The missing paradigm

Sophie E. Gelski

A thesis submitted to the University of Sydney in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies
School of Languages and Cultures
Faculty of Arts
University of Sydney
2010
Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Signed ___________________________ Date ___________ __________

Sophie E Gelski 23. 11. 2010

Signed ___________________________ Date ___________
Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Irene (Tubi) Havas, who would have been immensely proud.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Suzanne Rutland not only for giving generously of her time, but also for her support and her meticulous attention to detail. Second, I would like to thank my associate supervisor, Professor Sol Encel not only for giving generously of his time, for his penetrating intellect and wealth of knowledge, wisdom and experience, but also for always gently steering me in the right direction. Third, I would like to thank Marti Marosszeky, a treasured friend, for her constructive comments and encouragement throughout this process. Finally, I would like to thank my husband Richard, my children Jacquie, Alexander and David for their patience and love.
Abstract

This study explores the ways in which teachers’ biographies shape the act of teaching. It illuminates the formative (emotional, private, personal and professional) influences and experiences in teachers’ lives and work. After offering a detailed examination of the most significant ‘players’ (teachers’ educational beliefs, emotional connection and/or emotional knowledge of the subject matter; context and history syllabi) co-performing with the history teacher, the study then specifically focuses on the intersections between teachers’ emotional and personal history; their emotional knowledge and orientation to the subject matter; their pedagogical choices and the contexts (the type of school and in particular the subject’s locations in that school) within which they teach.

The research is inter-disciplinary and is premised upon theoretical and empirical studies in: teaching history, historical empathy, teaching the Holocaust, biography, modalities of teachers’ knowledge, emotion in education, teachers’ educational beliefs and context. It is a qualitative multiple-case study of 20 teachers working in 15 disparate schools and subject locations.

The qualitative empirical materials gathered for the study have allowed single and cross-case comparisons to be made within the study through examining both the individual and collective meanings that teachers bring to their work. Once this information is interpreted, a clearer picture emerges of what it is that history teachers regard as being most influential in affecting their choice of content or even their orientation to their subject matter.

By discovering the emotional, private and personal dimensions of teachers’ knowledge (an area which has to date been virtually unrecognised and/or acknowledged), this study has not only added to existing knowledge, but it has invited inquiry into a whole new area—second generation emotional knowledge (SGEK). This is a dimension of emotional knowledge that is unique and, as yet, uncharted.
# Contents

Declaration  
Acknowledgements  
Abstract  
Contents  
Appendices  
Glossary

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Landscape of the research, perspective and size  
(i) (Holocaust) Second Generation  
Jonathan  
(ii) Jewish South Africans  
Claire  
(iii) Sympathetic Gentile(s)  
James  
(iv) Switching Worlds  
Philip  
(v) Professionally Connected  
Gillian  
Outline of the study  
Conclusion

## Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction  
Part 1: Teaching history  
Part 2: Historical empathy  
Imagination, fantasy or make believe  
Empathy  
Empathy as distinct from sympathy  
Empathy and emotional identification  
Part 3: Teaching the Holocaust  
Part 4: Biography  
Part 5: Modalities of teachers’ knowledge: professional, personal and emotional  
Professional knowledge  
Personal knowledge  
Understanding Emotion  
Emotion in education  
(Holocaust) second generation—emotional knowledge (SGEK)  
Second generation Australian World War II veterans’ emotional knowledge (SGEK)  
Part 6: Beliefs
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction
Theoretical orientation
Symbolic interaction
Qualitative research
The researcher-as-interpreter
Case study research
The decision trail
Sampling decisions
Ethics
Methods of collection and analysis of empirical materials
The interview
Types of questions
Closing the interview
Recording and transcribing the interview
Listening
Creating and assigning categories
Aligning categories, properties and dimensions
Composing a truthful account
Managing and celebrating subjectivity
Conclusion

Chapter 4: Biographies: Their emotional and social locations: (Holocaust) second generation and Jewish South Africans

Introduction
Socialisation - becoming a member of society
How socialisation is possible: taking the role of ‘the other’
Identity
Family
Community
Secondary socialisation
Stratification of society
Education
Switching worlds
(Holocaust) second generation - cultural orphans (1 – 6)
1. Esther
2. Judith
3. Rebecca
4. Irene
5. Jonathan
6. Adrian
Analysis & Conclusion – the (Holocaust) second generation
Socialisation: descendants of Holocaust survivors
Outsider
Chapter 5: Biographies cont’d: Sympathetic Gentile, Switching Worlds & Professionally Connected

Sympathetic Gentile (11)
11. James

Switching Worlds (12)
12. Philip

Professionally connected (13 – 20)
13. Simon
14. Olivia
15. Ethan
16. Amelia
17. Charlotte
18. Sandra
19. Gillian
20. Jack

Conclusions: Sympathetic gentile switching worlds & professionally connected

Chapter 6: Biography: Asset or Hindrance

Introduction
The personalisation of ‘history’
Does biography matter?
Conclusion

Chapter 7: Feeling or knowing the Holocaust

Introduction
Pedagogical and emotional issues in teaching the Holocaust
Reasons for teaching the Holocaust
A fine balance: how much [horror] is too much
To test or not: an emotional or pragmatic question
Same as or different from
Emotion work
Conclusion

Chapter 8: The [in]communicability of Auschwitz

Introduction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical empathy</th>
<th>205</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the concept</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversy about the use of historical empathy</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using historical empathy — the communicability of Auschwitz</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding historical empathy — the incommunicability of Auschwitz</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The incommunicability of Auschwitz</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivialisation</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional knowledge or emotional connection — ‘too close and too raw’</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context — small worlds, different worlds</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSC and VCE</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes: teaching history: teaching Jewish history</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical knowledge: Knowledge of the facts</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global citizenship</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Schooling’ emotion</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 9: Conclusion**  

Introduction  

231

Level 1: External objective and academic  

Researcher’s assumptions & beliefs  

232

232

Level 2: Internal subjective and emotional  

The contribution of this research  

235

236

Where to next: Areas for potential research  

240

**References**  

242

**Appendices**  

263
Appendices

1. Ethics approval letter from the University of Sydney Human Ethics committee.

2. Past HSC Modern History examination questions on Twentieth Century Germany 1919-1945.
Glossary

Am Yisrael Chai  the Hebrew saying, ‘Long Live the People of Israel’

B’nei Akiva  literally ‘Sons of Akiva’ in Hebrew; the name of a religious Zionist youth movement

B’nai B’rith  literally ‘Sons of the Covenant’ in Hebrew

The Independent Order of B’nai B’rith is the oldest continually-operating Jewish service organisation in the world. The organisation is engaged in a wide variety of community service and welfare activities, including assisting hospitals, awarding tertiary scholarships to Jewish students and opposing anti-Semitism and racism.

Bar or Bat Mitzvah  literally ‘Son’ or ‘Daughter of the Commandment’

The term Bar Mitzvah used to describe the coming of age of a Jewish boy (and Bat Mitzvah for girls) according to Jewish law, when Jewish children reach the age of majority (generally 13 years for boys, and twelve for girls) they become responsible for their own actions and become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Prior to this the child’s parents are responsible for the child’s adherence to Jewish law and tradition, and after this age children bear their own responsibility for Jewish ritual, tradition, and ethics and are privileged to participate in all areas of Jewish community life.

Bund  the name of the Eastern European Jewish socialist party established in 1897, commonly known as the ‘Bund’

Challah  the Hebrew/Yiddish word for traditional Jewish braided bread, eaten on the Jewish Sabbath.

It is also eaten on Jewish holidays, except Passover, when eating leavened bread is not permitted.
Churban literally ‘destruction’; Hebrew/Yiddish word for the Holocaust or Shoah.

It is also used to refer to the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.

In der haym the Yiddish term for the sense of home or homeland

Einsatzgruppen literally in German, the Operational Squads of the Security Service and the Security Police

Einsatzgruppen was a task force of mobile killing units operational in German-occupied territories during World War II.

Emic the perspective is the insider’s or ‘native’s’ perception, while the etic perspective is the imposed framework of the researcher or outsider

In social research this means that a distinction is made between ‘subjective’ knowledge of the participant and the ‘scientific’ knowledge of the social scientist. The insider’s accounts of reality produce knowledge of the reasons why people act as they do.

Fiddler on the Roof a well-known musical about Jewish life in a small Russian village or shtetl at the turn of the twentieth century

It was based on the story ‘Tevya the Milkman, by the Yiddish writer Shalom Aleichem.

Gere Hasidim those who regard the Rebbe of Ger (now resident in Bnei Brak) as their spiritual leader

Habonim literally, ‘Builders/Freedom’ in Hebrew

The international movement is called Habonim Dror.

Hanukkah literally, ‘dedication’ in Hebrew; also known as the Festival of Lights

It is an eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem at the time
of the Maccabean Revolt of the second century BCE. The Festival is observed by kindling of the lights of a special candelabrum, the nine branched Menorah or Hanukiah, one light on each night of the holiday, progressing to eight on the final night.

Hasidic Judaism

‘Hasidut’ meaning ‘piety’ is a type of orthodox religious movement. The movement originated in Eastern Europe in the eighteen century. Hasidic Judaism tends to focus on the role of the rebbe [rabbi] as a spiritual conduit of God. Hasidic followers join worship groups associated with dynasties of Hasidic spiritual leaders. Each dynasty follows its own principles. Thus Hasidic Judaism is not one movement, but a collection of separate individual groups with some commonalties.

Hashomer Ha’atziar

literally, the ‘Young Guard’; the name of a Socialist Zionist youth movement

Hausfrau

German for ‘housewife’

Heder

literally ‘room’ in Hebrew; an elementary school in which students are taught to read Hebrew texts

Holocaust

The Holocaust also known as Shoah is the term generally used to describe the genocide of approximately six million European Jews during World War II. It was a part of a program of deliberate extermination planned and executed by the Nazi regime in Germany, led by Adolf Hitler.

HSC

This acronym stands for the Higher School Certificate. In NSW each student in Year 12 is mandated to sit for a series of examinations across a wide range of subjects. Their individual performance determines their eligibility to study at tertiary level.

JNF

the acronym for the Jewish National Fund
The JNF is a non-profit environmental organisation. Its primary goals are the development and conservation of land for the benefit of the Jewish people.

**Judenrat**

_Judenräte_ (singular Judenrat; German for “Jewish council”) were administrative bodies that the Germans required Jews to form in the German occupied territory of Poland. The _Judenrat_ served as a liaison between the German occupying authorities and the Jewish communities under occupation. With the formation of ghettos, these bodies became responsible for local government in the ghetto, and stood between the Nazis and the ghetto population. They were forced by the Nazis to provide Jews for use as slave labour, and to assist in the deportation of Jews to extermination camps during the Holocaust.

**Kaddish**

literally, ‘sanctification’

This term refers to an important and central prayer in the Jewish prayer service. The term ‘_kaddish_’ is often used to refer to specifically ‘the Mourners Kaddish’, said as part of the mourning rituals in Judaism in all prayer services as well as at funerals and memorials. When mention is made of ‘saying kaddish’ this unambiguously denotes the ritual of mourning.

**Kapo**

term used in the Nazi concentration caps for an inmate appointed by the SS men in charge to head a commando (work gang) made up of prisoners

The term ‘kapo’ is sometimes also used for any prisoner who collaborated with the Nazis. Generally the kapo was to escort the prisoners to their places of work and ensure that they performed their tasks properly and met their quotas.

**Kippah**

literally skullcap in Hebrew, known as a _yarmulkah_ in Yiddish
It is a thin, slightly rounded skullcap traditionally worn at all times by observant Jewish men. In the Conservative and Reform/Progressive communities, some women also wear one during services and other religious rituals. Its use is associated by demonstrating respect and reverence for God.

**Kosher**

Food in accordance with *halakha* (Jewish law) is termed kosher in English. Jews who keep kushrut (Jewish dietary laws) do not consume non-kosher food.

**Kotel**

Literally ‘wall’ in Hebrew. Kotel refers to the retaining Western Wall in Jerusalem that dates from the time of the rebuilding of the Jewish Second Temple by King Herod in the first century CE. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘Wailing Wall’ referring to Jews mourning the destruction of the Temple. The Western Wall is revered for its proximity to the sacred Holy of Holies on the Temple Mount that is the Most Holy Place in Judaism. This makes the Western Wall its holiest location.

**Maccabi**

Literally ‘hammer’. Maccabi is the name of a Jewish football club and also a Jewish Sports organisation in Australia. The name derives from the Maccabees, the Jewish rebels who overthrew the Assyrian Greeks in the second century BCE, the event celebrated on Hanukah.

**Melton**

Jewish organisation, based at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem that provides a pluralistic Jewish education to adults. It is named after the American benefactor, Florence Melton.
Milgram Experiments  They were a series of seminal social psychological experiments, conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram that measured the willingness of study participants to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal consciences.

Minyan  This term refers to the quorum of ten men required for certain Jewish religious obligations. The traditional minyan requires 10 men, which continues to be the position with Orthodox Judaism. Conservative/Progressive Judaism permits women to be counted towards the required quorum of ten. The most common activity requiring a minyan is public prayer.

Mitzvah  literally, ‘commandment’ in Hebrew

The term has come to express any act of kindness or good deed, such as care for the sick, charity or the burial of a body of an unknown person.

Modus operandi  Latin word for ‘preferred means of operating’

Parashat HaShavuah  Hebrew word for ‘portion of the week, known also as ‘Parshah’

The five’ biblical books which constitute the Torah in the masoretic text of the Tanach (Hebrew Bible) have been divided into 54 portions, to allow for the entire Torah to be read over one year according to the Hebrew calendar.

Pesach Seder  literally, ‘Passover Order’, referring to the service and home ceremony carried out on Passover eve

Passover commemorates the Exodus and freedom of the Israelites from ancient Egypt. It is traditional for a Jewish family to gather on the first night of Passover for a special dinner or Seder. The table is set with the finest of china and silverware to reflect the importance of this meal.
During this meal, the story of the Exodus from Egypt is retold using a special text called the Haggadah (Hebrew for ‘Telling’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>acronym for prisoners of war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosh Hashanah</td>
<td>literally ‘head of the year,’ in Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosh Hashana</td>
<td>is commonly referred to as the Jewish New Year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabbat</td>
<td>Shabbat (rest/inactivity) is the weekly Sabbath or day of rest in Judaism, symbolising the seventh day in Genesis after the six days of creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiur</td>
<td>Hebrew word for ‘lesson’ but can refer to a Torah lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simcha</td>
<td>literally ‘happiness’; Hebrew/Yiddish word for celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shtetl</td>
<td>The Yiddish word for village or small town with a large Jewish population in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shlep</td>
<td>Yiddish word meaning to pull along heavily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shule</td>
<td>Yiddish word for synagogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The term comes from German for ‘school’. A synagogue is also a place of learning, because Torah study is considered to be on par with prayer in Judaism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siddur</td>
<td>literally from the Hebrew word for ‘order’; a Jewish prayer book containing a set order of daily prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skif</td>
<td>the name of the Jewish youth movement of the Bund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonderkommando</td>
<td>literally ‘special units’ in German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sonderkommando were work units of Nazi death camp prisoners forced to operate the crematoria during the Holocaust. They were forced into the position, and accepted it because it meant a few more days or weeks of life. Because the sonderkommando were privy to information about Nazi methods that the Nazis did not wish to reach the outside world, the groups were murdered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
at regular intervals; new sonderkommandos were selected from the subsequent transports.

Tanach acronym that identifies the authorised Hebrew Bible in Judaism

Tarbut literally, 'culture' in Hebrew

Tarbut was a Zionist network of Hebrew-language educational institutions founded in 1922. They operated in the former Jewish Pale of Settlement, specifically in Poland, Romania and Lithuania. Their existence was primarily between World War I and II, although some schools affiliated with the movement continue to operate today.

Tefillin Phylacteries are a pair of black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with specific bible verses. The hand-tefillin is worn by Jews wrapped around the arm, hand and fingers while the head-tefillin is placed above the forehead. They serve as a 'sign' and 'remembrance' that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Tisha B’av annual fast day in Judaism, named for the ninth day [Tisha], in the month of Av in the Hebrew calendar

The Fast that commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in 656 years apart, but traditionally believed to have occurred on the same date. Accordingly, the day has been called the 'saddest day in Jewish history'.

TPI acronym TPI refers to a particular class of disability (totally and permanently incapacitated) that dates from the First World War

Tzitzit ‘fringes’ or ‘tassels’ worn by observant Jews on the corner of a four cornered garment, called the Tallit (prayer shawl) Since they were considered a time-bound commandment they are worn only by men.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umschlagsplatz</td>
<td>During the Holocaust the umschlagsplatz (German for: collection point or relocating point) was where the Jews gathered for deportation to the death camps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verstehen</td>
<td>German for ‘understanding’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>According to Max Weber (1968), Verstehen means understanding the point of view — the subjective meaning of the other person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yad Vashem</td>
<td>literally ‘hand and name’ in Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, is the Jewish people’s memorial to the murdered Six Million and symbolises the ongoing rupture engendered by the Holocaust. It contains the world’s largest repository of information on the Holocaust. Yad Vashem is a leader in Holocaust education, commemoration, research and documentation. Bi-annually (in winter and summer) it runs intensive Holocaust education courses for international educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerusha</td>
<td>Hebrew/Yiddish term for inheritance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeshivot</td>
<td>literally from the Hebrew root for sitting; name for orthodox Jewish centres of learning in both Hebrew and Yiddish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yidishkeit</td>
<td>The Yiddish term for a Jewish person’s sense of being Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIVO</td>
<td>Founded in Vila Poland as the Yiddish Scientific Institute, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in dedicated to the history and culture of Ashkenazi Jewry. It is the pre-eminent centre for the study of Eastern European Jewry. Its headquarters is located in New York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom Ha’atzmaut</td>
<td>literally, ‘Independence Day’ in Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It refers to the national independence day of Israel, commemorating its declaration of independence in 1948.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom HaShoah</td>
<td>Holocaust Remembrance Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom Hazikaron</td>
<td>Memorial Day for Israeli fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism and is an Israeli holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom Kippur</td>
<td>‘Day of Atonement’ the most solemn and important of the Jewish festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Its central themes are atonement and repentance. Jews traditionally observe this holy day with a 25 hour period of fasting and intense prayer, often spending most of the day in synagogue services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom Tov</td>
<td>literally, ‘Good Day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yom Tov is the Hebrew/Yiddish word for festival or Jewish holidays on which work is forbidden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zadie</td>
<td>Yiddish term for grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zahor</td>
<td>Hebrew word to remember</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xviii
Chapter 1: Introduction

The thing is not to write what no one else could have written but to write what only you could have written. Nam Le (2008) *the Boat* Victoria: Penguin. p. 25

The genesis of this ‘madness’ called a PhD is biographical. Like others of my generation — the (Holocaust) second generation — my life has been lived in the shadow of the concentration and death camps. For many of us there exists ‘the eternal presence of an absence’ (Berger & Berger, 2001, p. 1), that is, the shadows of those murdered at Auschwitz. This study is largely premised upon my emotional, private and personal transaction with my Holocaust legacy.

the Holocaust for me,
burnt branches
of a vast family tree.
A world
reduced to ash.
Dare I forget?

Cousins, aunts and uncles
I never met,
their love and their connection I never felt —
except through my mother’s vignettes—
grey silhouettes on an empty canvass.
How can I forget?

Sophie Gelski

For many years I taught modern history at a Jewish day school in Sydney. In the early 1980s, a number of Jewish South African teachers joined the Jewish Studies department and consequently began teaching the Holocaust. I remember that I was incensed by this. I kept asking myself, ‘How can they teach the Holocaust? They have no knowledge or connection to it!’ Clearly my emotions had surged out of control and had hijacked my thinking. I had never stopped to think how I had, quite
successfully I might add, taught nineteenth and twentieth century Russian and/or Chinese history having no emotional, private or personal connection to either of them. For many years these thoughts and feelings lay dormant. It was only after I had left teaching and enrolled in a PhD program, and was in the process of formulating my research question that these ideas and feelings bore fruit, manifesting themselves in the design, method of collecting my empirical materials\(^1\) and in the heart of my thesis.

**Landscape of the research, perspective and size**

This research is concerned with the interpretive understanding of human (social) beings and the ways in which social actors (in these case, secondary school history teachers) make sense of their life worlds – both personally and professionally. My research is premised on the belief that teachers’ biographies are foundational to understanding classrooms. In line with this approach I adopt a qualitative multiple case study methodology to determine the connection between the teacher’s biography and her/his classroom practice. The project comprises 20 case studies of (in the main) highly experienced history teachers located in 15 diverse school settings. The process involved in-depth interviews in order to capture each participant’s emotional, private, personal as well as professional experiences. Empirical materials were analysed and woven into a multi-coloured fabric that represents the ‘subjective lens’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 21) through which my respondents view their pedagogy. However, to truly understand why my history teachers had such diverse approaches to the teaching of the Holocaust, it was absolutely necessary to hear their voices, and to see the world from their perspective. Therefore, analysing my multi-coloured fabric was not enough and, consequently, the emic or insider’s voice has also been woven into this study.

Integral to qualitative practices is the researcher’s subjectivity. Reflecting on my research path has prompted me to acknowledge that this study is as much about me as it is about the ‘others’. Having explored the lives and meanings of ‘the others’

\(^1\) The term *empirical materials* has become the preferred term for what traditionally has been described as ‘data’ (Lincoln & Denzin 2008).
(that is, of twenty secondary school history teachers), I recognise that I have held up a mirror to myself. Although I have attempted to depict the realities of my subjects, I have in fact discovered my own (Krieger, 1991), and in the process found that integral to quantitative practices, is the researcher’s subjectivity.

This chapter introduces five identities or categories that emerged from my empirical materials: (i) the (Holocaust) second generation; (ii) Jewish South Africans; (iii) sympathetic gentile; (iv) switching worlds and (v) professionally connected. Next, I explain why I have combined the biographies into two main groups — (i) the (Holocaust) second generation and the Jewish South Africans and (ii) sympathetic gentile, switching worlds and professionally connected. I then discuss my reasons for maintaining the Second Generation World War II Veterans category.

Finally, I believe that I open the door to a new field of historical-socio-psychological inquiry. A field that will both recognise as well as appreciate the seminal role that the ‘substantial self’ of the history teacher plays in understanding history classrooms of the future, in particular, the emotional history and the emotional knowledge of the teacher. The chapter finishes with a ‘map’, painted in broad brush strokes, of the content and structure of the thesis.

Five vignettes (extracted from the eclectic storylines of five of my participants’ biographies) as well as a brief description of its accompanying category follow. The result is a pastiche of lived experiences. One can immediately establish their range of locations regarding the Holocaust.

(i) (Holocaust) Second Generation

**Jonathan**

My father’s Lithuanian from a modern background. He went to a Tarbut [a Zionist Hebrew school] school, was a member of Hashomer Ha’atzair a [Zionist youth
movement]. My mother came from a more religious background, from Upper Silesia on the Polish border of Poland and Germany. My father died as a result of war injuries received as a partisan. He died when I was four. My step-father came from a German background. He married my mother in 1955. He was from a very religious, but relaxed background. He was on the Dunera\(^3\), came straight here on the Dunera. He, his father and mother, sister and first wife were all on the St. Louis\(^4\). They were forced back to Germany. He escaped to England. So, all three were involved in the Holocaust.

The (Holocaust) second generation is composed of the six teachers — Esther, Judith, Rebecca, Irene, Adrian and Jonathan— who are the direct descendants of Holocaust survivors. They alone have been socialised in homes over shadowed by the Holocaust. Their knowledge of this history is emotional, private and personal in nature.

(ii) Jewish South Africans

Claire

My grandparents left Lithuania in about 1907, the one group. The other left around 1909 and came to Cape Town, worked in Cape Town, and in surrounding towns. My parents are first generation South Africans, and I’m second generation South African. Any connection to the Holocaust? None at all. Remarkably devoid, until I got to

---

\(^3\) Jennifer Nias distinguishes between a person’s ‘situational selves’ and his or her ‘substantial self’. The latter is composed of a person’s most important and most valued views of and attitudes to the self, that is consistently defended and is highly resistant to change (1984, p. 268).

\(^4\) HM Dunera was a British passenger ship built as a troop transport in the late 1930s. One of her duties became one of the most notorious events in British maritime history. The Dunera left Liverpool on 10 July 1940 with 2,542 men classed as enemy aliens, who were considered a risk to British security, after the fall of France. Many of the internees, including those who had fled Europe to escape Nazi persecution were thought to have been German agents, potentially helping to plan the invasion of Britain. The internees included 2,036 Jewish refugees. They were taken to Australia for internment in the rural towns of Hay in NSW, and Tatura in Victoria alongside those interned in Australia.

\(^4\) The St Louis was a German ocean liner most notable for a single voyage in 1939 in which her captain tried to find homes for 900 Jewish refugees [mainly German Jews seeking asylum from Nazi persecution]. On the ship’s arrival to Cuba they were denied entry and the ship was forced to return to continental Europe.
Canada, and met children of Holocaust survivors, and children of people who’d left Germany in the 1930s. I had never met a survivor grandchild, a survivor child or survivor. South Africa had a small number of German survivors, but unless you were part of that community, you never ever fraternised with them.

**Jewish South Africans** comprises five teachers— Natalie, Claire, Rachel, Janet and Adrian —who were born and raised in South Africa, attended university there, and in some cases, taught English and/or history. They were (except for Adrian and Rachel) completely (privately, emotionally, personally and in some cases professionally), ignorant of the Holocaust until they arrived in Australia and were subsequently recruited to teach Jewish history in Jewish day schools. Although, in the main, they had no knowledge what-so-ever of the Holocaust, their sense of Jewish identity and community is very strong. Their knowledge of the Holocaust is acquired and learned.

### (iii) Sympathetic Gentile(s)

**James**

I am adopted. My parents were very Anglo, going back three or four generations on both sides. They’re white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. I don’t know much about my biological background. A little bit only, that suggests I am definitely Anglo-Saxon. I was fortunate in that I went to Melbourne Grammar School — one of the most prestigious schools in Melbourne. I matriculated in 1960. I grew up in a relatively strict, formal, do the right thing, all that stiff upper class thing. My mother was the youngest of ten children from a family that had been very wealthy. They had lost money somewhere … I feel some sort of affinity to Jewish people … The first source of my interest was reading Lord John Russell’s book, *Scourge of the Swastika* which I read when I was 15. For a pre-pubescent boy to see some of the photographs in it were pretty horrific.

**Sympathetic Gentiles** originally comprised two teachers – James and Gillian. Gillian shared similar experiences with both the Second Generation World War II
veterans’ as well as the professionally connected teachers. I decided to place her in the professionally connected category because to do otherwise would have caused overlapping.

James was born and raised in Melbourne by his adoptive, Anglo Saxon, Protestant parents. He joined the teaching profession after working in the construction industry for 20 years. He has for a long time felt a close affinity with Jewish people and also has had ‘a sort of fascination with the Holocaust’.5

(iv) Switching Worlds6

Philip

I don’t think you would say that there was any background there that was in any way attuned to any sort of Holocaust experience. The Jewish history of my family is very different from that of many members of the Jewish community which takes it as a matter of pride that over half its members is comprised of Holocaust survivors. I come from a family background of numerous cases of Jews and non-Jews marrying in and marrying out, and conversion taking place in both directions.

Philip is Australian born and bred. His pedigree stretches back to his great-great-grandfather, who was an English convict. His family history is one of recurring intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. The source of Philip’s knowledge of the Holocaust is academia: his Holocaust consciousness is a graft.

3 These words are taken from an interview with James.
4 The term was cited in Berger & Berger (1967) The Social Construction of Reality. New York: Anchor Books. p. 157. It is used to describe persons who have switched worlds through conversion or an alternation of their reality or consciousness. An example of this is a person’s conversion from Christianity to Judaism.
(v) Professionally Connected

Gillian

I am a baby boomer. My parents were both Anglo Celtic. My heritage is both English and Irish. My parental great, great, grandfather was a convict. He was transported out here and his grave is on Mangrove Mountain out of Gosford. The other part of my heritage is Irish which I cling to. I’m Irish Catholic. In that sense my family’s story are country people from the region of Young. My father came from Cootamundra, my mother from the Albury region, so my roots are from that area. The key thing about my own experience is that I basically left home when I was 13. I went to boarding school because I won a scholarship, a Bursary and attended a Catholic school and it’s a long story.

Professionally Connected is the largest of all the groups—Simon, Ethan, Olivia, Amelia, Charlotte, Sandra, Gillian and Jack—and is part of the baby boomer generation. They are born to Anglo-Saxon parents in the late 1940 and 1950s in Australia. The world of their primary socialisation was totally devoid of Jews. Individually or as a group they have no private or personal connection to the Holocaust. In most cases they have only come into contact with Jews at university or when they began their teaching careers in either Jewish day schools or independent non-denominational schools that had significant numbers of Jewish students and staff. In all cases their knowledge of the Holocaust is learned professionally. They acquired their knowledge either at secondary or tertiary levels, or on the job where they either elected or were required to teach the Holocaust, in either the junior and/or senior Modern History syllabus.

Second Generation World War II Veterans is another group that emerged from my empirical materials. However, during the coding process, I discovered that a number of my participants (Philip, Gillian and Jack) shared similar experiences not

---

7 This term refers to those teachers whose only connection to the Holocaust is professional – that is – they teach it.
only with this group but also with the **Professionally Connected** so I decided to collapse the ‘Second Generation’ World War II Veterans’ category because to do otherwise would have caused repetition and overlapping. Nevertheless, I have decided to retain discussion of this experience in my Literature Review\(^8\) for three reasons. First, the Second Generation World War II Veterans’ stories mirror in many ways the stories of their counterpart in the (Holocaust) Second Generation category. Second, since there is a dearth of literature on the experiences of World War II group, I wanted to acknowledge their experience as well as to ‘save’ them from completely falling between the cracks of history. And, finally, I believe that Philip, Gillian and Jack’s biographies are enriched by having their accounts placed within this historical context.

I have divided the biographies into two groups. The first group comprises those that have either an emotional, private and/or personal connection\(^9\) with this history — the Holocaust Second Generation and Jewish South Africans, while the second comprises those who have no private and/or personal connection— sympathetic gentile, Switching Worlds and those Professionally Connected.\(^{10}\)

Having discovered a range of experiences and differences in the personal backgrounds of my participants raised the question of whether there was a relationship between the history teacher’s biography (which naturally includes her or his emotional, private and personal self), and her or his teaching of a particular history (in this case, the Holocaust). Thus, the central aim of this inquiry is to establish whether biography\(^{11}\) matters. Is biography a hindrance or an asset to the history teacher, when teaching subject matter that his/her intimately knows and/or is connected to emotionally, privately and personally? However, to answer this question fully a host of related questions must also be examined. Therefore, the following questions scaffold my research:

---

\(^8\) See pages 70-75 for details.
\(^9\) See Chapter 4 of this study.
\(^{10}\) See Chapter 5 of this thesis.
\(^{11}\) Apart from understanding biography to mean a person’s socialisation that includes their social location, family, religiosity, (level of religious observance), sense of community, ethnicity, and education, biography can also be perceived as a ‘way of knowing’. 
Does biography:

- determine the extent to which, the private and personal knowledge of direct descendants (Holocaust Second Generation), is different in nature to those teachers who have no personal connection to the Holocaust;
- shape teachers’ concepts of ‘history’;
- resolve key pedagogical and emotional issues related to teaching the Holocaust; for example, what is the reason for teaching the Holocaust; decisions about how much, horror is too much (to expose students to) and/or whether to test this content or not;
- explain the ‘emotion work’¹² teachers do to manage their emotions in Holocaust classrooms;
- shape teachers’ orientations to the subject matter (for example, why some teachers use historical empathy in developing students’ understandings of this history and others do not);
- decide how and what is taught;
- establish the outcomes, other than knowledge of the historical facts, that teachers want their students to learn?

These questions do not only define the inquiry but they also establish the scope of this research.

**Outline of the study**

This study comprises nine chapters. The first three chapters follow the traditional format for reporting empirical studies in the Social Sciences. It is an interdisciplinary study, combining the disciplines of Education and Sociology with a thorough knowledge of the history of the Holocaust.

---

Chapter 2 examines theoretical, and in many cases, empirical studies in the following areas: history teaching; historical empathy; teaching the Holocaust; modalities\textsuperscript{13} of teachers’ knowledge; teachers’ educational beliefs; as well as the burgeoning literature on the power of context and its capacity to fashion teachers’ classroom instruction. Part 1 of this review examines recent research on teaching history, with special reference to studies that position the teacher centre stage. Part 2 surveys the research literature on the concept of ‘historical empathy’ and the attendant misunderstanding and controversy that surround it. Literature on imagination, make believe and fantasy, affective empathy, sympathy and emotional identification have also been surveyed, in the effort to highlight the distinctive nature of historical empathy. Part 3 evaluates the literature on teaching the Holocaust. In spite of the massive body of literature on teaching the Holocaust only four studies target classroom practice, focusing on the different approaches as well as problems that teachers confront when teaching the Holocaust. Part 4 examines not only the construct of ‘biography but also its many guises. The discussion moves beyond the every day usage of the term biography to one that considers any study to be naïve, if it does not appreciate its intersection with history and society. Part 5 assesses the research findings on the modalities of teachers’ knowledge — professional, personal as well as emotional—and extends it beyond what almost (with the exceptions of McCaughtry, 2004 and Zembylas, 2007) no other researchers have done. It extends all research, to date, by refining the concept of emotional knowledge, and identifying that, some history teachers—(Holocaust) second generation —possess their own, very specific emotional knowledge [SGEK]. Part 6 looks at the growing body of literature on teachers’ educational beliefs. Researchers continue to experience difficulties because they have been unable to reach a consensus on a clear and consistently accepted definition. However, this body of literature is important to my research purposes because teachers often treat their beliefs as knowledge. The final part of this review, Part 7, assesses the importance of context to the work that teachers do. The picture that emerges from the literature is one that shows context to be ‘the most potent player in dictating patterns of practice and learning outcomes’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 31).

Chapter 3 deals with the design of this study (methodology, data collection and analysis), and assesses its trustworthiness and its outcome. It also locates the study within the field of qualitative sociology by recognising that to truly explore the individual one has to understand his/her complex social locations.

Chapters 4 and 5 showcase the storylines of my participants’ emotional, private and personal histories. Both chapters are drawn from the participants’ identities/substantial selves as well as their lived experiences. These chapters provide ‘thick description’\(^{14}\) of the formative episodes in the lives of each teacher. The former of these chapters examines the life experiences of the (Holocaust) second generation and Jewish South African teachers, while the latter focuses on the experiences of all the other groups — sympathetic gentile, switching world and professionally connected. Each history ‘opens windows’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 133) onto teachers’ substantial selves as well as onto their social and historical locations. Featuring each biography, making their stories public extends an invitation to a three way conversation with the reader, the ‘authors’ of each text and the researcher. The reader is (just as the researcher was at the time of transcribing) prompted by the rawness and the honesty of the stories to become introspective and question his/her responses to the biography; nay, even to question how he/she would have acted in a similar situation. Such a dialogue could predispose the reader to more readily understand the reasons for the various teachers’ teaching repertoires and to recognise and accept the fragile and ephemeral nature of the human condition—lives are slippery things.

Chapter 6 answers the central questions on which this study is premised. It draws a direct line from each participant’s biography to his or her conception of history or their belief about the nature of history. It also reveals the extent to which the history teacher’s biography matters.

Chapter 7 looks at the role that biography and emotion play in key pedagogical issues in teaching the Holocaust. Some of the main issues that it examines are: should this topic be treated and examined in the same manner as any other topic in

---

\(^{14}\) Thick description is a term used in ethnographical research. It aims to provide the reader with a sense of the emotion, thoughts and perceptions that research participants’ experience.
the history syllabi; on what basis do teachers decide which graphic images are acceptable to show their students whilst others are not; and what ‘emotion work’ do teachers do to manage their emotions in Holocaust classrooms.

Chapter 8 considers teachers’ orientations to the subject matter (the Holocaust). It examines why some teachers use historical empathy to develop their students’ historical understandings of the subject while others refuse to do so. The chapter also questions whether context makes a difference to the outcomes that teachers want for their students.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the purpose of this study, its methodology and its scale. The key questions that scaffold my research are also addressed in this chapter. As a way of introducing the research I present five extracts (together with the characteristics of its particular category) drawn from the experiences of my participants’ stories. Each account (and its category) highlights not only the distinctiveness of each story but also its relationship to the Holocaust. In the following chapter I review the literature that is relevant for my research concerns.
Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

This thesis examines sociological questions about the nature and construction of teachers’ personal knowledge and the ways in which it shapes the teaching of a particular history (in this case the Holocaust). The theories that frame my enquiry are also explored: teaching history (in particular the Holocaust); historical empathy; teachers’ professional, personal and emotional knowledge; teachers’ educational beliefs; and the context within which they teach. All of these theories are examined within a social psychological paradigm as a means of identifying links that exist between teachers’ biographies (including their unique, emotional, private and personal knowledge) and their teaching practice.

Webster’s Dictionary defines the word ‘biography’ as ‘the written history of a person’s life’. I do not intend to write traditional biographic narratives of my participants’ lives: selecting, ‘arranging, clarifying, and assembling incidents and choosing an event as an end point, as an outcome of a story as yet unconceived and assembling its antecedents and consequences’ (Berk, 1980, p. 94). This being the usual approach of a biographer. Rather, this thesis uses the ‘biographic inquiry’ approach to understand how teachers hold (that is conceptualise) history and how their individual conceptualisations have been filtered through their biography. Furthermore, this thesis empirically explores the relationship between biography and the teaching of history.

Using the term ‘biographic inquiry’ implies that biography is both a phenomenon and a method. ‘Biography’ names the structured quality of experience to be studied and it names the method of inquiry for this study. Hence, my approach deviates from traditional narrative biographers in that it does not aim to chronicle or construct stories or narratives but to deconstruct and analyse my participants’ life-worlds in order to make meaning of them.
Since teaching, and particularly history teaching, is the medium through which the intersection of a teacher’s biography and his/her teaching method is examined, the obvious starting point must be the discipline of teaching history.

**Part 1: Teaching history**

The research base for teaching history is important to this study as it is the discipline through which the current study is explored. Understanding how history teachers construct their own definitions of history as well as the ways in which they attempt to develop the historical thinking and understanding of their students (in particular their use of historical empathy) are fundamental concerns of this thesis. This leads to a consideration of the ways in which teachers’ personal understanding of history is shaped by the influences of their individual background (in particular, their emotional history, of which emotional knowledge is one component: their educational beliefs; and the contexts within which they teach), and how these factors translate into their teaching of history. In order to address these questions, the current study places the teacher centre stage and attempts to make sense of personal experience.

The research findings on teaching and learning history are almost exclusively American. There is a serious paucity of research in teaching history in Australian schools. As this thesis is concerned with how secondary school history teachers teach history in New South Wales and Victoria, one of the two Australian studies undertaken by Halse, Khamis, Dinham, Harris, Buchanan and Soeters becomes particularly relevant. ‘The State of History in New South Wales’ was commissioned by the History Teachers’ Association of New South Wales to determine how effective history teaching was in secondary schools. Teachers, students and members of school executives in both government and non-government schools across New South Wales were asked to complete questionnaires, participate in interviews and write submissions.

The study describes the teaching and learning methods that secondary school teachers had reported using in history classrooms. It recognises the importance of
teachers giving voice to their experiences and allowing teachers’ classroom realities to emerge. The data reveals that teachers are using a wide range of dynamic teaching and learning practices to bring history alive and develop students’ historical skills and understanding. The research suggests that the majority of teacher-participants privilege written work, particularly empathy tasks, research assignments and summarising, as the means of developing students’ historical knowledge and understanding. The findings suggest ‘an inclination to rely on fairly traditional ‘pen and paper’ approaches to the teaching of history’ (Halse et al., 1997, p. 97). However, there is also evidence of a range of creative teaching and learning methods that include group work, use of videos and computer simulations as well as catering for the needs of different ability levels.

Textbooks are the preferred teaching strategy for over half of the teachers who participated in the study. Furthermore, male teachers’ practices mirror these preferences to a statistically significant degree. Female teachers are more inclined to use drama, role-plays, historical empathy tasks and group work, and they cater to the needs of different abilities more than their male counterparts. This body of research sheds valuable light on the teaching and learning repertoires of history teachers in New South Wales as well as on their inclination to use historical empathy to foster historical understanding. The study undertaken over two decades ago, unfortunately overlooks the teacher’s biographic experiences, teaching style and the role that context plays in fashioning his/her practice.

The other study carried out in Australia, Carmel Fahey’s (2007) study, Practice in context: Teaching and learning about history and the past in secondary schools is also of special interest. In the first instance because it is an Australian study and secondly, because it is a very recent piece of research, carried out in urban, southwest and western Sydney at three disparate schools and departmental sites. The sites chosen were Edensor High School, a comprehensive government school with a high economically disadvantaged, ethnic population; Wattle Park, a selective government high school with a relatively evenly distributed student population; and Denham College, a Catholic high school for girls. Fahey’s research is of special relevance
because it argues that teaching practice is the product of the teacher and the school environment. More importantly, it also demonstrates that the way a topic is depicted, the choice of material through which it is taught and the teaching approach used to deliver it are determined by the teacher teaching it, the students it is being taught to and the department in which the subject is located.

At the very start of study we are presented with six lively and engaging snapshots of practice. We ‘sit’ as if alongside Fahey, as she observes the introductory lesson on a unit of work on World War I, taught by her participants to their Year 8 history classes in each of the three schools: Margaret and her colleague Michael at Edensor High School; Robert and Anna at Wattle Park; and Mary and Karen at Denham College. Fahey’s montages capture ‘the varied instructional goals, styles, plot development, teacher and learner roles and the balance between public and private renderings of a significant event in Australian history’ (2007, p. 16). Each of these vignettes captures the quality differences among her participants’ classroom practices and allows us to question the reasons for them.

Fahey (2007) uses a biographical approach to examine her participants’ professional lives. She provides cameos of her participants through presenting their professional milestones: their academic and teaching history and their approaches to both the teaching and the learning of history. To understand more clearly the variables that determine classroom practice, Fahey examines the effect of subject departments on her participants and she identifies three factors—departmental culture and identity; school and departmental leadership and organisational politics—as being significant in creating a particular atmosphere and thereby a particular teaching practice. Fahey’s (2007) findings with particular reference to departments and their potency in shaping instruction endorse views that are prevalent in the literature. Clearly what matters most to teachers’ professional lives is their workplace context. However, both Fahey (2007) and the literature overlook the power of teachers’ emotional and personal lives/histories in shaping their subject practices. This thesis is concerned with redressing this lacuna.

---

1 The conditions include: schools and communities; subject departments; learners and school subjects.
2 See Johnson (1990); McLaughlin & Talbert (1990); Siskin (1991) and Talbert (1993).
Hahn (1994) explores the importance of teachers abandoning traditional instructional strategies (that is, teacher as lecturer and student memorisation) in order to enhance students’ engagement with history. Her study advocates the inclusion of controversial and/or sensitive issues into social studies teaching in order to engage students in meaningful and active ways. She tells us that many students recall their past experiences in the social studies classroom with ‘displeasure’: ‘Memories of high school social studies classes are of reading textbooks, listening to lectures about events in the past, and studying for tests’ (Hahn, 1994, p. 201). She maintains that the teachers whom students remember are those rare individuals who ‘deliberately planned instruction around controversial issues’ or who ‘encouraged students to express their views and elaborate on their reasoning, citing evidence and supporting values’ (p. 202). She argues that citizenship education (that is, the development of informed, reflective citizens who are motivated to participate as well as possess skills of analysis and decision making) is the primary consideration of teaching and learning social studies in the United States. However, the dominant pattern of instructional strategies of teachers, lectures and students being the memorisation of uncomplicated material runs counter to fostering these skills and actions. She claims that these very strategies also result in students leaving social studies classrooms with unfavourable experiences.

Hahn (1994) believes that exposing students to more subject matter content in social studies will not necessarily result in students achieving informed active citizenry; on the contrary, it might even discourage them from future study in the discipline. However, she reasons that students’ exposure to controversial and/or sensitive issues might positively influence citizenship outcomes as well as students’ enjoyment of their social studies or history classes. To support this premise, Hahn (1994) invited four expert history teachers to a group ‘conversation’ about the role of controversy in teaching secondary school history. No further details are provided as to how these four teachers were selected or located or what questions were posed for discussion.

---

3 In the United States, history is but one strand of several disciplines that form part of the primary and secondary school subject of Social Studies.
Several commonalities of practice emerged during discussions. Student interest in contemporary events was used to draw parallels with historical events. This provided a framework for students to raise questions or enter into debates. These teachers were particularly aware of the need to select material wisely and to be sensitive to students’ backgrounds, community demographics, interpersonal relations and religious affiliations. There was a shared commitment to developing students’ reasoning by expecting them to take counter positions to their own. All four teachers agreed that the use of questions was ‘a critical part of teaching controversy’ (Hahn, 1994, p. 211). Creating a classroom climate that fostered openness, tolerance and respect for self and others’ views was found to be essential to effective history teaching. These four ‘experts’ agreed that it took ‘persistence, patience and hard work on the teacher’s part’ (Hahn, 1994, p. 212) to foster these skills in their students. Likewise, considerable time was required for them to build confidence in their abilities to resolve conflict positively within their classrooms.

Hahn (1994) advocates that more research needs to be undertaken in history classrooms where controversial and/or sensitive issues are regularly examined. She believes that the research needs to examine who should be teaching these subject areas and under what conditions. Hahn (1994, p. 216) joins other researchers in asking the question: ‘Are there particular characteristics, such as tolerance for ambiguity, open mindedness, intellectual flexibility, risk taking, and a provisional view of the truth possessed by some teachers that enable them to confidently incorporate controversial and/or sensitive issues into their teaching?’ In order to answer this question the present study proposes that an additional, integral component needs to be addressed: the component of understanding the individual teacher’s personal and emotional self—his/her biographical and emotional experiences that accompany the teacher into the classroom. Without these missing pieces the answer will remain incomplete.

