Date Complete
<p>The events of World War Two in Europe surrounding the development of genocidal policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The invasion of Poland, France and other parts of Europe – the growing 'Jewish problem' The Wannsee Conference and the implementation of the 'Final Solution' 	<p>Teaching, learning and assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher to show students photos from Hitler exhibition in Berlin in 2010: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/8063977/Adolf-Hitler-exhibition-in-Germany-Hitler-and-the-Germans-at-the-German-Historical-Museum-in-Berlin.html Discussion about how Nazis reached into every aspect of life Look at a range of antisemitic propaganda (in Folder, or choose own): What common features do they notice? Would some people have recognized this as propaganda? If so why did they go along with it? Why would many Germans have accepted this? Students write 2 paragraphs, one each from Perpetrator/Victim perspectives Discussion around issue of dehumanization – what it means, what it looks like. Compare with more modern examples (i.e. refugees) Teacher introduces the next phase of anti-Jewish laws, that is, state sanctioned violence. Students view clip explaining the events of Kristallnacht. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYVUX8CBH4) Students read and analyse the orders given to the Gestapo. (in folder - Nuremberg laws) Students read text pages 12C to 15C and take notes on the main events of the Kristallnacht and complete source study 1 on the locations of the destruction of Synagogues. Students listen to survivor testimony of the Kristallnacht and record these in their books. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfjCJwEBIZo&app=desktop) Look at Kristallnacht photos (in Folder) – BadenBaden – What do they see? (Note: men are not wearing Kippahs - been forced to remove them, which was forbidden in synagogue. Also man reading at front: he is reading Mein Kampf). Look at Rostock Synagogue photo: What do they see? What's NOT in the picture? (Students should note lack of fire engines, police, and the calmness of the crowd). What do these photos show about attitudes? ALSO – Series of worksheets in Folder on Kristallnacht – ideas of upstander/bystander/perpetrator/victim Students read the information on http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/es/article.php?ModuleId=10005201. Class discussion on the implications of Kristallnacht. Students write an extended response which explains the different phases of Nazi laws and policies against the Jewish people from 1933 to 1938 and the significance of these events in the isolation, segregation and public acceptance of state violence against the Jewish people. Use pyramid of hate document to help. (in Folder) <i>Why didn't they leave?</i> Exploration of the options open to Jews. Students are assigned a country and research their response to Jewish immigration: Japan, China, Russia, England, USA, Canada, Australia (look into the efforts made by Aboriginal Australian William Cooper, as well as idea for Zionist homeland in Australia – the Kimberley Plan, the Cosgrove Plan), Dominican Republic, Argentina. What does this say about options? Also look at Hitler's Madagascar Plan. Brainstorm the concept of ghettos. Class discussion of why Nazis introduced ghettos. The teacher may use information from the text, pp. 16C-17C and https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007445 Use Pearson History pp 196 – 198 to view maps of camps/ghettos in Poland. Use Google Maps to look at some of these places today. How could people not know about these places? Compare Pearson map with those at USHMM https://www.ushmm.org/learn/mapping-initiatives/geographies-of-the-holocaust/mapping-the-ss-concentration- 	