Grant (2001) supports Hahn’s (1994) findings that teachers’ practices shape students’ views of history. She argues that ‘while there is not sufficient evidence to support a causal relationship’, her data suggests ‘a correlation, points of coherence between each teacher’s practices and the views their students construct of history’ (Grant, 2001, p. 65). Using observations of two high school social studies teachers’ teaching
units on the civil rights movement in the United States and interviews with students in each class, Grant (2001) explores the relationship between teachers’ practices and students’ understanding of history in general and of the United States’ civil rights movement in particular. In her research, Grant examines three dimensions of historical thinking: historical knowledge, significance and empathy. Two teachers, Linda Strait and George Blair, share similar academic backgrounds, teach in the same suburban high school, express related views about the importance of teaching civil rights, prepare students for external examinations and, yet, the units they teach and their pedagogical styles are vastly different.

George Blair does not teach a discrete unit on civil rights but ‘addresses civil rights issues and events as they occur in the chronological order his textbook presents’ (Grant, 2001, p. 70). His teaching approaches epitomises Evans’ (1994) category of the ‘storyteller’: a style where narrative emerges as the dominant instructional mode in the teaching units. His stories are fact-filled renditions of historical personalities, policies and events. He concentrates on the actions of key individuals and employs theatrical means (such as vocal modulation and emotion) to build an engaging story. Students take in what they hear and copy notes displayed on the overhead projector. Blair delivers his story as a monologue without any student interjections.

Unlike her colleague, Linda Strait uses a multiplicity of resources some of which include her university notes, a range of curricular materials as well as her personal reading. While the textbook appears in this assortment, it determines neither her preparation nor her teaching. ‘Her units are a complex whole with various instructional activities and experiences designed to provide multiple opportunities for students to engage the ideas and emotions of the times’ (Grant, 2001, p. 75). Some examples that highlight the diversity of her approach include reading, writing, observing, group work, and role-playing. Strait moves beyond the traditional role of teacher; she does not merely disseminate information and then assess its uptake but she becomes an actor and part of the material, part of the mechanism through which she teaches. She encourages a broad view of the subject matter by paying attention to the principal actors as well as to the minor ones. As a result, she makes the civil rights movement accessible and identifiable for her students. ‘So while Strait teaches
the standard political and economic fare, her unit highlights the ordinary lives represented in social history’ (Grant, 2001, p. 77).

The differences between the ways in which Blair and Strait’s students view history are clear and striking. Grant (2001) found that Strait’s students held views of history that were more considered, nuanced and sophisticated than Blair’s. Furthermore, Strait’s students appeared to view history as a more powerful and longer lasting influence on their lives than did Blair’s. Blair’s students equated historical knowledge with facts that are both immutable and indisputable. By comparison, Strait’s students viewed historical knowledge as intricate, tentative and open to analysis and interpretation. Clearly the dimensions of historical understanding (historical knowledge, significance and historical empathy) that Grant explored support her argument that although Strait and Blair’s instructional strategies may not have determined their students’ views of history, their methods must have had a significant impact on the attitudes that the two groups of students developed to the study of history. Grant shows us that teachers’ instructional practices are pivotal to the ways in which students interpret history. But what are the factors that decide or influence teaching practices? This study proposes that understanding the individual teacher’s personal and emotional self—his/her biographical and emotional experiences—that accompany him/her into the classroom are essential factors. It is these experiences, overlooked by Grant (2001), that are considered in this study; for without these missing pieces the answer will remain incomplete.

Evans (1988, 1994) has carried out the only studies, to date, that identify links between teachers’ biographies, their conceptions of history and their preferred teaching styles. Utilising survey, observation and interview, Evans identified five typologies: storyteller, scientific historian, relativist-reformer, cosmic philosopher and eclectic. Dramatic aspects of peoples’ lives and events dominate the discourses of storytellers. Storytellers as teachers use historical narratives to foster interest in the past. Their instruction is very much teacher directed. Data on storytellers suggest that their discipline orientation develops from early interest in stories, literature and film. Parental influences and political affiliations are cited as contributing factors; but no explanation is provided as to how these background factors shape the formation of storytellers’ epistemologies.
Scientific historians believe that history is based upon interpretation and explanation. These individuals represent the discipline as a form of scientific inquiry, ‘as a tool for arriving at balanced judgements about events and situations’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 34). The teacher is seen as a guide on the side rather than the sage on stage. Their pedagogical preferences appear to be shaped more by their disciplinary training than family influences and are often aligned with religious and political affiliations.

Relativist-reformers comprise the largest category. These teachers take their (present-day) world as their point of departure for exploring the past. They aim to ‘make the world a better place’ by fostering citizenship and enquiry. Having families where debates about history, politics and social justice are commonplace together with provocative teachers at secondary and tertiary level seem to explain these teachers’ instructional styles.

The last two categories consist of cosmic philosophers who portray history as series of cycles of progress and decline, and eclectics who have no particular or dominant orientation and believe that history is optimally represented when it is taught in many different ways for widely discrepant purposes—to forge identities, discipline minds and elicit interest or amusement. Although Evans’ (1994) study provides a clear link between conceptions of history and instructional preferences, it provides only cursory explanations as to the relationship between teachers’ backgrounds and their subject orientations. It is precisely this gap in the literature that the current study aims to fill.

The above studies shed valuable light on the varying dimensions of history teaching; however, a critical element is missing—the teacher’s biography. History teachers’ pedagogical preferences—disciplinary training, content selection and methodology—only partially explained their orientation to the subject matter. Understanding the teacher’s biography (in particular his/her emotional, private and personal history which implicitly includes his/her emotional knowledge) is the key to making sense of the source and nature of the teacher’s personal knowledge and the ways in which these translate into his/her practice.
Although the two studies above (Halse et al, 1997 and Grant 2001) highlight the fact that history teachers’ classroom practices shape their students’ views of history, only Grant (2001) recognises the importance of historical empathy in this process.

Clearly more empirical research is needed to determine why some teachers use historical empathy whilst others consider that doing so trivialise the experience and avoid it altogether. The purpose of the present study is to extend this knowledge; to do so requires an examination of the ways in which historical empathy differs from imagination, fantasy and make-believe, empathy, sympathy, and emotional identification. This study explores the extent to which an insider, a person with a direct or emotional connection or a traumatic history, for example the Holocaust, employs historic empathy in the classroom.

Part 2: Historical empathy

Working within the discipline of history, Foster (1999) focuses on those characteristics of historical empathy which suggest a melding between Verducci’s cognitive and epistemological categories. Disregarding affective constructs of empathy, Foster argues that, contrary to accepted belief, historical empathy is not identical to sympathy or imagination\(^4\), nor does it have the ability to take the attitude of ‘the other’.\(^5\) He claims that ‘historical empathy’, comprising six characteristics\(^6\), seems to be more akin to the notion of historical thinking than empathy.

Lee (1984) takes a more restricted view on historical empathy. Focusing primarily on what Verducci (2000) refers to as ‘affective empathy’, Lee distinguishes four ways of viewing empathy: firstly, as a \textit{power}—as in the ability to discern others’ thoughts and feelings; secondly, as an \textit{achievement}—as in understanding what others have

\(^5\) This concept was coined by George Herbert Mead. See his \textit{Mind, Self and Society}. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1934.
\(^6\) Foster’s six characteristics of historical empathy are: i. understanding and explaining why individuals behaved as they did; ii. appreciating the context of historical events; iii. analysing and evaluating historical evidence; iv. appreciating the consequences of past actions; v. recognising that the past differs from the present: and vi. understanding human action. (Foster, 1999, p. 19).
believed, valued or felt; thirdly, as a process—the means by which we interpret the actions of others; and finally as a propensity—as a disposition to consider the other’s perspective with regards to a particular issues. The last quality, Lee contends, is ‘an essential part of learning to think historically’ (1984, p. 90).

Both Vansledright (2001) and Lee (1984) agree that historical empathy is an essential tool for understanding past ages. It is closely aligned to historical contextualisation—history must be understood and interpreted from within its own time. This process requires the historian to stand in the shoes of his/her subjects in order to understand the choices they had and made. In the ideal, this textures and tempers our understanding of our ancestors (Vansledright 2001). This, however, is quite different to (affective) empathy which is only an emotional response.

Vansledright (2001) argues that ‘authentic, contextualised historical empathy’ (p. 57) cannot be achieved in any direct, unmediated manner and that our very perspectives or ‘positionalities’ preclude us from achieving it. To Vansledright ‘positionality’ means ‘the current socio-culturally permeated perspectives that any historical thinker brings to the task of making sense of the past’ (Vansledright, 2001, p. 57). Thus, he claims that our contemporary locations (the present) preclude us from achieving historical empathy in any complete or absolute sense—at best it is a relative achievement. Indeed, we cannot get to an outside location that is bracketed from our own historical positionality. Consequently, he advises history teachers to consciously focus on developing, what he calls, ‘specialised competencies’ (Vansledright, 2001, p. 65) in students’ thinking by exposing them to a variety of historical materials that are investigated in depth. He also suggests that students be encouraged to reflect upon their own positionalities by challenging their own assumptions as well as the positionalities of the composers of historical artefacts and the manner in which these have been constructed. Vansledright’s claim that authentic, contextualised historical empathy may well be unachievable is difficult to refute. However, he overlooks the person of the history teacher and the ways in which the teacher’s biography and emotional history mediates the use of historical empathy in his/her classroom.
Imagination, fantasy or make believe

The concept of imagination in history is problematic because it carries with it connotations derived from the Arts (artistic licence) and therefore appears to be in conflict with the fundamental principle of history (fact-based evidence). Furlong (1961) noted the following basic distinctions within the concept of imagination: (i) in imagination or make-believe—where the past action takes place wholly in the imagination; (ii) supposal—where one imagines being in the place of a historical figure; (iii) with imagination—where supposal is carried out with hindsight and imagination.

P.J. Lee (1984) explains this further when he writes:

> It is tempting to say that [historical] imagination must always be backed by evidence, but it would be nearer the truth to say that when it is supposal, imagination starts from the evidence and then returns to [often the ‘same’] evidence with the ability to see it in a new light.

For example, in a history lesson a student imagines he is Robin Hood engaged in battle with King John and his men; maybe he has just wounded King John with his bow and arrow. He is doing this in his imagination. The teacher, however, has more specific concerns and suggests, ‘Suppose you are Robin Hood. Where would you position your archers?’ (She might have said, ‘Imagine you are Robin Hood …’) In response, the student may argue for dispersing his experienced archers amongst those less proficient with a bow and arrow. He has supposed that he is in Robin Hood’s position and, like Robin Hood, he has certain logistical problems. If the student does his supposing with real insight (comprehensive historical knowledge) and makes perceptive selections from the wealth of possibilities open to him (from the evidence he has), his teacher can say that his supposal is done with imagination.

Empathy

There has been and continues to be disharmony amongst theorists, philosophers and historians about the construct of empathy. The literature reveals significant
variations. Deborah Meier (1996) suggests that empathy is the ability to take the perspective of the other. Martin L. Hoffman (1984) and Nancy Eisenberg & Janet Strayer (1987) argue that empathy is primarily an affective phenomenon. Although John Deigh (1996) is of the same opinion, he stipulates that the empathiser maintains his sense of self as a distinct entity from that of ‘the other’. On the other hand, Walter Köhler (1949), Francine Deutsch & Ronald A. Madle (1975) and George Herbert Mead (1934) consider empathy to be a cognitive process or cognitive role playing. It is not surprising that Susan Verducci (2000) comes to the conclusion that ‘although theorists have considered empathy a singular phenomenon, they have been capturing and explicating components of a complex of phenomena’ (2000, p. 65). She groups empathetic phenomena on an ‘affective-cognitive axis’ (p. 66). Like Hoffman (1984) and Eisenberg & Strayer (1987), Verducci posits that empathy can privilege either affect (feeling) or cognition (knowing). She establishes four categories of definitions: ‘affective empathies (aestheticism, sympathy and compassion), cognitive empathies (Freudian therapeutic and moral philosophical), a complexion of feeling and thinking empathies (defined largely in terms of contemporary therapeutic) and epistemological empathies’ (Grant, 2001, p. 97). I found Verducci’s (2000) idea of separating empathy on an ‘affective-cognitive axis’ (p. 66) particularly useful. Her insights provided a lens through which to filter the responses of my participants not only regarding their use or avoidance of empathy in the history classroom, but also the ways in which they empathise with their subject matter.

**Empathy as distinct from sympathy**

Etymologically ‘empathy’ came into ‘existence’ within psychological literature at the turn of the twentieth century, as a rendition for Einfühlung—‘to feel one’s way into another.’ It derives from the Greek ‘empathia’ meaning to be deeply touched or affected by a something. It is a form of social intelligence according to Mead (1934). It enables us to understand others and ‘beat time’ or ‘resonate with their hearts’ (Sherman, p. 84, 1998). On a general level, it has been defined as ‘the involuntary and at times forceful experiencing of another’s emotional state … Not only do we experience another’s feelings but also some of that person’s thoughts, wishes and perceptions, which we can relate to our own’ (Cairns, 1989, p. 13).
Our capacity to connect to our fellow human beings is predicated upon our capacity for empathetic imagination (Sherman, 1998). According to Sherman (1998) the origins of this capacity stems from innate features in our biology. Consequently, from infancy onwards, we are able to ‘mimic others emotional responses and experience them as our own … feel what others are feeling … [and] … establish mutual relationships’ (Sherman, 1998, p. 82). As we age, our capacities to take the role of the other (Mead, 1934)—to imagine others situation and mental states—becomes fundamental to our social interactions. These propensities for empathetic understanding are important contributors to and motivators of altruistic behaviour. What seems to be the case from a very early age is that:

We step out of our egocentric and by extension culturally parochial worlds, through mechanisms such as empathy and imagination … we come to see through other’s eyes, take on other’s emotions, imagine what others believe. We re-centre ourselves on others’ (Sherman, 1998, p. 83).

Often people mistake empathy as sympathy or a kind of feeling. According to Wispé (1986):

Sympathy refers to the heightened awareness of another’s plight as something to be alleviated. Empathy refers to the attempt of one’s self-aware self to understand the subjective experience of another self. Sympathy is a way of relating. Empathy is a way of knowing (p. 314).

Sympathy has its roots in eighteen-century moral philosophy (reflected in the works of Adam Smith (2000) and David Hume (1739/1968). It is the older concept that has been ‘superseded’ by the newer concept, empathy. There are a number of differences between sympathy and empathy that are worth noting. ‘In empathy the self is the vehicle for understanding, and it never loses its identity’, sympathy, on the other hand, is concerned with ‘communion rather than with accuracy, and self-awareness is reduced rather than augmented’ (Wispé, 1986, p. 318). In empathy, the empathiser tries to feel the feelings of the other, while in sympathy it is the other that affects the sympathiser. Some regard empathy as an instance of ‘perspective taking’. Downey
Empathy and emotional identification

Empathy and emotional identification, though similar, have a fundamental difference. Both empathy and emotional identification require that one takes the role of the other and imaginatively becomes involved in the other’s experience. A distinguishing feature of empathy, however, is that it requires imaginative participation in the other’s experience without ‘losing or dissolving’ one’s self. The same does not apply to emotional identification. When there is intense identification and one’s identity is fragile, the outcome is ‘likely to be a loss of one’s self as separate from the person with whom one identifies’ (Deigh, 1996, p. 175). For example, there is my subject Rebecca, who strongly identifies with her father’s (and his family’s) Holocaust experiences as well as with the experiences of even unknown Jewish victims. Consequently, every lesson she teaches on the Holocaust is an instance of vicarious suffering. Her pain is not expressed as empathetic understanding but rather as the actual pain of the victim. Rebecca so completely imagines herself as one of the victims that her ‘self’ is dissolved in the process. By comparison, to empathise with another one must acknowledge the person as distinct from oneself, a separate person with qualities of his/her own. Such acknowledgement demands that one maintain a sense of one’s self even as one assumes the other’s position and imaginatively becomes involved in his/her experience (Deigh, 1996).

‘Empathy as historical understanding’ (Vansledright, 2001, p. 25) demands serious thought and ‘entertaining complex ideas and seeing how they shape views of historical circumstances from (and perhaps opposed to) our own’ (Vansledright, 2001, p. 25). This is equally true whether teaching the Holocaust or any other historical event of similar magnitude. Such events all require the ‘examination of historical accounts, biographies, testimonies, in addition to reading a mountain of

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{2} \quad \text{‘I survived, survived for a reason. This is my legacy’. (From interview with Rebecca).}
\end{align*}\]
secondary sources and sifting through countless pages of private evidence’ (Riley, 2001, p. 139). However, ‘the journey to understand neither begins with nor ends with an examination of available evidence’ (Riley, 2001, p. 139) but is contingent upon ‘the unique experiences of the individual researcher, teacher, and/or student’ (Riley, 2001, p. 139). As this enquiry is premised upon my belief that the biographies of history teachers determine in large measure their orientation to their subject matter, I chose the Holocaust as a case-study both because of my emotional connection to it and because it elicits multiple perspectives and responses.

**Part 3: Teaching the Holocaust**

Apart from Evans’ (1994) study I was not able to locate any other study in Britain, North America, Canada, France, Germany, Australia or New Zealand that examines the influences of the history teacher’s biography (that is socialisation—family background, past experiences, emotional history, significant events, education, and sense of community) on his/her teaching of history (in this case the Holocaust). It is this gap in the literature that this study explores.


Of the four main themes cited above, only two—teaching the Holocaust and biographical perspectives—are relevant to the focus of this thesis. To date only four studies have focused on actual classroom practice. Two of the studies that have addressed this gap in the research were carried out in England by Supple (1989) and
by Short (1995), a few years later. Supple’s research was done before the ‘Era of the Second World War’ became a compulsory component of Key Stage 3 (KS3) of the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom. The third study is by Berman (1998, 2001); it is an Australian profile of the state of Holocaust education in Jewish day schools, during the years 1945-1996. The fourth is Schweber’s (2004) interviews with and observations of four highly experienced American secondary school history teachers. This work highlights the ways in which traditional and non-traditional pedagogies expose the ways in which moral messages are conveyed implicitly and explicitly.

Supple’s (1989) research survey was the product of her personal frustration at having to use textbooks that dealt with the Holocaust in a perfunctory manner. This led her to question how the Holocaust was being taught; what was being taught and learned; and teacher and student attitudes towards the subject. Her findings are based on questionnaire returns and interviews with twenty-eight secondary school history teachers (mainly Heads of Department) in north-east England. Most schools she visited had a very high percentage of Jewish students. She gathered the evidence for her survey from teachers, students, the syllabus, the treatment of the Holocaust in examination papers and in textbooks, survivors, librarians and advisors. As my thesis concerns itself with teachers’ practices, it will focus only on data collected and analysed from within the area of pedagogy.

Supple’s study reveals that schools generally encourage the use of historical empathy in order to develop students’ historical understanding. The picture that emerges, however, reveals teachers’ insecurity concerning its use. Teachers’ reluctance is also reflected in such comments as ‘the dreaded empathy component’ (Supple, 1989, p. 13) as well as in their confusion about the meaning of the term itself. Some

\[9\] This research was conducted before the ‘Era of the Second World War’ became part of Key Stage 3 of the National curriculum in England and Wales.

teachers were of the opinion that empathy tasks were too difficult for 13 to 14 year old students.

One of the main problems Supple’s respondents faced in teaching the Holocaust was pupils’ racism. How to diminish the appeal of Nazi propaganda and ensure that students were not attracted by it was a major concern. Inadequate knowledge of and reasons for anti-Semitism made some teachers feel uncomfortable answering the question: ‘Why the Jews?’ Due to the paucity of teachers’ knowledge of the history of anti-Semitism, this area is largely overlooked. Teachers also found it difficult to communicate the magnitude of the Holocaust and the idea that the Holocaust happened to real people, without titillating the students. With respect to the latter, the following comments represent teachers’ concerns: ‘It is very easy to turn the lesson into a source of sadistic amusement for children’ (Supple, 1989, p. 19) and ‘I would definitely not show videos because it’s so horrific and panders to their sadism … it allows them to laugh at the treatment of Jews, they love blood, guts and horror’ (Supple, 1989, p. 19).

‘Teachers’ feelings’ is a category that Supple considered but only in a very cursory manner. Apart from noting her respondents’ views, Supple did not attempt to explore the personal aspect of teachers’ difficulties. There was a general consensus among teachers about the distressing nature of the subject matter and the difficulty they experienced in dealing with the emotional responses of their students; particularly of those who had lost relatives in the Holocaust. Three of her respondents’ comments are worth noting as they each bear testament to the need for biographic understanding of teachers’ experiences and the ways in which these shape their pedagogy and beliefs. One teacher remarked that he experienced difficulty teaching

the Holocaust because his mother’s family was German and had lost relatives in the war (Supple, 1989, p. 26). What was the nature of his difficulty? Did he mean that he felt uncomfortable teaching the Holocaust as he was of German descent and was teaching the Holocaust in a predominantly Jewish context? Did he mean that he experienced ‘emotional’ difficulty because he had a personal connection with the subject matter? Supple does not explain. Another teacher spoke of ‘the horror and how hard it was to go on and on … and [that] teaching the Holocaust can be too negative about Jewish identity’ (Supple, 1989, p. 26). Why did this teacher feel so overwhelmed by the nature of the subject matter? Could her misgivings concerning her students’ sense of Jewish identity be due to her identification with them? There is no further inquiry as to the genesis of this teacher’s reaction. The third teacher expressed the following view: ‘Nazism fascinates me, but the Holocaust leaves me cold’ (Supple, 1989 p. 26). Supple does not ask this respondent for further elucidation of her perspective.

Supple’s findings are valuable because they do shed light on the teaching of the Holocaust and the problems teachers encounter in its teaching. However, while the study does note teachers’ reluctance to use historical empathy to develop students’ historical understanding, it does not consider the ways in which teachers’ personal connections to the subject matter (biography) could mediate the employment of it in the classroom.

Context is another factor that Supple’s survey overlooks; naturally, the type of school within which a teacher is teaching will itself directly influence that teacher’s classroom practices. Context makes particular demands on teachers’ identities as well as ‘skills, knowledge, attitudes, sensitivities and judgements’ (Sockett, 1987, p. 210). Even though it is accepted that biography illuminates the person of the teacher, and the contexts within which teachers teach determine their practices, these dimension of pedagogy remain missing from Supple’s investigation.

By the time Short (1995) starts his research, the ‘Era of the Second World War’ had become a mandatory component of the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom. By focusing on more ethnically diverse regions than Supple, Short’s study examines a broader base of teacher experience. He believed that teachers in ethnically more
diverse regions would have different experiences teaching the Holocaust. According to Short, Supple fails to establish her study’s ‘raison d’être: how much value teachers place on the Holocaust as a medium for combating racism in general and anti-Semitism in particular’ (Short, 1995, p. 169).

Short employed a similar methodology to Supple (1989). He interviewed thirty-four history teachers (most of whom were Heads of Department): twenty-four men and ten women. The teachers taught in thirty secondary schools selected at random from schools in south-east England. All, but one of the schools, were comprehensive schools. The majority were ethnically diverse and only two schools had a majority of Jewish students.

Although all teachers interviewed believed that the Holocaust should be included in the History curriculum, a number felt that introducing the Holocaust to 13-14 year-olds was too early. This is also reflected in the views of one respondent who tells Short (1995) that: They’re not quite of the age to understand the real implications of what was involved in the causation and the effect (Short, 1995, p. 172). Although about two-thirds of the sample saw the teaching of the Holocaust as a valuable warning against racism and its latent dangers, Short’s respondents were acutely conscious of the need to avoid student distress. In the words of one teacher, ‘In principle there are no disadvantages. In practice, it can be quite harrowing; it’s very hard to strike the right balance, between not shocking and alienating the children through fear, whilst making them fully aware of what went on’ (Short, 1995, p. 173).

Short does not examine the ‘state’ that empathy has in history teaching nor whether teachers have a clearer understanding of the term six years after Supple’s research. However, he did find that two-thirds of his sample felt confident teaching the Holocaust, though a few did express similar fears to those cited in Supple’s (1989) survey, ‘Students will fail to learn that the Holocaust is about people and families, and merely look at it in terms of the numbers involved’ (Short, 1995, p. 176). Short’s study, just like Supple’s (1989), does not consider the value of exploring teachers’ biographies in order to provide answers to why some teachers experience these difficulties and others do not.
In both studies, teachers are asked how much time they devoted to teaching the history of anti-Semitism and church complicity. Short’s research, like Supple’s (1989), reveals that over half of the teachers in his study do not provide this historical background nor cover the topic of the churches in any but a cursory fashion. According to Short (1995), ‘[t]hey tended to restrict discussion of the subject to its form and development under Nazi Germany’ (1995, p. 178). The denominational schools were equally divided between those that recognised the importance of the history of anti-Semitism and the churches’ role in perpetuating it and those that largely overlooked it. Though neither researcher directly consider the importance of context and its influence on teaching the Holocaust, Short did ask his respondents whether the ethnic composition of their classes would influence their teaching practice. The majority claimed that they would not modify their methods. Short admits that he did not probe for reasons (1995, p. 179). To ascertain the verity of their claim further empirical investigation is required. Context, in my view, is one of the driving forces of teaching practice and is therefore a central theme of this enquiry. Both of the above studies provide a lens through which teachers’ practical and personal experiences in teaching the Holocaust may be examined. Unfortunately, these studies confine themselves to what teachers said and did, rather than to the analysis of the teachers’ emotional, private and personal experiences and difficulties. Supple (1989) and Short (1995) fail to explore not only the relevance of teacher backgrounds to the problems they experience but also the role that context and emotion play in their teaching.

The ‘small scale’ studies of Supple (1989) and Short (1995) indicate that many teachers in the United Kingdom encountered difficulties and felt ill-equipped to teach the Holocaust. The first comprehensive, ‘large scale national survey’ (Guardian 2008)\(^\text{11}\) of how the Holocaust is presently taught in British secondary schools was launched by the Institute of Education, in November 2007. This survey is a segment of a three-year project that aims to address the concerns and issues teachers encounter in teaching the Holocaust as well as provide a source for professional development. From November 2008 onwards, questionnaires were sent to teachers in

---

\(^\text{11}\) the *Guardian* co.uk. Retrieved Saturday, November, 08, 2008 from [http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/07/holocaust-teaching](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/07/holocaust-teaching)
all British secondary schools, with follow-up interviews in 2009. Unfortunately, the results of this project will only be available in 2011; and, therefore, no comparisons may be made with the findings of this research.

Berman’s research (1998, 2001) focuses on the Jewish day school experience in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, over a fifty year period. A letter outlining the aim of her study as well as copies of her Teachers Questionnaire were sent to the director of Jewish Studies at Moriah College, Masada College and the Emanuel School in, Sydney; Bialik, Yavneh and Mount Scopus in Melbourne; and Carmel School in Perth. The Heads of the above Jewish Studies departments introduced Berman to the relevant members of staff; and she subsequently read the interview surveys to each of the thirty-one participants. She recorded respondents’ answers and used the opportunity to ask for elucidation if required. The questionnaire comprised open-ended questions, requiring short factual answers and five closed questions with preset responses. According to Berman, ‘making the questionnaire as least time consuming as possible was an important consideration for teachers’ (2001, p. 192).

Holocaust education in Australian Jewish high schools is located within the Jewish Studies curriculum and is situated within the framework of Contemporary Jewish History—a practice that is consistently maintained. Berman noted that although the time devoted to teaching the Holocaust had increased, it did vary between a one-semester course at Carmel School in Perth to almost the whole year of either Year 9 or 10 Jewish History at both the Sydney and Melbourne schools.

‘Despite the independence of the schools and the Holocaust studies teachers’ autonomy in determining unit structure, content and emphasis, a similar approach to teaching the Holocaust emerges in almost all the Jewish high schools in Australia’ (Berman 2001, p. 94). Holocaust courses aim to provide students with a thorough factual knowledge of the Jewish predicament from 1933 to 1945. Most teachers teach the Holocaust as a ‘discrete history’, set apart from its immediate historical context. Jews are presented as ‘the primary victims of Nazism and unique in being singled out for total, systematic annihilation’ (Berman, 2001, p. 94). Scant attention is given to other victim groups under Nazi rule—gypsies, homosexuals and Jehovah’s
Witnesses. Consideration of events leading up to World War II as well as the nature and progress of the war are considered the domain of secular history.

Berman bases her findings on a brief questionnaire and the written syllabus of each school. She does not attempt to investigate the biography of teachers working within these schools nor does she question how the actual curriculum operates in the classrooms. Teachers cannot but bring ‘themselves’ to class—their dispositions, beliefs and historical understandings—and, therefore, although the material may be the same, they will teach it in many different ways. For as Schweber (2004, p. 146) writes, ‘[h]uman diversity, in the richness of its possibilities is endemic to teaching generally’. Thus, teachers’ own experiences of family, emotional history, education, gender, circumstance, disposition and religion are critical factors that require consideration in explaining the disparities inherent in teaching the Holocaust. However, these factors do not constitute the main thrust of Berman’s research.

Schweber (2004) examines classroom pedagogy and the teaching of the Holocaust through her insightful study of four teachers’ practices: Mr Jefferson, Mr Zeeman, Ms Bess and Mr Dennis. All four are very experienced high school teachers who teach the Holocaust to diverse student populations in public high schools in California.

Over a two-year period, Schweber (2004) observed classroom lessons and interviewed teachers and selected students. Her student sample consists of students who were ethnically, racially and religiously diverse and of mixed academic ability. Schweber provides rich detail of each school setting, teacher and course or unit on the Holocaust and conveys a vivid sense of being present in each classroom. She wanted to discover how students with no connection to the Holocaust could engage with it in a manner that was ‘historically informative, personally relevant and morally powerful’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 11). She assumed that by studying the practices of teachers who had taught the Holocaust for many years she could present models of expertise for others venturing into this challenging terrain.

12 All teacher, school and student names have been changed by Schweber to protect the identities of her participants.
Her first subject, Mr Jefferson, epitomises the history teacher whom all students encounter at some stage in their schooling. He, ‘Mr Jefferson simply wanted to convey more information than a typical 50-minute period could accommodate’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 14) and his students were encouraged to assiduously write down whatever he dictated. Over the three-week course that Schweber was observing him, he imparted an impressive amount of information relating to the Holocaust. As a summation, he would finish his Holocaust unit with a list of warning slogans such as ‘Racism continues, (We must be on our guard),’ or ‘Fascism/ethnic cleansing is not dead!’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 15). Interviews with Mr Jefferson’s students prior to and after the unit showed that they had learned Mr Jefferson’s information.

In one instance, Mr Jefferson used a play set in Germany in the 1930s. The play concerned a Christian family’s dilemma over whether to hide a German Jewish family. The family sought their pastor’s advice and were told to provide no assistance since the Jews are forever ‘Christ-killers’. Mr Jefferson’s intention was to illustrate church-based anti-Semitism. However, when Schweber interviewed one of Mr Jefferson’s students, she expressed opinions similar to those adopted by the pastor in the play. It seems that the pastor’s words had reinforced what the student, herself, had believed.

Researchers of teaching and learning history like Vansledright (1997), Seixas (1993), Epstein (1997, 2000) and Grant (2001) agree that students bring various aspects of their family background, personal knowledge, experiences and disposition to the classroom and that these shape what they learn. Yet, from the above four researchers, only Grant (2001) examines the relationship between teachers’ practices and student predispositions. This is clearly illustrated by the case study of Mr Jefferson: his teaching style (his reliance on the lecture methodology) allowed his student’s misguided religious interpretation of the Holocaust to go unchallenged; and his use of the play and his accompanying lecture allowed a misinterpretation to remain ‘undetected, invisible, unmined and entrenched’ (Schweber, 2001, p. 16).

In Mr Jefferson’s lessons the moral was embedded in the informational. ‘He seemed to consider moral messages as yet another form of factual knowledge to be
‘transmitted’ to students, absorbed by them, and then tested’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 17). Moral content that is not presented in a manner that encouraged students to engage in debate, to question or disagree with the issues or ideas can easily be misconstrued or completely overlooked.

Mr Zeeman, by contrast, was described as having a charismatic personality and was well-liked by both staff and students. Due to the course that he taught on the Holocaust he was also well known. He was an ardent supporter of the Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) program. His description of the course was laced with the latest educational jargon: he referred to his class as a ‘learning community’; to his methods as ‘teacher centred’; and to his assessment procedures as ‘authentic’ and ‘portfolio based’. Mr Zeeman was an enthusiastic advocate for the program because it complemented his educational beliefs completely.

Lively and easygoing, Mr Zeeman led his students to believe that their lives and concerns were important to him. He established what he called a ‘comfort zone,’ ‘a place where traditionally formalised and hierarchical relations would become more personable and egalitarian’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 23). Mr Zeeman was also a storyteller par excellence. ‘He wove tales about his own life, about his parents and extended family members, his wife and children, and about numerous encounters with strangers, friends and even lovers’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 26). In this way, Mr Zeeman broke down barriers between himself and his students and established a high level of trust. For him, stories were the vehicle for transmitting moral lessons.

His course included four distinct strands. The first strand established his expectations of the students and familiarised them with his style, his stories and his individual vocabulary relating to human behaviour. The second focused on the concept of identity: Mr Zeeman’s aim ‘was [for each student] to build a small, little window into someone else’s life’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 37). By allowing and encouraging students

---

13 The Facing History and Ourselves curriculum aims to engage students of diverse backgrounds to examine racism, prejudice and discrimination (for example anti-Semitism) and scapegoating, in order to promote the development of a humane and informed citizenry. It encourages students to move from thought to judgement, and ultimately to participation. The curriculum has a more universal approach – it’s not just about the Holocaust. It also makes connections to other genocides (for example the Armenian, Cambodian, Tibetan, Rwandan and Sudanese genocides).
to see each other as individuals he attempted to break down stereotypes. The third strand introduced the case study of the Holocaust; however, he did this in an unexpected way. ‘The Holocaust became iconic in his classroom, discussed as a symbol rather than understood as events’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 57). Though the Holocaust was mentioned in discussions it was peripheral rather than central. Because Mr Zeeman did not impart information about the Holocaust in class, and since most students don’t read textbooks, the class learned about Holocaust-related issues without actually studying the Holocaust.

In the fourth and final strand of the course, students viewed examples of role models for, what Mr Zeeman referred to as, ‘participatory citizenship’ but could just as well have been referred to as living heroes. According to Schweber, ‘[t]he ultimate irony of Mr Zee[man]’s course is that while it didn’t teach students very much Holocaust history … it did seem to instil in them the moral lessons most people want conveyed to students from rigorous study of that history—that racism is abhorrent, interceding on behalf of the oppressed is necessary, and every single person can make a difference’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 59). Mr Zeeman succeeded in inspiring his students in unorthodox ways and taught them to ‘face him and themselves’: all of which is important and valuable, but he did not teach them to ‘face’ the Holocaust.

Ms Bess’ approach using simulation to teach the Holocaust is highly controversial. Totten (2000) even suggests that teachers who use simulation are not only ‘minimizing, simplifying [and] distorting the Holocaust but ‘possibly even “denying” it’ (p. 170). Schweber researched Ms Bess’ Holocaust simulation because she was curious to know whether a well-designed simulation could concurrently acquaint students with Holocaust history and develop, in them, a heightened empathy for its actors.

Ms Bess had been teaching history for 24 years and the Holocaust since the early 1970s, a time when very few published Holocaust resources were available. The outcomes she wanted for her students were ‘[t]hat they would investigate the historical circumstances of the Holocaust, clarify their values, and gain humility in the face of tragedy’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 65). It was the gravity of the subject matter that prompted her to experiment with its form.
Her simulation was based on an initial encounter with an experiential board game called *Gestapo: A Learning Experience about the Holocaust* (Zwerlin, Freidman, Marcus, & Karmish, 1976, cited in Schweber, 2004, p. 65), which over the years she altered substantially. In addition to *Gestapo*, Miss Bess’ course comprised five chronologically structured units of study called *The Road to War; The Happy Times of the Axis; America Fights the Good War; The Tide Turns for the Allies; and Final Reckoning*. The simulation was woven through the course at unexpected moments.

Her course on World War II afforded students the opportunity to engage in moral deliberation with some sense of consequences. The complex moral dilemmas with which she confronted her students during the simulations were not ‘hypotheticals’ with choices of action available to the students, but ‘sealed fates’ with predetermined decisions and no choices. ‘Ms Bess had frequently confronted the students with morally intricate stories, anecdotes, and events lacing Holocaust history with dimensions of moral complexity that rarely appear in history classrooms. Ms Bess’ students had learned about this history by investigating much of its moral richness’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 99).

After experiencing Ms Bess’ simulation and interviewing her students, Schweber’s opinions about using Holocaust simulation changed. She realized simulation encouraged students to draw comparisons. As one student explained, ‘I don’t really know what happened back then, but I have a little idea about what did happen; [the simulation is] not as big as what really happened, but it’s kind of a short introduction to what *could* have happened’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 106). Schweber also presumed that the emotional potency of a simulation would necessarily compromise its intellectual component. However, she came to understand that, at least, in Ms Bess’ class ‘the experiential and intellectual components of the simulation were mutually reinforcing’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 107).

What first struck Schweber as she entered Mr Dennis’ classroom was its austerity. He too was a much loved teacher and a member of the Palmer High School, fundamentalist Christian community for 14 years. The traditional part of his course was self-constructed and included a *mélange* of lesson plans and materials from
diverse sources. Mr Dennis had also written a play, tailored the script of another to suit his class and then had his students perform both. Even though his students described his methods as eccentric, they were clearly very fond of him. The ones with whom Schweber spoke, all agreed that Mr Dennis ‘toned down his typically exuberant playfulness while teaching his unit on the Holocaust’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 113). According to Mr Dennis, teaching the Holocaust was his favourite unit:

because of … the moral and ethical issues … [his] goal [was] always to teach … for life …
Maybe the whole point of this [was] to turn the kids into rescuers, to instil in them the mentality that will say ’When I see something happen on campus to somebody, do I turn my head and walk the other way or do I try to help? … Mr Dennis’ punning, spontaneous dramatizations and his singing of information that he wanted to get across mesmerized his students. Using a combination of humour, performance, gags, audience participation and general goofiness, he was practically a vaudeville act himself, enlivening the historical information with imaginary voices and dramatic gestures. (Schweber, 2004, p. 113-115)

In other lessons, students would have the opportunity to interrupt, to ask questions or to voice ideas. Intermittently, Mr Dennis would break his lectures to ask his students if they had ‘gotten it’.

Mr Dennis’ first re-enactment, a highly polished and poignant play, involved a ‘display’ of various ‘objects of art’ in Nazi Germany. Each ‘exhibit’, represented by a different student, would be brought to life through the voices of the students. A spotlight would be shone alternately on each speaker while he/she recounted vignettes of Jewish experience from the Holocaust—Herschel Grynszpan’s shooting of Van Rath, ghettoisation, the cattle cars, concentration camps or the ‘burden’ of survivors. The slideshow enabled students to visualise as well as hear about the atrocities.

This would be followed by lectures on the various stages of the Holocaust that he had labelled Identification, Persecution, Isolation, Concentration and Violence. After speaking about the actions of the Einsatzgruppen, the technology of murder (the operation of the gas chambers at Auschwitz) and the work of the Sonderkommandos, he would change direction and recount a story like that of Anne Frank—an inspiring story of humanity in the midst of egregious brutality. ‘Hitler thought that by
murdering millions of others like her, he could silence their voices’ he would tell his classes. ‘But they’re not silent at all. She speaks to us today, in fact … I’d like to take you someplace to hear some of those voices’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 120).

The students would then follow Mr Dennis up a cramped stairway to a landing where there were a couple of bookcases crammed with books. One of the bookcases could be turned on its axis to reveal a narrow entrance to an attic. The students would file in to watch the lives of the Franks and Van Daans in their secret annex. For the ensuing 45 minutes, the student audience would be completely engrossed in the characters’ situation as ‘they dreamed of the outside world, struggled through Mr Van Daans’s stealing of bread, … witnessed Anne and Peter’s growing infatuation, discussed the prospect of the war ending as the annex was discovered …’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 122). Both Mr Dennis’ unit on the Holocaust and his teaching in general were extremely dramatic. ‘His re-enactments were clearly built around drama, heightening his students’ engagement with the material by involving them literally, in its presentation’ (Schweber, 2004, p. 139). The plays, enactments and props demonstrated to his students just how captivating history could be.

Schweber’s (2004) research clearly demonstrates the close connection that exists between teaching practices and outcomes achieved. She provides a rich collage of curriculum and pedagogy and theories to support them. However, she does not investigate what Nias (1984) refers to as the ‘substantial self’—the entity that makes each and every teacher unique—the ‘personal packages’— or the personal beliefs, emotional history, emotional knowledge and historical conceptions held by teachers as a result of their socialisation, family, community and education. All of these elements, teachers bring with them into their classrooms where they invariably fashion their teaching.

A number of recent publications (Totten, 2002; Totten, 2003; and Totten, Bartrop & Jacobs, 2004) are indicative of the revived interest in biography. These publications are composed of personal and pedagogical essays by Holocaust scholars, curriculum developers, directors of Holocaust organisations and secondary and tertiary level educators. The authors are recognised not only for being highly experienced but also for having made significant contributions to Holocaust education and moving it
beyond the classroom. All of the contributors to the above mentioned works provide brief biographic details relating the genesis of their interest in the Holocaust and the changing contours of their educative efforts as well as their individual contribution to the field of Holocaust education.

Totten’s (2002) publication is particularly relevant for this study as it focuses on the experiences of secondary school English and history teachers from disparate school sectors (public, independent and non-denominational) as well as from schools with somewhat similar backgrounds (Christian, Jewish or unaffiliated). The reader is presented with case studies of the pedagogical practices of nine highly experienced educators who are exemplars in the field of Holocaust education. Each account offers a model to replicate or formulate for ‘teaching [the Holocaust] in the most efficacious and powerful ways—ways that are accurate and comprehensive and that avoid the simplistic, perfunctory and gimmicky’ (Totten, 2002, p. xi). Totten merely presents a collage of pedagogical experiences without any interpretation in whole or in part as to how the biographies of his contributors have coloured their teaching practices. Clearly the above studies shed valuable light on the teaching of the Holocaust. However, what becomes evident from this body of literature is that there has been no exploration of the history teacher’s emotional, private and personal self (‘the substantial self’, Nias, 1984), his/her emotions or the contexts in which he/she teaches, nor the ways in which these factors influence his/her teaching of history (the Holocaust).

According to Riley, ‘each person is shaped both by the accident of birth and his/her historic moment’ (2001, p. 139). Therefore the quest to understand any historical event (say, the Holocaust) is largely dependent upon the individual background of the researcher, teacher or student. Consequently, understanding the concept of biography becomes indispensable to unlocking teachers’ orientation to their subject matter.
Part 4: Biography

In the literature there is some confusion about the term ‘biography’. For example, terms such as life story, life history, life writing, life documents, human documents, autobiography, case study and case history or as Smith (1994, p. 287) suggests portraits, memoirs, journals and diaries are all used interchangeably, even though each one denotes a somewhat different orientation. I find these terms wanting since either they have clinical over tones (case study or case history) or they denote something that is finished, complete and static. I agree with Pinar and Butt (1986) and Raymond and Yamagishi (1988) who all use the term ‘architecture of self’ to refer to the private emotional and personal self that is ‘significantly influenced and shaped by experiences of context and situation, in a cyclic and dynamic fashion’ (Butt et al, 1988, p. 97). The term ‘architecture of self” helps us, as outsiders, to understand how the private person of the teacher — a unique individual — has developed, changed, and continues to do so during his/her life-time.

Berk tells us that ‘a biography is the formative history of an individual’s life experiences’ (1980, p. 90). It not only examines what has occurred in a person’s life but also considers how the individual interacted and responded to his circumstances. According to Berk (1980, pp. 94, 95), biography is the disciplined story telling of a life or part thereof through the selection of those incidents that will explain that life. He also makes the salient point that biography is not, as one would assume, a chronological record of taped interviews and their transcripts. Rarely do the records contain the events that constitute the biographer’s story but rather ‘the events are inferred from the transcribed records. It is a deliberate, critical procedure that aims to make sense of thoughts, feelings, and experiences’ (1980, p. 98). C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 7) alerts us to the importance of recognising the special relationship that exists between biography, society and history. He warns that a social study that does not take into consideration the intersection of these three entities is intellectually wanting. Leon Edel (1984) is of the same opinion and argues that biography does, indeed, belong in the department of history. He too feels that a biography that does not reveal ‘the individual within society’ is incomplete. After all there are ‘no lives
… led outside of history’ and none that do not ‘take place in human time’ (Edel, 1984, p. 4).

One of the seminal sociological works of the twentieth century that has influenced theorists, social psychologists, social scientists and students of sociology and history is C. Wright Mills’ (1959) book, *The Sociological Imagination*. In it Mills states that one cannot understand the life of a person without simultaneously understanding the times in which he/she lives or lived—neither can be understood without understanding the other. Mills maintains that men and women of today only understand their connection, location and relationship to world history by possessing ‘the sociological imagination’. For Mills, history, biography and society are inextricably linked:

> Every individual lives from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living, he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its push and shove (Mills, 1959, p. 6).

Mills’ position is shared by Jean-Paul Sartre. According to Sartre:

> … man is never an individual; it would be more fitting to call him a *singular universal*; having been totalized and therefore universalized, by his epoch, he retotalises his epoch by reproducing himself into it as a singularity. He is thus, at once universal by way of the singular universality of human history, and singular through the universalizing singularity of his projects – he requires to be studied from both perspectives simultaneously [1981, p. 7-8].

Denzin, like Sartre, also sees the individual as part of a collective that is:

> … haunted by this past, by this childhood they have inherited. Their lives can be understood only in terms of this total situation that they embody, and inherit – their historical and cultural epoch, the biological facts of their existence, the social milieu they were thrown into, the childhood they lived. Individuals then are products of chance, and at the same time the sum of their projects, intentions, and practices (1984, p. 91).
One of the central assumptions of this enquiry, the primacy of teachers’ backgrounds in shaping their pedagogy, is inextricably linked to the types of knowledge they hold. Therefore it is essential to examine both the nature of teachers’ knowledge and its sources.

**Part 5: Modalities of teachers’ knowledge: professional, personal and emotional**

On reviewing the considerable literature on teachers’ knowledge an underlying discord becomes apparent. This discord is reflected in the plethora of views on what constitutes professional knowledge. These differences of opinion are also evident in the many and varied conceptualisations of the word ‘knowledge’, itself. Tom & Valli (1990) for example, outline the major epistemological traditions of professional knowledge as positivist/traditional, interpretivist/progressive and critical/radical (critical theory and feminism). Grimmett & Mackinnon (1992) offer a thorough analysis of craft conceptions of teaching. Philosophers of education such a Dewey (1938), Greene (1986) and Fenstermacher (1994) offer their individual perspectives. The same can be said of the multiplicity of ‘types’ of knowledge depicted by Shulman (1987). Calderhead (1996) maintains that the mapping of a knowledge base in any professional area is potentially a never ending task due to the ‘vast and somewhat idiosyncratic knowledge base that may be continuously changing and restructuring’ (1996, p. 710). What becomes evident from the above discussion is that the literature not only raises many questions about the nature of teachers’ knowledge, but also about qualitative differences in the types of knowledge teachers hold’ (Calderhead, 1996, p. 711). Having established the diversity of perspectives on what constitutes professional knowledge, I now move onto a number of studies that examine its nature.

---

14 A number of comprehensive reviews of the teacher knowledge literature are: Kathy Carter’s (1990); Alan Tom & Linda Valli (1990); Peter Grimmett & Allan Mackinnon (1992); Gary D. Fenstermacher (1994); Kathy Carter & Walter Doyle (1996) and the most up to date: Hugh Munby, Tom Russell & Andrea K. Martin (2001).

15 See John Dewey (1938) *Experience and education*; Maxine Greene (1986) Philosophy and teaching. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching*; & Gary D. Fenstermacher (1994) *The
Professional knowledge

Donmoyer (1996) argues that ‘knowledge is a primary source (possibly even the primary source) of professional expertise’ (Donmoyer, 1996, p. 98). However, as I noted previously, even to define knowledge or to pare it down to its components is problematic. Thus, Donmoyer argues that all knowledge is subjective and therefore ‘it reflects the conceptions and metaphors of the knower’ (Donmoyer, 1996, p. 101). There is no such thing as the truth or the reality. All our understandings of these concepts are borne out of and influenced by the social world that we inhabit. Our knowledge is therefore tainted by our language, our customs and our perceptions of the world.

Understanding the subjective nature of knowledge has placed a greater emphasis on ensuring that teachers have the skills and flexibility to evaluate and tailor their knowledge to the specific needs of their students. The nature of this knowledge base has been the focus of the following studies: Shulman, 1987; Sackett, 1987; Wilson and Wineburg, 1988.

Shulman’s (1987) study provides a framework for a knowledge base as well as outlines some of its sources. His study (based on empirical work conducted with secondary school teachers, both new and experienced in a range of disciplines) conceptualises teachers’ subject matter knowledge as representing a filing cabinet containing seven compartments. He argues that the following categories represent content in meaningful ways as well as scaffold this knowledge in order to promote student understanding. These seven ‘compartments are composed of: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values’. His (1987) study also provides examples of some of the sources of this knowledge base: scholarship in the content disciplines, educational materials and structures, formal educational scholarship and the ‘wisdom of practice’.

---

knower and the known: The nature of knowledge in research on teaching. In Linda Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Review of research in Education.*
What becomes evident from this research is that both the conceptual as well as the identified sources of the teachers’ knowledge base are confined to intellectual or cognitive parameters. However, once again, there is no attempt to consider the ways in which a teacher’s background, lived experiences (what Dewey, 1938, refers to as ‘biographic educational episodes’), emotional history and knowledge have shaped this body of knowledge or its source. This study aims to fill this lacuna.

While Shulman’s (1987) study highlights the importance of teachers’ professional knowledge in the teaching process, Wilson and Wineburg (1988) also point to the role and significance that teachers’ disciplinary perspectives (both knowledge of the pedagogy as well as the subject matter of the particular discipline) have in the instructional choices that teachers make each day. Wilson and Wineburg’s (1988) findings have particular relevance to this study since my participants, like theirs, are also drawn from diverse disciplines and teach in disparate secondary school departments. They examine the impact that the discipline in which the teacher was originally trained had upon the pedagogical choices he/she makes in teaching social studies. As part of a two-year study conducted for ‘The Knowledge Growth in a Profession Project’, Wilson and Wineburg (1988) interviewed and observed six novice social studies teachers; four of whom they selected to illustrate their examples.

The four novice teachers (Cathy, Fred, Jane and Bill) came from diverse academic backgrounds (anthropology, political science, American Studies and American History). The aim of the study was to compare and contrast the differences in their conceptions of history to some of the dimensions that feature prominently in the literature on teaching history. These dimensions being: the role of factual knowledge; the place of interpretation; the significance of chronology and continuity; and the meaning of causation. What became evident during the observation of these teachers’ classroom practices was the extent to which their individual, disciplinary backgrounds ‘wielded a strong—and often decisive—impact on their instructional decision making’ (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988, p. 526). These researchers discovered that a teacher who views history as an aggregate of facts will emphasise the amassing of historical data. Whereas a teacher who views history as narrative will encourage
students to look beyond facts to include themes, events and the lives of people as ‘a vehicle of social change, will focus on issues of gender, race and power’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 34). Wilson & Wineburg (1988) not only demonstrate the impact that beliefs and disciplinary perspectives have on teachers’ instruction but they also underscore the significance of subject-specific pedagogical knowledge in the teaching of history.

Furthermore, Wilson & Wineburg’s (1988) study highlights the commonalities as well as the differences that exist between the discipline of history and other disciplines. History is not simply an encyclopaedic collection of facts that is to be memorised. It involves attempts by the historian or student to make sense of some portion of the world—it is a particular way of knowing. Thus teachers not trained in the discipline of history are likely to experience difficulties adjusting to its requirements. Knowledge of the structure of any discipline is essential to its effective teaching. However, teachers’ professional knowledge in itself is insufficient to explain their orientations to their subject matter. To fully understand why teachers teach as they do, their personal lives, locations—social, economical and geographic—emotional histories, educational and personal experiences all require consideration.

**Personal knowledge**

The works of Dewey (1938); Berk (1980); Butt, Raymond and Yamagishi (1988); Butt & Raymond (1989); Raymond, Butt & Townsend (1992); and Butt (2003) all examine the dynamic interactions between personal knowledge, experience and education. For the pre-eminent philosopher and educational theorist John Dewey education, experience and life are inextricably intertwined. Berk argues that Dewey ‘conceived the educative in terms of the history of individual experience and he employed a biographic conception of education’ (Berk, 1980, p. 89). According to Dewey, there is an ‘organic connection between education and personal experience’ (Dewey, 1938, p. 25); consequently, education occurs only through experience. However, education and experience cannot be directly equated to each other because some experiences may be quite mis-educative. Therefore it is the quality of an experience that is its critical component and, naturally, one cannot always immediately discern the value of an experience. ‘Just as no man lives or dies to
himself so no experience lives and dies to itself … every experience lives on in further experience’ (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). This is why the biographic approach to education is so valuable; it allows us to discover rather than assume formative episodes in teachers’ lives.

Dewey, quite logically, proposes that things happen simultaneously and within a context—of people (or their absence), place and time; therefore, even though teachers are all individuals, their experiences always have a social component. While his contention that there is a direct link between education and experience is undeniable, not all genuine education comes about through experience (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). Although all our experiences happen within the context of our social world, it must be remembered that it is ‘significant others [who] mediate the world, as well as modify it, in the course of transmitting it to the child’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 130). They pre-select and filter the world through their biases, their cultural inheritance and their positions within that inheritance. It must also be remembered that the acquisition of knowledge during the formative years is not purely cognitive—emotional knowledge also plays a very significant role. Therefore, by building on Dewey’s (1938) premise, this thesis explores the nature of both personal and emotional knowledge.

Berk (1980) tells us that we must distinguish between education and schooling, and remember that the two terms are not synonymous: ‘education is the justifying aim of schooling’ (Berk, 1980, p. 88). According to Dewey, it is not readily apparent whether schools are performing well just because they are accomplishing their perceived ends—educating. Schools can operate effectively as institutions and yet mis-educate students. Thus, for those who would evaluate schools, the appropriate subject of study becomes the learner’s experience. However, this then produces its own problem: How to recognise education? Berk (1980) aims to answer this question by demonstrating that biography ‘by rendering the quality of a learner’s experience, [can] disclose the educational significance of events in his or her life’ (Berk, 1980, p. 88).

Berk (1980) uses biographic narrative to interpret the events in the life of eighteen year old Peter Nussbaum. His findings are based on an academic year-long field
study, conducted initially with twelve students. For a year, Berk (1980) attempted to record the greatest variety of influences on these students. He was ‘attempting to observe education naively’ (Berk, 1980, p. 97). He collected all the facts that could be gathered about each person, place and circumstance. He listened to individual accounts to determine motive and intent. He interviewed parents, friends and siblings to flesh out with whom, where and what each student was doing, hour by hour. He observed the students in their classes, around their schools, in their homes and during activities he regarded as important. He examined the students’ schoolwork, photos of their rooms and, in some cases, even had discussions with their teachers and counsellors.

Despite these heroic efforts at a complete and precise recording of events, the ‘educative experience’ remained elusive. Because Berk had not defined his meaning of ‘education’, despite all his data it was impossible to detect. However, Dewey’s (1944, pp. 134-135) criteria of effort, insight and the going-on provided Berk with a framework for a narrative and became markers for an educative experience. Fortunately for Berk, in Peter Nussbaum’s case the hourly record was almost complete and ‘required the least guesswork to render as narrative’ (Berk, 1980, p. 153). Peter was also chosen because he proved to be the most articulate. So with reference to two episodes drawn from Peter’s life and using Dewey’s premise—that the educative quality of an experience lies in its relation to antecedent and consequent events in a life—Berk was able to reveal ‘how narrative structure functions to disclose the educative significance of events in a life’ (Berk, 1980, p. 100). Since schooling is a contributing factor in most people’s biography, one can ascertain the kind of contribution it has made. As a means of assessing the effects of schooling, biographical interpretation is useful. Though inordinately time consuming, it does illuminate formative episodes in an individual’s life as well as enables the effect of schooling in relation to other influences to be studied.

While researchers like Dewey (1938) and Berk (1980) investigate what is educative in students’ lives, Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi (1988); Butt and Raymond (1989); 16

---

16 The two episodes that Berk (1980) uses are: ‘How Peter Decided to Become a Film Maker’ (pp. 102-119) and ‘How Peter Came to Conduct the Sex Poll (pp. 125-139).
and Raymond and Butt & Townsend (1992) shift the focus to teachers’ experiences and the biographical formation of their personal, practical and professional knowledge. This second group of researchers belongs to a group that has acknowledged the centrality of biography in understanding teachers’ classrooms. Therefore, their work is of particular interest to the present study as it places the teacher centre stage. They believe that each teacher possesses a particular type of knowledge. One’s ‘architecture of self’ (the private person: an amalgam of values, beliefs, feelings and personal interests) (Pinar, 1986) is significantly influenced and shaped by context and situation which, in turn, may change and shape this ‘self’. Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi argue that:

The make-up of teachers’ knowledge, as held, can be seen as being influenced by the personal biographical stream of cyclic interactions of context and personhood of the teacher in the past. This knowledge disposes each of us as teachers to interact with, treat, regard and be shaped by present context in particular ways. It is from this depth of personal history and experience, both in terms of the teacher’s personal private world, the social world, and the professional world that a teacher’s knowledge emerges (Butt et al, 1988, p. 102).

Butt et al (1988) see the recurring relationship between person and context in terms of Dewey’s (1938) theories plus a biographical conception of education (Berk, 1980). Rogers’ (1969) perspective, closely allied to both Dewey and Berk’s, suggests that only those experiences which affect the learner’s genuine self result in any meaningful learning. Learning that is important is self-discovered and self-appropriated; it is most obvious when experiences emphasise the self or have personal relevance, interest, involvement, feelings and cognitions (Rogers, 1969, pp. 151-153). Dearden (1968) emphasises the value of reflection in and on experience. According to him, ‘nothing is of value to us unless it can enter our

17 This knowledge is grounded in classrooms and includes the practical decisions teachers confront in acting purposely. It includes personal, explicit, tacit and/or intuitive knowledge that is based on teachers’ personal understandings of the situations in which they work (Carter, 1990).
18 Professional knowledge according to Shulman (1987), is composed of a melding of subject matter knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy. It overlaps to a significant degree with the teacher’s practical knowledge. Carter (1990) makes a clear distinction [between practical and professional knowledge] and argues that it refers to knowledge built on professional collective wisdom.
experience in such a way that enables us to realize what is valuable in it’ (1968, p. 38). The knowledge that grows out of such personal experiences is what Butt et al (1988); Butt & Raymond (1989); and Raymond, Butt & Townsend (1992) call personal knowledge. These ‘educative episodes’ (Dewey, 1938) or significant learning experiences form the basis of teachers’ personal knowledge. Butt et al (1988) focus explicitly on teachers’ personal knowledge and they emphasise its biographical formation. They maintain that ‘the above experiential conceptualization of learning is an appropriate framework through which to view how teachers evolve their own special ways of thinking and acting in classrooms; how they continue to learn to be teachers and evolve their own particular knowledge’ (Butt et al, 1988, p. 99).

Berk (1980) suggests that if we intend to study the quality of education of particular learners, we should use the biographical means of inquiry. Butt et al (1988) adopted this suggestion of Berk’s and applied it to teachers’ experiences both in their private and professional lives; this permits the discovery of the quality and educational significance of teachers’ experiences through their relationship to previous and later experiences (Berk, 1980, p. 93). In the literature, teachers’ personal knowledge (both private and public) has been conceptualised in a number of ways. For example, Pinar (1994) has not only examined his ‘architecture of self’ or the personal self but also the idea of currere—the course of life’s experiences (past, present and future). As a consequence of these experiences, the individual, acting always within context, perpetually enacts and evolves this ‘architecture of self’. Butt et al (1988); Butt and Raymond (1989); and Raymond et al (1992) also emphasise the ‘architecture of self’—the personal background of the teacher—as being of seminal importance in its influences on how teaching is experienced and constructed.

To understand how an individual thinks, acts, feels and acquires knowledge, it is also necessary to understand the nexus between context and individual lives (Goodson, 1980, p. 63); and not only as it relates to the present but also to the past. To make meaning of one’s present situation one needs to retrieve prior related experiences. As Pinar points out, the ‘biographic past exists presently, complexly contributively to the biographic present’ (1994, p. 22). Therefore, in order to understand teachers’ knowledge in respect to classrooms, we need to understand the contexts that are
‘their working realities’ (Butt et al, 1988, p. 100). Together with Sockett (1987), Butt et al (1988) underscore the significance of context in the formation of a teacher’s personal, practical and professional knowledge. They argue that it is important to understand a teacher’s personal knowledge in a manner that reflects ‘how the teacher knows, sees and perceives it — (personal knowledge) should reflect the teacher’s voice’ (Butt et al, 1988, p. 114). Of course, the best way to understand what a teacher knows ‘is through the teacher’s own commentary, preferably unfettered and unshaped by others’ (1988, pp. 114-115). We do however know that at times such expressions are constrained by context; and, therefore, the type of collaboration entered into when attempting to discern a teacher’s knowledge is a sensitive exercise and requires special consideration. For Butt et al (1988); Butt and Raymond (1989); and Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992) the task becomes ‘one of facilitating the process of the autobiographical impulse and expression, autobiographical interpretation and reconstruction without interfering with the substance of the teacher’s story’ (Butt et al, 1988, p. 117). Having worked collaboratively with several teachers to elicit the biographical formation of their knowledge, Butt et al (1988); Butt and Raymond (1989); Raymond, Butt & Townsend (1992); and Butt (2003) have developed their own particular methodology—‘autobiographical praxeology’.\textsuperscript{20}

This approach involves a group of experienced teachers working collaboratively through four phases of activity (Butt & Raymond, 1989). The first phase, writing personal statements, includes:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a depiction of the context of their current working reality, a description of current pedagogy and curriculum-in-use, reflections on past personal and professional lives that might facilitate understanding present professional thoughts and actions, and also a projection into preferred futures through a critical appraisal of the previous three phases (Butt & Raymond, 1989, p. 407).
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{20} Autobiographical praxeology includes the study of teachers’ knowledge, the manner in which it has been and is being elaborated and how it is expressed through autobiographical inquiry (Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi (1988).
These statements are completed in a joint sitting so that participants can hear each other’s autobiographical accounts and thereby stimulate their own memories. During the second phase, the researchers themselves join the group in order to help the biographers locate major themes, patterns, issues, and events in their accounts. The third phase, a composite of the first two in a written description and explanation of the biographer’s knowledge base is read out for verification. The researchers visit the classrooms of the participants, in the fourth phase, to establish whether the account(s) correspond with classroom reality (Butt & Raymond, 1989).

Butt and Raymond (1989) describe two teachers’ life histories to illuminate the nature, source and development of these teachers’ personal and professional knowledge. The first teacher, Lloyd, has been teaching for 14 years. He is a forty-year old, Japanese Canadian, sixth class teacher in a low socio-economic area. His teaching centre-piece comprises the following three themes or aims: social development, academic development and human kindness. These three aims form the *basis* of his three ‘S’s—*survival, safety and success*—and permeated his personal and professional knowledge (Butt & Raymond 1989, p. 408). His three ‘S’s have their origins in his personal and cultural history. Lloyd perceives them as strong mutual interests which for him translate into the common goal of upward mobility. In pursuing this goal, with and for his pupils, Lloyd’s pedagogy engenders a strong sense of *family* in his classroom.

His personal and cultural background combined with his striving for the three ‘S’s established the platform for his constant pursuit of acceptance and competence both for himself and his pupils. Lloyd’s practical professional knowledge integrates three dominant themes. The first is derived directly from his personal background and family life, and it ‘enforces, reinforces, trains, ingrains, stresses and emphasises’ a *pedagogy of ingrainment* for essential social development (Butt & Raymond, 1989, p. 409). The second, an integral component of Lloyd’s knowledge, though it springs from his academic development, has as its source his family values, his experiences as a student and his modified form of the curriculum guidelines. The researchers Butt

---

21 See Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi (1988); Butt & Raymond (1989); and Raymond, Butt & Townsend (1992) for further detail.
& Raymond (1989, p. 409) initially presuming that Lloyd’s pedagogy would be ‘dry, boring and traditional’. However, upon visiting his classroom the error of their presumptions was evident. Thanks to his third theme, the pedagogical theme, Lloyd provided for his students a safe and caring environment which fostered enquiry and the acquisition of knowledge.

Glenda a 44 year old teacher with nine years of teaching experience worked in a low socio-economic area with migrant and refugee children in a ‘pull-out’ program for English as a second language. Her teacher’s knowledge was based on her experiences in international contexts and in multi-cultural classrooms and was structured around the theme of self-determination. She depicted her own development as a blossoming from the seed planted in early childhood, a romantic fascination with other places, and as a response to her students, who taught her what they needed to know and the praxis through which to teach it.

The power of pre-teaching experiences is also evident in the language used by teachers to describe how their early perspectives were acquired. Lloyd spoke of how his parents ‘had an uncanny ability to *engrav* their values and pass them on to their children without the use of physical force or verbal abuse’ (Butt & Raymond, 1989, p. 151). Likewise, Glenda described her father ‘planting the seed’ of respect for others early in her development (Butt & Raymond, 1989), thus influencing her sense of self as a teacher of Languages Other than English (LOTE). All the autobiographies cited by Butt & Raymond (1989, p. 151) demonstrate ‘the strength, depth and persistence of pre-professional history in shaping [teacher] development’. Through their research, they identified the following as sources and influences on their teachers’ pre-professional development: parents, relatives, school teachers, the family home, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic and geographical locations. Lloyd and Glenda’s experiences support Nias’ (1984) theory that the ‘substantial self’ (the personal self) that the (history) teacher brings to his/her classroom contexts is pivotal to the crafting of his/her practices.

Butt et al (1988); Butt & Raymond (1989); and Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992) highlight both the primacy of pre-teaching, early, formative experiences and the pedagogical biographies of teachers. They posit that by doing so it becomes
possible to illuminate the relationship between the teacher’s ‘architecture of self’ and his/her orientation to the subject matter. They also stress that the teacher’s voice be honoured. In order to understand current classroom practices we need to ask teachers to explain, from their perspective, how they, themselves, understand their classrooms. Only by doing this will we enable teachers’ knowledge of classrooms to begin to emerge.

Butt et al (1988); Butt & Raymond (1989) and Raymond, Butt and Townsend’s (1992) studies demonstrate not only the importance but also the value of using biography as a method of inquiry into the nature and development of the knowledge that teachers’ possess. Whilst they acknowledge that teachers’ personal lives (their social, historical, economic and geographic location) establish ‘a firm emotional and moral ground, which shapes teachers’ professional commitment and identity’ (Butt & Raymond, 1989), they do not identify teachers’ emotional, private and personal knowledge—their emotional knowledge—either as a form or a source of knowledge, nor do they investigate the ways in which it shapes their orientations to the subject matter.

We are defined not only by our thoughts but also by our emotions. Our emotional history is just as important, if not more so, than our social history. There is ample evidence in the literature that suggests that emotion plays a significant part in teaching and learning. 'Considering the importance of education, it becomes crucial to not only understand the causes or antecedents of emotional events and how they affect classroom transactions' (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007, p. 9) but also to gain greater insight into the ways in which these forces influence the teaching act. To accomplish these ends requires understanding emotion.

**Understanding Emotion**

The literature is in complete agreement with Andy Hargreaves (1998) who tells us that emotions are fundamental to teaching, its driving force in fact, and also with Jennifer Nias (1996) who believes that teachers’ emotions are fundamental and central to the approach that they take to a subject and, thereby, to their class’ response. This study is also in agreement with the literature and therefore examines
three important areas in which emotion is a vital factor. Firstly, the study explores the teacher’s biographic self (emotion being integral to it) and its influence on teaching the Holocaust; secondly, it focuses on establishing the nature of the teacher’s private and personal knowledge (emotion being not only integral but fundamental to it); and thirdly, the study determines the role that emotion plays in key pedagogical issues when teaching the Holocaust.

Robert C. Solomon (1993) warns us that although feelings are usually, if not always, connected to emotions, feelings and emotions are not synonymous (Solomon, 1993, p. 97). Emotions are always about something; they are directed. A person is never simply passionate; one is passionate about someone or something. Every emotion is connected to its particular ‘object’ and it is this ‘object’ that elicits the emotion. Therefore, to understand an emotion it is essential to understand its ‘object’ as well as the many components that may be combined within that emotion. The considerable literature on the emotions or passions defines these components as: physiological, cognitive, communicative, personal, social, relational, cultural, linguistic, philosophical, historical, evaluative, strategic/political and moral processes. A number of these components have direct relevance to my research and therefore I discuss some of them in detail. Emotions are a complex phenomenon because they are very responsive to ‘personal and contextual circumstances’ (Ben Ze’ev, 2000, p. 3) and, therefore, in many cases our response might be a constellation

---

22 See Chapter 7 of this thesis for further details.
of emotions rather than a single emotion. They are our body’s inbuilt warning system: when there are significant changes (positive or negative) in ‘our personal situation or in those related to us’ (Ben Ze’ev, 2000, p. 13) our emotions are activated. Once we decide that the unusual or surprising change in our circumstance is significant, we cannot ignore it. However, the significance of a change is determined by its ‘impact, power, reality, [and] relevance’ to us as well as our ‘background and personal history’ (Ben Ze’ev, 2000, p. 15). By protecting our personal ‘investments’ or well-being through such an evaluation our emotions often act as a barometer as well as a security system.

Therefore the significance of an eliciting event is determined by our emotions. However, its emotional significance, by definition, is relational; it has a comparative core. To make sense of any information requires establishing its relationship or location vis-à-vis other objects. For example, to know about a person’s circumstances one needs to determine his/her relationship with his/her family, friends and colleagues. Any object that is completely isolated and has no relationship to anything else remains a mystery (Ben Ze’ev, 2000, p. 18). Understanding one thing is premised upon understanding (to some extent) its alternative. This comparative component is personal. We compare our personal situation with other possible circumstances. Our personal backgrounds shape ‘the manner in which we perceive our present, past, ideal and ‘ought’ states as well as the same states in other people’ (Ben Ze’ev, 2000, p. 20). Emotions are elicited whenever an important difference between our present, personal state and that of essential others becomes evident.

Since comparison is integral to emotional significance, the closer our imagination aligns with the reality of significant others the more intense will our emotional response be to that reality. The Jewish South African teachers in this study are very good examples of this. They identify very strongly with the Jewish victims in the Holocaust because they can imagine sharing their fate had the shadow of the Third Reich passed across South Africa during World War II. Since we know that shared emotions provide a very strong foundation for a cohesive community, their reaction is not surprising.
During childhood we learn to make sense of our feelings (hunger, pain) and emotions (joy, fear, shame, and love) from significant others who are responsible for our care; thus, emotions are social, relational and learnt. Initially the ‘family provides the setting in which the person’s emotionality is learned, felt, expressed and interpreted’ (Denzin, 1984, p. 52). This is a most formative time because this is when the individual establishes his/her place in the world. Later it is from friends, school and books or films that he/she acquires the vocabulary to understand and express himself/herself. Emotions are attached to social situations and they become part of the person’s emotional biography. These situations of emotion ‘occupy spaces like paintings on a wall in the person’s emotional memory’ (Denzin, 184, p. 77) or emotional history; thus, emotionality also has a historical dimension. A person’s emotional history complements his/her social and historical biography. Although our emotions are shaped by a communal value system (Ben Ze’ev, 2000, p. 35), they are personal, selective and restricted. We can only respond emotionally to a personal event or a restricted number of events. ‘One death is a tragedy; a million is a statistic’ (Ben Ze’ev, 2000, p. 36).

Most theorists and philosophers agree that emotions are judgements. Both Lazarus (1991) and Parkinson (1995) write that judgement is the key and single most important determinant of emotion—‘in all circumstances emotion’s necessary and sufficient condition’ (Parkinson, 1995, p. 39). Without judgement, emotion is impossible. Therefore, whenever we feel emotional about something, implicit in that feeling is an evaluation:

Good or bad, beneficial or detrimental, morally outrageous or admirable … otherwise we would not care about the situation and consequently no emotion would be felt at all (Parkinson, 1995, p. 29).

In addition, Arnold (1960 cited in Frijda et al, 1989) maintains that our emotions are ‘felt action tendencies’ and it is this component that prompts us to act: we feel moral injustices and act upon such feelings. This is a positive reaction because ‘if we only thought about them (moral injustices), we might never say or do anything’ (Planalp, 1999, p. 162). Robert Solomon makes this point clear when he writes that Socratic truths do not emanate from ideas of justice but from basic emotions such as:
envy, jealousy, and resentment, a sense of being personally cheated or neglected, and the desire to get even – but also of course those basic feelings of sharing, compassion, sympathy, and generosity that cynics have forever refused to acknowledge (1990, p. 33).

Daniel Goleman seems to support this idea when he tells us that we have two minds, two ways of knowing: ‘one that thinks and one that feels’ (Goleman, 1995, p. 8). These two modes shape, colour and compose our mental life or consciousness. The rational mind is concerned with such cognitive processes as comprehension and reflection, and side by side to this is an alternative mode of knowing that, though potent, is occasionally hasty and illogical—the emotional. Usually our ‘head’ and our ‘heart’ judgments are attuned: in fact, we expect them to be and rely on them to be so. It is this balance between the rational and the emotional mind that helps us to make sense of our world. ‘Mostly these two worlds are exquisitely co-ordinated: feelings are essential to thought and thought to feelings’ (Goleman, 1995, p. 8).

Goleman (1995) suggests that since we have two different ways of knowing, we must also have two different kinds of intelligence—the rational and the emotional. How we cope in life is decided by both: ‘it is not just IQ, but EQ (emotional intelligence) that matters’ (Goleman, 1995, p. 28). The old concept that assumed a tension between reason and feeling is now slowly being superseded by an ‘intelligent balance’ between the two (Goleman, 1995).

Although Solomon (1993, p. xv) believes that due to the ‘myth of passivity’ there has been a tendency to view emotions as a reactive response rather than an active factor of social interaction, both he and Frijda (1994) perceive them as strategic and political (Solomon, 1998). Not so much a manifestation of interpersonal communication, but ‘as activities we do, stratagems that work for us individually and collectively’ (1998, p. 5). In this sense emotion can be rational, mindful and calculating. Solomon (1998) declares that our understanding of emotion becomes more nuanced when we stop thinking about emotion and emotional response as products of social life and think of them rather as strategies—strategies for dealing with others or even ourselves. Following a similar line of argument, Nico Frijda (1994, p. 7) claims that when used to move people, emotion can even be political.
Solomon writes that at times we employ emotions as a strategy to achieve a predetermined or required outcome.

Our emotions and emotional displays involve solicitude, a cry for help, an experience of need. Because they work so well, they can also be learned, cultivated and practiced, and thus employed in an intentional manner (Solomon, 1998, p. 71).

For example, it would be reasonable to assume that Jewish Studies teachers would have a considerable investment in how their students feel about the content that they teach. It could be therefore argued that these teachers would ‘school’ the emotions of their students to be favourable to the suffering that Jews experienced in the past (for example the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust).

Though emotions do not offer solutions to what our moral position should be, Sally Planalp maintains that emotions ‘assert and celebrate whatever moral standards we hold’ (1999, p. 162). Greenspan supports this view and maintains that when we feel an inclination to act in specific ways, our emotions are drawing knowledge from our own ethical assessments (1995, p. 189). They direct us to ‘the good and the should: to things we value and the things we feel we ought to do’ (Planalp, 1999, p. 161). This is not to argue that feeling a specific emotion, at a particular time, in a specific context steers us on the good or right moral path. Moral appraisal and moral action relies on both our emotions and reason. To Planalp emotional messages are ‘morality plays’ (1999, p. 162) that well-up inside us, alerting us to the chasm between what we have done and what we should have done.

Naturally, because our emotional reservoir is not infinite, our emotions are aroused most when events are significant to us or to those closest to us. Therefore there is a moral limit to what or for whom we can be responsible emotionally. Of course, the extent and the depth of our responsibility are determined by the intensity of the relationship. Emotional and moral attitudes must not be seen as irreconcilable. Exhibiting partial emotional ties towards those with whom we are intimate is understandable, but this does not exclude adopting an impartial moral attitude.

towards the rest of the world. Indeed, recognising the humanity of the ‘other’, the outsider, is an essential moral imperative if we are to avoid future atrocities. Nazi Germany is an example of this. The Germans barely raised their voices against the Nazi treatment, persecution, exclusion and annihilation of the Jews but they protested vehemently against the Nazi euthanasia program (the elimination of Germans who were either mentally ill or physically handicapped).

The intermeshing of reason and emotions as described by Goleman (1995) provides a way to nuance the complex relationship between thought and emotions. The Holocaust is often seen as a site for ‘emotional pedagogy’ (Baum, 1996, p. 46). However, it should not be included in any curriculum purely for the purposes of ‘schooling emotion’ (Goleman, 1995; Baum, 1996). To develop a textured approach to teaching the Holocaust requires that teachers appreciate the importance of melding cognition and affect. Teachers need to be ready for the effect that the emotional magnitude of the topic will have on their students; and, therefore, they should be ready to guide their students so that their feelings and their thinking are kept in balance. Through the well planned teaching of the Holocaust, students will learn just how closely feeling and thinking are meshed and just how emotionally complex certain issues are.

**Emotion in education**

It is through understanding our emotions that we are able to examine and classify classroom experiences and thus provide the reason and impetus for the very act of teaching. As Goleman (1995) writes, the effectiveness of any teacher is very closely aligned to his/her self-awareness and connectedness to his/her emotions. Yet, despite the important role that emotion plays in teaching, it has been ignored, banished and relegated ‘for too long … [to] the ontological basement of educational scholarship’ (Linston & Garrison, 2003, p. 5). However, with the increasing stresses of our technological society and escalating demands placed on teachers today, it is at our peril that we disregard the importance of emotion in the classroom (Hargreaves, 1998, 2001).
Although Zembylas (2007) documents that there are recent studies which have examined ‘teacher emotions,’ researchers still only know a little about how teachers’ emotional experiences relate to their teaching or how teachers manage their own emotions in classrooms. According to Sutton & Wheatley (2003), there are two main reasons for the dearth of research in this area: (i) emotion has only recently become a burgeoning area in psychology and it takes time for findings in one discipline to be applied to another; (ii) there are too many prevailing myths that continue to paint emotions as infantile, sporadic, irrational and destructive ‘intrusions into otherwise meaningful and quite rational lives’ (Solomon, 1993, p. xiv).

Teaching is a profession that involves interactions with others—students, parents and colleagues; and, therefore, it is an emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998). Teachers, like others in people-intensive professions, take their feelings to school and into the classroom; thereby, making them a part of all their encounters (Nias, 1996). Since teaching is a caring profession, it requires not only emotional intelligence but also emotional labour. Arlie R. Hochschild, author of The Managed Heart, writes:

This labour requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in the other … This kind of labour calls for co-ordination of the mind and feeling, and it draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality (1983, p. 7).

Our ability to control and manage our emotions and expressions vary from uncoordinated efforts to academy-award winning performances. Good actors, according to Hochschild (1979), have two ways of controlling their emotions: they can manage their expression—‘surface acting’ or they can manage their authentic feelings—‘deep acting’. The first, involves ‘feeling’ rules that function to suppress or elicit emotion as well as to shape them towards social ends (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). ‘Emotion’ work or ‘emotional’ labour is an important aspect of teaching, regardless of the subject area; but when teaching the Holocaust it becomes of

---

30 Studies on emotions in psychology have grown exponentially. In 2001 the American Psychological Association introduced a journal Emotion devoted exclusively to studies in this area.
paramount importance. Indeed, it would be difficult in Bauman’s opinion, to teach it without ‘a concern for emotion … not only the students’, or the teacher’s emotions but in the texts themselves …’ (Bauman, 1996, p. 46).

To date, research on teachers’ emotional labour in education has been confined to managing anger and frustration\textsuperscript{32} as a means of ‘establishing power and control in classrooms’ (Sutton, 2007, p. 262). No-one has taken up Arlie Hochschild’s (1979) invitation to study the emotion work of other groups.\textsuperscript{33} For example, the emotion work that teachers are required to do to manage their emotions or feelings of grief, sorrow, anguish or pain when teaching subject matter like the Holocaust has not been studied or documented. This study aims to redress this lacuna in the literature.

**(Holocaust) second generation—emotional knowledge (SGEK)**

The existence of the (Holocaust) second generation was heralded in 1979 with the publication of Helen Epstein’s groundbreaking book, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*. It began, she writes, as a secret quest ‘so intimate I did not speak of it to anyone. I set out to find a group of people who, like me, were possessed by a history they had never lived. I wanted to ask them questions, so that I could reach the most elusive part of myself’ (Epstein, 1979, p. 14). She located and recorded the deep and lasting impact of the experiences of a group of individuals who all share very personal transactions with the aftermath of atrocity. For many of her participants, the interviews were the first time they had examined the post-Holocaust aspect of their histories as ‘something distinct and significant, or had articulated the impact of their parents’ histories on the parents themselves, the family dynamics, or their inner and outer lives’ (Hoffman, 2004, p. xi).


\textsuperscript{33} Arlie Hochschild’s (1979) study targeted the emotion work of air hostesses.
A significant proportion of the literature about the characteristics of survivor families and/or children of Holocaust survivors has come from clinicians and researchers working with a ‘clinical population’: that is, those individuals who are sufficiently affected to warrant psychoanalysis. As a result, the dominant trends in the literature regarding the Jewish second generation and/or the survivor family have grown out of an attempt ‘to provide meaningful clinical explanations for the disturbed family, and therefore emphasise pathology’ (Pilez, 1979, p. 158). The works of Melbourne based psychoanalyst Esther Faye (1999, 2001) and psychiatrist George Halasz (2001, 2005) as well as North American clinicians like Bergman & Jucovy (1982); Kestenberg (1989); and Canadian clinicians like Danieli (1982); Sigal and Weinfeld (1989); and Laub (1998) all attest to these perspectives. The concerns of psychoanalysts, clinicians and researchers working with ‘clinical populations’ are outside the concerns of the present study. Furthermore, the present research stands behind Pilez who argues that not all survivor families are ‘damaged, traumatized, and defective’ (Pilez, 1979, p. 159). There are myriad points on a broad continuum, countless ways that sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors are ‘shadowed by the demons of Auschwitz’ (Berger & Berger, 2001, p. 65).

It is since the appearance of Epstein’s book that the (Holocaust) second generation has ‘crystallized into a recognized entity and a self-conscious identity’ (Hoffman (2004). Children of survivors by now comprise ‘a defined, if hybrid, collectivity that holds local and international meetings and conferences and which has given rise to a growing body of writing, ranging from the highly personal to the highly theoretical’ Hoffman, 2004, pp. xi-xii). The works of Epstein (1979); Baker (1997, 2006); Zable (1991, 2006); Berger & Berger (2001); Wajnryb (2001); Grinblat (2002); and Hoffman (2004) attest to the Jewish second generation’s preoccupation or rather obsession with their Holocaust legacy. In each of the above accounts, the writer exposes a quintessentially private encounter with this palpable presence in his/her home and/or life.

On examining the extensive literature written by the (Holocaust) second generation, what comes to mind is the question: Why now? Why is it that this generation’s obsession with their Holocaust legacy became manifest only once they were in their 40s and 50s? Why have individuals like Kaplinski (1992); Berger & Berger (2001);
Wajnryb (2001); Grinblat (2002); Zable (1991); and Baker (1997), to name but a few, published works focusing on their private transactions with the Holocaust only in the last 20 or 25 years? According to the Melbourne based psychoanalyst George Halasz, the answer lies in two forces—the cultural and the psychological—working together. Halasz (2006), supported by Wajnryb (2001), argues that for various reasons the Holocaust was largely absent from public discourse before the late 1970s and 1980s. Many survivors ‘were bent on using all their energies to build a new life … and sought to suppress these memories … to protect their children from the horrors’ (Rutland and Caplan, 1998, p. 318). Indeed, Holocaust survivors were effectively silenced—both literally and metaphorically. ‘Figuratively and often literally, the events experienced become unspeakable … suggesting that some experiences are not the stuff of narrative. They can’t be talked about’ (Wajnryb, 2001, pp. 35-36). Furthermore, the lack of talk was not only the ‘fault’ of survivors. The world to which they returned did not want to listen or know. According to Halasz (2006), what they confronted was ‘a conspiracy of silence’.

For 30 years or so the ‘groundwork of receptivity’ was not in place (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 66). Survivors were told to put the past behind them and to get on with their lives. Fresco (cited in Laub, 1988) calls this period ‘the gaping vertiginous black hole of the unmentionable years’ (p. 508). It took until the 1980s before many Holocaust survivors were able to talk or publish accounts of their experiences. ‘Thirty years gave them some distance from the trauma, some degree of healing, some capacity to talk about it’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 75). Finally, the taboo was broken and the Holocaust slowly seeped into public consciousness. In the last 20 to 25 years writers, filmmakers, playwrights, educational materials and curriculum writers, oral history projects, historians and museums have all developed a keen interest in the Holocaust. This milieu, plus a resurgence in anti-Semitism, a growing number of revisionist

34 Whilst public discourse on the Holocaust only emerged in the 1970s and 1980s it has been taught, virtually from the end of the war, as well as openly and vigorously discussed, by members of various Jewish youth movements like—B’Nei Akiva, Ski/ Bund and B’Nai B’rith. MK (in his interview) speaks of his early knowledge of the Holocaust due to his membership in B’Nei Akiva. These youth groups have also been commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising since 1947 that has drawn on ghetto literature and poetry.
35 For further elucidation as to why survivors remained silent see: Wajnryb, 2001, p. 89.
36 For an examination of the political, historical, and social reasons for the post war ‘silence’ see Wajnryb, 2001, pp. 56-81.
‘historians’ denying or re-writing the Holocaust and an escalation in the war against Israel’s existence have compelled many of the Jewish second generation to provide an antidote. On a personal and psychological level, Halasz (2006) maintains that this generation also has a heartfelt reason to grapple with their profoundly personal legacy. He argues that their works (that is, their individual ‘narratives’, whether they be in the field of poetry, literature, linguistics, psychology, history, and/or psychotherapy) are attempts at sorting the vignettes of experience that they have inherited from their parents. Thus, what this generation is doing publicly, is working on the gaps in their primary narratives by reducing or eliminating them and, thereby, restoring and healing their fragmented selves. Wajnryb expresses the same views and offers a simple (though not simplistic) answer. She believes that: ‘it is only in our 40s as we are raising our own children that we’re able to pause and assess who we are, and why we do what we do. What our values are and where they come from. It is when the end of your life is closer than the start, when our parents are no longer with us that it becomes about ‘narrative management’ (Wajnryb, 2006).

The silence: How tragedy shapes talk, written by the Sydney author and linguist Ruth Wajnryb (2001), is a seminal work for understanding the Holocaust second generation experience and, therefore, is of critical importance to the present study. It is the one and only non-psychoanalytic reference that examines in detail the private and personal impact of the Holocaust on the next generation. Of the plethora of writings on the Holocaust it stands alone in capturing and analysing the complexities of intergenerational transmission of trauma through the voice of the second generation. Wajnryb’s book is essentially about silence—its many faces and meanings. It also examines, from the perspective of the post-war generation, other linguistic modalities of communication in the homes of survivors. Herself the daughter of survivors, she grew up with the ‘palpable presence of an absence’ (Berger & Berger, 2001), in a home that was ‘bathed in a silence wrought by trauma’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. xi). It took her over 40 years to confront her own demons and to try and make sense of her upbringing. This led her to seek out other children of

37 As cited earlier, antithetical to the experiences of Wajnryb (2001) and Halasz (2006) members of the (Holocaust) second generation who attended Jewish youth movements were conversant with this history from the 1950s and/or 1960s.
Holocaust survivors in order to establish whether they too ‘grew up apprenticed in the skills of inference and versed in the language of the oblique’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. xi).

She interviewed 27 Holocaust descendants: all adult children of Jewish Holocaust survivors. There was a fairly equal distribution in terms of gender. All her participants lived in or close to Sydney at the time of the interview. During her research, she interviewed 10 others who had parallel experiences of trauma and silence but had no direct connection with the Holocaust. Wajnryb describes her book as being:

about stories, indeed it is a tapestry of stories, woven through my own narrative. As well as glimpses of my own story, there are those of my respondents that emerged during the interviews, and the stories that my generation was not told, or that we were told only partially or indirectly (Wajnryb 2001, p. 25).

The Jewish second generation’s sense of their parents’ losses is a deeply felt personal disturbance. They ‘are guardians of an absent meaning. They seek to connect with and mourn the loss of an extended family whom they never knew but whose existence is a palpable presence in their lives. The presence of this absence shapes the boundaries of the interpsychic lives of second generation witnesses’ (Berger & Berger, 2001, p. 65).

Feelings of grief, guilt and loss also became manifest in survivors’ naming their children after relatives who had perished: ‘Nearly always, with a name comes a story or a set of stories that are conveyed over a lifetime in fragmented reminiscence’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 149). Wardi (1992) also acknowledges this phenomenon, and drawing on her extensive experiences as a psychotherapist, participant in professional workshops and lectures, she found that in most survivors’ families at least one of the children is ‘designated as a memorial candle … and … is given the burden of participating in his parents emotional world’ (Wardi, 1992, p. 6). Naming children after dead relatives is not unique to the families of Holocaust survivors but
is particularly prevalent among them. These children, the direct descendants of survivors, ‘the Jewish second generation, are the hinge generation, who on the one hand serve to preserve the past, and on the other, fuse it to the present and future’ (Wardi, 1992, p. 6).

According to Wajnryb, this generation has ‘an overwhelming sense that they were born with and into a sense of awareness’—they were ‘born knowing’ (2001, p. 135). By and large this generation think that they know a lot about the Holocaust and their parents’ experiences; but upon closer scrutiny they realised they know very little. ‘The children believe they know about the Holocaust simply because they have perceived its after effects on their parents’ (Hass, 1990, p. 85). Thus, the knowing—emotional, private and personal—that the ‘second generation’ has of the Holocaust evolves over time into a knowledge that is acquired vicariously, is mediated and often quiet scant.

According to Young (1988), all knowledge about the Holocaust (except for those who have experienced it) is mediated through the process of transmission. There are only two ways to have knowledge about any event—experienced or ‘found out’. The latter is always mediated by the process of transmission and the quantity and quality of the information. Naturally, the second generation’s knowledge is the latter and, invariably, it is transmitted via their parents.

This generation, even before birth, was exposed to and affected by one or both their parents’ experiences of the Holocaust. Although their knowledge of the Holocaust is varied, highly personal and subjective, depending greatly on the psychological state of their parent or parents, the acquisition of this knowledge always had both a physical and an emotional component. Hoffman maintains that what some of the ‘Jewish second generation witnesses’ (Berger & Berger, 2001, p. 1) inherited was ‘the emotional sequel of our elders’ experiences … [these were] not a processed, mastered past, but the splintered signs of acute suffering, grief and loss’ (Hoffman, 2004, p. 34). Their legacy was an inchoate, powerfully psychic inheritance.

See Chapter Four: (Holocaust) Second Generation, Interviews 1 – 6, pp. 112 –129.
Overall, survivor parents did not give their children history lessons about their wartime experience. ‘Often there were ‘small visual “cameos” like the escape story or the arrival in Auschwitz … a constellation of intact stories … that over the years became windows through which the children glimpsed their parents’ history’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 180). Thus, the Holocaust narratives that the descendants inherited were fragmented and partial disclosures. Even in homes where there was ‘an endless account of tribulation’ (Bergman & Jucovy, 1982, p. 20), the immersion was in ‘emotional knowledge’ (Hass (1990, p. 157) rather than historical knowledge.

Who we are or who we become is a complex amalgam of our genetic and cultural inheritance, our society and our position in it and ‘our internalised past’ (Hoffman, 2004, p. 28). Some argue that of all the forces that shape us, emotional knowledge is the most powerful. The emotional cargo carried by the children of Holocaust survivors came in a ‘range of affective tonalities’ (Hoffman 2004). For example, ‘Eat! You do not know where the next meal is coming from’ illustrates the taboo of never throwing food away—even stale bread; ‘They can’t take knowledge away from you. Trust no-one’ illustrates an on-going sense of anxiety; while, ‘You don’t know what hunger is …what pain is …because you were not there’ simply identifies the incommunicability of trauma. Emotional knowledge, in whatever form it was expressed, was either consciously seared into the psyches of the children or it seeped in unintentionally and imperceptibly.

Without a doubt the (Holocaust) second generation is a distinct and identifiable community. Perhaps the community can be best described as an ‘imagined community’ (Hoffman, 2004, p. 28); imagined, because this community is not a physical entity but an entity united by its distinctive, emotional, private, personal and powerfully psychic transaction with its particular but shared past. It is this shared past which enables the members of this imagined community to identify, understand and support each other.

39 These litanies appear in both Wajnryb (2001, pp. 193-206) as well as in Hoffman (2004). They appeared in a number of my participants’ stories as they did in my own home.
Second generation Australian World War II veterans’ emotional knowledge (SGEK)

‘In Australia there has been no substantial interest in family effects of war’ (Raftery & Schubert, n.d. p. 26). The body of literature on the families and, in particular, children of Australian World War II veterans is woefully thin. Most of the studies undertaken on Australian war veterans ‘have been clinical in nature and have found a high incidence of post traumatic stress disorder’ (Kingston, Douglas & Holwill, 1993). There are however a small number of Australian studies and accounts that are historical or personal: McCubbin, Dahl, Lester & Ross, 1977; Damousi, 1999; Raftery & Schubert, n.d.; Damousi, 2001; Mc Kerarnan, 2001; Lennox, 2005; Parish 2005).

Whilst Raftery & Schubert’s (n.d.) primary focus has been on the experiences of Australian veterans’ families and their role, particularly that of women, in veterans’ life-long adjustment, the study provides a small window into the post-war effects on the children, the second generation of Australian World War II veterans. As there are no official records of how families coped with men returning from this war or how many veterans experienced chronic problems, the researchers’ primary methods of data collection were interviews, questionnaires and some information gathered from letters. Empirical material was gathered only from Australian World War II veterans, their widows or wives and their children. Sixty-five family profiles were constructed from 125 individuals. Forty-nine widows or wives became participants as did 57 children. The average age of children participants was 48 years and their ages ranged between 29-68 years.

Veterans returned from war with ‘no effective debriefing and no education on how they might deal with any remnant of war … specific instructions were issued to those who had been prisoners not to talk about their experiences’ (Raftery & Schubert, n.d. p. 65). Military life had ingrained the disciplining of emotion and ‘this mechanism for survival was carried into civilian life when soldiers returned home’ (Damousi, 2001, p. 100). Hence, when veterans returned home ‘their cloak of silence’ hid from their loved ones the distressing aspects of war. During the immediate post-war period, talk of death was a cultural taboo and ‘the social climate
was also not conducive to recounting acts of death, killing and mourning’ (Damousi, 2001, p. 108). It was also not an acceptable practice for husbands to confide in their wives. Related to this ‘wall of silence’ is the fact that ‘it has been socially unacceptable or appropriate for men to grieve openly and in public’ (Damousi, 2001, p. 100), so they did so in the community of men.

The returned soldiers’ silences also ‘limited their families’ understanding of the war and its effects’ (Lennox, 2005, p. 126). More often than not, veterans only told their families selected vignettes of experiences and these usually alluded to amusing incidents. ‘This history has generally been closed to wives and children, who were not allowed into the inner world of veterans at any time, even in the reminiscences of later life’ (Raftery, 2003, p. xvii). Women and children often discovered information about their husbands or fathers from conversations overheard between veterans. A further reason that the veteran remained silent and isolated was due to social stigma, indeed, shame associated with war neurosis. Even though there were services available to veterans, families would become marginalised by the stigma of mental illness. Public initiatives\(^\text{40}\) to assist Australian World War II families, like the recent provisions made for Vietnam veterans, have only been available for a short time. It is only since the late twentieth century with the widespread acceptance of ‘the need for men and women to grieve or examine emotions’ (Damousi, 2001, p. 109) openly and publicly that this silence has been shattered.

The emotional, private and personal knowledge of the children of Australian World War II veterans is similar to that of the Holocaust second generation’s in that their second generation emotional knowledge (SGEK) is also mediated. In the main, their and their fathers’ pain remains unexpressed. In some cases the transmission of trauma manifested itself as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms range from neurotic illnesses such as anxiety to emotional ones like emotional withdrawal and/or depression; in severe cases it can lead to a complete mental breakdown. Geoff Parish’s (2005) reminiscences about his father revealed ‘two very different people. When he was well, he was a kind and loving person and when he was ill, the illness

\(^{40}\) Some of these initiatives can be located on the DVA’s website: http://www.dva.gov.au/health/younger/mhealth/policy/index.htm
and dealing with it consumed him, so you weren’t dealing with the same person’. There are also many cases of physically debilitating illness such as recurrent malaria and ulcers. Some children reported their father’s drinking and verbal abuse as evidence of a deep disturbance that is persistent and chronic.

Not all children of veterans have been scarred by their father’s experiences; in fact, many children in Raftery & Schubert’s (n.d.) study regarded their fathers as a positive role model. Lennox (2005) reports the recollections of an Australian World War II veteran’s son, who remembers his father as being ‘a hard, remote man, and very strict … but he let you know he loved you. Just that pat on the back … I loved him. He taught me to have a go—to never give in’ (2005, p. 203). Yet his son acknowledges that his father never spoke about the war. He ‘went to a couple of Anzac Day marches that made him cry’ and ‘he preferred to work alone—just him, his horse and his dog. It gave him space to think’ (Lennox, 2005, p. 203). Willingness to talk only developed later in life for some veterans. For most families, however, full disclosure of their husbands or fathers’ stories has remained obscure and incomplete.

In most cases, unlike for Holocaust survivors, ‘the marks of war’ Raftery, (2003) experienced by Australian World War II veterans has remained absent from both private and public discourse, leaving the children of Australian World War II veterans still looking for closure. There are five main gatekeepers guarding this ‘wall of silence’ and preventing the personal pain of World War II veterans from entering the public arena. The first of these are the veterans themselves, then there are the restrictive social norms which have remained unchallenged by the relevant sections of the media and the medical profession and, finally, there are the institutions such as the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and ex-servicemen’s organisations like the Returned Services League (RSL).

---

41 This extract is taken from a web page that features a program that was broadcast on Radio National on Saturday 30 April 2005 at 5.00pm. Program Two: When Time Stood Still focuses on the story of Staff Sergeant John Parish, an Australian World War II veteran who was one of many Australian men who were haunted and traumatized by their war experiences. Using his father’s service and medical files, his son Geoff Parish, tells that story of his father’s battles with himself, the bureaucratic systems of the day, and the impact of his father’s illness on his father as well as that of his family.

42 This is the current name. The previous name was the Returned Servicemen’s League.
Despite the harrowing experiences of battle and the enduring pain of POWs, most Australian World War II veterans who returned home ‘bore the scars stoically and silently, choosing to get on with their lives, do their civil duty, and hide their marks of war’ (Raftery, 2003, p. xii). In the post-war years, social stigma associated with mental illness prevented many veterans and their families from speaking out or seeking help. ‘No-one discussed nightmares. They thought they would put you in a loony bin’ (Raftery & Schubert, n.d. p. 78). In this context families had very limited options and support for any difficulties they faced and were essentially silenced. Like their First World War I counterparts, the Second World War veterans sought solace in their community rather than in the professional advice of the social workers, psychiatrists and counsellors, who had become influential after the war (Damousi, 2001, p. 100). Although there were some post-war attempts by sections of the media\footnote{For an extended discussion of some of the media’s attempts to create public space to discuss the predicament of war-damaged veterans, see Raftery, 2003, pp. 72-76.} to draw the public’s attention to the mental damage of war, no serious or extensive exploration was undertaken. The medical authorities trumped these attempts and contained any public discourse on war stress. As a consequence, talk of stress, strain or any other mental health issue was kept within medical confines.

Raftery, one of the few psychologists as well as researchers to investigate this topic, argues that the ‘distress of post-war life was confined to the only space in which it could be explored—in the psychiatrist’s or doctor’s room or in the psychiatric ward—and the traumatic memories of dead mates and dismembered bodies were further exorcised from the public arena’ (Raftery, 2003, p. 165). Furthermore, organisations such as the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the ex-servicemen’s organisations to a large extent even to this day maintain a culture of pride and patriotism where only physical injuries and disabilities are acknowledged. ‘Mental health crises are not part of the illness discourse—only physical crises such as strokes, heart attacks and cancer’ (Raftery, 2003, p. 71). One of the veterans cited in Raftery’s (2003) book, Bert Ward, summed up the mood of servicemen’s gatherings in the following way:

\textit{Only a few veterans raise the subject of war, so the distressing memories are rarely discussed. Items covered [at reunions] are sport, family matters, general ailments, and news}
The distressing aspects of war have also been excised from all such public occasions as Anzac Day or Commemoration Day. Consequently the private and personal ‘wall of silence’ has largely remained in place—both for veterans and their children.\footnote{There are a few exceptions. Walter Heskett, who served in New Guinea in W.W. II but kept silent immediately after the war, published his autobiography later in his life (Lennox, 2005, p. 201). Raftery (2003) mentions that amongst the many World War II veterans he interviewed [all of whom served in the Pacific war against the Japanese] a few of the men have written short biographies for the benefit of their grandchildren. No doubt there are many unpublished works in existence, in World War II veterans’ homes. The point also needs to be made that whilst there has been a proliferation of memoirs of Australian World War II veterans (see Damousi, 2001, p. 211) these have been of soldiers who served in the European rather than in the Pacific war against the Japanese.}

Although the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) has established services for the needs of veterans and their families\footnote{The DVA in partnership with the Australian Government and the Department of Defence now fully recognises that mental health disorders arise from war and other military operations. They are currently working in tandem to promote better mental health care for veterans and their families. See the joint initiatives of the DVA, the Australian Government and the Department of Defence on the DVA web site: http://www.dva.gov.au/health/younger/mhealth/policy/index.htm}, the social stigma associated with mental health has prevented many veterans from using these services. Even today, ‘World War II veterans report that they make little use of DVA funded health services’ (DVA, 2006). Largely, it is this continued silence of the veterans that has prevented not only the veterans but also their children from coming to terms with the aftermath of the traumas of World War II. In part, these silences also explain the almost total neglect of this area in the literature\footnote{Only Schubert & Raftery, n.d. make cursory references to the experiences of the children of World War II veterans.}

In contrast to their Jewish counterparts, children of Australian World War II veterans have chosen not to visit the war zones where their fathers’ had fought.\footnote{There are increasing numbers of descendants of Australian War Veterans who join tours or individually visit the Pacific Theatres of War. Some of these visits, especially walking the Kakoda Trail, have recently received publicity highlighting its treacherous nature.} They remain content with the fragments of knowledge that they possess, and grateful for their father’s courage, sacrifice and endurance. However, the mainly fragmented, piecemeal and largely inaccessible knowledge of the World War II veterans is very similar to that of the Holocaust second generations’ knowledge. For those children of Australian World War II veterans who have been traumatised by their father’s
wartime experiences, vestiges of this trauma permeate their consciousness just as the Holocaust permeates the consciousness of the Jewish second generation, even sixty years after the event.

Ironically, in spite of the current prominence in educational research literature on teachers’ beliefs, researchers continue to ‘confront the difficulty of finding a working definition of teachers’ beliefs’ (Eisenhart, Shrun, Harding and Cuthbert, 1988, p. 52). Some researchers refer to beliefs as ‘teachers’ “principles of practice”, “personal epistemologies” … “practical knowledge”’ (Kagan, 1992, p. 66). To date, no single definition of belief has been widely accepted in the educational research communities.

In Pajares’ (1992) opinion, until researchers decide on a definition for beliefs and on how they differ from other constructs, especially knowledge, they will not be able to investigate the part they play in the teaching process. To make this task even more complex, Pajares (1992) also claims that such concepts as attitudes, values, judgements, conceptions, preconceptions, dispositions, opinions, orientations, ideologies, action strategies, repertoires of understanding and perspectives, to name but a few, are really beliefs in disguise. Thus, in the first instance, beliefs need to be clearly distinguished from knowledge.

Part 6: Beliefs

Nespor (1987), drawing on the work of Abelson (1979), identifies four features of belief which distinguish it from knowledge. They are existential presumptions, alternativity, affective and evaluation loading, and episodic structure. For Nespor, existential presumptions are the unassailable personal truths that everyone holds. Rokeach (1968) adds his support to this assertion when he writes that they are the taken-for-granted beliefs about physical reality, social reality and the self and therefore to question them is to question one’s own sanity. They are deeply personal

48 See Colderhead (1996) and Richardson (1996)
49 Abelson worked with artificial intelligence systems in an attempt to establish a definition of what constitutes a belief.
rather than general and are impervious to persuasion. They may be beliefs held about oneself as well as others, and their genesis can be a chance encounter or an intense experience. For example, a mathematics teacher may believe that for all people learning maths is a function of drilling. Existential presumptions are held to be unalterable entities that exist outside individual control or knowledge.

For varying reasons, there are times when beliefs can create an ideal or alternative situation which will contrast with reality. Nespor (1987) describes how Ms. Skylark, due to painful experiences as a student, attempted to create the teaching environment she had fantasised about as a child. Unfortunately, because her fantasies were carried out through teaching practices inconsistent with effective classroom procedures, they resulted in unfinished lessons and frequent interruptions.

Nespor (1987) asserts that beliefs have a more powerful, affective and evaluative dimension than knowledge. Knowledge of a specific domain or subject-specific area differs from feeling about a domain or subject-specific area. Teachers often teach the content of a specific course according to the values held about the content itself. For example, while there are some teachers who believe that certain aspects of the Holocaust or experience of atrocity are ‘incommunicable’, others have no problem at all with such content.

Nespor (1987) also maintains that knowledge system information is semantically stored; whereas, beliefs are embedded in episodic memory and the material drawn on is from experience or from cultural sources of knowledge—what some have termed folklore. Furthermore, Nespor (1987) asserts that beliefs draw their strength from past episodes that colour the understanding of subsequent events. Such past episodes obviously played key roles in the practices of his teacher subjects: Ms. Skylark’s efforts to create a friendly classroom environment are based in her vivid

50 While Abelson (1979) and Nespor (1987) are in agreement that beliefs have their origin in previous episodes or vignettes of experience, neither recognises, nor acknowledges that part of the reason that these episodic memories are memorable is because of their emotional nature.
childhood memories and Mr Ralston bases his instruction (of mathematics) on his past experiences whilst teaching in the Job Corps.

Belief systems, unlike knowledge systems, do not require general or group consensus regarding the validity and appropriateness of their beliefs (Abelson, 1979, p. 321). The very fact that belief systems are founded on individual and personal experiences makes them questionable and obviously less flexible. While knowledge is an ever changing landscape fertilised by ‘reason and evidence’ (Abelson, 1979, p. 321), beliefs are fundamentally fixed; and, if they do change, it is not argument or reason that alters them but rather a ‘conversion’ or ‘gestalt shift’ (Abelson, 1979, p. 321). Knowledge systems are open to evaluation, critical examination and logic; beliefs are not. Nespor (1987) concluded that for all eccentricities, beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organise and define tasks and problems and, therefore, of the two, they are the stronger predictors of behaviour (Pajares 1992). Given their various guises: How then to define beliefs? Brown & Cooney (1982), drawing on the work of Scheffler (1965), assert that it is our beliefs which push our dispositions into action and are therefore the key determinants of behaviour (though, it must be remembered that our dispositions are framed by context and time). Sigel contends that beliefs are ‘mental constructions of experience’ (1985, p. 349). Rokeach views them as ‘any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase “I believe that …” ’ (1968, p. 113). He also reasons that all beliefs have a cognitive dimension representing knowledge, an affective component capable of eliciting emotion and a behavioural aspect when required. Kagan defines beliefs as ‘tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught’ (1992, p. 65). Ultimately what matters most is that conceptualisations of the term itself are clear, precise, consistently understood and adhered to. Once these specific constructs relating to beliefs are properly assessed and investigated, they will become, as Fenstermacher (1979) predicted, ‘the single most important construct in educational research’ (Pajares, 1992, p. 329).

Pajares (1992) argues that teachers’ attitudes to teaching, schools and students are often referred to, erroneously, as beliefs. They should, in his opinion, be referred to as educational beliefs about something. We should be discussing educational beliefs
about the nature of history, educational beliefs about developing students’ historical understanding or educational beliefs about the reasons why some teachers find teaching certain content (for example, the Holocaust) different from others. Finally, when identifying teachers’ beliefs, it is important to distinguish between those that they hold professionally—and have become part of their practices—and those that they hold in general. However, to do this is quite challenging since educational beliefs are ‘diffuse and ungainly, too difficult to operationalise, too context free’ (Pajares, 1992, p. 316).

However, it must be remembered that educational beliefs are but one of the four seminal forces—emotional knowledge or personal connection to the subject matter, educational beliefs, the history syllabi and context—which shape the act of teaching. It is interesting that the forth, context, seems to exert ‘the greatest influence on teachers’ content choices and pedagogy’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 1).

**Part 7: Context**

Sockett (1987) argues that Shulman’s mapping of the knowledge base of teaching is seriously flawed due to its lack of attention to context. Of course, it is undeniable that contextual knowledge is crucial to teaching.

> The knowledge base of teaching as an occupation involves complex judgements of balance between ideal and possible practice, not merely in matters of pure pedagogical reasoning – for practice is rooted in context. That context is not a set of abstractions, but is the social, perhaps, political base for practical day-to-day, hour-to-hour decisions made by teachers. (Sockett, 1987, p. 210)

Because teachers’ practices are largely contingent upon a number of external variables like ‘the unique variable (students) and unpredictable elements’ (Sockett, 1987, p. 209) and the varying contexts in which they teach, there can be no one-size-fits-all pedagogy. Teaching involves an intricate balance between ‘ideal and sustainable practice’ (Fahey, 2007); thus, practice is irrefutably embedded in context.
In the past, context was given only scant attention\textsuperscript{51} in the literature. Currently, however, there is a developing body of research\textsuperscript{52} examining the nexus between context\textsuperscript{53} and practice and its attendant consequences for teachers’ decisions about their classroom instruction. Recent studies conceptualise it as a complex phenomenon (Seddon, 1994), socially constructed (Sockett 1987; Grossman & Stodolsky 1999) and an embedded and interactive medium (Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Talbert, McLaughlin, & Rowan 1993) that affects the teacher’s work. Context is no longer ‘something simple and taken for granted, a backdrop to what is important’ (Seddon, 1994, p. 6). Indeed, contexts of teaching—‘the school, subject area, department, professional networks, state policies and community demographics’ (Talbert, McLaughlin and Rowan, 1993, p. 116)—are all seen as more diverse and more powerful than previously assumed. For the purpose of this research I have adopted Fahey’s definition of context: ‘the multiple and interactive macro,\textsuperscript{54} meso\textsuperscript{55} and micro\textsuperscript{56} conditions that constitute the situations in which teachers make decisions about teaching and learning.’ (2007, p. 18). I have done so because Fahey’s definition\textsuperscript{57} captures, more than any other model, the complex and dynamic interdependence between the various contexts within which teachers work.

The discussion within this section clearly demonstrates the inter-disciplinary nature of my research and explains why my thesis draws on such wide ranging research as: the teaching and learning of history (using the Holocaust as a case study), the sociology of emotion, the knowledge that teachers have, the educational beliefs that teachers hold, the context in the field of education within which teachers teach, and the psychology of second generation survivors of the Holocaust.

\textsuperscript{51}See: Sockett (1987).
\textsuperscript{52} See: McLaughlin & Talbert (1990); Erickson & Shutz (1991); Siskin (1991); McLaughlin (1993); Talbert, McLaughlin & Rowan (1993); Gallego, Cole & The Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (2001), and Fahey (2007).
\textsuperscript{53} According to recent research, departments, rather than schools, are perceived to be the main points of reference for teachers regarding their professional identity and practice (Johnson, (1990); Siskin (1994) Fahey, 2007).
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Macro} conditions as described by Fahey (2007) refer to schools, communities, policymaking bodies and disciplinary interests.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Meso} conditions refer to subject departments.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Micro} conditions include teachers, learners and school subjects.
\textsuperscript{57} See Fahey (2007, p. 69).
My literature review demonstrates that the study of biography encompasses the following three disciplines: history, sociology and education. I have also found that at times, a certain issue like empathy, for instance, an important element of this project, may need to be examined, understood and defined in its many guises; however, doing so may often involve cross disciplinary study. It is well accepted that empathy is important to both history and education, but that it also has psychological underpinnings which must be considered before the concept can be fully understood and used as a tool is not quite so fully appreciated. It is because the study of biography involves dealing with such complex inter-disciplinary subject matter that it requires the use of qualitative research methods. These methods are therefore discussed in the following chapter.

This concludes the examination of the literature that is relevant to my research and I now turn to discuss the theoretical orientation and methodology that underpin my work.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Whoever is searching for the human being first must find the lantern — Nietzsche, 1947 (cited in Max Van Manen, 1990, p. 4).

Introduction

This chapter outlines my research trail; and within it I discuss the research design for this study as well as justify its appropriateness for illuminating a teacher’s biography, which I believe to be integral to his or her teaching of history, with particular reference to teaching the Holocaust. I begin with a brief examination of interpretivism and then narrow my focus to symbolic interaction\(^1\) as the preferred approach because it conveys the complex, subjective and emotional nature of a teacher’s personal knowledge. In doing so, I consider the nature of qualitative research and the researcher-as-interpreter; I outline the merits of case study methodology; and discuss the collection and analysis of my empirical materials. Finally, I look at the management of the researcher’s subjectivity.

Theoretical orientation

Nietzsche’s observation prompts us to consider the following two questions: (i) which lantern, symbolic interaction, phenomenology, ethnomethodology or post modernism is best suited to understand the human being; and (ii) which method/methods is/are required for this type of study?

I believe that from the four epistemological paradigms (i. positivist and post-positivist; ii. constructivist – interpretivist;\(^2\) iii. critical -Marxist, emancipatory; and

\(^1\) Symbolic interaction represents only one of several interpretive approaches to the human sciences. Others include phenomenology, ethnomethodology, gender studies, critical theory and semiotics. 
\(^2\)Interpretivism attempts to identify and clarify the meaning of structures and experiences from the participant’s point of view.
iv. feminist – post structural) in qualitative research, interpretivist or the *emic*\(^3\) point of view, particularly symbolic interaction, to be the ‘lantern’ or lens needed for this study. I hold the belief because the aim of the study is to interpret and understand the experiences, and the worlds, of the participants through examining the meanings, interpretations, activities, interactions and emotions embedded, within their personal and professional lives. All four epistemological paradigms, like Max Weber’s ‘*Verstehen*’ approach, are based on the belief that to ‘understand’ a subject the researcher must gain entry into his/her experiences and perceptions through close observation and attentive listening.

When studying the natural world, we are content to observe, measure and classify; however, when the world merges with that of the human, we develop a need to interpret, analyse and understand our subjects and their worlds.\(^4\) Dilthey, cited in Ermath (1978, p. 246), stressed that ‘we explain nature, but human life we must understand.’ Interpretivists such as Max Weber (1971), Denzin (1992) and Schwandt (1998) believe that only through understanding, defining and investigating the history of a human being and the language used to explain this history can we make sense of his/her circumstances. However, it must be remembered that as soon as interpretivists begin to decode the ‘construction’ that their subjects/participants provide of their lives, they embark on a further ‘construction’ or interpretation. It should also be noted that all ‘interpretive inquirers watch, listen, ask, record, and examine’ (Schwandt, 1998, p. 222). Their interest is not in the methods per se. For interpretivists, these are but the processes through which they can achieve their aim of ‘knowing’ — understanding and interpreting — the ‘being’ of their subjects (Schwandt, 1998).

---

\(^3\) The ‘emic’ perspective is the insider’s – while the ‘etic’ perspective is the imposed framework of the outsider. In social research this means that a distinction is made between the ‘subjective’ knowledge of the participant and the ‘scientific knowledge of the social scientist. The insiders’ accounts of reality produce knowledge of the reasons why people act as they do.

\(^4\) Some of the names associated with this tradition (in Germany) are: Dilthey, Richert, Simmel and Weber and Collingwood (in England).
Symbolic interaction

The social psychological theory of symbolic interactionism underlies the interpretivists’ process of meaning-making. Herbert Blumer (1969, p. 2), extending G.H. Mead’s work, believes that there are three pillars on which symbolic interactionism rests. The first pillar being, the meaning objects or people have for us; the second, the societal values given to objects or people and their influence on our initial response; and the third, the interpretive process through which society’s values towards these objects or people are decoded.

‘The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action: … meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of actions’ (Blumer, 1969, p. 5). The Blumer-Mead version of symbolic interactionism regards human beings as purposive agents who engage in ‘minded, self-reflexive behaviour’ (Blumer, 1969, p. 81); and confront a world that they must interpret in order to act rather than a set of environmental stimuli to which they are forced to respond. Since what is in or on someone else’s mind cannot be directly observed, symbolic interactionism requires that the inquirers actively enter the worlds of people being studied in order to ‘see the situation as it is seen by the actors, observing how they interpret what is taken into account’ (Blumer, 1969, p. 56). The ‘best’ method of gaining access or acquiring such understanding is through in-depth interviews. The virtue of this method is discussed later in this chapter. Symbolic interactionism is particularly suited to my research concerns because of its intersubjective nature. This ‘lantern’ or lens has enabled me to grasp the various meanings, interpretations and actions of my participants with special reference to teaching the Holocaust. This perspective illuminates the fact that no two actors’ definition or response to any particular situation or event is identical. Even though all the Holocaust second generation teachers in my sample grew up or were socialised in homes strongly

---

5 Prus (1996) tells us that people create their own particular version of reality. There is no world outside our imaginings of it. They do likewise for their lived experience as they reflect on, interact with and respond to others. Thus, reality is fundamentally intersubjective.

6 See chapters 7 & 8 for further details.
overshadowed by the Holocaust, their reasons for teaching it are many and varied.\textsuperscript{7} In turn, this is reflected in their pedagogy. The same applies to their counterparts — the Jewish South African teachers. In most of their cases, their lives were untouched by the Holocaust until they were required to teach Jewish history in various days schools in Sydney. Upon examining their individual approaches to teaching this history, one discovers that each teacher has fashioned his/her own particular social and personal interpretation of this event; and it is this interpretation that determines the approaches they take to its teaching. The very same situation can be said of those teachers who are only professionally connected to this content. These teachers’ lived experiences or backgrounds are as widely diverse as are their approaches to this topic.\textsuperscript{8} Thus, symbolic interactionism (communication in symbols and symbolic cues) and, in particular, taking the role of others (in this case the individual perspectives of my participants) has facilitated my interpretation as well as my understanding of the individual perspectives of my participants to teaching this particular history.

**Qualitative research**

**The researcher-as-interpreter**

Since the character of qualitative inquiry defines the methods most suitable for the collection and analysis of empirical materials and because qualitative inquiry focuses on meaning in context (Merriam, 1998), it requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meanings. Consequently, the human being is best suited for this task.

The researcher-as-interpreter needs to be sensitive to the socially constructed nature of the natural world and needs to realise that ‘inquiry is affected by histories, dispositions and circumstances’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 108). According to interpretive researchers all experiences are anchored in time, place or the psyche of the protagonist—they are ‘context bound’. They also accept that values and interests are

\textsuperscript{7} See chapters 4 and 7.

\textsuperscript{8} See chapters 4, 7 & 8 for details.
part of the research process and are not separate from the phenomenon they study. They recognise that the very language used to express experience is also context bound, defined by the values and social position (biography, socialisation, family influences, sense of community, socio-economic position and education) of the researcher and his/her subject. Since in qualitative research the researcher is the data collecting instrument, he/she must be fully aware of his/her role (reflexivity) in the gathering and analysing of the empirical materials. Managing the researcher’s subjectivity is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The interviewer needs to be sensitive to humanistic methods: his/her empathy is essential to establish rapport. To capture participants’ essential meaning’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 1), an atmosphere of trust must be established and the interviewer must be able to empathise and share the lived experiences of her/his participants. The researcher must also be sensitive to the context (and the many variables within them), including ‘peoples’ overt and covert agendas and to non-verbal behaviour’ (Merriam, 1998, p. 21). Being sensitive during the collection of empirical materials ‘involves a keen sense of timing—of knowing when to allow for silence, when to probe more deeply, and when to change direction. Every sense of the researcher must be alert to cues and nuances provided by the context’ (Merriam, 1998, p. 22). But most importantly, the task of the researcher-as-interpreter is to discover what his/her participants are thinking. Since this cannot be directly observed, the interpretive interviewer needs to frame questions a way that will obtain meaningful information. Ultimately, it is only ‘by listening to many individuals, and to many points of view, that value-resonant social contexts can be fully, equitably, and honourably represented’ (Merriam, 1998, p. 23). All these issues were taken into consideration in this research project.

**Case study research**

As the focus of this study is to understand teachers’ perspectives, and in particular their orientations to teaching the Holocaust, it is essential that the knowledge and

---

9 Researchers are reflexive when they critically examine their own assumptions and actions through being ‘self conscious’ and self-aware about the research process.
understandings gained rest on the research participants’ personal (cognitive and emotional) experiences and perspectives. In order to glean such understandings, the case study becomes the lantern by which the biographical nature of teachers’ lives is studied. Choosing to use multiple case studies was prompted by Nietzsche’s observation—whoever is searching for the human being, first must find the lantern. I agree with Nietzsche and believe that case studies, ‘more than any other social science approach … enables us to know people intimately, to see the world through their eyes, and to enter into their experiences vicariously’ (Shaw, 1931, cited in Minichiello & Aroni et al, 1995).

Yin (1989) argues that case studies can be explanatory, exploratory or descriptive. In the current study a research method that allows for description is required because of the need to understand my participants’ different perspectives. The case study approach is also appropriate for this study because the guiding research questions — the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ teachers teach the Holocaust — call for the exploration of such complex phenomena as lived experience and educational phenomena in specific and bounded contexts over time. It allows the unique character of each individual case to be studied within context and the participants’ voices to be honoured, though their views are compared and contrasted across cases, in order to capture the rich tapestry of practices.

The decision trail

The research or decision trail needs to be open to examination and appraisal. The central concerns are about producing valid and reliable knowledge. The researcher must be absolutely sure that whatever his/her findings are, they are based on fact. Research validity is about being certain that you actually see what you think you are seeing. Research reliability depends on being able to replicate results, regardless of how, when or where the research is carried out. In other words, there has to be an ‘audit trail’ (Merriman, 1998), showing how empirical materials were collected; how categories were assigned; and how and what decisions were made during the inquiry.
Sampling decisions

The means by which I located and selected the participants for this study was criterion based.\textsuperscript{10} The criterion being that all research subjects taught Modern and/or Jewish history in Years 9 and/or 10 and/or 12. The sample comprises twenty teachers selected across five educational contexts: state/government, Jewish, Catholic, independent, and non-denominational. There are three teachers from state schools; seven from independent Jewish schools; four from Anglican or Presbyterian\textsuperscript{11} schools; three teachers from Catholic schools; and three teachers from non-denominational schools. Only teachers from NSW and Victoria are represented in this study, because after a nation-wide search for modern history and/or Jewish history teachers who are the direct descendants of Holocaust survivors, (the Holocaust second generation), only six were located: four from NSW and two from Victoria. Therefore any teacher in NSW or Victoria became eligible, if he or she taught the Holocaust as part of his/her history teaching. In NSW this happens in either Year 12 Stage 6 Option E: Modern History Germany 1918-1945\textsuperscript{12} or in Genocide Studies (using the Holocaust as a case study), in Stage 5 Elective History to year 9 or year 10. In NSW the Holocaust is also taught in Jewish Studies in Jewish day schools in either Year 9 or 10. In Victoria, the scope to teach the Holocaust in history is limited to either Year 10 or 11. It is usually taught in the context of Twentieth Century History to 1945. Such concentration to specific school years and the content field not only further defined the study but also facilitated cross-case comparisons.

\textsuperscript{10} Another name for this type of qualitative sampling procedure is purposive or purposeful. The researcher chooses the criteria in advance of the study on which the selection of a sample is based. In purposive sampling generalisability is less important than the collection of rich empirical materials and an understanding of the ideas of the people chosen for the sample. For further detail see M.Q. Patton (1990) \textit{Qualitative Evaluation & Research Methods, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition}, Sage: Newbury Park.

\textsuperscript{11} The following Muslim schools were approached: Al Amanah College K-10, Liverpool, Malek Fahd Aziz School K-12, Chullora and Noor Al Houda Islamic College K-12, Strathfield and the researcher was advised that they did not teach either Option E: Twentieth Century Germany 1939-1945 or the Holocaust in any of their History courses.

\textsuperscript{12} This course has been revised. The Holocaust is at present, partially covered in the revised Modern History Stage 6 syllabus, in Part II. National Studies: Modern Germany 1918-1939. It can also be examined, in greater detail, in Part III. International Studies: Conflict in Europe 1935-45. The revised Modern History Stage 6 syllabus was implemented in Year 11 in 2005 and was examined for the first time in the HSC in 2006. Revision of the syllabus occurred only after the majority of fieldwork had been completed.
The selection of at least three history teachers from different school environments, teaching similar topics or units of work, enabled a close examination of the role that individual differences played in the nature of instruction. The purposeful selection of secondary school history teachers who are the Holocaust second generation is of special interest as are the Jewish South African teachers who have strong Jewish identities but are not directly linked to the trauma of the Holocaust. These two subsets become particularly important when understanding the teaching methodologies of those who are directly connected to the trauma of the Holocaust with those who are removed from it.

In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis occur almost simultaneously rather than in two separate stages. In fact, the linking of these two stages is seminal to ‘grounding’ the data. According to Glesne & Peskin (1992, p. 149), using this approach allows ‘all the soft nuances … the tones and shades of meaning’ to be captured. This process not only enables preliminary insights gathered from empirical materials to inform later interviews but also enriches the emerging understanding. At any given time during the fieldwork I might have been interviewing a teacher, transcribing the interview, reflecting on the interaction or revising the interview guide. During the research three separate files were maintained to distil ideas and enhance the effectiveness of the interview guide. There was a transcript file containing the transcription of each interview and an accompanying short summary; a personal file on fieldwork and methodology containing reflective notes on participants, settings, social interaction as well as on interview skills and ways to improve them; and an analytical file containing the careful examination of the research questions asked, emergent ideas, concepts and further direction.

**Ethics**

Integral to the research process is ethics approval granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney. Sydney University’s code of ethics informed the research journey, thereby ensuring that throughout the interviewing process the participants’ welfare remained paramount. Power and control issues invariably and inevitably arise in social research because the process involves the
social interaction between the interviewer and the participant. Consequently, clear
moral parameters were established in the researcher and participant relationship. The
informed consent of each participant was sought. Participants were provided with
open and honest information regarding the purpose of the research, the manner in
which the interview data would be stored, restriction of access to the empirical
materials, the researcher’s use of the empirical materials and the guarantee that the
final product would be accessible to participants. As the empirical materials used to
buttress the findings may be particularly sensitive in nature (the personal and often
painful recollection of participants’ experiences as well as potentially damaging in
criticism levelled against particular heads of departments and/or colleagues), it is
important to ensure that the names of the participant as well as the schools included
in the research retain their anonymity. Therefore, each participant has been allocated
a same sex pseudonym, and school sites have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Methods of collection and analysis of empirical materials

Before fieldwork commenced some preliminary research was carried out to establish
which schools taught the Holocaust. This was followed by a letter to the principals of
these various schools, informing them of the project and asking permission to contact
the respective heads of departments. Each head of history was asked to canvass his or
her staff for volunteers.

Arrangements were made by telephone between the volunteers and the interviewer as
to the time and place of the interview. Each of fifteen schools, representing different
ideological and religious positions, provided the setting for either one or up to three
case studies that supplied a context for teachers’ experiences and reflection. The
empirical materials for this study were gathered from interviews. These were
carried out face-to-face in either the school setting or in the home of the participant or
that of the interviewer. The interviews were taped with the informed consent of
interviewees. Sanger (1996) argues that taping interviews has several advantages
over taking notes. It allows the interviewee’s own words to be used in the
representation of the empirical materials; it leaves the researcher free to concentrate
on building empathy and on careful questioning. When the researcher listens to tapes
later, the conversations may prompt recall of non-verbal cues. These issues are important for this researcher as one of the primary aims of the research is to capture the authentic (verbal as well as non-verbal) experiences of the participants.

**The interview**

I found the interviews to be the most rewarding stage of my inquiry. ‘The personal contact and the continually new insights into the subject’s lived world’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 124) proved to be both an exciting and enriching personal experience. The interview usually lasted between 90 and 120 minutes and was based on focused interviewing. In the majority of cases a follow-up interview was scheduled. These were driven by the need to ensure that the researcher and participant’s understandings were essentially the same. My decision to use a focused or semi-structured interview was based on its flexibility. It enabled me to use a greater variety of questions and also to follow-up the meanings of my participants. My interview schedule was revised after each interview in order to refine its effectiveness. This mode of inquiry marries particularly well with in-depth interviews that focus on the participants’ perception of reality. The decision to use in-depth interviewing as my research strategy, or data collection method, is linked to my view of the social world. Since I believe that social reality exists as meaningful interaction between individuals and can only be known through understanding others’ points of view, interpretations and meanings, I have used in-depth interviews to gain access to my participants’ worlds in their words.

The interview process was both enhanced and proscribed by the fact that I not only share with all my participants the experience of teaching modern history and in particular the Holocaust but I also share the Jewish second generation experience with six of my participants. In this instance being a descendant was an advantage in that it created an immediate affinity and understanding with regards to background and outlook. Furthermore, being a modern history teacher was also an advantage in that as a colleague I held the same status as my participants, and was conversant with syllabus requirements and teaching practices, and therefore these needed no further explanation. However, being an *emic* or insider was at times an impediment. There
were times when ‘the assumption of shared views was simply not true’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 325).

Also ‘the naivety’ that qualitative researchers require is not easy to maintain when the researcher has and is perceived to have ‘insider knowledge’. Being ‘naïve’ is an important element of the investigation. It requires the researcher to put aside assumptions and take on a learner’s role and understand things as though he/she is coming to them for the first time. It is very important that the participants see the researcher in this way— as a blank page. If they do, they are obliged to translate terms that an insider would know.

**Types of questions**

The nature of the questions used in in-depth interviewing is very important to the interaction between the researcher and the participants. Questions bear a direct relationship to the type of information/knowledge that they attempt to elicit as well as to the control of the interview. The main types of questions that are used in my interviews are: descriptive, value, feeling and probing questions (Minichiello, 1995, p. 88). *Descriptive* questions are used at the beginning of the interviews to allow participants to talk about their experiences as well as to establish rapport. Questions like, ‘Could you tell me about your parents’ background?’ or ‘Could you tell me what communication was like in your home?’ enabled the participant to direct the initial stream of information. This strategy is also ‘non-threatening because the interviewer is not probing for specific answers to specific questions’ (Minichiello et al, 1995, p. 88). According to Patton (1990), *value* questions are a means of finding out an individual’s opinions on a range of issues and experiences. Questions like, ‘What is your understanding of historical empathy?’ or ‘Why did you choose this particular film?’ give insight into the participants’ interpretive processes/world-view. Access to the *feelings* or emotional history of individual participants was seminal to understanding their private and emotional knowledge and, in turn, how these shape the teachers’ pedagogy. Interpreting the emotional responses of participants is particularly important since many of the teachers in the study privilege the affective curriculum. Therefore, feeling questions are an excellent way to gain an
understanding of the participants’ emotional worlds. Minichiello, et al, (1995, p. 89) stresses that the researcher ‘cannot take for granted the common sense understanding that people share, because these may be differently interpreted by informant and interviewer.’ Probing questions, however, aim to distil the meanings inherent in conversation, clarify participant’s meanings; and acknowledge that the researcher is cognisant of the possibility of different interpretations.

The researcher’s use of body language, including silence and nodding of the head as well as such gentle probes as ‘hmm …’ or ‘could you tell me a little more …’ and ‘I am not sure that I understand your meaning …’ were used to minimise intrusion and to encourage the participant to continue speaking. At times, I used reflective probes\(^\text{13}\) like, ‘my understanding of what you have said is … is this what you meant’ or ‘did I understand you correctly, did you say’… to verify my interpretation of my participant’s meaning. It is very difficult for any qualitative researcher to be completely sure about the veracity of the account he/she hears; however, the researcher is ‘not primarily concerned with finding out the truth \textit{per se} but rather the truth as the informant sees it to be’ (Minichiello et al 1995, p. 94). The bias and subjectivity that characterises authentic perspectives are valued for these very qualities — they represent the participant’s personal feelings, attitudes and interpretations.

**Closing the interview**

I always finished each interview by asking: ‘Are there any additional comments that you would like to make? or ‘Anything further that you wish to add?’ This provided each participant with the opportunity to add anything of relevance that had not been covered in the interview. After every interview, I expressed my thanks for the time and effort that my participant had invested as well as my appreciation for the ‘gift’ of information he or she had bestowed.

\(^{13}\) Reflective probes reflect the answer back to the informant in order to verify the researcher’s interpretation of a response. See Minichiello, 1995, p. 92 for further details.
Recording and transcribing the interview

Each interview was tape-recorded to obtain as full a record as possible of what was said. This was then meticulously transcribed to obtain an accurate written record of what was said. Transcription entails transformation from an aural discourse into a written one. The risks of misinterpretation and/or subjectivity are ever present in the transcription process and must be guarded against as far as possible. The researcher must be aware that there are risks even more pronounced when transcribing oral history; and, therefore, must at all times be mindful of the trust bestowed upon him/her by the interviewee. According to Kvale, ‘there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode’ (1996, p. 166). Therefore it must be acknowledged that even transcription is very much an interpretive enterprise. Interviews today are seldom analysed directly from the tape recordings. Usually the taped interviews are transcribed and then they are regarded as the solid, empirical materials in the interview project. Although it seems like an apparently simple and reasonable procedure, transcription involves a series of methodological and theoretical problems and, therefore, it should not be regarded as raw empirical material—after all, it is an artificial construction. Within the transcription process, ‘there is a certain paradox and possibility of betrayal’ (Weber, 1986, p. 70).

There is an unspoken or inferred understanding (between the interviewer and respondents) that allows their ‘spontaneous, tentative, oral language’ (Weber, 1986) to be treated as written language. Potentially, these accounts may appear somewhat ‘incoherent and inarticulate’ (Kvale, 1996). My insistence on a ‘faithfully reproduced’ verbatim transcription with ‘all pauses, broken sentences interruptions and other aspects of the “messiness” of casual conversation’ (Poland, 1995, p. 292) substantiates this impression.

However, when the analysis of my empirical materials was completed, I made the decision to ‘tidy up’ quotations, remove ums, errs, incomplete and run on sentences

14 As I was unsure which segments would be useful at different stages of the analytical process, full-word-for-word transcriptions, were made after each interview. I felt this approach would prove particularly useful during the writing stage, when I wanted, my participants to give voice to their experiences in their own words.
as well as make ‘judgement calls’ (Poland, 1995) about where to begin and end sentences. Bearing in mind the possible ‘betrayal’ (Weber, 1986) of my participants’ meanings, I was very careful and did my best when editing the transcripts not to alter the essence of what was said. In addition to this, throughout the study, wherever possible, I wanted my participants to give voice to their experiences in their own words.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the transcripts as well as capture the ‘full flavour’ (Poland, 1996, p. 292) or lived experience of the interview, I was careful to ensure that the ‘emotional context’ (Poland, 1996, p. 292) of the conversation was also captured by the transcription process. Therefore, such emotional responses as ‘laughter’, ‘sighs’, or ‘eyes brimming with tears’ were carefully noted at the time of the interview and then faithfully recorded in the transcripts. This was made possible by the field notes which supplemented each interview and aided the recall of and reflection on the interaction. The field notes were maintained in my personal file (discussed earlier in this section) and usually written immediately after each interview.

Many times during my every day activities, I found myself rehearsing interviews and wishing that I had asked a particular question or explored a certain idea in greater detail. I often found that I shared the sentiments, observations and experiences expressed by Sandra Weber when she wrote:

A dialogue between two people may evolve into a conversation between three or more people. I often find myself, for example, questioning one participant in the light of what another person had said, or exclaiming in silent surprise when one participant contradicts or echoes the thoughts of another. Through me, the ideas of participants are exchanged, challenged, and tested’ (1986, p. 69).

Mindful of the paradoxical nature of ‘the interview’ and its possibility of betrayal, I always tried to maintain my commitment and responsibility to my participants by honouring and doing justice to the experience of what was taking place ‘entrée nous’ (between us). By moving beyond the daily conception of ‘an interview’ to a more literal meaning—a ‘seeing the between’ or sharing a viewpoint—I found, as Martin
Buber (1965) did, that it is the ‘between’ (entre) that reveals, that permits understanding. ‘It is through the ‘seeing’ of that which is neither only you nor only me but rather our, “between” that we learn about each other ‘(Weber, 1986, p. 68).

**Listening**

Every effort was made to create an atmosphere in which my participants felt safe and could talk freely about their experiences and feelings. I attempted to ‘listen without prejudice, allowing the participants’ descriptions of their experiences to unfold’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 135). This involved listening attentively and empathically by smiling and nodding, as well as verbally, endorsing my participants’ views. Some researchers (Douglas, Roberts & Thompson 1988) regard listening as an ‘art’. Others, like Schatzman & Strauss (1973), consider it a strategy for facilitating the flow of conversation. I believe that both perspectives are valid: a researcher’s role is not merely to passively record and process responses; it also requires dynamic listening. According to Peavey this involves:

… immersing yourself within the sea of “transactions” that surround an issue… listening in only one direction — your ears are turned only toward the deepest part of the person opposite you. You are listening to their thinking, to their feeling, to their essence. Your ears wander in between their words, their sights and their questions, searching out meaning … (1994, p. 98).

Thus, the researcher is an active agent who maintains a critical inner dialogue (Adelman 1981). This requires not only engaging in conversation but also in remaining sufficiently distanced to sustain analysis of what is being said.

To penetrate beyond the ‘ordinariness’ of talk … to separate out his own knowledge as a member of the culture from the talk being used by a fellow member of the culture. This separating out allows the researcher to sustain a critical inner dialogue … Such reflexivity comes through attention to what people say … (Adelman, 1981, p. 24).

My method is positioned in the category that treasures and values subjectivity. I did this because there is literature that demonstrates that the written version of profound verbal accounts can be and often are discrepant. Claire Jankelson (2008) found that once when she interviewed an older woman who had never before recounted her
Holocaust-related life story, on reading the transcript of her account, the lady was dismayed to find that the essence of her story had not been captured. For this reason, I chose not to visit my participants’ classrooms to determine whether there was an alignment between their personal accounts and their classroom behaviour. The size of my sample as well as my method\(^\text{15}\) of collecting my empirical materials militated against this. Furthermore, I was working with direct accounts — choosing to trust the words spoken by my participants as well as their own experiences of themselves. I was more interested in capturing my participants’ meanings rather than observing their behaviour.

**Creating and assigning categories**

Once the interviews were over and transcribed, they needed to be coded or categorised. This involves sorting the transcript or pulling the data apart. Dey (1993) calls this process ‘funnelling’ or drawing distinctions and making comparisons about what to include and what to exclude. It involves sorting a sentence, topic or paragraph and giving each discrete idea or event a name. Categories are generated from a variety of sources. Some are based on my theoretical interest: the relationship between a teacher’s biography and her teaching of the Holocaust. For example, there are teachers who are the direct descendants of Holocaust survivors — the *Holocaust Second Generation*; there are teachers who are Jewish but have no direct, personal connection to the Holocaust — the *Jewish South Africans*; and, then, there are those teachers who are neither Jewish nor have any personal connection to the Holocaust, except a professional one, they teach it — the *Professionally Connected*.

Other rich veins are the words and phrases used by the participants themselves.\(^\text{16}\) For example, Jewish South African teachers refer to themselves as *It Could Have Been Us* or there are teachers who referred to themselves as *Sympathetic Gentiles* as they have a close personal relationship with Jews and/or Judaism. Some codes emerge

---

\(^{15}\) I gathered my empirical materials by conducting either one or more often two and sometimes three in-depth interviews. Each interview lasted anywhere between one to one and a half hours. These were transcribed word for word shortly after the completion of the interview. By the end of the data gathering process I had over 800 pages of fully transcribed data.
from the literature. For example, French academic Erika Apfelbaum (2000a), argues that the Holocaust second generation are *Cultural Orphans* due to their disjuncture with their past history. Berger & Luckmann, (1967, p. 157) discuss the idea of *Switching Worlds*. This happens with teachers whose Holocaust consciousness is ‘grafted’ and they ‘switched worlds’ through conversion to Judaism. Other categories, for example, the *Reasons for Teaching the Holocaust* ‘correspond to the thrust of questioning in the interviews’ (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 37). Dey, (1993, pp. 98-99) claims that essentially ‘categorization of the data requires a dialectic to develop between categories, data’ and the literature. It is the interaction between these three elements — categories, empirical materials and literature that forms the heart of categorisation.

In the main, categories are generated ‘bottom up’ and are well grounded in the data. Categories are developed in terms of their properties or characteristics that in turn became ‘dimensionalised’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 69). These two aspects — properties and dimensions — are critically important because they establish the foundations on which relationships between categories and sub-categories and main categories are premised. Categories did not surface all at once but evolved as a consequence of heightened sensitivity — resulting from deep immersion in the data. At first, my codes or categories were descriptive and aimed at labelling a concept or idea; however, with time, some categories were modified to cope with new directions in the data; some merged with others, while some were discarded, and new ones took their place. I found that as my initial assumptions were transformed, ‘the fit between data and categories required constant adjustment’ (Dey, 1993, p. 111).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) note that awareness of the hues and tones of meaning embedded in the data vary from researcher to researcher. The sensitivity of the researcher is in part premised upon his/her familiarity with the material in print.

---

16 Glaser, 1987, p. 70 cited in Strauss and Corbin (1998) refers to such phrases as, ‘*in vivo*’ codes. They are unusual phrases that immediately capture our attention.

17 Dimensions represent locations of a property along a continuum.

18 Sensitivity refers to, ‘a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates as awareness of the subtleties of meaning of the data … [it] refers to the attribute of having the ability to give meaning to the data and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 41-42).
Therefore, the literature provides a rich source of information and ‘sensitises’ him/her to what is happening in the phenomenon under study. Professional experience is another source of knowledge. Being an experienced practitioner (history teacher) enabled me to make meaning of events and actions and to do so more quickly than if I had been unfamiliar with the ‘territory’. Drawing on my own personal experience (that is, sharing a Holocaust second generation background and for example its attendant feelings of loss and grief) helped me to understand as well as empathise more deeply with similar experiences of a particular set of my participants. It also provided a strong basis for making comparisons that in turn stimulated and generated relevant categories, properties and dimensions.

In fact, asking questions and making comparisons are according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) pivotal operations of data analysis. The researcher needs to be aware that some questions may be many layered\textsuperscript{19} and therefore may require quite in-depth probing, while others may be quite straightforward and easily answered.

A central concern of all researchers is asking ‘good’ questions; ones that ‘turn out to be wonderfully productive, leading us to answers’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 75) that we are seeking. Good questions are at times contingent upon luck but, more often than not, I found that they occur when I felt that ‘something is missing here,’ and I have not located gaps or incomplete explanations, or when I realised that I had not achieved or fulfilled the needs of my questions. I was fortunate in that my interviewees were happy to be re-interviewed and I could ask questions that would provide the ‘specific and defining information’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 82) that I was seeking.

Irrespective of how mindful we are, we cannot separate ourselves from ‘who we are and what we know’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 47). Knowledge combined with conscious attempts at impartiality\textsuperscript{20} helps to promote understanding that leads to those glorious moments, those sudden insights or ‘Aha!’ experiences. It must be

\textsuperscript{19} The different levels that questions may take are: abstract, substantive and mundane. See Strauss & Corbin (1998).
\textsuperscript{20} I will discuss the problem of subjectivity at a later point in this chapter.
noted that insights do not happen in a vacuum; they occur after sustained immersion in both the empirical material and the literature. According to Dey, ‘there is a difference between an open mind and an empty head. To analyse data, we need to use accumulated knowledge not dispense with it. The issue is not whether to use existing knowledge, but how’ (1993, p. 63).

Another technique that I borrowed from Strauss and Corbin is ‘waving the red flag’ (1998, p. 97). Researchers as well as their participants embody their values, beliefs, biases and assumptions; this, in itself, is not a bad or unusual thing, since we are all influenced by our heritage, environment and individual and collective experiences. We need to be conscious or to recognise the occasions when either our own or those of our participants’ ‘biases, assumptions or beliefs intrude into the analysis’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 97). The researcher must take care not to impose meaning onto his or her subjects’ statements just because they have a common heritage or shared experiences. To be fair to our participants and to honour their ‘voices’ we must become detached observers on these occasions and tell ourselves to stop, take heed and investigate further rather than assume. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 97), bias may intrude at times when ‘the face value acceptance of words or explanations given by participants, or the complete negation of these, without exploring what is being said’ makes it into the research conclusions. Whenever my participants used words such as always and/or never a ‘red flag’ popped-up in my mind to warn me to stop and prompted me to probe for further explanation. In these instances, I adhered completely to the cardinal rule of qualitative research — do not take anything for granted, and question everything.

**Aligning categories, properties and dimensions**

Having created, assigned and reshuffled and then modified and developed some of my categories, I shifted the focus of my analysis from the data to the data as reconceptualised through the attribution process (identifying and assigning). Tesch (1990) refers to this process as the ‘reconceptualisation’ of the data because it has been reshaped in ‘the context of our own categories rather than in its original context’ (Dey, 1993, p. 131). For example, the category ‘Teach Empathy’ or ‘Avoid
(use of) Empathy’ is a category that I had decided upon before my interviews, but’ having abstracted the relevant ‘data bits’ (Dey, 1993, p. 131) and having them aligned under each category, I was then able to link categories at the level of properties and dimension as well as to refine them. Table 1 is a very good example of this.

Table 1. Data bits assigned to categories on empathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teach empathy</th>
<th>Avoid [use of] Empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To develop historical understanding</td>
<td>Teaching it [the Holocaust] in a Jewish school is one thing, but teaching it in a non-Jewish school is quite another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell individual stories in order to engage with history</td>
<td>HSC Modern History syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop interest in history, in particular this topic (Holocaust)</td>
<td>Inadequacy of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use ‘imagine if’ as a means of making it more real</td>
<td>We don’t have a right to do that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because they live in the here and now and it’s difficult to explain why people behaved as they did back then</td>
<td>It’s disrespectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use empathy as a tool to help students to get into the shoes’ of others</td>
<td>A trivialisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too close and too raw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It’s a mockery of the experiences of those who were murdered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This process not only led to further clarification of the relationship within categories, but also contributed to enhancing the conceptual framework upon which I built my data. By this stage I was able to identify both the direction I wanted the analysis to take and some of my central categories or chapters. Consequently, I was able to work towards a fuller integration of my concepts. Although these processes appear to take place sequentially, in practice, I found myself moving back and forth between these two aspects of data categorisation. Deciding which categories were central was in part based on the conceptual framework that had emerged during preliminary analysis and on my personal interests and concerns. Having decided upon my main
themes, I shifted from making comparisons within categories to making comparisons and establishing relationships between them; and I found that I agreed with Dey (1993, p. 139) that ideas ‘which seemed interesting at first, no longer seem so; while other issues apparently marginal at first, may now assume center stage.’ A number of times I went back to the field for an intake of additional empirical materials. These occasions were followed by the analysis procedures outlined above. This process was accompanied by adjustments as well as refinements of my categories until I felt that the information they held was as extensive and as accurate as I could make it.

The write up stage could not begin until the data collection and its very closely associated data reduction stage were over. Writing was a protracted process. As soon as one of my chapters was ready, the findings were written up in draft form. This process was repeated with all subsequent chapters. As I grew ‘wiser’ or more knowledgeable, I continued to make adjustments wherever I felt it was necessary. Although computer software is available to manage and assist with qualitative data analysis, having attended an introductory workshop, I decided that I wanted to interact with my data manually. I wanted to write, see and touch my data. For me this was more important than the time I would have saved by using technology.

**Composing a truthful account**

All research has a human element. Therefore, if it is to be recognised as contributing to the existing store of knowledge, it must be conducted on the basis of a well-designed and robust research methodology; but, above all, it must have truth as its guiding light. The following section will demonstrate the rigour and the integrity with which I conducted my research.

**Managing and celebrating subjectivity**

A major concern of researchers involved in qualitative research is the ‘problem’ of rigour and accusations of subjectivity or researcher bias. Often when compiling research findings, one of the researcher’s tasks is to discover the meaning that lies *behind* the data. To do this, researchers must rely on their understanding and
interpretation of their participants’ stories. There are times when researchers are required to note information that could have been inferred only from an account. It is absolutely because of such requirements that, occasionally, social scientists and qualitative researchers are accused of bias.

According to Corrine Glesne and Alan Peshkin (1992), subjectivity can both enable and disable. On the enabling side, most qualitative researchers would contend that their subjectivity is the well from which their research springs as well as the source of its strength and driving force. Looked at in this light, subjectivity appears more to be a research generator than an impediment. Peshkin (1992, p. 102) claims that everything he learnt as a researcher ‘was rooted in those personal orientations … [called] subjectivity.’ In line with others, he believes that ‘there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the world of and between the observer and the observed’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 29).

Although having a bias is not necessarily a bad thing, researchers must be aware of and alert to its distorting affect — loss of clarity in judgement. Belonging to one of the categories (Holocaust second generation), I had to be exceptionally careful not to allow my personal biography to intrude into the research. I believe that I achieved this through the process of ‘bracketing’. In phenomenological research, this is a procedure by which the researcher suspends his/her belief system before entering that of his/her participants. Bracketing allows the researcher to ‘take the role of the other’ (Mead, 1934) or to be ‘other sensitive’. In phenomenological research, this means ‘using the matrices of that person’s world-view in order to understand the meaning-making of what the person is saying, rather than what the researcher expects that person to say’ (Hycner, 1985, p. 281).

Finally, one way of ensuring the internal validity of the research is through the use of ‘member checks’ or ‘participant verification’ (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, pp. 104-105). However, as I mentioned earlier, I had decided against doing this with my participants, but I did decide to tap an alternate source — literary sources — to enhance validity as well as reliability. Literary sources such as literature, poetry as well as other story forms have served as ‘a fountain of experience to which a
researcher may turn for insight’ (M. Van Manen, 1990, p. 70). Such works appear throughout this project.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the theoretical orientation that underpins my study and positioned it within the field of qualitative sociology. I have assessed the trustworthiness and outcomes of the research design as well as addressed such aspects of the design as case study methodology, data collection and analysis, and construction and contextualisation of the research product.

---

21 A field in which an individual or group is investigated within her/his complex socio-cultural settings.
Chapter 4: Biographies: Their emotional and social locations: (Holocaust) second generation and Jewish South Africans

To know the world in a grain of sand. - William Blake

History is something that happens, but it happens in a different way to everyone.

Introduction

In this chapter I draw on the literature to theorise the dimensions of a person’s biography as well as the ways in which biography intersects with history and society. I then showcase ten of my participants’ biographies—The (Holocaust) second generation (1-6) and Jewish South Africans (7-10). I have combined these two groups because they have a number of commonalities: all of them are Jewish and have a strong sense of Jewish identity. They all have a special relationship to this history; be it emotional, private, personal and/or professional.

Socialisation - becoming a member of society

A person’s biography or social location\(^1\) can be conceptualised in a number of ways.\(^2\) Berger & Berger’s (1972) *Sociology: A Biographic Approach* offers an examination of biography that is structured sequentially. Each segment ‘corresponds to the stages of social experience in the biography of an individual’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 7). I adopted this model because I found it to be the most appropriate for my research concerns. I have chosen to focus on the following ‘segments’: socialisation

\(^1\) Social location refers to the specific intersection point or epicenter of the following social forces: chance, biology family, childhood, adolescence, emotional history, socio-economic circumstances, historical and cultural epoch, community and occupation – in essence one’s biography.

(childhood), family, community, socio-economic circumstances, and education, as these dimensions have the greatest relevance for my research purposes. These are the experiences that reveal a person’s location — his/her social, emotional, biographical (personal) and historical self. Ostensibly, our biography is a metaphor for our experience of society and history. Berger & Berger write:

The time span of our biography is only a segment of a larger time span of the society in which it occurs – in other words, biography is located within history. Conversely, our knowledge of society is biographically acquired; we grow into a steadily expanding circle of social and institutional relationships (1972, p. 21).

Therefore, from the moment of birth, our biography and our experience of society co-exist (Berger & Berger, 1972). Although we have no innate knowledge of society, we are inducted into it and become members of it from our birth; this process is called socialisation. Primary socialisation (childhood) is the first and, in the majority of cases, the most important phase. It is at this time that an individual is moulded into becoming a member of her society. During childhood we are highly dependent, and very quickly learn that certain individuals are more significant to us then others. According to Mead (1934), these ‘significant others’ are responsible for the particular patterns that are imposed on us. From an outsider’s perspective, the patterns that are imposed in this phase of socialisation are relative and depend not only on the individual eccentricities of the people responsible for our socialisation but also on their social location. Through their mediation, these ‘significant others’ filter the world for us. Thus, the social world that children receive has been through a double filtration; for example, children from a Holocaust background not only absorb a Holocaust survivor perspective on the social world, but they absorb it in the distinct manner assigned by their parents or the significant others responsible for their primary socialisation.

Children (at this particular stage) have no choice but to accept the perspective of the ‘significant others’ as well as the patterns that are imposed on them. They lack knowledge of an alternative pattern or world and hence, for them, these become the world. Only much later do these children discover that, alternatives to their parents’ particular world do exist. As Berger & Berger (1972, p. 3) suggest, eventually they
realise that their parents’ world is relative in space and time and that alternative patterns are also possible.

In the process of primary socialisation, emotion is equal to, if not more important than, cognition. Berger and Luckmann (1967) claim that without strong emotional attachment to significant others, the learning process would be problematic, if not unattainable. Baum (1997) points out that emotions are relational phenomena; they are both personal and social. Denzin (1984) tells us that they are learned during primary socialisation, in the family. The family is the context within which the learning takes place that both ‘provides us the language with which we understand and express ourselves’ (Baum, 1997, p. 8) and enables our emotions to be interpreted. Just as our experiences of society reflect our biography, they also illuminate our emotional history. Thus, emotions constitute an essential as well as an integral strand of our interactional biography (Denzin, 1984).

A draconian view of socialisation holds that it occurs simply through the imposition of external controls, buttressed by a system of rewards and punishments Berger & Berger (1972). A more nuanced perspective looks at the same phenomena as ‘a process of initiation in which the child is permitted to develop and expand into a world available to him … Socialisation is a process of initiation into a social world, (with its attendant) forms of interaction and its many meanings’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 63).

**How socialisation is possible: taking the role of ‘the other’**

Essentially, the means by which a child is initiated into society is by ‘interacting and identifying’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 63) with others. An essential milestone in a child’s development is when he/she learns to ‘take the attitude of the other’ (Mead, 1934). This means the child not only learns to recognise a certain attitude in someone else and to understand its meaning, but she learns to adopt it for herself. For example, the child notices that his/her mother is taking the attitude of joy on

---

3 Baum (1997) tells us that our emotions are schooled by other sources, such as, school, books, film, music and museums.
particular occasions: times when instead of wetting her nappy she uses the toilet. The attitude of joy expressed by various gestures and words conveys a particular meaning: using the toilet is the appropriate thing to do. At first the child will imitate the external expression of this attitude both verbally and non-verbally. It is through this process of interaction and identification that the meaning of the attitude is appropriated by the child. However, this particular phase of socialisation is successfully accomplished only once the child adopts this attitude even in the absence of the mother.

Identity

Identity is often defined as ‘the socialised part of the self’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 73). Every society can be seen as ‘show-casing’ or ‘advertising’ a collection of identities: girl, boy, student, mother, friend or teacher. Such identities are dispensed at birth purely by serendipity or earned at a later stage of a person’s development. Some identities are as if on offer in a catalogue — clerk, lawyer or judge — from which they may be acquired depending on personal effort and determination. Irrespective of whether an identity is ‘assigned or achieved’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 73), it occurs or is constructed through interaction with others. It is ‘the other’ who locates or defines a person in a particular way. The authenticity of an identity can be confirmed only by ‘the other’. Consequently, ‘identity is the product of the interplay between identification and self-identification’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 73).

Family

In western contemporary society the traditional primary group comprising two parents (a male and a female) and their biological offspring is referred to as ‘the family.’ Over time we have witnessed significant changes both to the composition and the concept of the family. Although the traditional conjugal nuclear family is still the most common form in western society, a number of other forms have gained acceptance. Generally ‘the family is the home port from which the person embarks

----

4 Some alternate examples are: single parent family, extended/blended families, and same sex families.
on her journey through society’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 9), time, space and history to become Sartre’s (1981) ‘universal singular’. As stated before, the child initially lacks the capacity to assess the importance of either the family unit (as a particular institution in society) or the adults (significant others) who populate his/her world. At this early stage, the child does not recognise that her micro-world is but one possible constellation in the macro-world. In other words, the child is incapable of appreciating that ‘the family both in its overall societal form and in the particular modification of that form … is fundamentally important’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 92).

Many sociologists, philosophers and academics claim that one of the primary functions of the family is to perpetuate society — socially and/or biologically. As I have already discussed earlier, a major role of the family as an institution is socialisation. The family remains the site for primary socialisation. Whatever happens to a child during this innocent and vulnerable stage has serious ramifications for his/her later growth and development. Thus, the ‘significant others’ that a child encounters at this stage will leave an indelible imprint.

Procreation is yet another important function of the family\(^5\); children after all are vital to the continuation of human society. Finally, the family is also a conduit providing knowledge and connections to and from the broader world. It serves as a model ‘because the attitudes and roles expressed within the family (by the adults) represent various structures and behaviours of the macro-world’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 93).

**Community**

The Macquarie Dictionary defines the word ‘community’ as a social group of any size, where the members reside in a specific locality, share government, and have a cultural and historical heritage. In a biological sense the dictionary tells us that a

\(^5\) It is questionable whether in today’s society the family is still regarded important for procreation. Children can and indeed are born outside the family. It is rather more important that the family be considered an important structure for the continuation of society.
community is a group of organisms (both plant and animal) living together in an ecologically related fashion, in a defined region. To my mind, human communities or ‘human landscapes’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 119) share values, interests, academic knowledge/expertise, professional skills, location (place of residence or employment) and/or resources that identify their members and influence the degree of cohesion amongst the group. From a sociological perspective, community refers to the ‘immediate social context of a person’s life’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 120). An example of this immediate social context or ‘human landscape’ would be the particular school (primary, secondary and/or tertiary) a person attends or the school he/she works at as an adult (for example, religious, government or independent) — academic community of teachers, teaching particular courses.

### Secondary socialisation

Sociologists distinguish between primary socialisation (the initial process by which a child learns to become a member of society) and secondary socialisation (any subsequent learning that takes place through which a person is inducted into a particular social world). This may occur through training and/or education in any field of endeavour; for example, nurse, doctor, teacher, architect, painter, or soldier, each involves the process of secondary socialisation. It is erroneous to think that socialisation is confined to childhood and adolescence. Socialisation is an ongoing process and every instance of interaction is potentially an episode of socialisation. However, the acquisition of ‘the self’ during primary socialisation is the most crucial product of this socialisation; it is foundational to all that follows in the course of a person’s life-span.

### Stratification of society

Within society there is a stratification or hierarchy of salience: ‘rankings’, with some ranks or classes and/or circumstances higher or lower than others. According to Peter, L. Berger (1966) in contemporary western society one of the most obvious examples of social stratification is the class system. For the purposes of my research I accept Peter Berger’s explanation of class as being ‘a type of stratification
determined by economic criteria’ (1966, p. 95). Although location between classes has, to a significant extent, blurred over time and is far less obvious than it was 50 years ago it is undeniable that one’s social location determines educational opportunities for one’s children. It also determines the quality of medical attention, housing and, in many cases, food and clothing for the family.

**Education**

Eventually the time comes for the child to attend school. For most children the experience marks a significant milestone in their socialisation. In western societies, school is a child’s first experience of a *formal organisation*. Children leave the protection of a one-on-one-experience and become members of a group that is required to adhere to explicit rules. The parents’ authority and care is replaced by a teacher who is specially trained to expand the child’s socialisation, both formally and informally. Once at school, the child enters a ‘new’ world and he/she must now become more self-reliant and, ironically, more compliant — a ‘team player’. School, just like the family, simultaneously represents and mediates the ‘wider’ world into which the child is being socialised.

Although the years of schooling may be limited, education is a life-long process and therefore a crucially important social experience — a ‘universal phenomenon’. Regardless of the years spent in educational institutions, most people find life to be a continuous learning experience. School is but the first step in this ongoing process. It provides the context for this socialisation, both formally and informally, through the many interactions it engenders between teachers and peers and the exposure it provides to texts, the arts and sport. Social experiences (family, community, and education) are not merely agents of socialisation and the building blocs of ‘the architecture of self’ (Pinar, 1986); they are also forces that shape the distinctiveness of each person as ‘a universal singular’ (Sartre, 1981). Having examined the main dimensions of a person’s social location, — socialisation, family, community, socio-economic circumstances, and education — it becomes necessary to consider the phenomenon of re-socialisation, and alternation (what Berger & Luckman 1967
referred to as ‘switching worlds’). This has particular relevance to the experiences of one of the participants in this study.

Switching worlds

Film stars do it. Children do it. Film stars play roles; we dream, go to the theatre; children play make-believe. Joaquin Phoenix was quoted in *Time* magazine (October, 2005) as saying that he ‘shut out anyone and everything that reminded him that he was Joaquin Phoenix’ when he was preparing for his role as Johnny Cash in *Walk the Line*. He said that every time he finishes a movie, he has a difficult time readjusting to life. ‘You relinquish all these things that are familiar, and you start living according to the character, and then all of a sudden it ends.’ Marion Cotillard had a similar experience when she played Edith Piaf. While she was shooting *La Vie en Rose*, Cotillard told *SMH’s* Stephanie Bunbury (June, 2007) that she barely slept at night. (Piaf, the French icon always slept badly). After months of arduous preparation, Cotillard felt that she inhabited the character. She said:

> During shooting I was never alone. I was not totally me. I knew my humour was not mine. I knew the way I was walking was not mine. But I knew it wasn’t dangerous [SMH June 2007].

The above are examples of the phenomenon ‘switching worlds’ or in the words of Berger & Luckmann (1967), ‘the transformation or alternation in an individual’s reality or consciousness’.

There are many degrees of alternation or transformation. The most radical case is the one in which there is an almost total transformation or ‘switching worlds’ — a religious conversion.⁶ Alternation requires re-socialisation as it has to ‘radically reassign reality accents and consequently must replicate to a considerable degree the strongly affective identifications with the socializing personal that was characteristic of childhood’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 157). Hence, it is reminiscent of primary socialisation.

---

⁶ Conversion from Christianity to Judaism is an example of radical or near total transformation.
I now turn to present the biographies of my participants through the prism of ‘sociological imagination’ in order to demonstrate that each person is a social being who embodies his/her historic moment and that ‘biography, history and society, are the co-ordinate points of the proper study of man’ (Mills, 1959, p. 143).

The (Holocaust) second generation comprises the children of Holocaust survivors, who have all been socialised in homes saturated by the emotional knowledge of their parents’ traumatic experiences.

(Holocaust) second generation - cultural orphans (1 – 6)

1. Esther

**Memorial candle:** I am named after my father’s mother, Frimet Chaya. She was murdered at Auschwitz Birkenau.

**Disciplinary training:** Economics, Accounting and Legal Studies.

**Teaching experience:** 28 years teaching. 20 years teaching the Holocaust.

**Teaches the Holocaust** in Judaic Studies to Year 10 students.

**Primary socialisation**

**Family**

I am the child of survivors. Both my parents were born in Poland, my mother in Warsaw my father in Lodz. Both survived with the remnants of their families. My mother was in the Warsaw Ghetto until the very end and was there during the uprising. She was taken to Majdanek and she was also in Birkenau. She was also in Ravensbrück and survived the war with her mother. My father was in Lodz. In the

---

7 Majdanek functioned as both a concentration [forced labour], as well as an extermination camp. In the labour camp Jewish prisoners were singled out for cruel treatment and were often worked to death.

8 Birkenau or Auschwitz II was a concentration camp. One of the satellite camps of Auschwitz.

9 Ravensbrück was a notorious women’s concentration camp during World War II located in northern Germany. Between 1939-1945, over 130,000 female prisoners passed through the Ravensbrück camp system. Only 40,000 survived.
Lodz ghetto until the very end with his mother, father and twin brothers. They were in the last transport in August 1944 that went to Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was separated from his mother never to see her again. My father, his father, and his brothers from Auschwitz were sent to another work camp. The three of them survived and were liberated. Eventually the remnants of both families ended up in Germany … My mother studied Dentistry, my father did Pharmacy and they met at the university. They married in Munich. My mother never finished Dentistry. My father did finish Pharmacy. They came to Australia in 1950.

Emotional knowledge: communication in the home — the presence of an absence

It was a mixture. It was always there. It was referred to but not in detail. Part of it is the doom and disaster from which they came out definitely! That my mother’s experience was worse than my father’s, that was always there. A sense of ghetto and camp was always there … I can’t put a date to it. It was always there. I cannot pinpoint a date that we actually sat down and they said: ‘Now, we’re going to tell you actually about this’ as one does the birds, and the bees. I don’t know. I just, there is in memory, in consciousness it was always there … My father is always more open than my mother about actual details, names, places – that sort of factual information rather than on just an emotional level. He spoke about it a lot more. My mother never did in a logical, chronological fashion, but in term of vignettes, snippets of certain things.

Education

All my peer group were predominantly Holocaust survivor children. Firstly I went to xxx and went to xxx for my primary education and went to xxx for secondary school.

10 Auschwitz was Nazi Germany’s largest concentration as well as extermination camp. Auschwitz originally contained German criminals and Polish political prisoners and was a relatively small camp. This part of the camp later came to be known as the mother camp—Auschwitz I and held only a small minority of Jews. In October 1941 a second camp was established, called Birkenau or Auschwitz II. After March 1942 mainly Jews and also some gypsies were deported there. Birkenau also functioned as an extermination camp. When teachers in this study mention that they visited Auschwitz, they do not make a distinction between these two camps. It is more accurate to say that they visited Auschwitz-Birkenau.
I was lucky because I had two grandparents, one from each side. I was really a very lucky girl in my peer group. My background is not in history. My background is in Jewish Studies. I didn’t teach general history, I never have. I have studied Jewish history. My training has not in the discipline of history. Basically I stumbled onto a Masters degree in Jewish Education at NYU [New York University] … Someone had just reneged on a fellowship and the department was waiting to give it away. So I had tuition and admission … I had stumbled into the right place at the right time and that really changed my life. It was a watershed mark as it opened up the possibility and existence of an area of study called Jewish Education that was not part of the language or frame of mind in Australia at the time … Jewish education is the field in which I have found my place … When I came back, I started teaching very part-time, at XXXX in Jewish Studies. In 1991-1992 the school sent me to the Hebrew University where I studied at the Melton Centre for Diaspora Jewish Education in the senior educators’ program. That also was what I call a watershed time in my life. I was working and studying with and learning from Jewish educators from all over the world. That year I also completed the Yad Vashem Course. Basically these are really formative experiences firstly in leading me into the field of Jewish education, but also for keeping me there.

2. Judith

**Memorial Candle:** I am named after my grandmother Cilli Zelig who was murdered in Auschwitz aged 44. My sister is named after my aunt Mimi, also murdered in Auschwitz.

**Disciplinary training:** Hebrew, French and History/Social Studies.

**Teaching experience:** 30 years teaching. 15 years teaching the Holocaust.

**Teaches the Holocaust** in Judaic Studies to Year 10 as well as at Monash University for 6 years.
Primary socialisation

Family

My mother was born in Vienna. She came here with her parents just before the war in 1939 and went to school in Australia. My father was born in Rumania in a small village. His family was caught up in the Holocaust. In May 1944 the whole family, parents, grandparents, four siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins were deported to Auschwitz … Seventy-eight members of dad’s family were murdered there. Whenever he spoke, it was with great sadness, about the fact that at the end of the war, there was no-one else left in the family. He was the only survivor. He came to Australia in 1949.

Emotional knowledge: communication in the home — the presence of an absence

I always grew up with absent relatives. I always knew I was named after a family member who died. It [the Holocaust] was never kept silent but it was never spoken of aloud … There weren’t any secrets. If I wanted to know anything my father would tell me. It was only when I became interested in the Holocaust as a subject that he started to open up and tell me more. My mother on the other hand, her brothers and sisters, six or seven brothers and sisters and none of them survived. She refused to talk about it. Even though her experience was quite a positive one (because she grew up from the age of nine in Australia), she absolutely refused to talk about it and hated it if I asked my dad any questions. She just clammed up straight away, but she didn’t go through it. She refused to let me talk about it with him, or with her. She tried to stop it. Whereas every time I had a question he always had an answer for me.

In Melbourne there is close to (I think 100); they call themselves the Buchenwald Boys. They were all liberated at Buchenwald. They were all 16, 17 or 18 and went to orphanages in either France of Switzerland after the war. Many came to Australia and, every year on the anniversary of Liberation on the 11th April, they all used to get

11 Buchenwald was a concentration camp where prisoners were in most cases worked to death.
together and have an amazing party. I remember mum and dad getting dressed up to the nines, and going. He would say, ‘You know, today is my birthday.’ I’d say, ‘It’s not your birthday. Your birthday is in December.’ He says, ‘No. This is the day I was liberated. This is the boys’ birthday. We call it the birthday.” That is a very strong clear memory.

Outsiders

The only thing we all had in common is that none of us had a lot of grandparents. I was lucky because my maternal grandparents had been in Australia. That was the thing about the Holocaust – the absence of grandparents. I don’t remember as having any Yom Ha Shoah [Holocaust] commemorations while I was in primary or secondary school. That was the only commonality. People didn’t really talk about it then. You knew that your grandparents went through the war or they didn’t.

Education

I think when I started to teach history, because the history that I usually taught was so far away and this was ‘recent history’ that’s when I started to ask dad about his experiences. Then I read and I would confirm the information that I read with him. I taught medieval history and that was only something you could read in a book. When I started teaching the Holocaust I was thinking I have my own resource – my father who can tell me the information. As I said before, when I asked he told …

I couldn’t work out why he survived. I decided that he must have survived so that he could tell me the story so I could perpetuate the memory … That’s why I started MOTL here in Australia, so that I could do it. The task is not finished. The memory has to be handed to the next generation. It needs to be an active, conscious thing.
3. Rebecca

Memorial candle: My names are Gittel and Rivka. Gittel is after my mother’s maternal grandmother, and Rivka my father’s mother. They were murdered during the Holocaust due to Nazi brutality.

Disciplinary training: English and Geography

Teaching experience: 25 years teaching. 3 years teaching the Holocaust

Teaches the Holocaust in Jewish Studies to Year 10

Primary socialisation

Family

I am from Melbourne. Both of my parents came to Melbourne after the Second World War. One came from what was once Czechoslovakia; [my father], and my mother came from Poland. Both were what you call ‘survivors’. My father spent time in various concentration camps and would be classified as a child survivor. My mother escaped from Poland with her family who stayed in Russia, and survived there, but lost a lot of her family who stayed in Poland. They both made their way to Melbourne for all the reasons people came to Australia and met in Australia.

Emotional knowledge: communication in the home — the presence of an absence

My father spoke quite a bit [about his experiences] In fact when he got together with his sisters they used to talk a lot. I remember as a young girl being really amazed how they could talk about things before the war, quite light-heartedly, and how they could laugh after all they had been through. My father would talk and anecdotes would come up or truisms or statements. Sometimes in the context of why he was saying that and sometimes they were just statements. Once I asked, and found out that it was some reflection on something that had happened in those years.

My mother often talks about the wisdom of her father who said, ‘Things are not good for the Polish Jews, let’s get out.’ How he spoke with his brother and cousins. Only a
couple of families, because the others of course thought it was just going to change, as many, many Jews did, because they didn’t leave. When it got worse they couldn’t leave. My mother said that her family and her uncle’s family survived and lived together. She often talks about how they lived in really squashed conditions. How grateful they were they survived. So generally they did speak. There was no silence. My father spoke about his siblings and his mother who were murdered. He always used the word ‘murdered’ not ‘died’ … He used to say, ‘Don’t volunteer!’ I asked, ‘Why shouldn’t I? What do you mean?’ Then he’d tell us about his older brother who at one point, at one of the line ups, in one of the camps … A few boys stepped forward and his brother was no expert but they always thought if there was an opportunity to go and work somewhere else they should go. His brother went. My father understood, knew he was a compulsive smoker and that he would swap rations for cigarettes. He died of starvation. To my father that meant ‘don’t volunteer’. That’s the way he interpreted that.

Feelings of guilt

The other thing which ingrains so deeply and I refer to it a lot to students I teach, or to my own children. When I used to come home as a young teacher and say, ‘That was awful’. ‘That was terrible’. I would get the line, ‘That was terrible? You know what terrible is? I’ll tell you what terrible is: he proceeded to tell me … He’d tell me what’s terrible is: to starve, and to lose your family; to be shunted off into lines; anything associated with concentration life … It set my standard of values and is ingrained so deeply, is that nothing is terrible, nothing within the normal range is terrible. Terrible is only being enslaved, loosing your family, being deported and being tortured – that’s terrible … All of these I’ve told at various times in my teaching, because I think they are so poignant.

My father was with his father. The other brothers died … My father tells the story that there were even Nazi soldiers SS - some were more vicious then others. He tells the story that one day there was this young, a German soldier walked past them and had a loaf of bread and threw this loaf of bread at them on the ground. They grabbed it, they cut it up, and they rationed it and it really kept them going … We can learn from everyone of his stories an important message.
As a teacher I tend to be on stage. I like to conduct it and I like to control it … tell lots of anecdotes or stories to try and get them, to captivate them, to try and get them interested … with teaching this particular history I come up with some personal stuff and every now and then I will bring in an anecdote or story I have heard from my dad, to underline a situation or point – to make it real for them.

**Outsider**

… I went to a Jewish day school where I would say, in those years, I don’t know, perhaps a half or a majority, a big percentage were Holocaust second generation. My direct group of girlfriends at least one parent was in a camp. I even remember that the term ‘survivor’ wasn’t used in those days. In those days we’d say, ‘Did your parents go through the war?’ It was like a badge of honour kind of thing. Where were they? Were they in Auschwitz? We just spoke about it. It wasn’t this huge study and identity thing, as probably now we are clutching, because people are passing away. Then it was just, we’re the generation after. We didn’t give ourselves or our parents’ special names like ‘survivor’ or anything. None of that existed.

---

4. Irene

**Memorial candle:** I am named after my maternal grandmother. She perished in the Holocaust.

**Disciplinary training:** History

**Teaching experience:** 35 years. 8 to 10 years teaching the Holocaust.

**Teaches the Holocaust:** Secular history to Years 9, 10 and Year 12 HSC (20th Germany 1918–1945)
Primary socialisation

Family

My mother and my biological father were both born in Romania. They met and married straight after the war and moved or relocated to Paris. That’s where I was born. My father died of TB about 1956/7. Then we came to Australia and my mother remarried. My father I think was in a concentration camp. I don’t know that much about him. My mother definitely was. She was in Auschwitz.

Emotional knowledge: communication in the home — the presence of an absence

While I was growing up she never talked about her experiences at all. It was only when my step-father died that she started talking about it. Then she was interviewed by the Spielberg Foundation. Now we have a video recording of that. I think that opened her discussion of it a bit more. We got more details from the video and then she was more willing to talk about aspects of her experience - basically her experiences of concentration camps and her experiences in Auschwitz towards the end of the war. They were moved around and she ended up in Berlin for Liberation … I knew she had experiences in the war. I just don’t know very much about it as I grew up. So I was aware [that she wasn’t your typical Australian mum]. She told us enough to make us aware but not the details … She was very, very, very anti-German, refusing to buy anything made in Germany. Everybody that I met had to be Jewish and she wouldn’t tolerate even one non-Jewish friend. Apart from that there were no other indicators. I was pretty lucky in that it was a fairly normal life. She was probably scarred as a lot of other people were. In terms of what I heard, I think she was sort of lucky in that way because her experiences in the camps were much more limited because she was there [in Auschwitz] for a very short time. Her movements after that, whilst not very pleasant, she did have an aunt and cousins. So

12 The Spielberg Foundation was established by the film maker Steven Spielberg. It archives nearly 52,000 testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses in 32 languages and from 52 countries.
there was, even though she lost a lot of family, she had family right through, and she felt they pulled her through.

**Outsider**

I didn’t feel any different [to my peers]. I was pretty drawn to the Jewish community. I probably had an insulated upbringing in that sense. A couple of times I’d meet someone who wasn’t Jewish and thought I’d like them as a friend, but it wasn’t going to be, because of my mother. She was really adamant about that. … I went to xxx and then xxx where there were a whole lot of Jewish kids, and there wasn’t, certainly not at that time, a lot of talk. I mean obviously if you are Jewish you’re going to know about it. You’re going to hear about it. We might have spoken occasionally about our parents’ experiences [during the war] but I wouldn’t have thought that was the focus of our conversations. We just were aware that yes most of us would have family that would have been affected by it. I don’t think it was a real focus … The one thing I didn’t have, like a lot of my Jewish friends at school, was grandparents. My mother was the youngest of six children. Both my parents came from big families so there would have been lots of aunts, uncles and cousins.

5. **Jonathan**

**Memorial candle:** My grandfather’s name on my mother’s side is Kol Tuv.

**Teaching experience:** 36 years. 35 years teaching C20th century history

**Teaches the Holocaust** in secular history C20th history [Totalitarianism, Fascism and Nazism] to Year 10.

**Primary socialisation**

**Family**

My father was born in Nazi Germany and saw what was going on. My mother lived in Upper Silesia that had a very large German population. The Nazi movement was
very virulent there because of the Anschluss with Germany. I only know fragments of what my real father experienced during the war. I know he wasn’t in a concentration camp.

**Emotional knowledge: communication in the home — the presence of an absence**

The only one of the three who was in a concentration camp was my mother. She was in Plaszow,\(^{13}\) Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen\(^ {14}\). She spoke about the ghetto period. She discussed only fragments, on certain occasions, about Plaszow or Auschwitz and only when it was relevant to the conversation, or when she has experienced what we were discussing or talking about. It wasn’t a maudlin thing. She just said, ‘This is what happened.’ There was no sort of like Friday night we’re going to sit and discuss the war. If something came up in a film, an article or book or when people got together. I would ask, ‘Where do you know these people from?’ or ‘Where did you meet them?’ She’d reply, ‘In the ghetto.’ ‘What was the ghetto?’ She would reply.

People got together quite often because most of my mother’s friends were people who were either central or eastern European. Those who were Germanic Jews very rarely discussed the Holocaust. Those who were eastern European brought it into their conversations far more. It wasn’t something that they sort of dwelt on. It wasn’t the Lily Brett\(^ {15}\) idea. They were much more positive. My mother and her friends didn’t look at the world in a dour way. I always knew [about the Holocaust] because we used to have Warsaw Ghetto commemorations that we used to attend. I belonged to B’nei Akiva and being a member would always participate in all their public events. Therefore, I’d come back and we’d [he and his mother] talk about these things … So I had the experiences of having three parents who were in the Holocaust in different forms of it. One was in the underground. His injuries were so severe,

\(^{13}\) Plaszow was a forced labour camp and became a concentration camp. It had a population of 24,000 by May-June 1944. The camp featured in the film *Schindler’s List.*

\(^{14}\) Bergen Belsen was an internment camp for prisoner exchanges and later became a notorious camp where camp prisoners, who were unable to work, were sent to languish, without food and water and left to die.

\(^{15}\) Lily Brett is the child of Holocaust survivors. She was born in Germany and migrated to Australia with her parents in 1948. She is a successful writer whose writing is fixated on the Holocaust. She currently lives in New York.
because he was captured and beaten, that he eventually died from these beatings. One who was on the *St. Louis* and ended up in Kitchener’s army. Was a member of the Eighth Australian Employment Company in the Australian army, and a mother who went through the ghetto and the concentration camps. If you talk about the pastiche of experiences that one family could have, I had.

**Education**

The other thing is that I went to xxx. In my year at xxx there were about 850 kids in the school and starting from Year nine of which 700 hundred were eastern European Jews. There were about 50 to 60 non-Jews in the school. The whole school was rendered with Jewish kids and most of them from Eastern Europe … The Holocaust wasn’t discussed at school that I can recall. I can remember it was discussed in B’nei Akiva, because we knew. Our youth movement used to talk about why Israel was so important and we had classes in Jewish history. We all went to Yom Ha’atzmaut. On Yom Ha’atzmaut they talked about Yom Hashoah and they talked about Yom Hazikoron …

The Holocaust was for me an attempt to destroy the fabric of Jewish life and it nearly succeeded. What people became concerned with was making sure that the Holocaust did not happen again. That to me would be number three on the priority list. Number one was to make sure that the Holocaust would not be successful in rooting out Jewish people, because people wanted to stay Jewish but didn’t know how. There’s an interesting chapter written by Nora Levin (1988), author of *The Holocaust*. She talks about the *gera Hasidim* in the ghetto. They stayed learning their Torah because for them the whole purpose of the Holocaust, the whole attack, was to root out and destroy the connection between Judaism and the Jews. That’s what made the most sense to me, in terms of the experience that I saw amongst young people. I thought to myself, well, they all know about the Holocaust, but what are they going to pass on to their children? … I thought the message must be, if there is a message that we have to continue on as Jews. This is irrelevant to whether God exists or not, that’s

---

16 *Kitchener’s Army* was a World War I formation. Jonathan is referring to those (like his step-father) who eventually ended up in Great Britain, some of whom may have joined the British Army’s 1944 Jewish Brigade.
not the question. The question is how to make it [Judaism] relevant, and how to continue the Jewish fabric? I became orthopraxic.\textsuperscript{17} I put on \textit{tefillin} every day. It’ll make a difference to my day … I keep kosher. I’ll keep \textit{shabbos} (the Shabbat) I go to \textit{minyan} everyday. It will make the \textit{fabric} of my life \textbf{Jewishly more meaningful}. I’ll learn \textit{Tanach}. I learn Hebrew. I didn’t come from a Hebrew speaking home. I have books that are very strongly allied to part of the world that was destroyed before the war, and during the war. I became aware that, what we see as the destructive power of the Holocaust, was already well entrenched. The destructive aspect, was well entrenched before the First World War,\textsuperscript{18} and really very strongly by the Second.

I don’t, I don’t, I don’t, I don’t have a second generation hat. I very rarely think of myself as a second generation person. I think of myself as the son of a Holocaust survivor. It is an \textit{obscenity} in my mind because I know that the Holocaust in the mind of my mother and all the people that I have known have generated a huge fear to be Jewish. The opposite of that fear to be Jewish is the release from that fear. Therefore, I shouldn’t be frightened of being Jewish. So what happened when they (children of survivors) came into this freedom? They just threw it away. They threw the freedom \textit{and} the Judaism away. What did they do with it? What do they do? … You are a practising Jew or you are not. It’s a mindset that you have to cultivate and live with and practise all the time.

\section*{6. Adrian}

\textbf{Memorial candle:} I am named after one of my father’s brother’s, Abraham, who together with his wife and two young daughters were taken into the ghetto in Baranowich where they were separated. Upon hearing that his wife and daughters were transported, he committed suicide, aged 36.

\textbf{Disciplinary training:} Hebrew, History, with sub-majors in English, and Sociology

\textsuperscript{17} Orthodox means ortho doxo – correct belief. Orthopraxic means I will practice what Judaism says, whether you believe in God or not.

Teaching experience: 29 years teaching. 15 years teaching the Holocaust.

Teaches the Holocaust in secular history - C20th Germany 1918 – 1945 to Year 12 HSC students.

Primary socialisation

Family

I am a child of Holocaust survivors. My father was born in Slonim that is in Bielo Russia. He was born probably around 1909. I say probably because I’m not exactly sure. All his birth documents and other documentation unfortunately was left behind or destroyed during the Holocaust. So there’s never been any documentation. He came from Slonim. My mother came from Vilna. Perhaps I will talk about my mother first. She was born about 1917. She came from a family of musicians. Her mother was a professor of the piano at the Conservatorium of Music in Vilna. She was quite famous. My mother’s father was a violinist. My parents met in 1938 or thereabouts. They met in Vilna because Vilna of course was the cultural capital of Poland, the Jewish cultural capital. My father was very into Yiddish, even as a youngster. He belonged to one of the Jewish youth movements. They got married in 1939. My father was one of eight or nine children. He was the youngest. He was quite fortunate because his family, they weren’t very well off. In Slonim they used to make fishing ropes. The family couldn’t send each child away to be educated at university. My father was the lucky one. He was sent to Paris to study Medicine. He finished and graduated as a doctor from the Sorbonne in Paris before the war. Then he came back to Poland and met my mother. They married a few months before the war started.

When the war started they found themselves in Slonim, in eastern Poland. My father’s and my mother’s parents unfortunately were not that lucky. My mother’s parents were amongst the early victims of the Shoah. They were taken along with many other Jews from Vilna to the Ponar forests, probably about 1941 or thereabouts, 1942 perhaps. They were taken to the Ponar forests where there was a massacre of many Jews from Vilna. They had to dig their own trenches and then they were shot by the Einsatzgruppen. That was the end of my mother’s parents. My
father’s parents, from what I can understand, were rounded up together with many
other Jews from Slonim and then there were, it was a small town, they were herded
into the shule, the local synagogue, into the wooden building and then the shule
doors were locked from the outside and they threw petrol over the shule and the Jews
were burnt alive in the shule.

My mother and father ended up in a ghetto in a place called Iwje. They ended up in
the ghetto that was near the hospital where my father was working, where my father
and mother were living not far from Slonim. Conditions in the ghetto were bad.
There was starvation and so on. My mother worked as a nurse. She used to help my
father. My father was very good at delivering babies. That was his speciality … what
happened one day was that an order came that the ghetto was going to be liquidated.
My father and mother mentioned to the commanding officer that her husband is a
doctor and that she was a nurse. They were eventually saved because they (Germans)
needed doctors for the Nazis, for their wounded. I know that when my mother tried
to jump up to say that her husband was a doctor and she was a nurse, at first they
didn’t believe her and they beat her. One of the guards with his rifle hit her with the
butt of his rifle in the face. Eventually the mayor of the town of Iwje, a Polish man
who knew my father because he worked in the hospital and therefore was known
fairly well and actually intervened and verified that he was a doctor and it saved him.
The ghetto was liquidated and only a few survived. They soon realised that to remain
was to push their luck from day to day because they didn’t know what was around
the corner and when the end might come. They decided to make a plan to escape
from the ghetto because my father and a few others from the town, friends of his,
they were all young and they would have been in their thirties and they would all
have been energetic. So they staged an escape. They managed to escape from the
ghetto and they eventually linked up with a group of partisans. So my mother and
father ended up in a group of partisans that was led by a guy called Tuvia Bielski -
the Bielski brothers. They were quite renowned as having been leaders of a sort of
partisan resistance unit. They joined this group and they remained, they saw the war
out till the end. So for the next three years they lived on the run. It wasn’t easy. Even
though they were no longer in the ghetto they still faced an uncertain future because
they were being hunted by the Nazis. They knew that were people in the forests,
people engaging in sabotage and so on. So they were hunted constantly. But they
managed to hang in for the next three years, until the war ended. They survived but their lives were fraught with danger. At one stage they were nearly caught …

After the war my parents were refugees. They went back (to their homes in Poland) and to see who came back. My mother went to Vilna and she saw there was no-one left. My father realised there was no-one left on his side. They eventually ended up in Cyprus. My father was very Zionistic he was keen to go to Israel to Palestine. It was the time that the *Exodus* was sailing to Palestine but by the time they got to Cyprus it had sailed. The next option was South Africa because my father had two brothers and a sister who had wisely immigrated to South Africa long before the war started.

I was born in South Africa. They ended up in South Africa, at the end of 1947. By the time they got to South Africa and after their horrific experiences, having lost their parents, and having lived for years through a time of uncertainty, my father, they say when the war is over, it’s not finished and when the war is finished it’s not over. So my father was quite bad psychologically. He was quite badly affected, as indeed was my mother. What my mother told me was that he wanted to work as a doctor in South Africa but it proved too difficult … Both his brothers had done reasonably well. My father failed qualifying as a doctor in South Africa. He drifted from job to job … I grew up in a very disturbed home.

**Emotional knowledge: communication in the home — the presence of an absence**

Both my parents were highly paranoid. Because they had been pursued they felt the hunt wasn’t over. It went to things like, for example, when sometimes the phone used to ring my mother used to say, ‘Don’t answer, somebody’s after us.’ There were little things that I remember as a child. They didn’t talk openly about their experiences. We (brother and I) had to piece it together from bits and pieces. I remember my father like screaming in the middle of the night. He’d scream, ‘Police, police, come

---

19 The *Exodus* was a ship that carried emigrants that left France on 11 July 1947 with the intent of taking its passengers to Palestine [now known as Israel] then controlled by the British. Most were Holocaust survivor refugees who had no legal immigration certificates to Palestine. The British Royal Navy seized the ship and deported all its passengers back to Europe.
quick,’ that sort of thing. Obviously he had some recurring nightmare … They never explained. We never asked them to explain. They were very loving parents and extremely protective. When they didn’t want us to understand they would speak in Yiddish. They never actually sat down and said, ‘This is what happened.’ It would come through various forms and instances. For example, my mother used to often cry when she heard Chopin on the radio and tell us that it reminded her of her mother who specialised in Chopin. She would also sometimes take us to orchestral concerts. There was never a concert we went to where she would remain composed. She would always burst into tears at a concert. We never had a piano at home. Not because we couldn’t afford it but she didn’t want a piano in the house. The memories were so traumatic that she didn’t want a piano at home. These were things that made my home life very different.

Despite the terrible experiences that they had my father was quite a committed Jew. Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Pesach, he was always in shule. He was keen for us to perpetuate the Jewish identity in our home. Because their lives had been a failure, not through any fault of their own, they kind of projected their inadequacies on us. They hoped that we would compensate for the terrible losses and terrible disasters. It was very important that we achieve through education. That education and knowledge was power. It was necessary for us to go to a good school. My father moved heaven and earth to try and get us into xxx. He was always trying to get us exposure in the Jewish newspaper for things we had accomplished. My father always used to say that when you finish school you would go to university. Not going to university was not an option. Going to university became an obsession. It was absolutely paramount when we finished school.

**Analysis & Conclusion – the (Holocaust) second generation**

The significance of formative (early) experiences — the weight of childhood — casts a long shadow over an individual’s development. A discussion of the emotional and social worlds in which the children of Holocaust survivors’ grew up follows. Listening to the descendants’ stories, a pattern emerges from their experiences. What
they all have in common is ‘a shared traumatic past that made an unmistakable imprint’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 124).

**Socialisation: descendants of Holocaust survivors**

All of the (Holocaust) second generation participants’ families are decimated by what was the brutal force of the Holocaust. As described by Marianne Hirsch, The Holocaust’s devastation was of a different magnitude to the impact of the two world wars.

The violent destruction of the Jewish communities and the Jewish cultures of Eastern, Central and Western Europe – the destruction not only of the people but the records and memories of their existence – is of a different order than the displacements of other Europeans had to suffer because of the two world wars, painful as they must have been … [that world] was irreparably changed or destroyed, not by natural or historical evolution, but by the sudden, violent annihilation of the Holocaust (1997, p. 242).

On a personal scale the loss was enormous. Its impact reverberates in the minds and hearts of the children of Holocaust survivors to the present day. In many cases there were no physical records – photographs, birth certificates, matriculation certificates (equivalent to the HSC), school and/or personal records of achievement. These private and cherished documents attesting to facets of their life experiences and, indeed, their existence were obliterated. Adrian’s father could not be certain of his date of birth, ‘Born in Slonim, probably around 1909.’ Elaine Culbertson (daughter of Holocaust survivors) principal of Philadelphia Regional High School and a prominent American Holocaust educator, shares Adrian’s lack of personal knowledge as well as uncertainty about facets of his parents’ past. Elaine said,

> The memories are the only legacy that I have inherited. While others may have family mementos, I have stories about people, but no faces to match them to, because the photos that might have linked me to their past, were all destroyed (2002, p. 46).

It was not just documentary ‘evidence’ — photographs or facts and dates — that children of Holocaust survivors and their immediate families lost, but the lives of their extended families. All the Holocaust second generation participants’ family
trees have been extensively ‘burnt’. Their lines devastated beyond repair. Judith’s estimate of her family’s loss in the Holocaust is representative of all survivor families. ‘… My connection is that 80 members of my dad’s family were murdered in Auschwitz. At the end of the war, he was the only survivor from his family.’ Esther can only imagine the lost world of her mother. She cannot visit the places where her mother was born and grew up. The whole landscape of her mother’s pre-war life and that of her extended family has been erased. ‘Nothing remains in Warsaw. So it’s pointless to go there.’

Outsider

As this generation was growing up, they had the sense that they were different to others. In answer to the question, ‘What was growing up like for you?’ The majority of descendants of Holocaust survivors replied that they knew that their family life was in a number of ways different to their Australian peers. A distinct point of difference between the lives of children of Holocaust survivors and their peers is their lack of grandparents and extended family. Adrian’s situation is a particular example of the ways in which the Holocaust decimated Jewish families, and its effects continue to reverberate down the generations. Adrian has no grandparents. The Holocaust as well as his parents’ silence have also robbed him of even the names of his grandparents. Elaine Culbertson suffers the same loss.

The only photos that survive are those that were sent to America by my grandmother before the war, when she was communicating with her two brothers, who had ventured forth into the new world … They were the only proof that we had some semblance of a normal family, that I had a grandmother, even though I could not touch her. This had been a trauma for me at one point. In fact, I didn’t even know the word ‘grandmother’ in English, since there had been no need to understand it in my household. It was only when my first little friend, Irene had told me that we couldn’t play together on a particular Sunday because her grandmother was coming over, that I questioned my mother about what the word meant. When she told me that it referred to her own mother I asked where she was and what had she (my mother) done with her. My mother burst into tears, and I realised that I had uncovered another family secret, that once again we did not have, something that everyone else had, or that we had the wrong thing. This was to be the metaphor for much of my life (2002, pp. 46-47).
Shouldering guilt is another characteristic of many descendants of Holocaust survivors. While their peers went to the local pub after a day’s or week’s teaching to let off steam and relax with ‘mates’ or friends, many of the (Holocaust) second generation had a markedly different experience. If they complained to their parents at the end of a difficult day by saying, for example, ‘The kids were really impossible today so I’ve had a terrible day.’ The response would be swift and caustic. Rebecca’s father would invariably respond by saying to her ‘You think that was terrible? You know what is terrible?’ And he would proceed to tell her what terrible was. ‘To starve and to lose your family, and be shunted off into lines, and to be anything associated with camp life.’ It had the required effect. Very quickly the children of Holocaust survivors learnt that nothing within the normal range is really terrible. ‘Terrible is only being enslaved, and losing your family, being deported, and being tortured – that is terrible.’ (Interview with Rebecca)

Second Generation Emotional Knowledge — (SGEK)

Communication in the home; emotional knowledge

Emotional knowledge or communication took many different forms in survivor homes. Instead of talking about diametrically opposing poles – ‘homes with talk/homes without talk’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 170), Wajnryb suggests that Holocaust discourse might best be positioned on a continuum from homes where there was a lot of emotional knowledge and communication was direct to homes where the past was tightly cordoned off. Irene’s mother never talked openly about her experiences in Auschwitz and other camps. ‘She told us enough to make us aware, but not the details.’ Rebecca’s experience was diametrically opposite. Rebecca recalls that her home was never silent. Her father spoke a lot about his Holocaust experiences as well as life before the war. For Esther, the emotional knowledge that she received was a ‘mixed bag’. It was ‘a place between speech and silence’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 170). The presence of an absence haunted the atmosphere of the home, ‘It was referred to, but not in detail … A sense of the ghetto and camp was always there.’ Adrian’s parents remained largely silent about their traumatic past. Sometimes they chose to communicate in a covert fashion. Adrian and his elder brother had to try and
piece it together. ‘They never actually sat us down once and said, “This is what happened”. When they didn’t want us to understand, they would speak Yiddish.’

Emotional knowledge or communication in survivor homes was of a different order – it was in ‘feelings not words’ (Wajnryb, 2001, p. 144). It was a feeling that permeated the home atmosphere – a presence of an absence, or suppressed pain characterised many survivor homes. Esther can’t remember a time when this knowledge was not present in her home. She recalls that ‘There is in my memory, in consciousness, it was always there.’ Similarly, Elaine Culbertson cannot remember:

… a time when I did not know about the Holocaust, although that word did not come into my vocabulary until I was an adult. In my house, we called it by a Yiddish word, churban, that roughly translated into ‘the disaster’ or ‘the horror.’ It was part of daily discussions, part of family meals, an accepted family event, that coloured everything we did, everything in our lives. We did not even need to acknowledge that it sat as an uninvited guest at every family gathering, and that most of the family decisions were predicated upon it, so that it permeated all that we were’ (2002, p. 43).

Adrian always knew that something terrible had happened to his parents because of their chronic anxiety. This fear would manifest in his father’s nightmares. Also, when the phone would ring his mother often instructed him not to answer. ‘Don’t answer’, she’d say, ‘Somebody’s after us.’ Not all children of Holocaust survivors were brought up in homes that were darkly overshadowed by the Holocaust. Irene considers herself one of the fortunate ones, in that her family life was relatively normal. She attributes this to the limited time her mother spent in various camps, and also the fact that she ‘had some family members, an aunt and cousins, even though she lost a lot of family members, she had family right through that time, and they pulled her through.

**Emotional knowledge — Dominance of grief**

Many children of Holocaust survivors have absorbed, in varying degrees, their parents’ grief since childhood. For survivors, their forced removal from families left shards of pain, guilt feelings of irreparable loss and grief. Adrian remembers his mother crying at concerts, or when she heard Chopin played on the radio. Her tears
communicated her anguished memory of her beloved mother who had both loved to hear and to play Chopin. Hearing music transported her back to times before the war, when the family had been complete. Manifestations of grief also found expression in Holocaust survivors’ naming of their children born in the post-war years. Set against the mass annihilation that was the Holocaust, Jewish naming attribution takes on a special meaning. Children of survivors are not named after loved ones who had died (under normal circumstances) but those — murdered before their time.

I know that my life has been indelibly marked by everything that they went through. From the time of my birth I represented the only family they had, and even my names are testament to their need to connect and remember. I was named for my grandmothers who never lived to see me. Though I bear the Hebrew names Chava (Eva) and Malkah (Mala), I was called Mamele (Little Mother) by my mother, and my younger brother has always been Tatele (Little Father). Whether this occurred because it was too painful for my mother to call us by our given names, or because it gave her comfort to call us ‘mother’ and ‘father,’ I have never understood, but the names persist until this day (Culbertson, 2002, p. 44).

The descendants of Holocaust survivors in this study are all ‘memorial candles,’ and attest to the phenomenon described by Wardi (1992) and Wajnryb (2001). What comes to mind after reading about the families of the children of survivors in this study is that, in the main, the world of their primary socialisation was pervasively drenched in and/or powerfully over-shadowed by emotion. Thus, the private and personal knowledge (of the Holocaust) of the (Holocaust) second generation is primarily emotional in nature. It is a unique form of knowledge—Second Generation Emotional Knowledge (SGEK)—pertaining only to the ‘second generation’ of genocide, war and natural disaster victims. By the same token, the private and personal knowledge (of the Holocaust) for all the other groups is acquired, or learned.

Jewish South African teachers arrived in Sydney in the early 1980s. They joined Jewish Studies departments and were required to teach the Holocaust as part of the broader Jewish history curriculum. In the main, these teachers learned or ‘claimed’ their Holocaust history and/or Holocaust consciousness as part of their professional

20 See Chapter 4: Descendants of Holocaust survivors Interviews 1-6.
development and professional locations—Jewish history teachers teaching in Jewish Studies departments in Jewish day schools.

**Jewish South African teachers - ‘it could have been us’ (7 – 10)**

7. Natalie

**Disciplinary training:** History & English

**Teaching experience:** 24 years teaching. 20 years teaching the Holocaust

**Teaches the Holocaust** in Jewish Studies to Year 10

**Primary socialisation**

**Family**

I was born in South Africa. My father is from Lithuania. He left there when he was three, just before the outbreak of the war. My mother is English. She grew up in London and her family went to live South Africa. My family is traditional, we keep *Shabbat*. As we grew up less and less so. We are quite a committed family, quite involved in South African organisations. My father can’t remember anything (of his life in Lithuania). My uncle could but he passed away. Most of what we know comes from my uncle. He could tell us stories about the butcher with his wooden leg, and his education, the little bit about the kind of education, he never went to school, he went to *heder* and spoke about the warmth of the community in Ponevesh and it sounds like what we’d call a *shtetl*. When I was growing up I always found my father and his brothers particularly strange when they used to speak in Yiddish. They would often reminisce about the place they grew up. It’s a terrible thing to say, but I think my mother, who was born and raised, from Polish descent, but born and raised in London, and well schooled, and educated, used to look down on them (father’s brothers and siblings), and have a bit of a laugh about where they came from, particularly my late *Buba* … I used to think my [paternal] grandmother was so foreign in comparison to my other (maternal) grandmother. My grandparents were steeped in Yiddish culture. She was a *real* traditional, old school cook. She dressed
differently from my very Anglo-Saxon grandmother who always had an apron on, and her house smelt different, and looked totally different in every single way. It’s quite strange that my family was part of that world, particularly my grandfather. I don’t think my grandparents’ world has influenced my teaching, if I think about it.

**Education**

I never went to a Jewish day school. My parents felt it (Jewish Day schools) didn’t produce the kind of children they wanted. They wanted us to be South African kids in a South African environment. I went to university. I studied History and English. I majored in Education with History and English, and became a History and English teacher. In my final year, just out of interest, I did the Arab-Israeli Conflict because that’s what I was interested in. I did a sub-major in African History.

**8. Rachel**

**Disciplinary training:** English Major.

**Teaching experience:** 30 years teaching. 20 years teaching the Holocaust.

**Teaches the Holocaust** in Jewish Studies to Year 10 students.

**Primary socialisation**

**Family**

My father was actually born in Poland. He went to South Africa as an infant. My mother was actually born in South Africa in a little town called Dewetsdorp. Her mother came from Ponevesh in Lithuania. In my life, Ponevesh had a dominating influence. It featured very much in my childhood consciousness. It was always there. My grandparents were very observant Jews who spoke Yiddish a lot of the time. There was a constant awareness of a big void at the centre of their lives. My grandmother would tell us stories about the snow and the wolves and going to school and teach us little bits and pieces of poetry. So it was very vivid in my imagination … My maternal grandparents were the ones we had the strongest relationship. I also
had paternal grandparents. I actually had a paternal great grandfather until I was about 13. We were steeped in Eastern Europe. It was a world that coloured everything in my life as a child. There was just a sense of place that was gone. It was very alive in the language that my parents and grandparents spoke and in the rhythm of our lives. All my grandparents’ friends were from the same place. My sense of being Jewish was that all Jews spoke Yiddish and that all Jews were from Lithuania. That was the shaping of my reality, probably till my early 20s. That’s about the time I stepped out of that world. I had never left South Africa, so my Jewish identity was that was who Jews were … I didn’t go to a Jewish day school. I went to an all girls’ government school. Our family, out of my entire social circle was the only family that kept kosher, that had to go to shule all the time. My grandparents were so enmeshed with us, and so they had a powerful influence on us, on me. I don’t know about my siblings, on me more than my parents in a strange way. They were just a constant in our lives.

Emotional knowledge: communication in the home — the presence of an absence

My grandmother had a photograph of her sisters, a few photographs on the sideboard. I would ask about them and my grandmother wouldn’t really talk about what happened to her sisters. I picked up bits and pieces from my mother … the family had stayed in Lithuania for the yerusha – for the inheritance. All of them were killed … There was a lot unspoken, many, many silences, and a sorrow that was always there.

There was a lot unspoken. I know that my grandfather had some amazing stories. He had a crooked finger. This is all family mythology that enters your life … ‘Zaider, what happened to your finger?’ ‘It happened in the war.’ My mother told me that he had shot himself in the finger to avoid going into the army. But did go into the army and was very traumatised by it. I know he was quite unstable … There were also stories that were actually stories from my parents, lovely family mythology … You know these are things that are transmitted and told again, and again.
The central pillar of our home was being Jewish. It determined the entire rhythm of our lives – the rhythm of the Jewish year was the rhythm of the home. Everything revolved around my grandparents. Every Friday night was with the family, every yontev we were in shule. My grandmother baked the challah and food was the symbol of the year, those were the values. There was no question of who we were. My grandparents were always there. They just lived their lives. They accepted us, there was never any tension. They played a very big part in our lives.

9. Claire

Disciplinary training: History

Teaching experience: 33 years teaching. 23 years teaching the Holocaust.

Teaches the Holocaust in secular history to Year 12 – (20\(^{th}\) Germany 1918 – 1945), and she also teaches HSC History Extension, as well as teaches the Holocaust in Jewish Studies to Year 10 students.

Primary socialisation

Family

The family was very traditional. I can remember my parents lived on one side of the mountain in Cape Town, my maternal grandparents lived on the other side, and every Rosh Hashana my whole family would pack up and go, and stay with my grandparents. If I think of what that must have done to my father, whose mother lived down the road. He never saw her every Rosh Hashana, because he never travelled on shabbat. Obviously, the link between my mother, and her mother’s family was very strong.

In Canada, when I met a South African girl my age, and she had all South African children who were grandchildren of survivors, I told her I had never, ever, met one.\(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\) At the end of World War II South Africa did not accept Jewish survivors, so that the number who migrated to South Africa was very small.
and I found that very strange. Now, I look back on it because I’ve looked at it quite closely. My parents had no point of reference luckily. I always say, ‘Thank God for the Tsar,’ because if it hadn’t been for him the whole Lithuanian community would have been wiped out 40 or 30 years later. I think all those Lithuanians left as a result of pogroms. So they figured that life had to be better elsewhere. I always think that if it hadn’t been for him, ironically, because he was very anti-Semitic, I think we would have all been caught up into the dragnet of the Shoah or they would have been, certainly.

**Education**

I didn’t go to a Jewish day school. At that time the English public schools were very strong and you didn’t send your kids to the day schools until later. I never had any friends at the Jewish day school. I think it was also because we were very sporty and focused on fitting into the neighbourhood. I belonged to a very active *shule*. I went to *cheder* and I belonged to *Habonim*. My affiliation with Israel was very Zionist. In the 1960s there were no Shoah education, the first time I ever internalised it was probably when I was 15 through school and modern history. It wasn’t taught in any other way than: ‘This is what happened.’ So any reading [on the Holocaust] that I did was purely my own. I don’t think I did very much until I got to university. Not in an emotional context at all, there was no link. I had no knowledge of what people suffered. As far as I was concerned there were no survivors in South Africa. Later on, when I’d come through various processes, I realised just how much there was that I wasn’t aware of as I grew up.

We (her and husband) went to Canada in my early 30s. The riding [district] in which I taught, called North York in Ontario was in the process of developing a unit for all high schools on Holocaust education. My school sent me to a university in-service for teachers where I met a woman who absolutely changed my whole way of thinking and actually changed the path of my life. She had no Holocaust connection but she’s come to Holocaust education through doing a PhD … She was also working with the Jewish Museum on a Toronto Documentation Project to try and get as many survivor testimonies down. This was in the early, mid 80s. She asked me if I would be interested. I befriended her then. She was giving a workshop and we struck
up this friendship … She told me that she was developing this program and she was training interviewers and would I like to be an interviewer, and like to be trained to interview survivors? … Push came to shove and I was trained. She asked for volunteers (from Holocaust survivors who were willing to tell their stories) in the Toronto Jewish community [of which there were 1000s] and they came forward to be interviewed.

Through her I met another woman who had gone on MOTL with the Canadians. She got me involved. In 1994 just after I went on the program with the Canadian group, she phoned me and said, ‘Listen, Spielberg’s [22] coming to town … Consequently, many of the people who were interviewers for the Toronto Project became part of Spielberg project. That was a huge privilege. For me, that together with MOTL, together with the Ontario Project was a very defining period of my professional life and personal life, because it was such an incredible privilege to be part of this rawness, this emotion.

I was very influenced by a woman, a Jewish woman called Edna Bradlow who taught a course on American history. I was so fired up by that, the personal stories that she told … I think Mrs Bradlow’s focus on the way she taught American History was very important for me … I had two colleagues who worked with me, they were both professors at the University of Cape Town who were also very important in the way they read history. I think now when I look back on it they were probably very influential in the way I saw history … They also believed in the personal … just the personal stories … that’s how you hook kids, because that’s what they’re going to remember when they’ve forgotten everything else.

10. Janet

**Disciplinary training:** English & History

**Teaching experience:** 29 years teaching. 26 years teaching the Holocaust.

---

22 Steven Spielberg is a renowned Hollywood director. After he finished making *Schindler’s List* he became committed to a project aimed at collecting as many Holocaust testimonies as possible as well as visually recording the interviews. His foundation is a repository of 1000s of survivor testimonies.
Teaches the Holocaust in Jewish Studies to Year 10 students.

Socialisation

Family

My mother was born in South Africa. She actually was brought up in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and in northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. Her mother had migrated from England when she must have been 19 or 20, she had (gave birth to) my mother a few years later. My grandmother came as I said from England and her family originally came from Lithuania. When, they immigrated to England, I’m not quite sure. My father’s born in South Africa and his father came from Russia, His family originally came from Russia, but they ended up in Ireland. My parents are not religious but they are believers. They’re not practising Jews as such but my father became interested in the Reform Movement. He became quite a fervent believer in the Reform Movement and he was a great supporter.

Communication in the home

… If you ever knew my mother there was never silence in my home. My mother was an exceptionally bubbly human being, very chatty, always conversing. I was a quiet child, a very private person. My mother spoke a lot about her schooling and unusual experiences. My dad never spoke a lot about his youth and his war years. He fought in the army, volunteered before his age. He had to get special permission from his father, who didn’t want to give it, because he was adamant to go. He ended up going and fighting in Egypt and Italy and even a bit in Australia … Only in recent years has my father become more verbal about his wartime experiences. It’s funny with the grandchildren who’ve asked him questions. None of them were related to the Holocaust. They were all related to fighting the Germans in North Africa. The only thing that he did of great interest to me was that, at the end of the war, he helped smuggle arms to Palestine. I was never really told very much but it, otherwise he was very open.
Education

I was always taken to what in South Africa, the Progressive shule. I went to shule regularly and I also attended Hebrew school. I attended Judaism classes more than my orthodox friends. I did a Bat Mitzvah through the Reform which wasn’t just a little pageant, and a display. It was an exam. While I didn’t go to a day school (Jewish day school) and went to public school, I had quite an intensive Jewish education for someone who belongs to a Reform shule. When I went to university I did a Bachelor of Arts course. In those days in South Africa if you did a Bachelor of Arts you had to do two languages. I didn’t want to do Afrikaans because I had political and moral obligations. As I had never learnt any other foreign language other than Hebrew I did a course at Natal University in Hebrew and Jewish Studies. It was a combined course – tough and demanding. When I finished doing my Bachelor’s of Arts degree I majored in History and English. I always wanted to be a History and English teacher. I married, went to live in Johannesburg. The Jewish day school there needed someone to step in for a history teacher who was ill and she was teaching senior classes. I started to teach part-time in order to complete my Dip. Ed. Although it was a Jewish day school I taught English and History. I didn’t do anything in the Jewish Studies area until I came to Sydney when we came in 1980.

Analysis & Conclusion: Jewish South African teachers

Socialisation

All but two of the Jewish South African teachers in this study have no direct emotional, private or personal knowledge and/or connection to the Holocaust. In the main, they were largely — both academically as well as emotionally — ignorant of it until they arrived in Sydney and were recruited to teach Jewish history. Claire’s experience illustrates this phenomenon: ‘My parents are first generation South African and I am second generation. I have no connection to the Holocaust. None at all. Remarkably devoid of it until I got to Canada.’ In all cases their secondary as well as their tertiary education was also devoid of knowledge of the Holocaust.
Natalie’s story is similar: ‘I never went to a Jewish day school … I studied history and English at university. In my final year I did the Arab-Israeli conflict because that’s what I was interested in. I did a sub-major in South African history.’ On the other hand their sense of being Jewish – their feelings of belonging or being part of the Jewish community are strongly evident in all cases. Rachel recalls that ‘The central pillar of our home was being Jewish. It determined the entire rhythm of our lives – the rhythm of the Jewish year was the rhythm of the home … Every Friday night was with the family, every yontev we were in shule … There was no question of who we were.’ Thus, most of the Jewish South African teachers had no emotional, private or personal knowledge of the Holocaust prior to settling in Sydney. However, most of them felt a very strong sense of community — both religious and communal.

**Conclusion**

The biographies showcased above demonstrate Falconer’s (2008) observation that ‘History is something that happens, but it happens in a different way to everyone.’ A person’s location—biographic, emotional, social and physical/geographic—is a major factor in how he/she experiences a certain event in history. Apart from providing profiles of the Holocaust Second Generation and Jewish South Africans, these narratives provide access to their lived experiences. The following chapter focuses on the emotional, private, personal, social and psychological experiences of the remaining groups—sympathetic gentile, switching worlds and professionally connected—of my participants’ stories.

23 Claire only discovered this history in her early 30s when she went to Canada and became involved in the Toronto [Holocaust] Documentation Project.
Chapter 5: Biographies cont’d: Sympathetic Gentile, Switching Worlds & Professionally Connected

Sympathetic Gentile (11)

James has for a long time felt a close affinity with Jewish people. This ‘felt sense’ belonging is a dominant motif in his personal and professional history and is also mirrored in his pedagogy.

11. James

A brief history of his experiences before entering the teaching profession:
Worked in the Insurance industry for two years. Changed to the building and construction industry, mostly in sales and marketing for about 15 years. Began teaching after about 20 years in industry.

Disciplinary training: Completed a Bachelor’s degree in Economics and sub majors in Sociology, Social Sciences and History.

Teaching experience: 26 years teaching. 12 years teaching the Holocaust.

Teaches the Holocaust in secular history to Year 10 students

Primary socialisation

Family

My father had a back injury that prevented him from enlisting in the army, or taking an active part. He worked in a ‘protected industry’. I spent a lot of time with cousins because my adopted mother was ill a lot of the time I was growing up. They had all fought in World War II and were a lot older then me. It was from them that I learnt bits and pieces of the war. My father hadn’t fought in the war and all of them had, so there was some tension there. I often stayed with them in the suburbs like Malvern and Brighton. My father’s family was from the country. He only had one sister and they came from East Gippsland and his parents were very staunchly Methodist. My
father hadn’t fought in World War II, and all the others had, but he was a fairly gregarious sort of bloke and fitted in with them pretty well.

I remember that there was a great deal published about the Second World War. I was particularly interested in the war in Africa … All of this was second hand as it was coming from reading. I have always read a great deal and after the school boy stuff of *Billy Bunter* and *Biggles* I settled into war books, lots of them, and particularly those of the war against Germany.

I had no idea that I was adopted until I was 18 or 19 and they didn’t say anything. They probably never would have except my sister, who isn’t really my sister, asked the question one day, as the physical thing doesn’t work as well as it ought. My sister was also adopted. We’re both adopted, but we aren’t brother and sister. At one point I tried to find out about my birth mother and father but didn’t get very far. My father was a fairly successful business person. Women did not work, so my mum was at home. Inevitably, we were more in tune to her and close to her.

**Education**

I honestly don’t remember anything much, one way or the other, about my schooling. My father wanted me to be an engineer, but my mind doesn’t go in that direction. So, I did rather poorly in Maths, Physics and Chemistry. I did all the Humanities which I thoroughly enjoyed – languages, especially French and History. That was always my best subject. I enjoyed history because I can and try to place myself in the shoes of others. I really enjoyed History and English and I’ve always loved books. I don’t know anyone who came from anywhere else except I knew or was aware of a Malayan prince at school. He was the only person I knew or was aware of who wasn’t Anglo-Saxon. There might have been a few Jewish kids at school but they would not have been children of Holocaust survivors.

I feel some sort of affinity to Jewish people. I don’t know why. I can’t explain it. I have done so for a long time. I met a very beautiful, sophisticated Polish, Jewish woman, rather older than me, a survivor who excited my interests in a number of ways. We shared coffee, and some of her stories, but I lost track of her. Later, I had
another Jewish girlfriend who lived in Sydney, and whose mother was a survivor. I had a very long conversation with her in Sydney, during a holiday. It would be true to say, that somewhere between attractive Jewish women and their tales of their experiences, I grew to have some sort of fascination with Jewish people, and the horrors of the Holocaust, and feel very comfortable with them. I can’t all together explain it, but I’ve had sympathy for the kinds of experiences that they’ve had (such as being separated from family).

As a history teacher I was required to teach the Holocaust – a subject I knew something of (more than most of my colleague) and at a History Teachers’ Conference there was the Melbourne ‘Courage to Care’ stand offering information, and the potential for a scholarship to help towards study at Yad Vashem. I applied sure that I would not be successful, and was overjoyed and rather humbled, when I was accepted. I was far more humble after the experience. The reading I had done about the Holocaust which I am sure I have already mentioned continues to cause me to ask why, what had these people done that could cause German (and others, but I didn’t know that then) to dislike them that they would cause their deaths? I still cannot completely answer that question.

Switching Worlds (12)

Philip’s (Second Generation World War II veteran) socialisation mirrors in many ways that of his counterparts the Holocaust Second Generation. His emotional, private and personal story is emblematic of his generation—the many Australian families battling to accommodate fathers and husbands traumatised by war.

12. Philip

Disciplinary training: History

Teaching experience: 28 years teaching. 28 years teaching the Holocaust.

Taught the Holocaust at tertiary level, at a number of universities till 1997.

Presently teaches the Holocaust in either, Theology, Jewish history or Comparative Genocide at a secondary school to Years 10 & 11 students.
Socialisation

Family

My father fought against the Japanese during World War II. Met my mum during the war and married … My dad had major problems as a result of the war – physically and psychologically. He had to give up work permanently when I was six. So, I never knew a working daddy. He was declared, ‘totally and permanently incapacitated TPI’. As I look back it can’t have been much fun growing up in an environment in which there were constant arguments. As you grow older you realise that a large part of that was because of the intense psychological pressure – everything focused back on the experiences of my dad. As a kid I had to from the time when dad had to give up work, I was very much by myself. I am the youngest of a sister and a brother who are much older than I am. I was the first in the family, even in the wider family to finish high school, to go to university, to complete a degree and to complete other degrees beyond that.

I suppose, not from Jewish perspective, but from a generational perspective like most of those around me, with whom I grew up, probably because of our dads and uncles and so forth, we had an interest in the war and in the military side of the Second World War. We sort of grew up with an understanding, some sort of understanding of what the Second World War was about. Where our dads and uncles had been, what they had been up to. Who the enemy was? What the issues were from an infantile or adolescent perspective. It [the war] was something that was always with us …

Emotional knowledge: communication in the home

I didn’t really talk with my dad much, or he didn’t talk with me about the dimensions of war. He told me a few stories about the treatment of prisoners, Japanese prisoners in Australia, in Australian prisoner of war camps … On the part of my elders, there seemed to be a reluctance to mention the war at all. I never really knew what my father’s experience had been until much later; the same was true for those of his
generation who were his brothers and/or mates. My mother never talked about the war years in Australia as I was growing up. It’s as though that part of their lives was something through which they lived, but which they preferred not to discuss. I learned much more about the Depression years from them, than about the war years.

**Insider and education**

Most of the kids’ fathers at school were war veterans. Outside of school I was held back from mixing with others. I wasn’t allowed to have friends home because of dad’s circumstances… My Australia was I am sure very, very different to your Australia growing up. I wasn’t exposed to foreign kids or kids from foreign backgrounds … The first foreign kid that came to my school, my primary school was a German boy … I felt sorry for him … He used to get the strap every day and I wondered were those teachers getting stuck into him because he was German? Was it because he was foreign? Was it because he had trouble with English? I didn’t meet another foreign kid again until I was in high school, and I suppose this would have been about Form 3 … So my understanding of things European was always book-learned understanding.

I went to school, and here’s another interesting thing, the school was called Alamein Primary School, from the battle of Alamein. All the streets around us were named after Second World War battle areas. I grew up in Morotai Avenue after the Battle of Morotai, off New Guinea in the Second World War. All the streets around us; it was, I suppose you’d call it these days, a housing project, and the main street was a street called Victory Boulevard … Once again, we couldn’t escape from knowing or at least being aware of things that were around then.

When I was a little boy with enormous interest at every Anzac Day march you’d see a few old codgers would be walking … The Gallipoli Diggers were history and other World War I Diggers were history but so were the generation of the Second World War – that was history too. And viewed that way by my elders as though 1945 came along, the war is over, now let’s just put it all behind us as rapidly and best we can and move on … But still, it couldn’t be given up by that generation as well. It’s still there. It’s I suppose … I’m just as much second generation of the Second World War
as what the child of a Holocaust survivor would be second generation of the Holocaust. Part of the Second World War, I am of the fighting dimension of the Second World War from within Australia. But I don’t think I’ve ever thought about it that way … in my case it led me in a particular direction of studying history and being aware of having a consciousness I suppose of the Second World War that a lot don’t articulate as having, but I’m sure it’s always there …

**Professionally connected (13 – 20)**

This group of teachers is the largest of my participants. The homes in which this group grew up are diverse biographically, socially, physically and economically. Their individual experiences illustrate the power of the family in moulding the lives of its members.

13. **Simon**

**Disciplinary training:** Cultural and Intellectual History and English  
**Teaches the Holocaust** in Year 12 in the HSC Modern History Course C20th Germany 1918-1945, and also teaches HSC History Extension.

**Socialisation**

**Family**

My mother is third generation Australian from an Irish Catholic background. She wasn’t religious. My father migrated here in 1963 when my mother when to England to meet him and brought him back and he has lived here ever since. My sister and I were born in Australia.
**Education**

I went to the local primary school that was just down the road from us. We went to the state high school – Cromer High in the northern beaches of Sydney. I went to Sydney University. I ended up doing an Arts degree with honours in history, mainly cultural and intellectual history.

I started teaching with the Department (of Education) and got sent out to Western Sydney, quickly switched to an inner city private school. I then went overseas for about 12 years, travelled to Scotland, England and a few trips to Africa and Asia. I probably travelled about three or four of those years. I started off in Scotland doing casual teaching and then to England where I got a full-time position. I travelled every holiday to Europe and the Middle East and Northern America. Then I quit my job and came back through eastern and southern Africa. I worked in Australia for six months and then got enough money to go through Asia. I went back to England and was involved in a relationship. I worked there for another four years. I decided to go again through Western Africa on the way home. I enjoyed my twenties …

In Greece I went to Mycenae, Delphi and Delos. And in Israel I went to Jerusalem, Masada, and Germany obviously! I went to most of the major cities. I visited Dachau. It has given me more of a tolerance for difference. I think when you go to university, certainly fired up like I was you have certain stereotypical beliefs and intolerances to certain views. I think it [travelling] knocks it off you. You realise your view is a unique view and it is not usually shared by many people and it is a good idea to start tolerating their views. You realise that our Western way of thinking, based on logic and the cult of the individual is not shared by many people around the world. African concepts are completely different, their way of thinking and the way they approach a problem is completely different to us, not superior or inferior but completely different.
14. Olivia

**Disciplinary training:** History & Philosophy, double honours in History

**Teaching experience:** 37 years teaching, 25 years teaching (20th Germany)

**Teaches** (20th Germany) 1919-1945 in senior Modern History to Year 12 students. She also teaches the HSC History Extension course.

**Socialisation**

**Family and communication in the home**

My parents were both Australian. Both deceased. My mother was one of two girls. She was an Ascham girl and completed an Arts degree over many years at Sydney University. She was the first, I believe, the first *woman* newsreader on ABC radio during the war. My father went to Malvern which is named after the English public school. It was only a little school in Hunter’s Hill. He went onto Sydney University and did Arts/Law. Again it was an extraordinarily long drawn out process because he spent far more time on stage. Then he did his university course. He and my mother both acted with May Hollingworth’s company. He also wrote and acted in a whole lot of children’s serials. He used to write two or three or four a day and he acted in them with people like Peter Finch. It was only after the war when he and my mother decided to have a family that he thought they had better finish his Law degree and get a stable job. So he gave up acting and finished his Law degree and went to the Bar. Once Gough Whitlam became Prime Minister he was made head of the Family Court in NSW. He spent ten years as a judge and then retired. He died about ten years ago.

My mother stopped work because my father didn’t like her being on the radio when he was in New Guinea. She stopped work and then she never worked again. Had my sister and myself and stayed at home. Both my parents were atheists so there was no church going. The home life, what’s normal to you is never normal to anybody else. As we grew older we realised that we had more bohemian parents then the others. I don’t mean that they actually ever did anything when we were around or during our childhood, but they had more interesting and exotic youth and were better educated.
by and large than most of the generation. I think Sydney University only had a couple of thousand people when they were there during the 1930s so they had a privileged upbringing. My mother had learnt to cook in France and she cooked well and we drank wine at meals and we sat and we talked about philosophy and religion and literature at dinner most nights. My parents were totally opposed to any form of censorship. There was a lot of talk and there was a great deal of interest in the life of the mind. Like the reasons why people believed in God. The differences between ethics and religion … So that it was strongly ethical, irreligious and literate … They were tolerant on an individual level of individuals and people. They could make outrageously intolerant statements. My father would, my mother never … Some were prejudices that were typical of their class and time. Some were bred from experience.

15. Ethan

**Disciplinary training:** History & English  
**Teaching experience:** 31 years teaching. 26 years teaching 20th Germany.  
**Teaches the Holocaust in:** 20th Germany 1918-1945, as part of the senior Modern History Course to Year 12 students.

**Socialisation**

**Family**

I come from Northern New South Wales – from Armidale. I suppose lower middle class, Catholic family.

**Communication in the home**

I grew up in the country. Pretty much discussion would revolve around day-to-day issues. My father was a small businessman running the local petrol depot from Mobil. The kinds of things you are talking about [knowledge, of and association with the Holocaust] really wouldn’t have been discussed or of general interest. Going
through university and through my education I was always interested in history. Historically the only thing that I would have discussed with my father would have been his experiences during the Depression.

**Education**

I went through Catholic education system – primary and secondary school taught by the De La Salle Brothers.¹ I then moved from there to the University of New England. I did honours in history there. My honours year I did a study of the local community of Armidale during the First World War. I did a Diploma of Education. About eight years ago I was going to do a Masters of Educational Administration but it got graded to doing a PhD. That was about the English public school tradition and how it was transferred to Sydney Grammar School …

As far as the military connection was concerned my father was in the armed forces in the Second World War, but as he was about to be shipped off to New Guinea he broke his arm, so he never got there. So there was nothing really to discuss. The only way these bigger issues would ever be discussed, was if there was a movie on that mentioned them. I haven’t got any particular interest in the subject (the Holocaust), apart from in history lessons at school or from the media and movies … History has always fascinated me. I was always interested in where we came from, and I suppose things that could have triggered this interest would have been movies or novels. So, my family circumstances were certainly not a hot bed of philosophical discussions on historical issues.

**16. Amelia**

**Disciplinary training:** Italian & Medieval history also a Theatre PhD with a social and cultural angle.

**Teaching experience:** Three years. Three years teaching the Holocaust.

¹ According to Ethan the family attended church every Sunday. They were not fervently Catholic, but he was brought up in a devout Catholic environment.
Teaches the Holocaust in Year 10 elective history.

Socialisation

Family

My parents are from Irish Catholic stock ‘mongrel’ stock. They are both third generation Australian. In each case they were the first in their respective families to have tertiary education. My father is a clinical psychologist and my mother’s a teacher. The home I grew up in you could say was a liberal and non-religious one. It was tolerant towards others. There was a definite respect for difference as my parents had friends from all walks of life. I grew up in Artarmon in a middle-class, pervasively Anglo-Saxon environment. I had no contact with children or adults of other ethnic backgrounds.

My parents divorced when I was in Year eight. My father married Agnes, a Hungarian lady. She had come to Australia at the age of 12 after the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 or 1957. Her [Agnes’s] father lost her entire family during the war. I don’t know how much Agnes knows of the father’s Holocaust experiences and his first family.

17. Charlotte

Disciplinary training: History and English. Charlotte also has worked as a solicitor.

Teaching experience: 4 years. 2 years teaching the Holocaust.

Teaches the Holocaust in Year 10 elective history.
Socialisation

Family

I’m Anglo-Celtic and Roman Catholic. I come from a Christian household with a very important belief in God, and awareness in an afterlife. I take that idea very seriously. Respect for people was considered important. It was not a perfect household. I mean flawed as all individuals are. Very strong values, strong moral value, backed up by a belief in God … We’re a little bit narky. When I was seven my mother got sick with cancer. She was dead by the time I was eleven. That was very difficult as my father was left with five children. So there were a lot of fraught things in the family that we have come through. There were many difficult years. My father found it extremely difficult dealing with a lot of things. You can imagine particularly in those days, (mid 1960 or 1970s) when he was the breadwinner and my mother had been the family person. He had not only grief, but also how to deal with five children, and a career.

Communication in the home

Certainly we would talk about things, but I wouldn’t say that it was open. It was quite difficult for me. All our experiences were different because we had no mother. In me I think, it fostered independence. It also did make a lot of things harder, an awful lot of things, a lot harder. Like knowing how to behave, just getting basic information about simple things. Feeling that really there wasn’t that sort of confiding, overarching person there. Marvellous as my dad was, there were a lot of things I needed a mother for, and didn’t have. Certainly having brothers and sisters helped in that regard. I’d say that was an emotional loss, the absence of someone to be that path-finder for you, to make the road easier. I had to do it all myself. So, it was hard, I mean I am not completely on the ball with how I did behave but they’re the sorts of things that happened along the way. Connections with people, all those sorts of things, just the clothes you might wear – all … peer group can help you, but it’s just not the same as having a mother.
18. Sandra

**Disciplinary training:** history

**Teaches the Holocaust** in Year 9 Elective History, in senior Modern History 20th Germany 1918-1945, as well as the HSC Extension History course, to Year12 students.

**Socialisation**

**Family**

My family is Christian and what you would say working class. My parents were very hard working. There was little time for discussion. Not what you would call an informed environment. I am the eldest of my generation, in terms of the eldest of the family, and then eldest in the grand-children. I was the first person in my family, even the suburb, to have a tertiary education. I was a ground-breaker. But it was lonely and an isolated position. I had no-one to talk and share experiences with. No-one was there I could speak to about my concerns and the difficulties I faced. It was particularly hard for a girl, as it was in the 1950s and 1960s, and the norm was for girls to be mothers, and stay at home.

**Education**

I went to Sydney University on a Bursary scholarship. In my second year of History Honours I studied twentieth century Germany. I became interested in this area. I can’t explain why – no particular reason. I didn’t know any Jews, or had any contact with them, while I was growing up. I didn’t live in the Eastern suburbs but lived in Concord which then was not an inner city suburb. It was working class, and white I mean it was very homogenous sort of racial types.

I only had contact with Anglo-Saxons. Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s immigration had only just started to become apparent. I can remember in late primary school kids coming in to our class without names like Williams and Joss. Kids were from the Baltics. I’ve studied immigration policy and I realised that it was
a deliberate thing. As I said, the first kid, I can remember his name, Martin Steimanners, that was his name, and he came into sixth class, and everyone said, ‘Oh. What a strange name, what a strange boy’, because there was that sort of insularity. Probably had I lived in Sydney, it would have been different. The first Jewish friend as such would have been people I met at uni.

19. Gillian

Disciplinary training: History, Philosophy and Politics
Teaching experience: 33 years teaching. 20 years teaching 20th Germany/Holocaust.
Teaches 20th Germany 1918-1945, in senior Modern History, to Year 12 students

Socialisation

Family

My father fought, I’m not sure if he enlisted or was conscripted, on Bougainville in New Guinea as a driver of trucks and supplies. The Japanese had moved down into the area so they were on the front line. He very seldom, if ever, talks about it. Now if I ask him he will talk about certain aspects. His wartime experiences did impact on our family. His father was on the railways. He had two brothers and both of them started in the railways. Where it impacted on my father was that because he went away to war, when he came back his career in the railways was interrupted. His brothers both progressed, both became established in their careers, both enjoyed healthy superannuation, whereas my father, I don’t know, I’ve never talked about this with him, never went back to the railways. He couldn’t sustain it because of his nerves. When we were little he would be changing jobs a lot and finally established himself on his own farm. I get the impression that he always felt that his brothers were better off than he was. I don’t know that there’s any bitterness there, but his life was interrupted while theirs sailed on. His life was very different to theirs. It was not such a fortunate life.
He never initiated any talk about his war experiences. He prefers not to speak about it. I very seldom ask him questions even though as a historian it interests me. I’ve asked him why he hasn’t participated in Anzac Day ceremonies. When he indicated that it’s not part of his memory, I just think ‘fair enough’. You don’t want to go there, so that’s all right.

Emotional knowledge: Communication in the home

Even though we didn’t have TV until TV was quite well established, I remember mostly my parents always being tired because my mother worked the farm as well. We just did our own thing. We maybe talked of an evening but they’d have to be up at five thirty in the morning so there wasn’t a strong element of communication. I guess that followed through, right through my life. I’ve always been aware and I think it’s a combination of both my boarding school experiences that there are people in my life, significant others, before my family. The communication was not a strong thing in terms of an affectionate family … My parents had a dairy farm. That is hard yakka because it’s early in the morning and milking cows and then milking them again in the afternoon. It is very hard work. There was little room for anything else.

Education

We (other students) got into a bit of trouble over a note that we sent. We had no idea it was going to be taken that seriously. It was just a joke. I remember my parents being called into the convent and sitting in the parlour with this nun, Sister Edmond. I remember her saying, ‘For the sake of your daughter’s immortal soul you have to get her out of here.’ I did so and basically left home. It was in the time when I went to boarding school in Albury. Then it was a three term year, no such thing as free weekends. I would go home two weeks, two weeks, and six weeks, and that was that. That was the common thing (It was a common experience, at that time, for children who lived in the country to be sent away to boarding school). In so many ways that certainly coloured who I am.

In terms of my family, because I have a younger sister, we really grew up in different worlds. Even though there’s only 18 months difference age-wise, our experiences
have been totally different right through our life. I found that being away from family we wrote home once a week, we didn’t have mobiles. To phone was almost impossible. In many ways I don’t regret it because it made me who I am. I do think back on it in terms of being not lonely times, but being alone. Even though usually there were about 120 other boarders that you lived shoulder to shoulder with. In the midst of the crowd, you were on your own. It’s made me extremely self contained and independent. It was a Catholic all girls boarding school about three hours from home. Commonly referred to, cause was the acronym SJLC. We used to refer to it as, Stone Jail Labour Camp. I made good friends there. The nuns that were there didn’t attempt any sort of homey-sort of feeling. It wasn’t part of boarding school life in the 60s. I went home for the Christmas holidays. When I finished Year 12, I came down to Sydney. I went to the Catholic Teachers’ College. I stayed in a hostel run by nuns because that was the normal progression. There were no country universities so it you wanted to continue your studies then you had to come to the city.

**Education**

I taught in Cootamundra. It was my first teaching position. Then I moved to Cooma. I taught history at Cootamundra and English at Cooma. I also taught Religious Studies there. I only had a teaching diploma and wanted to progress so I decided to move down to Sydney. I started to teach at St. Clair’s Waverley. During that time I finished my BA degree at Macquarie University. I majored in History, Philosophy and Politics. I became a Deputy Principal at St. Claire’s for a number of years. I realised I wasn’t a paper shuffler and I missed being in the classroom. After 14 years it was time to move on. I went to Rosebank College at Five Dock where I taught only history and this year transferred to xxx.

… I didn’t meet any Jewish people, certainly not in the county. I suppose I always think that whilst it didn’t change my life, it was something that has always been, from the time that I was in Year 9 fascinated by, the whole Israel/ Jewish thing. When I was in Year 9, I read Leon Uri’s *Exodus*. I read that book then and I always felt that one day I would go to Israel. I was transfixed by it. I think that’s what has made me want to teach history. In the county, no, we didn’t meet, I don’t remember
any Jewish people. In the country we were very much part of the 50s migration with Italians and Greeks because of the orchards.

… Because of the reading, because of my own personal journey, my interest in Judaism at times friends have jokingly referred to me as a ‘pseudo Jew’. I went through a stage of fascination. I see myself, even though I am Catholic, I see myself very much as a Judaic Christian. I acknowledge that the origins of my religion are based in Judaism.

20. Jack

Disciplinary training: History and Religious Education

Teaching experience: 27 years teaching. 8 years teaching C20th Germany.

Teaches the Holocaust in senior Modern History C20th Germany 1918-1945 to Year 12.

Socialisation

Family

My father grew up in Victoria. He moved to Western New South Wales from a farming family. He married my mother in 1947 after having served for six years in the armed forces. My mother was a nurse. My father was a commando and fought entirely against the Japanese in the jungles. I grew up on a farm in Western New South Wales, riding horses and being an Anglo-Saxon kid in the bush.

My father was a TPI. He fought in the jungles, commando warfare behind the lines. Bare hands, like killing people with your bare hands, it was pretty serious stuff. Leaving wounded soldiers behind because he couldn’t carry them out. They were very highly trained, but dispensable. He saw some very heavy and nasty experiences. He explained to me that they didn’t take prisoners. That any Japanese that surrendered was killed on the spot … My father went and did what he had to do so I
have been able to have a life in peace and luxury and raise three children because of what he did. Every Anzac Day I thank him for it. (Did he talk to you openly about his wartime experiences?) Gradually over time. What allowed him to open up was because I became a history teacher and he wanted the story to be told. Other information was given to me by fellow mates.

Fellow soldiers, they’d come out to the farm and stay for a week or two. As I got older (in my mid 20s) we would sit around and have a beer and it usually came out after we had a few beers that one of them would say, ‘You know your father did this. He saved my neck that day, and I’ll never forget it. I always come out here to thank him.’ That was the kind of mateship for military soldiers, survivors.

There’s also another dimension (voice wavers and Jack’s eyes brim with tears). I’m also adopted. Being adopted, being number one, that’s special for me because somebody wanted me. Number two is that I have always had absolutely equal standing with my natural brothers and sisters. My parents wanted to have a large family. Mum was small-boned. She had to have caesareans. The first born was stillborn, and then a brother, then a girl, and then that was it. She couldn’t have any more children. So, they adopted four more and I am the first of the adopted. That’s very special as I got picked.

**Emotional knowledge: Communication in the home**

When I was younger my father talked very rarely about his experiences in the war. It was only later when I was in my mid 20s and had been teaching for five or six years, having made a career choice and chosen a life’s direction. In my mid to late 20s when there was a bit more openness there. That’s when I was comfortable to ask him directly. It was only a very few things. I used his story a couple of times in the classroom. I asked him a number of years ago and I said, ‘There must have been some good times.’ I didn’t want to ask him about bad times, because I didn’t want him, or he wouldn’t go into that, and I didn’t try to push him there. That’s just not fair.
Education

Went away to boarding school for six years in Sydney, to Waverley College. Because we lived out on a farm, out west and educational facilities weren’t adequate I could have gone an hour, probably an hour and a half on a bus one way to go to a state high school. The opportunity to go to a Year Seven to Twelve school for a complete education didn’t exist where I grew up. So it was a necessity to go to boarding school. On Saturday afternoon, I think it was Saturday afternoon, and the local Jewish community used to celebrate in the park. The kids would be dancing in circles. We’d be down there playing footy because we were boarders, so we got out and ran around. That’s where I had my first exposure to anything Jewish. Then I came to understand that they had a school close by and synagogues. That was why those guys had hats and beards. So that was my first exposure to that culture.

Following six years of boarding school I was inspired to become a history teacher by a very good history teacher as is always the case. Modern history was my area of particular interest. Went to a Brothers’ Teachers’ College, then I went overseas travelling for several years. Then came back and resumed my studies. In the meantime I went farming for a year to see if I was a farmer. Graduated and started teaching in 1981. I’ve taught History as a subject for my entire career. As well as particularly religion, in a Catholic school. The Master’s degree, the first one, was a Master’s degree of Religious Education. That gave me a very, for a Catholic anyway, a very solid scriptural background. Catholics aren’t necessarily strong in comparison to other Protestant religions. My Masters in Religious Education gave me a greater understanding of where these Jews come from, and their history.

Conclusions: Sympathetic gentile switching worlds & professionally connected

Sympathetic gentile

James is an adopted child. The silence surrounding his adoption is a deeply felt wound. His adopted parents’ silence prevented him from learning about his birth
mother and father as well as other important parts of his personal story. To this day he is haunted by his lack of knowledge. He had a regular family life. His adopted parents and ‘sister’ are Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Similar to others of his generation the Second World War hovered on the edges of his consciousness. His father’s back injury prevented him from serving in the army. So his immediate family had no direct connection to the war. All the information James gained was second hand — either through his uncles’ stories or gleaned from books that he read. David’s father had hopes for him becoming an engineer, but David showed little promise in that direction. ‘I did rather poorly in Maths, Physics and Chemistry.’ History was always his best subject, the one he was most interested in. Like his family life, his school years were also devoid of any social interaction with and, therefore, knowledge of Jews. It was only in his 20s that he met and found himself attracted to a number of Jewish women: ‘It would be true to say, that somewhere between attractive Jewish women and their tales of their experiences, I grew to have some sort of fascination with Jewish people, and the horrors of the Holocaust, and feel very comfortable with them.’

Switching worlds

Philip grew up in a Christian, Anglo-Saxon, working-class family. His father fought in World War II. He has fond memories of rare moments when his father was able to manage the steps at the back of their home and play ball with him in the garden. The atmosphere of the home was often fractured by violent arguments and there was a general feeling of anxiety — everything focused on his father’s moods — and the house was perpetually kept quiet.

The Second World War permeated Philip’s consciousness as the Holocaust does in the minds of descendants of survivors. His father’s torment, due to his physical and psychological injuries, pervaded the home atmosphere. For Philip, growing up with lots of older people who had been soldiers ‘seemed natural’. There was nothing unusual about it, ‘because for [him] that was [his] only reality’.

Philip attended the local primary and secondary school. His personal and public worlds were completely devoid of foreigners, including Jews. ‘The first foreign kid
who came to my school was a German boy … He used to get the strap every day … I didn’t meet another foreign kid until I was in high school … So my understanding of things foreign was always book-learned understanding.’

Philip’s teenage or adolescent experiences mirror to a significant extent many other Australian World War II veterans’ family life during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Philip remembers that:

Most of the kids’ fathers at school were veterans … It [the war] couldn’t be given up by that generation … It’s still there … I am as much second generation of the Second World War as what the child of a Holocaust survivor would be second generation of the Holocaust. I am of the fighting dimension of the Second World War within Australia … I’ve never thought about it that way … In my case it led me in a particular direction of studying history and being aware of having a consciousness of the Second World War that a lot [his generation] don’t articulate as having, but I am sure that it’s always there. Everything was seen through the lens of the older generation’s experiences. It’s something that just couldn’t be gotten away from.

**Professionally connected**

All the teachers in this category are only linked to the Holocaust professionally, through their teaching. In some cases, a personal connection to Jews exists through teaching in a school where the dominant religious background of students and teachers is Jewish. Others have a limited private connection (for example, a brother-in-law who is Jewish or a step-parent), and then there are others with absolutely no personal connection. This group of participants were born to third generation, Australian, and Anglo-Saxon parents. They come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds — from parents who operated a petrol station to a High Court judge. None of these individuals’ worlds (private or public) was populated by foreigners or Jews during their primary socialisation. Amelia’s experience is representative of the group at large. The following testimony: ‘I grew up in Artarmon, in a middle class, Anglo-Saxon environment. My parents were liberal people who had an eclectic range of friends. I had no contact with children or adults of other ethnic backgrounds’, sums up Amelia’s recollections of her youth.
Gillian and Jack share similar experiences with Philip; they too have fathers who fought in World War II and were classified as TPIs. Gillian and Jack also shared very similar experiences whilst they were growing up. They both lived in the country and both were sent off to Catholic boarding schools by their families. A third member of this group, Ethan, is also a product of the Catholic education system. Except for Gillian, their knowledge of Jews is very circumscribed.

The members of this group have no emotional, private or personal connection to the Holocaust. Their collective narratives provide a lens through which to view suburban Sydney in the late 1940s and 1950s. This generation by its own admission was in the main cocooned from the events in Europe and had no contact with migrants who were arriving on Australian shores. They were untouched by the horrors of the Holocaust and, consequently, totally uninterested, possibly even ignorant of the Holocaust and its aftermath.

**Conclusion**

The various identities discussed above in chapters four and five focus extensively on teachers’ emotional, private and personal biographies. However, it is the analysis of a range of factors—emotional, social, psychological and educational—relating to these biographies, which form the heart of this thesis. The following chapter explores the value of having a direct (emotional, private and persona) connection to the subject matter under consideration.
Chapter 6: Biography: Asset or Hindrance

Introduction

This chapter addresses the relationship between a teacher’s biography and his/her conception of history or belief about the nature of history. It answers the central question of this inquiry: In teaching Is the missing paradigm, the personal history of the history teacher?

The personalisation of ‘history’

A person’s biography or social location can be conceptualised in a number of ways.¹ Berger & Berger (1976) Sociology: A Biographic Approach offers an examination of biography that is structured sequentially. Each segment ‘corresponds to the stages of social experience in the biography of an individual’ (Berger & Berger, 1976, p. 7). It is this approach that I have adopted. I have chosen to focus on the following ‘segments’: socialisation (childhood), family, community, socio-economic circumstances, and education, as these dimensions have the greatest relevance for my research purposes.

The (Holocaust) second generation is the only group in my sample which stand in close proximity to a momentous historic event. They are a group which has felt and, in many cases, is still feeling the full weight of ‘the legacy of the Holocaust being passed to them, its symbolic descendants, and next of kin’ (Hoffman, 2004, p. x). All of the descendants of Holocaust survivors have been socialised in the emotional legacy of this ‘traumatic history’ (Hoffman, 2004), and some still feel caught in its vice.

Berger & Berger’s (1976) conceptions of history bear out this special relationship. Esther alludes to this position when she talks about the meaning that history holds for her. She tells us that:

Everyone always thinks history is about the past, but it’s unfinished business. For example, we talk about whether Wagner’s music should be played in Israel or should our library hold copies of Mein Kampf? These are, the echoes, and legacies we are still left with.

Judith considers herself to be the custodian of survivors’ memories. She believes that history and memory are inseparable — that memory fuses the past to the present.

History to me means memory. While there are eyewitnesses to history it is important to hear their voices. When survivors will no longer be alive to tell their stories, their memories become history. We are in a transition stage between memory and history. And when there are no more survivors left, when there is no more oral testimony, when there is no more active memory, that’s when history steps in.

Judith, shares the views of Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan Van Pelt about the relationship between knowledge (of the Holocaust), memory and history:

The Holocaust was a cataclysm of such profound importance that we think it is … our legacy … Knowledge about the Holocaust, in short, must be learned. And when memory fails, scholarship and education step in to maintain existing bridges, and create new ones to continued and fresh engagement with the past (2005, p. 24).

Rebecca conceives history as ‘a story of what happened, depending on who’s telling it.’ This is hardly surprising, given that the world of her primary socialisation was saturated with her father’s stories of survival — vignettes of his Holocaust experiences. Like for Judith, history for Adrian is about memory and is also ‘a very personal term’. Adrian said:

I think history is also the memory of people. I always tell my students when I am talking about the Holocaust that the history of the Holocaust is not about the history of the six million who perished, but about people who had a home life … I try and get them to empathise with the fact that they were first and foremost people … It’s about perpetuating and preserving the memory of those people as individuals with a personal life that really wasn’t that much different to the lives we lead today.
In Irene’s home there was no deeply felt sense of trauma, she says, ‘I was pretty lucky in that it was a fairly normal life’. Consequently, unlike others of her generation, her conception of history is framed by her secondary socialisation — in particular her disciplinary training, and her subsequent experiences as a history teacher. Irene said:

History is the story of what happened, how it happened, and why it happened. I would try, and draw out that there are a whole lot of other aspects, that it’s putting a puzzle together, and coming to some sort of conclusion … I think the investigative part is what I emphasise, and that we can’t be certain about our conclusions from the evidence that we have. Also, you don’t know how reliable the evidence is that you have got, and sometimes, you don’t have evidence, it’s disappeared. So, you’re putting it together, and just because you’ve got these certain things, you think you can draw conclusions, but it’s really at best, an intelligent guess.’

Thus, most of the (Holocaust) second generation participants in this study have been socialised in this ‘traumatic history’ during their primary socialisation — in childhood. Denzin (1984) argues that it is in the family setting, from their parents that children learn about emotion, how it is felt, expressed and interpreted. For this generation it is still a ‘living history,’ and they are still emotionally bound to it. Thus, their knowledge as well as conceptualisation of this history is emotional, private and personal. All other participants in this study have been socialised into this history during their secondary socialisation, especially through further education, training, and teaching, or through their sense of community — academic, professional or religious.

Olivia, Claire and Sandra have been socialised into or acquired knowledge of this history as part of their life-long education and, in part, the academic community to which they belong. Consequently, their conceptions of history are framed through their on-going professional development. Olivia gives voice to this experience. Olivia said:

My view of what history is has changed as I have studied it, and taught it. It certainty isn’t what I started with – the idea that it was, ‘what happened in the past.’ Now, it is the
information that we can get from the past, and the interpretations that we can develop, in the light of the past.

Sandra has similar experiences to Olivia. Sandra said:

[History is] … An attempt to find what happened in the past, if that is possible. The more I teach this Extension History course that has been hijacked by the postmodernists, the more I believe that maybe you can’t ever find out. You can only find out one version, or people’s versions of what happened in the past. [In the Extension History course] you study the historians, rather than the history because in Extension you ask the question: ‘Who is the person that wrote this?’ Everyone is a product of their time so you try and find what is their perspective and all that sort of thing.

Claire acquired knowledge of (or was socialised into) this history mainly through her educational experiences in Toronto. Her life-long educational experiences frame her conceptualisation of history. For example, she too has grappled with the complexities of the History Extension course, but now feels comfortable and confident in teaching it. Claire said:

I’ve had the privilege of teaching the Year 12 Modern History course as well as the Extension course. In the Extension course, we deal with questions like: ‘What is history?’ ‘Who are the historians?’ We do a lot of debates and discussions on these questions. It is knowing your past so you can know the future … It comes down to black history, women’s history and social history, economic history and geographical history. To get kids to understand that there are many kinds of history … That there isn’t only one truth, that there are so many different kinds of truth.2

Philip’s definition of history is very much in line with the views of the broader academic community (of historians and academics) that he feels part of. Philip said:

What makes history ‘history’ in my view is the seriousness, and careful attempt by scholars, to create an understanding of ‘what happened’ in the past, and then discuss why the events being examined happened in the way they did … One of my intellectual heroes, the French

2 Olivia, Sandra and Claire like other teachers in New South Wales, who teach the Stage 6 HSC Extension Course have had to re-think ideas about the meaning of ‘history.’ This group of teachers is a select group because they are expected to teach a more intellectually rigorous course. For further details of the HSC Extension History Course see: http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals
Jewish historian Marc Bloch, wrote in his book, *The Historian’s Craft* that, when all is said, and done, a single word, ‘understand’ is the beacon light of our studies, and that we are never sufficiently understanding. This has become something of a watch word for what I consider the task of the historian should be. ‘Understanding’ for me, is how we seek to attain that understanding, in what the historian’s task should be. This is what separates us from mere chroniclers.

A strong motif of James’ socialisation (into this history) is his pursuit of knowledge and understanding. The twenty odd years James spent working in industry would have exposed him to a range of informal educational opportunities — ‘experiences of learning through social relations with others’ (Berger & Berger, 1976, p. 193). Consequently, James was able to bring to the classroom wisdom, borne out of experience and common sense. James said:

I explain history by saying what it isn’t — which is a succession of things like kings and queens, that’s the skeleton. It’s to do with the experiences of people … In my view, it’s trying to understand all the social mores and that sort of thing … It’s trying to draw conclusions from evidence, rather that just looking at the evidence.

Ethan’s socialisation into the knowledge of this particular history has largely been due to his strong sense of community — he has been socialised into his particular school’s academic culture, and its attendant expectations of staff. Ethan said:

As far as a teacher is concerned I could think of no better way of preparing somebody if they wanted to be, for example a barrister. In other words history means gathering information, having a question to investigate, putting together a kind of explanation or interpretation, as to why something happened.

Finally, South African born, Natalie’s socialisation into knowledge of this history has also been through her strong sense of community, in her particular case, the Jewish community. For Natalie, history is also something personal. She said:

For me, teaching it [Jewish history], it’s the story of my people, the good, and the bad that has made us the people we are today.
The above discussion locates the stage(s) in my participants’ biographies — their social development or social experience that frames their conception of history. It demonstrates the points of intersection between their particular biography, their conceptualisation of history and their experiences of society. In other words, this section highlights the stage(s) in the course of the participants’ life course, when they ‘acquired’ or were socialised into their knowledge of this history (in this case, the Holocaust). For most of the (Holocaust) second generation, it was in their emotionally fraught, primary socialisation. For all the other participants, it was during their secondary socialisation — their life-long education and sense of community. Demonstrating a direct relationship between teachers’ biographies and their conception of history supports the research findings of Butt et al (1988), who argue that only by looking through the prism of biography can teachers’ personal knowledge and professional practice/instruction be understood. It also extends the conclusion drawn by Evans (1994), who found that teachers’ conceptions of history originated either in childhood or later during academic training.

**Does biography matter?**

Who is the *private* person standing in front of the class? Does it really matter? Does anyone *really* care about his/her personal history — childhood, family experiences, emotional history, circumstances and education? Teachers, after all, are professionals who have been trained to be objective, and as a-political as possible. However, Butt et al (1988) argue that a teacher’s biography is foundational to understanding classrooms. Acknowledging that ‘the person’ of the teacher is an undeniable influence on *how* and *what* is taught, raises an important question: Does the emotional, private and personal history of the history teacher ‘add value’ to *how* and *what* is taught, or is a teacher’s emotional, private and personal history, or direct emotional connection to the subject matter an impediment?

Having accepted that the biography of the history teacher does impact on *how* and *what* specific content is taught, some participants in this study expressed concern about the difficulties that certain teachers — those directly linked to this traumatic history — could and do face when teaching events to which they have a direct
emotional connection. One would acknowledge that if a teacher is directly connected to a specific history or trauma, he/she would, as a result of the very intensity of their feelings, teach it with greater fervour. One of the Jewish South African teachers gave voice to her belief that because of the intensity of their (Holocaust) second generation’s feelings as well as the private and personal loss associated with it, teaching this history could potentially expose the vulnerabilities of some of the direct descendants. Natalie said:

I think that in some cases you can get more hurt. That you’d be much more emotionally involved, and attached, whereas for someone like me, although it’s important to me, I have the ability to stand back. I’ll be more insulted when someone takes a sling against South Africans, because it’s part, and parcel of who I am. In some ways being a son or daughter of survivors … must be much more emotionally draining, because you’re giving of yourself, and giving of your emotions, and sometimes the kids aren’t responding appropriately.

Esther makes a similar point about ‘sharing herself and her parents’ with students, and the potential personal problems that could arise. Esther said:

It depends on the group! I adore these kids [her current class]. I don’t have a problem when my mother comes in with my dad to say, ‘This is mum and dad.’ I don’t mind sharing with them. They see me for who I am. I don’t mind when you are comfortable with the kids … If it was a class where they would be driving me nuts, I wouldn’t do it. I would bring in someone else. I guess when it’s a class I don’t relate to, I don’t expose myself. My dad still has an accent. If you want to make fun of people you can. It would be a way of the kids getting at me.

Janet believes that in some instances it could be ‘beneficial’ not to have a direct descendant teach the Holocaust. She is of the opinion that it would perhaps be better if this person would be someone a bit further removed from this history — though someone of the ‘same family’. Janet said:

One cannot assume that they [direct descendants] would have superior knowledge or skills. Having taught the Holocaust for so many years and having done extensive study of the period, I feel very equipped to teach it. I also relate to the victims as members of the Jewish family to which we all belong, and I am able to feel the sense of loss and horror.
Rebecca acknowledges that for some of her generation (including herself) dealing with this history can be, and at times still is, painful. Rebecca said:

We were showing a movie to our students, *Escape from Sobibor*. I was in so much pain when I was watching, that I literally couldn’t watch a lot of it … I guess I’m empathising that it could have been any of my family, and to see such cruelty and sadism.

Rebecca makes the salient point that as beneficial as it might be to have a direct descendent teacher teaching this history, having an emotional, private and personal connection with it isn’t sufficient in itself. Rebecca said:

I know I resisted teaching this history because I didn’t want to face having to deal with it emotionally. Also, I felt I had so much to learn. Just being a child of survivors doesn’t make anybody an expert. It gives you certainly more sensitivity or angle, where you are coming from, but it certainly doesn’t give you academic superiority over anybody.

Janet is of the same opinion. Janet said:

Second generation teachers would have a huge personal investment in teaching the Holocaust and could refer to family experiences in a direct way. However, one cannot assume that they would have superior knowledge or teaching skills. There is also the possibility that the second generation teacher could fixate on personal issues or could feel overwhelmed by some topics and be unable to teach properly.

Rebecca and Janet’s observation about the importance of having knowledge of the (any) history that one is teaching is supported by John K. Roth, who also believes that knowledge is cardinal — ‘sound history work is foundational, and indispensable’ (Totten & Feinberg, 2001, p. x).

Having a direct descendent teacher does ‘add value’ to how and what is taught. Direct descendants’ as a consequence of their emotional knowledge (in particular because of their second generation emotional knowledge—SGEK) can and do make this history more immediate and real. Esther highlights some undeniable advantages. She said:
I don’t have a problem saying, ‘Look an example of this is my parents. You can personalise. I tell them, ‘I’m not just reading a book. This is my grandmother. She was hidden here …

You can’t deny the fact that it (being a direct descendent) makes a difference because of our personal family experiences, and anecdotes that come to mind spontaneously that we can draw upon.

Natalie also acknowledges the potency of having a direct descendant teacher. Natalie said:

I don’t think they are necessarily better teachers; they are more equipped at teaching it than I am because of that emotional dimension … It’s so much part of their upbringing, part of who they are, whereas for me, it’s a period of history that I am particularly interested in. It must be different, and be more meaningful coming from them, than from me … I don’t have a right to say that I could give them the same, as someone who has had that experience, that day-to-day experience. I could never know, however much I’d like to … I’ve had it for five days in Poland, and that changed me a lot. Can you imagine what X, if she actually had to get behind it all, what that experience of living with her parents has taught her? … The simple little stories that we hear of her mother hoarding food, or her father checking identity papers all the time … That must have a huge impact … They are a unique group of people, who should be out there teaching it, but I know that they find it incredibly hard.

The ‘privileged’ position of teachers who are the sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors, because of their close proximity to this Event as well as their recourse to their parents, — first generation Holocaust survivors — can and do prove to be the most powerful means of engaging the minds and hearts of their students. Elaine Culbertson’s personal experience attests to this:

… The most moving experiences for my students came when my mother was the guest speaker. Their ability to hear a survivor, to talk with her, and to have known her daughter as their teacher, gave them a direct connection to the events of the Holocaust. When we talked about loss, it was no longer the loss of six million, but the loss of one particular family, whose names we could name, whose faces we could imagine, because we’d looked at the one remaining face [Totten, 2002, pp. 52-53].

Because of their direct emotional, private and personal knowledge and, therefore, proximity to the Holocaust, some sons and daughters of survivors could and do, in
some cases, find teaching this history emotionally difficult. Sharing their emotional,
private and personal transactions with this event can be both beneficial and
problematic. However, it is undeniable that they, like their parents, are a unique
group. They are — the generation after — the hinge generation (Wardi, 1992), who
while still meshed to the past are linked to the future and, therefore, are best able to
make this historical experience real.

**Conclusion**

This chapter examines the links between the history teacher’s personal history and
his/her conception of history. It also assesses the extent to which the history teacher’s
biography is a factor in the teaching of a history to which he/she is personally
connected. The following chapter examines the relationship between teachers’
biographies and key pedagogical issues, teachers’ face in teaching the Holocaust.
Chapter 7: Feeling or knowing the Holocaust

When God measures a person, he puts a tape around his heart, not his head.


Introduction

What motivates teachers to teach specific content as opposed to others? Is it due to emotional reasons — because it touches the heart? Perhaps it is because of personal connections to the subject matter? Perhaps it is for intellectual interest and engagement? For some, it may be because they agree with Karen L. Riley, that, ‘The quest to understand is the single most important endeavour and ultimate goal …’ (2001, p. 139) for both teachers as well as students of history. To what extent does a teacher’s personal biography influence him/her in making decisions on key pedagogic issues? This chapter will address the key dilemmas facing teachers when teaching the Holocaust and discuss the role which personal biography plays in resolving these dilemmas.

An important pedagogical issue that emerges from the literature is teacher concern about how to ‘strike a balance between not shocking and alienating the children through fear, whilst making them fully aware of what went on’ (Short, 1995, p. 173). Whilst both Supple’s (1989) and Short’s (1995) research identifies this concern amongst the teachers they interviewed, they made no effort to seek teachers’ ‘solutions’. How do teachers maintain a balance between exposing students to too much horror and the reality of the situation? Are teachers’ decisions based on their personal history, emotion, the emotional maturity of their students, common sense and years of experience, or a melding of these factors? Does a foolproof method exist that helps teachers answer this question? Teachers are divided in their opinions regarding the question ‘to test or not?’ Testing is an essential feature of schooling. Measuring students’ knowledge and skills is integral to teaching. However, not all teachers are in agreement about the wisdom, or indeed the morality of testing certain content. Why is it that some teachers oppose testing certain content, whilst others believe it is important to do so? To what extent do factors such as teachers’
biographies, emotion or whether they teach in secular or religious departments play a part? Does the answer lie in the difference between subjects that privilege cognition as opposed to affect? How do teachers determine whether the content they teach, is emotionally the same as teaching any other content, or very different? What makes the teaching of a certain content area different from the rest? Can one identify which teachers find a given topic (for example, the Holocaust) more emotionally taxing than others?

There have been studies undertaken on the ways in which students manage their anxiety (Albas & Albas, 1988), flight attendants have practices to manage anger (Hochschild, 1983), and 911 emergency operators have protocols to manage their anxiety and empathy (Tracy & Tracy, 1988). To date there has been hardly any research carried out on the emotion work or emotion management strategies that teachers use to manage their personal emotions.¹ What emotion work do teachers employ to manage their emotions in history (in particular Holocaust) classroom? Is their emotion work mainly ‘surface acting’, or do teachers feel comfortable enough with their students to allow their authentic feelings free expression, ‘deep acting’? Discussion of these questions is considered below.

Verducci maintains that: ‘Most conceptions of empathy possess a primary affinity with either emotion or cognition; in them, empathy becomes primarily a mode of feeling or reasoning’ (2000, p. 66). These aspects — the cognitive and the affective are interrelated and interdependent phenomena. They are not mutually exclusive, completely separate from each other or discrete kinds of experience. Just as empathy has a cognitive as well as an affective dimension, so does the teaching of any curriculum area. Teaching the Holocaust is emotionally laden. However, teaching it is no different from teaching any other subject requiring the balancing of cognition and affect. Privileging either one of these at the expense of the other is likely to result in an unbalanced curriculum: one that is lacking the essential qualities that make us human (Totten & Feinberg, 2001). Theorists like Howard Gardener (1993) Multiple Intelligence, and, in particular, Daniel Goleman’s (1995) Emotional Intelligence tell

¹ To date research on teachers’ emotional labour has been confined to studies that focus on managing anger and frustration. See Sutton (2007) and Liljestrom, Roulstos & Demarrais (2007).
us that the way a person feels is far ‘weightier’ than the knowledge he possesses. It is well accepted that feelings rather than knowledge determines behaviour. Naturally, knowledge is a major component of behaviour, but the manner in which any knowledge is applied will depend on the emotional maturity and well-being of the person with that knowledge: a person may be saint or villain, possessing the same knowledge. History is replete with examples of misused knowledge. Germany before the Nazis was one of the most culturally sophisticated and educated countries in Europe and, yet, after Hitler’s rise to power it was complicit in the Nazi genocide of six million innocent Jews: meticulously planned and orchestrated by people who knew much, but felt little (Kelley, 1969).

It is interesting to note, in the light of the above discussion, that some teachers in my sample choose to teach the Holocaust primarily because of their emotional knowledge and emotional connection to it, whilst others do so primarily due to a cognitive decision: they have the knowledge and believe it to be historically and intellectually interesting. Background factors seem to be seminal influences. It appears, that only the Holocaust second generation who are socialised in ‘a particular type of knowing’ that is complex and emotionally laden choose to teach it. Only they are socialised, in what one participant calls, ‘the emotions of absolute weeping’.  

**Pedagogical and emotional issues in teaching the Holocaust**

**Reasons for teaching the Holocaust**

Judith is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. Her motivation for teaching the Holocaust is due to her emotional knowledge as well as the strong emotional connection that she feels towards her father’s history. Judith said:

> My commitment to teach the Holocaust is due to my dad. It starts and finishes with him. I couldn’t work out why my father survived. So many people died, why did he survive? Why was he the only member of his family to survive? So, I decided that he must have survived so that he could tell me the story, so that I could perpetuate his memory and all the people who

---

2 This phrase has been taken from an interview with Rachel.
had perished. That has been very, very important for me, to continue the legacy. If I don’t remember, then they all have died in vain.

Rebecca’s emotional identification as well as her emotional knowledge of her father and his family’s suffering during the Holocaust is equally strong. Her motivation for teaching the Holocaust stems from similar emotional reasons as that of Judith. Rebecca said:

The reason why I teach the Holocaust is because I survived. I survived for a reason, or my parents survived, and this is my legacy. I am doing this to strengthen who we are … I really do believe that’s why I am doing it. That’s my mission. That’s why I am here. You can say, ‘If that thread survived there’s a reason, something’s got to be doing that.’ It had to be something that had a purpose.

The reaction of my interviewees in Australia is matched by similar responses from other educators and researchers. Elaine Culbertson (2002) (daughter of Holocaust survivors), Principal of Philadelphia Regional High school, and long-standing teacher of the Holocaust, shares the same emotional connection and emotional knowledge as Judith and Rebecca. According to Elaine: ‘If one’s psyche can be determined even before one is born then I was probably destined to teach about the Holocaust and to write about it long before I came into this world’ (2002, p. 43).

Adrian, like Judith, Rebecca and Elaine, has lived his whole life in the shadow of the Holocaust. His socialisation — his parents’ paranoia and silence — has left an indelible imprint. Emotional empathy as well as his emotional knowledge are the motivating forces for Adrian to teaches the Holocaust:

I trained in the disciplines of Hebraic/Judaic studies and in secular history. After completing my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees I accepted a position in Adelaide in a Jewish day school. A period of teaching in Jewish day schools followed … I reinvented myself as a secular history teacher for a public school appointment. I knew full well that in both Judaic and secular teaching, the Holocaust was part of what I would be required to teach. I felt and still feel especially determined and confident to impart my knowledge because of my own background as a descendant of Holocaust survivors, which I feel gives me an extra edge and insight into this area. So much of my teaching in this area involves relating my own connection to the Holocaust with which I always start when teaching a new class.
Not all children of Holocaust survivors are motivated to teach the Holocaust because of the strength of their feelings. Esther experienced a major epiphany when she and her husband temporarily relocated to New York. It was because of her experiences there that she decided to become a Jewish educator. Esther said:

I basically stumbled onto a Master’s degree in Jewish Education at NYU as someone had just reneged on a fellowship. I happened to be in the right place at the right time and that really changed my life. It was a watershed mark that opened up an area of study called Jewish Education that was not part of the language or frame of mind in Australia at that time … Jewish Education is the field in which I have found my place and when I came back, I started to teach Jewish Studies, and that included the Holocaust … Did it have anything to do with the fact that I was a child of Holocaust survivors? On a conscious level definitely not, but I wonder whether subconsciously perhaps so …

Likewise, not all second generation educators are motivated by the imperative to pass on knowledge of the Holocaust. In Irene’s case, context dictated that she teach this history. Ironically, on a personal level, she prefers not to teach it, because of her emotional knowledge. Irene said:

The only reason [I teach it] is that it is part of the syllabus. I don’t in fact actually set out to teach it. If I had a choice I’d do the opposite … unless you’re in a Jewish school it’s one thing, but in a non-Jewish school it’s quite another … because of your bias … you can’t not have a bias with that [the Holocaust] when you have a personal background, so you have to be really careful, and therefore I don’t feel as comfortable teaching it, because it’s going to be hard for me to be objective … I’ve tried, but it’s really hard … As history teachers we do have a responsibility to try and help students see both sides of the story, to help them analyse things, and to do their own critical thinking. I know our biases are there anyway, but we are trying to help them, and I don’t know that I can help. I don’t know, when you feel so strongly connected, that you can, and you can’t do that [the Holocaust] justice.

Jonathan teaches the Holocaust because of his emotional knowledge as well as emotional connection. He does so because he believes that the Holocaust is not a Jewish problem. It is the problem of the non-Jewish world. Jonathan said:

As a secular teacher and as a Jew I’m going to be very careful of what I do. I don’t want to make the Holocaust mine. I talk about the Gypsies as well as about the Jews. I talk about the Jews as a sub-group. I talk about other children who might have been affected by the
Holocaust in their own way. Children like Pastor Niemoller’s problem. He has all these parishioners whose kids are being gassed because they’ve got genetic problems. I mention that as well. The reason I emphasise the Jewish issue, if I really emphasise it at all, which makes them more marginal than they should be, if it was taught in a Jewish school, is because I can personalise it. I can’t personalise the experience of a gypsy. I can’t personalise the experience of a Nazi family. They are playing along with it but I don’t know how deeply committed they are. Their kids get taken away or a relative is taken away to be gassed, so I concentrate on that …

It’s [the Holocaust] important to teach because it’s not just from the Jewish point of view but also the Western point of view. It’s a primary example of a major flaw in Western morality. I can teach it because I know it, I see it, I’ve felt it. It’s something I live with and see myself. I see a father who did live to be 35. I see a mother who has no family. I have no grandparents. I see people walking around like shadows because they are dislocated — they are not Jews and they aren’t non-Jews.

All the other categories of teachers — Jewish South Africans, Sympathetic Gentile, Switching Worlds and the Professionally Connected — are primarily motivated to teach the Holocaust via cognitive role taking, because of their knowledge, expertise, intellectual engagement, and/or pragmatism. Natalie’s reasons for teaching the Holocaust are very similar to her Jewish South African counterparts. Natalie said:

In South Africa I never did Holocaust studies. I never met anyone who was a Holocaust survivor … It wasn’t of particular interest to me … we [other Jewish South African colleagues] were all history oriented and we just fell into that job … I had no real knowledge of Jewish History what so ever. I came from a secular background … when I came to Australia I couldn’t get a job. I met xxx and he asked whether I’d like to come and teach at xxx as he had a Jewish History teacher who was going to Israel for a year … I said, ‘No way. I can’t even spell Jewish, and I’m going to teach History or I’m not going to teach.’ … My husband said, ‘He’s only going in six weeks, you can sit and prepare, and you can read, and you can study.’ That’s exactly what I did. I landed up doing it, and I’ve never stopped.

Rachel likewise was recruited to teach in a Jewish day school after her arrival to Australia and had to learn about the Holocaust before she could teach it. She said:

… it [teaching the Holocaust] was essentially imposed on me. When I started teaching Jewish History in Australia it was part of the syllabus at a time when there really was no syllabus … It is interesting coming from South Africa, it was not part of our experience.
There were not many Holocaust survivors with whom we came into contact … My knowledge of it was this terrible ‘oy’ at the centre of my grandparents’ generation and they’d sit around and I’d just be aware of this huge sigh … I had no learning of history … so when I came to Australia it was like opening up a whole world, and learning and having to learn, and I’m still learning.

Janet’s experience attests to the strength of her cognitive role-taking. Whilst she has no direct emotional connect to the Holocaust, she strongly identifies, like her South African colleagues, on a personal and collective level. Janet said:

It’s quite difficult; it’s quite difficult for me, because I haven’t got any relatives or anybody that was at all affected. So all of my experiences have come indirectly through things that I’ve read, films that I have seen, people I have spoken to, courses that I have done and xxx³ essays I have read. My own study and my teaching of it … I have been teaching at xxx for 20 years and it [teaching the Holocaust] hasn’t stopped having an effect … I don’t think that, that has made it less emotional, and do I, do I feel the sense of grief? I do, unbelievably so … I think it’s attributed to all these multitudes of experiences I have had … I think another source has been the children in my classes who are descendants of survivors, or whose family perished in the Holocaust. Through their experiences and also through the xxx essays, hugely through the xxx essays - I mean 20 years of reading xxx essays. I have been acquainted with the Holocaust experiences of so many Sydneysiders.

James developed his interest in the Holocaust for both cognitive and affective reasons; the latter being due to his sense of affinity to Jews. James said:

A very long time ago I read a book Scourge of the Swastika but did not believe it. Gradually, over time, I found out more and more about the Holocaust and that was due to some Jewish people I got to know. A girl I was quite keen on from Sydney, I’d gone to Sydney to see her, and I remember seeing these numbers on her mother’s arm. That made the whole thing real. From then on I pursued some sort of interest in it [the Holocaust]. Once I got into teaching I had a strong interest in the Second World War and I just read more and learnt more and went to training sessions, and information sessions. Gradually, I got to know the Holocaust.

³ In 1976–1977 the xxx Essay Competition in Contemporary Jewish History was established by Sophie Caplan. It has become a compulsory component of Year 10 Jewish History at xxx. Its aim is to extend students’ knowledge of modern Jewish history through research into their own family history. Students are mandated to undertake primary research into various dimensions of their family history that relate to the historical events they study in a particular year. As most students are grandchildren of Holocaust survivors or pre war refugees, their research is often connected to the Holocaust (Berman, 2001).
museum in Melbourne and knew more Jewish people. I always had a fascination that I can’t explain with Jewish people, with Judaism without wanting to embrace Judaism, but to understand and know much about it. I have a sense of empathy with Jewish people that is quite strong.

The Holocaust is not part of Philip’s family’s experience on his side of the family. He cannot connect to it privately. He teaches the Holocaust because it is part of his undergraduate and postgraduate research areas (the Second World War and the Nazi Concentration Camp System) in which he has developed considerable expertise. He is empathetic vicariously, through cognitive role-taking.

… it was something I came to from the perspective or research … stemming from my interest as an undergraduate in European history, the First and Second World Wars, and the history of the twentieth century … I hit on a topic of interest that ended up with Europe in the 1930s. I had to further develop that when I got to my honours year … that got me leaning towards German history, Nazi history … So it was an incremental thing. When the time came for me to then look at a PhD instead of moving away from that I started to gravitate more and more towards a thesis on Nazi concentration camps … I came to build up over time, not just an interest, but a substantial body of knowledge concerning the Holocaust … went to lecture at university, failed to get tenure and happenstance … looking for employment came across a vacant position at one of the major Jewish day schools in their Jewish Studies department to teach Jewish history and the Holocaust.

Ethan’s reason for teaching this history is a directive issued by his subject co-ordinator. It is not borne out of personal connection, interest or expertise. Ethan said:

Not particularly an expert. At an earlier stage I was going helter skelter full pelt dealing with Russia and that was very much of interest to me as far as teaching was concerned. Then I had no choice in the matter but we weren’t teaching that anymore. About 10 years or 12 years ago we were told we were teaching Germany. I then went into that area and examined it in as much depth as I could.

Olivia’s reasons for teaching the Holocaust are representative of teachers who have no personal connection with this history, but are intellectually drawn to it. Olivia said:
I started teaching it so long ago … I was the only senior modern history teacher and the school had no resources, so I worked from what I had. I covered the Third Reich both at school and university and had good notes to work from. In my first years of teaching I used notes I had taken at school … this wasn’t as bad as it sounds as my teacher was outstanding … As I went on, of course, I bought shelves of books, and read, and wrote, and still do … … I think this is what fascinates everybody. A supposedly Western civilised country, and indeed Germany was one of the most literally cultivated and cultured countries, should come up with this visceral behaviour … I was fascinated by all the explanations for it … I think the syllabuses, not the countries, but the syllabuses of some of the other countries are not as interesting, or not enough is known. I don’t think enough is known about the Soviet Union. China is just a complete mystery. Australia from the point of view of exciting things happening must be the dullest country in the world. Now, that’s not true, but it doesn’t make it as dramatic … German history is dramatic and is intellectually engaging … how Hitler and the Nazi Party as a group of thugs can take control of a country with no intellectual pretensions what-so-ever … and its very hard to get back there. I think that’s what’s fascinating – to try to get back to it. It was a period of huge change and the creation of an incredibly powerful authoritarian state …

Simon shares the same sentiments. Simon said:

My students are very bright, so obviously I chose to teach twentieth century Germany …. When you look at the paucity of courses, you have choices like the United States and Australia, where not much happened, where not such fundamental change took place. What is fascinating about Germany is that it’s almost a new political philosophy just emerged. There is more depth, more intellectual inquiry about it than any other period in history.

A fine balance: how much [horror] is too much

Teachers interviewed by both Carrie Supple (1989) and Geoffrey Short (1995) grapple with the dilemma of how to balance between showing their students what actually occurred during the Holocaust and traumatising them. The majority of teachers are of the opinion that ‘You want them to be impressed … (however) It’s a tricky one’ (Supple, 1989, p. 19). How then do teachers determine what is an appropriate balance between avoiding unnecessary trauma or pain on the one hand and the need to present an honest account of what happened, on the other? How do
teachers decide what is appropriate for students to see, hear, and read? To what extent are their decisions premised on emotion?

A causal link can be established between teachers’ backgrounds and the basis for their decision either to avoid what they perceive to be ‘too much horror’ or to present the reality of the picture. Only the Holocaust second generation avoid dealing with what they consider to be excessively graphic images of horror in their classrooms because of their strong emotional empathy with the victims. Other factors, like the strength of identification that some teachers (in all but one of the Jewish South Africans) feel towards the plight of the Jews in the Holocaust or the particular contexts in which they teach, play no part in their decisions. There are a number of similarities, however, in how teachers’ maintain a balance. What students see, hear and read is largely determined by years of experience — what has worked in the past and what has not. Other factors, like the estimated maturity of their ‘audience’ — the particular class they are teaching as well as the ages of the students — also play a part.

Teaching is a complex and evolving practice. What works in one year might not do so in the next. Walking the fine line between presenting too much horror and the reality of the situation varies from year to year. Some teachers are uncompromising in their belief that students need to face the horrors of the Holocaust as it is part of the tragedy. For most teachers, however, there are no guaranteed or foolproof methods to determine the fragility or sensitivity of their students. Philip said:

This is not a problem for me, provided I keep in mind the need (a) to introduce the students to the worst material gradually, and (b) to alert them to what they are to see in advance. How do I assess what I think they should see/read/discuss? This is not a precise science. I can only go on my gut feeling and common sense, and trial and error over a succession of years. There is no formula for success in this regard, and I find I must renegotiate how I do what I do every year afresh.

---

4 Most of the Jewish South African teachers feel emotionally connected to the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust. However, their Holocaust consciousness, like that of Philip’s, is a graft. It constituted part of the knowledge that they had to acquire in order to teach Jewish History, in Jewish day schools, after their arrival in Australia.

5 The age of students in Year 10, is 16, as opposed to the age of Year 12 students who are 18.
Jack stressed the need to consider the emotional maturity of his students. He believes that maintaining a balance is largely a matter of common sense. Jack said:

Each group of students you teach are different and therefore the material you would use would vary. My determination as to what to use is based very much on the maturity of the group, and sometimes the gender mix of the students. Often girls don’t really need to be exposed to the full and extreme horror of an event to fully grasp the reality. Boys on the other hand need far more graphic detail to appreciate the full extent of horror of a given situation. In the end, an appreciation of the individuals in the group, and common sense, determine the material.

Judith avoids the horrors of the Holocaust as she finds it personally too painful. The strength of her feelings is reflected in her choice of words, ‘There are areas best not dealt with … I would never show them The Grey Zone.’ Judith is also an experienced educator, teaching at both secondary and tertiary levels. Consequently, like Jack, she believes that the students she teaches in Year 10 are too young emotionally to be exposed to potentially traumatic material — the stuff of nightmares. Judith said:

I don’t like teaching the camps in detail. I say to the kids this is where the camps were located. I distinguish between the types of camps. The ones that were pure extermination and Majdenek, Auschwitz and Birkenau that were labour and extermination camps, but I don’t go into the details. We have articles in their source booklet and if the kids want to read it it’s not a problem. I feel very uncomfortable talking about it. I wouldn’t show them anything that would give them nightmares … Two reasons why I feel really uncomfortable … that’s how my family died, and there were nearly 90 of them, so I really don’t want to go into that – the process, the actual process. They don’t need to know. Why do they need to know specifics? They need to know generally. I have read enough, I know enough, I think there are areas best not dealt with …

There are certain topics I don’t go into because I don’t think they are ready in Year 10, at university yes. I wouldn’t do sonderkommando, I do it very briefly in Year 10. At university I get them to read Gideon Grief’s reports on interviews with sonderkommando and we
discuss this … Some things are age-appropriate or not. I would never show *The Grey Zone* to Year 10. I just don’t think they are ready.

Esther highlights the difficulty of determining the individual sensitivities of students. She also points to the fine line that teachers negotiate, given the school context, and the constraints of the timetable. As a descendent of Holocaust survivors she finds graphic or written accounts of the horror too emotionally confronting. Esther said:

I am the curriculum co-ordinator for years 7 to 10 Judaic Studies. So, I am the one who decides what films we show, and when we visit the Holocaust Centre … I try and stay away from the actual horrors … I don’t think it is necessary. I think there are different degrees of sensitivity in the classroom, and that is reflected in my choice of films … In the material we put together there are some graphic accounts, but I would not read them in class. I just say that if you are interested then read that. I feel a lot of them have seen what they want to see, and I don’t think it is necessary to try and see or comprehend it all. Not in the classroom anyway … For example, I wouldn’t focus on the corpses and on the mass pits and shootings of the Einzatsgruppen. I don’t want to show these in the classroom considering the bell goes, and they have to go to Maths or English. I mean, that is another whole story, the milieu in which we teach this in the classroom. The bell goes and, ‘What do we have next? ‘We’ve finished the Einzatsgruppen we’re off to Maths.’ It’s problematic, and we all know that, but it is the constraints that we all live with.

You know, you touch some kids, you don’t touch others. I think also teaching you don’t know who you touch. You have no idea, we will never know, who you touched and who you influenced. Only perhaps a long time afterwards … It is very hard to know who you influenced. Influence on a young person I think is an awesome responsibility, and to be taken seriously.

The basis for Judith and Esther’s avoidance (that is, emotional empathy) of using graphic details in teaching the Holocaust is shared by Steve Cohen – lecturer on education at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. Steve said:

---

6 *The Grey Zone* is a film that portrays the experiences of the sonderkommand in very graphic ways.
It is truly astonishing at how little I knew … I used Night and Fog 7 … Nobody spoke after they saw it. It was as if no-one was breathing … I concluded that the film has hit them hard. I wanted that to happen … I have not used Night and Fog for many years … The horror that is in Night and Fog just became unrelenting after I started viewing it with parent’s eyes. I had always seen the horror before and intellectually understood it. But after my kids were born, the utter devastation of what it must have been like for a parent, not to be able to protect your child, just took over every other emotion (Cohen, 2002, p. 73).

The change in Steve Cohen’s response to Night and Fog demonstrates the difference between relating primarily through emotional empathy as opposed to cognitive empathy. Cohen talks to the heart of the matter when he admits that: ‘Oftentimes teachers say that they won’t use some film because of its effect on kids. Many times it is because of its effect on us’ (Cohen, 2002, p. 73).

Natalie’s experience highlights the difficulty in maintaining a balance in spite of the best intentions. Natalie said:

… you never really know. I remember one year one of my Year 12 students said to me, ‘Mrs XXX when you taught us the Holocaust in Year 10 I had nightmares. I had to sleep in my mother’s room.’ That really threw me. I thought, I don’t want to do that again to kids. I don’t want them to be the cause of their nightmares. I said, ‘Why didn’t you ever say anything?’ Then, on the other hand you think, wow you really taught someone, and you got to someone, and on the other hand, you feel awful. So, you don’t really know. As a teacher you don’t know.

Esther and Natalie’s claim that it is very difficult to estimate with certainty students’ sensitivities in the classroom support Sallie M. Fine, who tells us that ‘As educators we do not always know what impact our words of today will have on tomorrow’ (1999, p. 280).

7 Alain Resnais’s documentary intersperses footage from World War II with footage on Auschwitz, a decade after the war. The word ‘Jew’ does not appear in the film but the footage alludes to what occurred in a particular setting, at a particular time in history. It considers whether it could happen again.
Rebecca justifies showing graphic images of the horror as it is ‘part of the reality’.

Rebecca said:

… the scenes [in Escape from Sobibor] when they’re pulling them off the train and they are quite cruel. Then, they shoot an old man, and some men get beaten up because they try and steal some jewellery. I mean one scene after another. It’s almost like you cannot believe that there were human beings like this. It’s a shock to the system. Yet, we know, and we know, and we know … I had trouble, [containing my emotions] but I think it was fine that the kids could see that I was so upset by it. It doesn’t hurt them … Teaching Shoah is not to teach horror, and sometimes it gets a fine line, but in the context, it makes sense. We don’t just hit on the horror, but that’s the reality of it.

Olivia has taught twentieth century Germany for many years. She makes no apologies for showing students the horror that was the Holocaust. Olivia said:

We read bits from a variety of texts, including Peter Gay’s book on growing up Jewish in Nazi Germany. I encourage them to read Primo Levi. We talk about eugenics and Social Darwinism and how these ideas from the late nineteenth century played out in the West, including Australia and the United States. Linked to racism, the girls came to see where the ideas have their genesis, and why some people were prepared to take part in the Holocaust. When they finally see Night and Fog they are well prepared for it. I found the students watch in total silence and then leave the room in silence. I never pushed them to discuss it immediately – or indeed say anything about it afterwards if they didn’t want to do so. I am not of the opinion that this is required. We would have a class discussion a day or two later about the aims, actions and consequences of the Holocaust. I see absolutely no point in sanitising the past actions of people. If we cannot face what we are capable of doing we can learn little about what it is to be human.

Philip shares the opinion of Rebecca and Olivia. Philip said:

I like to see kids exposed to as many confronting sorts of experiences as possible. Any thing that will get them to think and reflect is for me legitimate. Such reflection must be informed reflection. I don’t have a problem with that [the experiences of the sonderkommando]. History is what it is. We can’t recoil from the reality of the history as it happened, as it was. There were people who were sonderkommandos. There were people who were ghetto police. There were people who were kapos. We cannot consider that everybody was a hero all the time in the Shoah … Our history is our history. I think the kids have to be Oliver Cromwell warts and all. These things are incredibly complex. I heard somebody say once in relation to
this point that we are discussing here - there was no right way of confronting the beast. Of looking in the eye the reality of the world in which people were living at the time. There was no right answer. It was only the answer that the people had, that was relevant to them.

Rebecca, Olivia and Philip’s perspective support the views of Sidney M. Bolkosky — a descendent of Holocaust survivors and professor of History and Director of the Honours Program at the University of Michigan. He is of the opinion that, ‘exclusion of some of the more flagrant atrocities, approaches something akin to an historical distortion’ (Bolkosky, 2003, p. 6).

To test or not: an emotional or pragmatic question

The school system is predicated on allocating marks for student performance. Assessment (formal and/or informal) is an integral feature of school life. Reports communicate and monitor student progress, application, and performance for both students and parents. Consequently, all subject departments are required to regularly or cyclically assess student performance, as well as maintain comprehensive records for each student. The grades that appear on the reports that are sent home to parents are usually composite marks, reflecting term work as well as formal testing and/or examinations. Apart from school-based testing, the BoS mandates examinations in Year 10 — the School Certificate (SC) — in English, Geography, History and Mathematics; it also mandates testing in a range of subjects in Year 12 — the Higher School Certificate (HSC). These exams are externally set and marked. Consequently, teachers who teach in secular history departments (twelve teachers of the interview cohort) have no choice in deciding whether to test or not.

Teachers who teach in Jewish Studies departments have greater discretion than their colleagues in secular history departments. They are, in the main, ambivalent and divided over the issue of testing the Holocaust. These teachers’ position supports Supple’s (1989) findings. Some of the teachers interviewed by Supple ‘felt uncomfortable asking for written work on the Holocaust (1989, p. 14). Some teachers

---

8 In some cases, instead of marks, schools use designated letters [for example, A – Excellent; B – Very Good; C – average; D – Insufficient and E – Minimal effort] accompanied by detailed comments.
agree with Carol Danks who feels that ‘rightly or wrongly to test students over this material (the Holocaust) would be sacrilegious’ (2002, p. 87), others’ decisions are also emotionally based — ‘would a survivor approve of what was being tested and/or how?’ (interview with Rachel). Some others believe it should be formally examined like any other topic. They believe that it is important to test their students’ knowledge, especially in the face of Holocaust denial. Most agree that some form of testing is essential.

Descendants of Holocaust survivors and those who closely identify with Jewish victims in the Holocaust, like the Jewish South African teachers, believe that certain parts of this history can be tested; but other areas, like the world of the concentration camps is definitely off limits. Clearly, for most of the Jewish teachers (both Holocaust second generation and South African) this question is strongly coloured by emotion. Natalie is ambivalent about this issue. Emotionally, she prefers not to test students. Cognitively and pragmatically she accepts the need for doing so: for reporting purposes. Natalie said:

My teaching has changed a lot. I used to feel upset that if they didn’t have the facts. I felt that I had failed them as a history teacher. If they didn’t know when the war started … when they went into Russia … I really don’t care … I care about them having heart … It’s hard though, because when it comes to testing and marks, which is what everybody wants, it’s hard to test a kid in that area. How much have you gained, and what do you know about the Holocaust?

Esther is emotionally opposed to setting tests on the Holocaust. She is not adverse to other forms of assessment, like film reviews, or research assignments. Esther said:

I supervised the Year 10 exams. They did them the week before last. So all the teachers, we sat and discussed all that we have done at this stage of the course on the Shoah. We discussed whether it is moral, reasonable and suitable to actually have an exam on the Shoah? We discussed very loudly and argumentatively, and I took a vote, and basically we decided as a group we didn’t want a formal examination on the Shoah. Even though we know we are in a school situation, and there needs to be formal assessment, we just found that to do so would be distasteful, to sit there and have a bell, testing one’s knowledge on the Shoah. Given that we had done a lot of revision work in class, we thought we could adequately assess their understanding, without resorting to an exam … We have assessments. Not big exams … We tend not to have exams but there will be some sort of assessment. It might be document
analysis, some sort of writing exercise. It might be assignments involving research, researching for example, Righteous Gentiles … It tends not to be, on principle an examination.

Rachel appreciates the necessity for some form of testing. She believes that any form of assessment on the Holocaust needs to be considered with great care. She tries to imbue her students with a shared sense of a lost past as well as a morality and reverence for life. The Holocaust for Rachel as well as for the sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors and her South African counterparts is a living history. Therefore, it is charged with emotional significance. Rachel said:

We wrestle with tasks on the Holocaust. What we have done in the past is that we have had them write a fairly formal essay on the Rise of Nazism, because you can do that. You know, we’re far enough removed to be able to talk about social, political, and economic issues. Assessments are very difficult. I think that we’ve come up with fairly good assessments that don’t betray the Shoah … The major difficulty is trying not to trivialise or reduce the complexity of the experience. There is no doubt that as time passes and events become a more distant past we might find that it is no longer an issue because each experience for a people is a trauma. So, I am sure that we would not have set tasks on the Crusades that we can do now a 1,000 years later. So, at present it is trivialisation. We never set a reading task that requires students to explain why people Jews felt this way or reacted. We’re very careful in the assessment having dignity. My ultimate test for a lot of my work that I do is to say, if I had a Holocaust survivor scrutinise this, would it pass the test? … and everything that I am saying I have to be able to answer, ‘yes’. I suppose at this point in time, there is something so profoundly confronting, and challenging that we do approach all assessment mindfully, for the reason that we are still linked to it.

Although Janet is of the same opinion as Rachel, she is not quite as empathetic. Janet said:

We do have two tests on the Holocaust in Year 10. We feel that it is important for them to have a body of knowledge about the Holocaust and testing is one way of getting them to consolidate what they have learnt. The Year 10 Jewish history syllabus is only comprised of the Holocaust so we have to have marks for the students’ reports … We do take care with the

---

9 Students are expected to complete a film analysis in either written or oral form. All students are required to read two Holocaust-related texts. One of these being Elie Wiesel’s Night. All students are also required to complete a major research assignment – the Hans Kimmel Research Project.
kind of questions we set. We never set any kind of question that requires students to ‘judge’ the victims in the Holocaust, in any way - for example, passing judgement on the members of the Judenrat. I insist that since none of us were there to experience the suffering, we don’t know how we would have reacted. We are not in a position to judge the actions of those who were actually there. For similar reasons I am also unwilling to set questions that require the students to write detailed descriptions of the Jews in the death camps.

Not all of the teachers who are primarily, emotionally empathetic to the Holocaust, oppose formal testing. Judith said:

... we have a big argument at school because I think they should know the documents and they should know events, and they should know important names. Sometimes, the other teachers in the department say, ‘No we have taught it and we’ve asked them at to write essays and we shouldn’t test them’ ... I feel very strongly that they [students] should know some things ... Some teachers on the other hand believe that you can’t test the Holocaust, because it is too sensitive an area. I don’t agree.

Philip also thinks that the Holocaust should be treated and examined like any other subject. Philip said:

I set an exam mid-year and at the end of the year. Doing so for me is not inappropriate, and I have not found that the students have ever taken it that way. The Holocaust is another subject that must be studied and assessed like any other. I’ve never had any problems on that score. Document analysis, true or false, fill in the gaps, multiple choice, paragraph answers, an essay – you name it, I’ve assessed from it. And things have been just fine. I have never had any emotional problems nor have the students.

Clearly, Philip relates to the Holocaust primarily in a cognitive way.

**Same as or different from**

Emotions surface only when we care. Ben-Ze’ev asserts that ‘Emotions typically occur when we perceive positive or negative significant changes in our personal situation — or in that of those related to us ... Like burglar alarms going off when an intruder appears, emotions signal that something needs attention ... they express our attitudes towards significant objects which are somehow related to us’ (2000, pp. 13
and 16). Most of my participants believe that teaching the Holocaust is different, at least in some aspects, to other topics that they teach. The extent and nature of the difference, however, separates those teachers who emotionally empathise with the topic from those who relate to this topic cognitively. Emotions also have an imaginary aspect — ‘it could have been us’. Maxine Green (1995) informs us that ‘one of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible.’ Thus, the closer the alternative is to reality, the more powerful the emotion. ‘It could have been us’ becomes, ‘It is us, our family, and those related to us.’

The teachers interviewed by both Supple (1989) and Short (1995) reported that teaching the Holocaust is affectively different to teaching other subject areas. This is reflected in the comments made by one of Supple’s respondents who said that, ‘In most of my teaching of history, it is possible to remain fairly objective in one’s viewpoint without making moral or value judgements on people and their times. I find this is impossible to maintain with respect to this topic’ (1989, p. 18). Another believed that there was an emotional dimension in teaching the Holocaust that was particular to it — ‘If you don’t touch the emotions, you may as well forget it’ (1989, p. 18). Teachers in Short’s study concurred. According to one teacher, ‘If your teaching is to be successful, it’s got to have some kind of emotional effect. You can’t do the Holocaust like other topics. It’s got to involve an emotional response’ (1995, p. 179). Thus, for some teachers, teaching the Holocaust is like teaching any other topic. But for others, it is profoundly different. The imagined condition of the other is understandably closest and of greatest emotional significance to the descendants of Holocaust survivors and the Jewish South African teachers. For both of these groups, this is still a living history and therefore emotionally troubling. All the Jewish South African teachers are highly experienced educators. In each case, they have taught the Holocaust for over 20 years; consequently, they have been immersed in ‘the emotions of tears’ for a long time. Emotionally they also feel strongly connected to it because they identify with the victims personally and collectively. However, as it is

---

10This phrase is taken from an interview with Rachel.
clearly shown by the data discussed below, their primary means of empathising is cognitive. For both of these groups, teaching the Holocaust is considerably different emotionally to other topics that they teach.

The teachers’ views cited in Supple (1989) and Short’s (1995) studies are shared by (Holocaust) second generation teacher, Judith. She finds teaching the Holocaust unlike any other history she teaches. Judith said:

Teaching the Holocaust has a personal resonance with me. It is not just a history. It is the history of my family. It is still a living history for me. The survivors are still with us to remind us of our obligations to remember for the future.

Rebecca is privately and personally connected to the Holocaust. She still lives in its shadow. This Event devastated her family. Rebecca said:

If we look at the Spanish Inquisition or the Crusades horrific things happened. But it just has to lack that impact because nothing is really personal, and that’s the nature of history. What makes something closer in time different is that we are still linked to it, and affected by it … I have cousins who were never born. There are aunts and uncles who never married. There are grandparents who never took part in any *simcha* – Bar Mitzvah or wedding. These were lives and generations that never were. That makes teaching about it harder to bear.

Esther admits that this history is still alive for her emotionally and, therefore, it is too close and raw. Her primary affinity is feeling. Esther said:

… There are lots of things I feel very much in the same category as them [the students]. We were not there. That makes us partners in trying to understand. I may *know* a lot more than they do but when it comes to crossing that line of, *I was not there*. In the same way they weren’t. Therefore we can never *really* understand. So, it’s a topic unlike any other, even in Jewish history. It has to do with the scope of the horror, the closeness of it in terms of time, and in terms of our families. That it’s raw still. I can teach about the Second Temple being destroyed, because it’s 2000 year later; I don’t know what it would have been like to talk about it in the year 120.
For Adrian there are no similarities. His beliefs are representative of the Holocaust second generation’s experience. Adrian said:

No. It’s definitely unique because of my own background and the experience of my parents. The fact that I am a Jew and it’s such a defining moment in our past consciousness, and our identity, and our memories, that it can’t be the same as teaching anything else.

South African born Rachel is a highly experienced Holocaust educator. Her disciplinary training is in English not History. As a child, the Holocaust hovered on the edges of her consciousness. Family photographs of her maternal grandmother’s family were silent reminders of a lost world that was never talked about and that had mysteriously disappeared. She feels emotionally very close to this history. Rachel said:

Do I use the same approach with other classes? No. Do I think it is the same as teaching other classes? No, because there is emotion, my emotion and the emotion of tears. It’s ultimately the emotions of absolute weeping that doesn’t go into my other classes … weeping about what happened, the loss of life, the loss of innocence, the barbarity of humanity, the tragedy …

I think that with the passing of time events assume a different place in the collective memory and you then deal with it differently. It will become a page in a textbook. At the present it’s too raw. It is amazing because [you and I] are living through a time where we’re watching it moving from the immediate, into history. It [teaching the Holocaust] is unique [when comparing it to other topics] because I approach it with increasing humility, realising how little I know, and with awe. The rest, I can approach very academically. I can go and do my research – it’s an intellectual approach … I suppose, it’s the magnitude of the loss, and the devastation, and the survival.

Natalie, like her South African colleagues, believes that there is something fundamentally different in teaching the Holocaust to other areas that she teaches in Jewish history. The belief that ‘it could have been us’ supports Ben-Ze’ev (2000). Natalie said that:

My commitment to my Jewish heritage and who I am and some connection to their [Holocaust survivors] trauma comes from the fact that they are similar to me. It could have been me. I think that in a way it can make me identify and I see why I think it’s so important.
I think that’s why a lot of South African migrants are involved in Jewish education because they feel it could have been us …

Natalie possesses a strong emotional affinity with the plight of her people during the Holocaust. Her felt emotional connection is one of the major reasons that she teaches Jewish history. ‘I can’t imagine just teaching it like any other topic. It’s different because it’s my people, my culture, and my history.’ Her emotional link is not, and cannot be, as profoundly felt as that of the Holocaust second generation’s. Natalie draws attention to this herself. Natalie said:

None of us have that direct link. It must be harder if you have someone who was in that position, [perished or survived the Holocaust] because you can totally identify with them. I don’t keep thinking, ‘Oh, what if that was my father?’ The fact is, that wasn’t my father, and he wasn’t there, so I didn’t grow up with all those things. These people [descendants of Holocaust survivors] have grown up with a total effect on their life. It must be harder. It must be much harder to teach it, and do it if you were involved in it.

Similarly, Claire’s experience highlights relating to the Holocaust emotionally. This is, however, not analogous to emotionally empathising with those afflicted. As a Jewish South African born teacher, Claire, like her South African colleagues, connects to the Holocaust on an emotional level since it is part of her personal and collective identity. However, she cannot emotionally empathise with those afflicted because her experience is mediated through her learning about it rather than being directly and, therefore, emotionally, linked to it. Claire said:

… it is very emotionally draining because you are putting out all the time. Because I don’t have any personal connections I don’t get emotionally involved with the material, but I do get emotionally involved with individuals, and what they must have experienced … There’s a very strong emotional content here. A very strong survival despite all the odds we have survived. Chronologically it’s not that different but when you are breaking it down and making it accessible, you are hanging their experiences onto biographical details that you might not do in other areas. How many biographies in Year 10 do I talk about with Vietnam? Not a lot … I think it is very different because it’s got so many diverse areas. It’s got history, it’s got geography, it’s got sociology, its got historiography. Now, most areas might have these things but I think when you factor in the emotional content as well, in terms of the history of a people, and then getting their own homeland - that has to be by its very nature different. I often think of the experiences of Wiesel, the experiences of Korczak, the
experiences of somebody like Rumkowski, of Czerniakow who was prepared to take his own life because he would not force the children to go. Those things hit me hard. And it raises a lot of moral issues as well - that’s what makes the Holocaust so different. It’s the question of morality…. I would be kidding myself if I didn’t say that the Holocaust was I don’t think it is our identity, or the identity but I think it is part of our identity, part of our collective identity.

The strong emotional identification with the Holocaust of both the second generation and the South African born Jewish Studies teachers is clear. All of the other teachers, those with an alternate identity, like the pseudo Jew, and those who are only professionally connected to this history consider teaching the Holocaust the same as teaching any other topic: no different emotionally. However, this latter group do concede that there is an element of difference from the intellectual point of view in teaching the Holocaust. Charlotte said:

I suppose [it is similar] teaching World War I and the horror in the trenches, and the whole futility of the Western Front definitely. Cambodia and the Killing Fields, definitely Pohl Pot … With the Holocaust because it’s a Western phenomenon and because movies, if you like, popular culture for want of a better word, the Holocaust is something there’s more written about it. I find it is not easy to identify with what happened in Cambodia. I guess there’s more awareness of the extent of it [the Holocaust]. With Cambodia because there’s been so much that’s been hard to access as it was hidden for such a long time.

Charlotte’s observation about the iconic status of the Holocaust supports the views of prominent academic and sociologist, Jeffrey C. Alexander. In his essay, he argues\(^\text{11}\) that, the Holocaust’s ‘world-historical relevance’ has been primarily confined to the West:

[The Holocaust] the quintessential trauma drama of the twentieth century has become the most widely understood and emotionally compelling trauma of the twentieth century … Once experienced only by its Jewish victims has become generalised and universalised … It has become emblematic and iconic of human suffering and as such the horrific trauma of the Jews became the trauma of all mankind (2002, p. 34).

---

Philip makes it abundantly clear that he finds no difference between the ways in which he teaches the Holocaust and any other history. Philip said:

I treat the Holocaust as an historical event. I would say that I would teach the Holocaust the way I would teach the French Revolution, or any other history. I walk around the room, I throw my fists in the air, I get excited about this and that. I say to the kids, ‘I don’t mind if you do too.’ I’ve had tears in the classroom from kids and I say, ‘Great get upset, be angry too if you need to be angry, but it doesn’t change the fact that these things happen … I’m like that as a teacher generally, whether it’s looking at the Holocaust, or anything else.

Olivia also sees teaching the Holocaust as being no different to teaching other topics. Olivia said:

My experience of it [the Holocaust] and attitude to it is completely different [from those personally connected]. It will probably take generations for Jews from Europe who has lost families to be able to see it in a non personal way … Yes [I engage the same way] I do with practically everything I teach. I get just as engaged arguing about the differences between *Pride and Prejudice* and the *Dolls House* as I do with this, actually … I guess it’s my personality. It comes down to the way I am made.

I see the Holocaust in the same way as I see Pohl Pot – another lunatic with a vision. I don’t like politicians who have visions of how to make things better. I don’t see a great deal of difference between his [Hitler’s] attitudes towards the Slavs. After all he did manage to kill millions and millions of Russians, with, in my opinion, the same purpose … However, the gravity of the suffering, the breadth of suffering is different. I suppose it has to be more emotionally charged …

**Emotion work**

It is clear from the responses above that teaching the Holocaust requires significant ‘emotion work’. In contrast with the previous sections, there seems to be no relationship between teachers’ backgrounds and their emotion work or emotional labour. There is, however, a discernable pattern about the ‘work’ that they do. Olivia’s emotion work involves suppressing her emotions. Trying to do so is getting harder and harder every time she faces teaching this history. Olivia said:
I have taught it for a long time. The longer I deal with it the less comfortable I am with personal engagement with it. … Because I am sensitive to it, I find it more distressing. So much of it, everything from people watching other people being taken away, to the way individuals are treated. I’ve read a great deal of it. I’ve read an awful lot about it, and just don’t really want to anymore.

Olivia’s experience is antithetic to Ben-Ze’ev’s, who argues that ‘Familiarity is important in generating emotional significance. However, excess of familiarity produces boredom’ (2000, p. 43). In Olivia’s case the more she engages with the Holocaust, the more she is distressed by it.

A number of teachers from all groups engage in deep acting or eliciting genuine and socially appropriate feelings by allowing them to surface in the classroom. Jack’s case is a typical example. Jack said:

To be honest, sometimes your emotions are evident. I have choked up and been unable to continue for a few minutes. I have had to pass the reading to a student because I couldn’t see the words as my eyes were filled with tears. I have also been filled with rage and frustration … I don’t dread these responses. I find it reassuring that I am still responsive to human suffering. I believe students will remember little of the detail that they learn, but will remember that their teacher expressed true and raw emotion. This in itself is worthy, and I hope honours the Innocents.

Amelia and Charlotte also feel comfortable enough with their students to express their raw emotions in the classroom. Charlotte said:

If I feel emotion welling up inside me I am up front about it. I just tell the girls I am finding this very upsetting.

For some teachers, like Rebecca and Esther, emotional labour involves handing the distressing text to a student to read; or, as in Natalie’s case, physically turning her back on certain documentaries and/or films that she has repeatedly seen before, but believes her students need see. Esther said:

I guess it depends on my comfort level in the classroom. If I can see I am going in a direction that isn’t going to be good for me, then I’ll say, ‘I can’t deal with this.’ For example
Rumkowski’s speech when he asks the mothers to hand over the children, under the age of ten. I find that devastates me … So, what I can do is, I won’t read it aloud, but get a student to do so, or they read it quietly to themselves, or I say, ‘Do it at home,’ or say that, I haven’t got time.

Natalie said:

I tell the kids, I’m not shy to tell them. I sometimes say to them that I don’t want to have to watch something or I don’t want to read such and such. So you can ask someone else to read and they will understand. Sometimes I say to them, ‘I don’t really want to watch this again. I’ve watched this and I think you need to watch it,’ and I turn my back … and they understand … It’s a hard thing to teach, and it has got worse as I’ve got older …

James, Judith and Elaine work on suppressing their emotions in order to teach effectively. James and Judith’s emotion work has enabled them to build up the protective layer that Ben’Ze’ev (2000) claims is due to the ‘excess of familiarity’.

James said:

It’s not as emotionally draining now as it was … there is a certain hardening of something or hardening in you about something with which you become to a degree familiar. I can because I’ve done it. I have seen these photos, I have read these accounts. I have got to get this through to the kids. I have to detach myself and I can because I had the experience I am trying to induce in them, and I’ve coped with these kinds of feelings — the helplessness and hopelessness. This does not mean that I don’t care.

Judith said:

I don’t get affected emotionally teaching this. I can teach quite clinically –this is what happened. It’s usually because I’ve been immersed in it for so long. I feel that’s part of the responsibility that I have taken on to perpetuate the memory … I am not dispassionate, because I bring in my dad and that’s the connection. But I’ve sort of developed a layer because, if I got emotionally involved I’d be crying all the time, and that’s not a way to teach either. They wouldn’t be remembering very much. I always have this veneer. I bring in personal stories which are the emotional thing, but I don’t get emotional.
Judith’s experience and sentiments are similar to Elaine Culbertson’s. Elaine said,

> When I work with students or teachers on Holocaust-related material, I know that my experiences make my reactions different to theirs … A colleague once remarked that she was amazed that I had managed to tell the stories of my family without becoming visibly emotional … How could I explain to her what I was truly feeling; how upset I surely was, but that I was duty-bound to tell the stories; that I could not risk stopping and indulging my sorrow: that each time I told the stories, I felt the presence of my grandparents, their approval at being remembered (2002, p. 49).

**Conclusion**

The world of one’s socialisation determines whether a person privileges feeling or thinking in role taking, when teaching the Holocaust. Hargreaves notes that ‘It is important to acknowledge that emotional and cognitive understandings are never pure, never absolutely separate from one another as distinct and self-contained kinds of experience’ (1998, p. 839). Of all the categories — Holocaust Second Generation; Jewish South Africans; Pseudo Jew; Switching Worlds, and Professionally Connected — only the Holocaust second generation privilege feeling in empathy or have ‘second generation’ emotional knowledge of the Event. Eva Hoffman, herself a daughter of Holocaust survivors, describes the knowledge that is particular to her and other descendants of Holocaust survivors. She said:

> Many others who grew up in households like mine remember the torn incoherent character of those communications about the Holocaust. The speech broken under the pressure of pain … The episodes … were repeated but never elaborated upon. They remained compressed, packed, and sharp. I suppose the inassimilable character of the experiences they referred to was expressed — and passed on — through this form. For it was precisely the indigestibility of these utterances, their fearful weight of densely packed feelings as much as any specific content, that I took in as a child. The fragmentary phrases lodged themselves in my mind, like shards (2004, p. 11).

Thus, in the main, emotional proximity to the Event motivates the (Holocaust) second generation to teach the Holocaust. Socialisation also explains the reverse of this phenomenon. In all other cases, socialisation was largely devoid of Jews and/or knowledge of the Holocaust. Therefore, in all of these cases, knowledge of the
Holocaust is learned. The knowledge acquired is through textbooks, literature, film, people spoken to, and courses undertaken. Consequently, for all these teachers empathy becomes cognitive role taking. They ‘know’ the Holocaust in contrast to the Holocaust second generation, who have emotional knowledge and ‘feel’ it.

Personal background also determines ‘how much horror is too much’ and the extent to which graphic, visual images of this atrocity is used in the classroom. In the main, the Holocaust second generation teachers shy away from graphic depictions of the horrors of the Holocaust. They do so because of their strong emotional connection or affective empathy with the Jewish victims — those who are us, our family and those related to us. Jewish South African teachers also feel emotionally connected to this history because they identify strongly with the Jewish victims — it could have been us’. However, their knowledge of the Holocaust is acquired knowledge — knowledge gained through courses they take, books that they read, films they see as well as their interactions with both Holocaust survivors and their descendants in the classroom.

The words of one (Holocaust) second generation attests to this: ‘I wouldn’t show them anything that would give them nightmares … I feel uncomfortable (because) that’s how my family died and there were 80 of them. So, I really don’t want to go into that’. All the other teachers determine though their experience and depending on their student’s emotional maturity what is and what is not acceptable for their students to see and/or read. For most teachers there are no guaranteed or foolproof methods to determine the fragility or sensitivity of their students. As one participant said, ‘There is no formula for success in this regard, and … I must renegotiate how I do what I do every year afresh.’

When it comes to testing the Holocaust, the descendants of Holocaust survivors as well as their ‘cousins’ — the Jewish South Africans — are ambivalent and divided. Most agree that some form of testing is essential. However, for them, testing certain topics like the world of the concentration camps is off limits. In the words of Carol Danks (2002), ‘it would be sacrilegious’. Clearly there is a strong emotional as well as ethical basis for their decision. All of the other teachers believe that the Holocaust should be treated and therefore examined like any other subject.
What is the answer to the question: ‘Is teaching the Holocaust ‘the same as’ or ‘different from’ other topics? For the Holocaust second generation, teaching this history is very different from all the other topics. For this generation, ‘The Holocaust will never be physically distant as it is part of our landscape and mental theatre … a memory not of theoretical abstraction, but of proximity charged with feeling’ (Hoffman, 2004, p. 180). For their ‘cousins’, the Jewish South African teachers, the knowledge that ‘it could have been us’ brings them into the emotional orbit of the Holocaust. They are ‘part of the family’ and, therefore, for them, teaching the Holocaust is also different to any other topic that they teach. For all the other teachers, the Holocaust is emotionally, much like teaching any other topic.

The emotion work of teachers is not related to personal background, identification or the contexts in which they teach. The nature and the depth of their emotional labour vary from person to person — to how ‘they are made’.

This chapter examined teachers’ motivations for teaching the Holocaust and reviewed questions that are central to teaching this history. Questions such as: Should the Holocaust be treated and assessed in the same manner as any other topic? This chapter also investigated the strategies teachers use to manage their emotions in Holocaust classrooms. The following chapter investigates whether teachers’ believe that Auschwitz can be imagined, explained, represented and/or communicated.
Chapter 8: The [in]communicability of Auschwitz

Introduction

In this chapter, teachers’ orientations (whether they use or avoiding historical empathy) in teaching the Holocaust is scrutinised. Teachers’ educational beliefs, direct or indirect connections to the subject matter, context and history syllabi are assessed in order to determine their capacity to fashion classroom practice. In this chapter it also becomes apparent that the outcomes required by teachers and/or the subject departments in which they teach ‘surface as significant players in the construction’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 166) of teachers’ instruction.

Historical empathy

Historical empathy emerged as being a controversial issue in this study. James and Sandra represent the only two cases amongst my participants who believe that historical empathy is a particularly effective and valuable means of developing their students’ historical understanding of the Holocaust. All the other teachers provided a range of reasons why they do not use this approach in teaching this history. Their reasons will be examined later in this chapter.

Understanding the concept

According to Low-Beer, historical empathy is ‘an elusive concept that means different things to different teachers …’ (1989, p. 8). Other educators argue that ‘(historical) Empathy carries a heavy burden of misuse and misunderstanding’ (Davies Jr., 2001, p. 3). Misunderstanding and confusion about what the term refers to is still apparent in teachers’ discussion of the term. It is borne out in the following exchanges: Esther said:

Interviewer: Would you ask students to imagine themselves in’ the picture’ from the Jews’ perspective, in Germany, let’s say, in 1935? Your American cousin writes to say he is planning to come and visit. What would you write back?
E: I have done that sort of thing – Germany in the 1930s, I can deal with it. In this scenario I would make sure that there has to be incorporated their factual knowledge of the Nuremberg Laws, and that would be my emphasis rather than, on how do you feel.

Judith, like Esther, mistakenly believes that historical empathy is synonymous with unfettered imagination. She said:

Well, that’s not really an example because you have given them the facts. They know what happened in 1933, 1935 and 1938. I thought when you said, ‘historical imagination’ you meant imagine you are in this situation and that students could make it up. That it was a creative writing type piece …

Judith and Esther’s responses support Supple’s (1989) findings. Some teachers continue to feel insecure about using historical empathy in order to develop their students’ understanding of the Holocaust, and remain unclear about its meaning.

**Controversy about the use of historical empathy**

Low-Beer’s (1989) comment about the difficulty of defining empathy reflects the debate that erupted in England and the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s concerning the advisability of including historical empathy as a focus in school history. This debate was ‘imported’ to New South Wales by the Board of Studies (BoS). A number of senior British academics were invited to Sydney as consultants. A number of private schools (Ethan’s amongst them) took advantage of this visit. As a result, Ethan’s school decided against the inclusion of historical empathy in teaching history (particularly in year 12). It was felt that it would prove to be too contentious for grading purposes. The school executive was concerned in the light of the trouble it was causing in Britain.


2 These senior British academics were Martin Booth and Eric J. Evans. They were brought out by the NSW History Teachers’ Association (HTA).

3 See footnote 1 of this Chapter.
Ethan said:

We’ve gone through that debate about [historical] empathy. This thing called empathy was very much the go about twenty or fifteen years ago and we use to do a fair amount of it but then we had some leading academics from England who came over here such as Eric Evans and Martin Booth and they were saying that they were having problems with this type of approach. So it fell into disrepute so I no longer use that approach. It’s very much an academic, university type of approach. It’s not ‘imagine if you were in the position of,’ that type of thing anymore. Also it’s not examined, and for quite number of years now, it hasn’t been examined in the HSC.

Some teachers (as noted earlier) confuse historical empathy with imagination or make believe. That imagination is an essential ‘tool’ of historians, teachers and students of history, might amaze many. The past is irrecoverable. The actions of men and women cannot be brought back to life. Their experiences cannot be fully reconstructed. Therefore, the historian, teacher and/or student of history must enter into the minds of past actors by ‘re-enacting experience, by re-thinking ideas’ (Shemilt, 1984, p. 40).

Historical knowledge is the knowledge of what mind has done in the past, and at the same time it is the redoing of this, the perpetuation of past acts in the present … it is an activity of thought, that can be known only in so far as the knowing mind re-enacts it and knows itself as so doing. To the historian, the activities whose history he is studying are not spectacles to be watched but experiences to be lived through in his own mind (Collingwood, 1946, p. 218).