Content:	Teaching, learning and assessment:	Date Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process of the Final Solution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration of Jews Roundups or Aktions The Einsatzgruppen The ghettos Transportation to concentration and death camps 	<p>camp-system Why might they be different? Use of photos as sources: http://collections.yadvashem.org/photosarchive/en-us/5854483-container.html Taken by a German soldier, Heinz Joest - Questions to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tram line – who uses it? Jews not allowed out What do they notice about the streetscapes? Crowding? Tipping the hat (remember the Kippah – Cover your head in order that the fear of heaven may be upon you.) Markets – why would Poles buy at Jewish markets? (cheaper) Rickshaw – Why are they there? Open soup kitchen – People had to be able to COME to the kitchen – only those who could survive <p>Use of dilemmas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to parent in a ghetto? (Encouraging children to steal/snatchers. How to divide food) Who to save? (See Dr Weinreb dilemma in Ghettoes folder, page 3) More dilemmas in Folder: Ghettoes <p>Group work – students choose a ghetto and explore the particular aspects of that ghetto, eg Lodz ghetto (labour), Theresienstadt (children), Krakow, Lublin, Vilna. Look at life, Judenrat, chronology, personal experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher provides an overview of the Final Solution including the Wannsee Conference and the different phases it took (registration of Jews, roundups, Einsatzgruppen, transportation to concentration and death camps). Students may view additional information on http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005151. Investigation into other persecuted minorities: disabled, Catholics, homosexuals, Sinti-Roma, Polish 	
<p>The experiences of victims of the Holocaust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roundup and transportation Conditions in the ghettos and camps Methods of control The gas chambers Liberation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation – The Salitter Report (see Folder: Transportation Camps). Read through Salitter Report and Sherman Transcript. Shows two differing views of the transportation experience – Full lesson overview here: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/transport.asp Show students opening scene of Son of Saul with its narration by director https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUGMT7HOIY – Is this what they think of the camps? Read the excerpt from “Night” by Elie Weisel (Folder) – Discuss the age issue, the separation. Ask students to choose one moment from the extract that is a turning point in Elie’s life and explain why. How did this moment change his perception of the world, relationship, life, himself? Read interview with Franz Stangle (SS Guard) – In Folder. How does he see the Jews? Why doesn’t he connect his own children to the Jewish children? What is his attitude? How does it help us understand attitudes. Look at photos from Auschwitz Album http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/ What do the photos show, and NOT show? Use these sources to create a report on what these sources tell us about transportation, considering usefulness and reliability Students research in groups following topics to create class presentations: Resistance in the Camps; Culture, Religion and Education in the Camps; Community/Teamwork in the Camps; Children in the Camps; Survival in the Camps; Sonderkommando; Kapo; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Content:	Teaching, learning and assessment:	Date Complete
<p><i>Legacy of the Holocaust</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Political</i> - <i>Legal (including war crimes tribunals)</i> - <i>Historical scholarship</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch drone footage of fly over Auschwitz https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76iizo-U4E. What do they see/don't see? Why are buildings missing/destroyed. • Idea of resistance: What constitutes resistance? – Discuss different types, eg spiritual, cultural, armed, passive • Students may view a clip on the Warsaw Uprising and create a newspaper report on the event. http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005188 • Teacher explains the order and purpose of the death marches. Students listen to survivor testimonies from http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005162. Students compose a structured response which explains the purpose, conditions and outcomes of the death marches. Discussion: There are only 8 surviving photos of the death marches – why? • Righteous among the nations: Look at the criteria for Criteria (in folder). Do students agree/disagree with criteria. Look at statistics – what surprises them? • Show first 10 minutes of Episode 9 of Band of Brothers: Why We Fight – shows liberation of death camps. • Discussion as to the reactions of the townspeople. Compare and contrast with original movie film “Civilians at Weimar” http://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file_num=1923. Consider the issues associated with de-Nazification. • Teacher explains the liberation experience of concentration camps and those still alive on the death marches. • Examine photos of Liberation (in Folder), compare and contrast differing photos. Why is the man crying when he has been liberated? Why are there children in Auschwitz (usually killed)? Article on children photo: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2926645/Survivors-visit-Auschwitz-day-ahead-70th-anniversary.html 	
<p><i>Legacy of the Holocaust</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Political</i> - <i>Legal (including war crimes tribunals)</i> - <i>Historical scholarship</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher explanation of the short and long term legacy of the Holocaust including the formation of the United Nations, International Human Rights Law, the creation of the sovereign state of Israel, war crimes tribunals. • Discussion of the “fairness” of the Nuremberg Trials – was it “winner’s justice”? • Teacher explains the contested historical question regarding how much knowledge the German population had regarding the events and different stages of the Holocaust. Students could study an overview of Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband’s new study, “What we Knew” (2006). • Students examine and debate the moral and historical validity of the five arguments historians have composed in an attempt to understand why the German people allowed the Holocaust to occur. Present simplified version of the Goldhagen/Browning/Kershaw debate • Memorials – in groups, students research a Holocaust Memorial from around the world. What does it symbolise? Why is it there? • Critical viewing: Choice of film, eg In Darkness, Defiance, Escape from Sobibor, The Pianist, The Counterfeiters – Film review for accuracy, interpretation • Should Hollywood be able to make films about the Holocaust or does that trivialise it? • Examination of treatment of minorities today – could the Holocaust happen again? 	

<p>Content:</p>	<p>Teaching, learning and assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion around Holocaust Denial – lesson ideas in Folder from Echoes and Reflections. Also could discuss Iran's Holocaust Cartoon Competition: http://www.newsweek.com/opening-holocaust-cartoon-contest-exhibition-tehran-provokes-continued-461296 	<p>Date Complete</p>
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Appendix vii

Year 10 Holocaust Assessment Task 1

Assessment Notification

Course: Australian History

Task Topic: The Holocaust

Year: 10

Task Details: Podcast

Assessment Task 3

**Due Date: first History lesson
of Week 9 starting 17th**

September

Weighting: 25%

Submission Instructions

Part A: Podcast submitted using Audacity program into the Student Files dropbox for your History class

Part B: Hard copy of your transcript and bibliography: Submitted to your teacher on the due date.

Outcomes being assessed

HT5-2 sequences and explains the significant patterns of continuity and change in the development of the modern world and Australia

HT5-3 explains and analyses the motives and actions of past individuals and groups in the historical contexts that shaped the modern world and Australia

HT5-6 uses relevant evidence from sources to support historical narratives, explanations and analyses of the modern world and Australia

HT5-8 selects and analyses a range of historical sources to locate information relevant to an historical inquiry

HT5-9 applies a range of relevant historical terms and concepts when communicating an understanding of the past

HT5-10 selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate about the past

Task Description

You are an Educator at the Sydney Jewish Museum. The events of the Holocaust resulted in the deaths of millions of Jews and minority groups who were persecuted for their religious, cultural and political differences. As an Educator at the Museum you feel it is necessary to highlight how survivor stories are a means to understanding the Holocaust.

Part A: Your task is to create a talk (3-4 minutes) about the significance of Holocaust survivor stories and how they can help us to gain an understanding of the nature of the Holocaust.

Your talk should consider

- The experiences of two survivors and how they were affected
- What these stories show us about the nature of the Holocaust (its origins, purpose, effects)
- Why the Holocaust changed over time (i.e. from the 1933 boycotts to the Final Solution)

You will be provided with 2 research lessons by your class teacher.

Students are advised to use Audacity (a free software program) to create their podcasts.

Part B:

You are to write a transcript of your oral task (approx. 400 to 500 words) and provide a correctly formatted bibliography.

Survivor Testimonies

Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Museum:

<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/multimedia.asp>

United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum: <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/the-holocaust-survivors-and-victims-resource-center/survivors-and-victims/survivor-testimonies>

British Library Voices of the Holocaust: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/voices/holocaust.html>

Witness Organisation: <http://remember.org/witness>

You are to select TWO different survivor testimonies. They should be of two different kinds of experiences, for example:

- a. Nuremberg Laws
- b. Kristallnacht
- c. Ghettos
- d. Hiding
- e. Resistance
- f. Transportation
- g. Camps
- h. Death Marches
- i. Liberation

In order to undertake this task you need to :

- Conduct your own research into your chosen topic, ensuring that you use a range of different print and electronic sources.
- Take detailed notes from your sources, and provide a comprehensive plan for your response.
- Write a transcript which **uses your own wording as much as possible and acknowledges sources appropriately.**
- Ensure that you regularly consult the mark scheme for the specific requirements of the task.
- Submit the transcript and podcast in the first History lesson of Week 9

Marking Guidelines

Name: _____ Total Mark: / 25

Criteria	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addresses the question asked with a clear and accurate discussion, which demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the Holocaust• Engages the listener immediately and sustains engagement throughout podcast• Very clear delivery with highly effective expression and pace, clear grammar and correct pronunciation• Transcript is appropriate, relevant and accurate, and contains a correctly formatted bibliography	21 - 25
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addresses the question asked with a sound discussion, which demonstrates an understanding of the nature of the Holocaust• Engages the listener and sustains engagement through most of the podcast• Clear delivery with effective expression and pace, clear grammar and correct pronunciation• Transcript is appropriate, relevant and accurate, and contains a formatted bibliography	16 - 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addresses the question asked with a relevant but largely narrative or descriptive response• May be problems with engagement of listener• Delivery with some attempt to effectively use pace, grammar, pronunciation and expression• Transcript is largely relevant and bibliography may contain some errors in bibliography	11 - 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attempts a narrative or description, which may be only generally relevant AND/OR seriously incomplete• May fail to engage the listener• May have problems with delivery and use of expression and pace, clear grammar and correct pronunciation• Transcript may be brief and bibliography may contain errors or not be completed	6 - 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attempts a narrative or description, which is largely irrelevant and seriously incomplete• Presents a disjointed AND/OR very brief response• Very basic transcript or no bibliography	1 - 5

Comment: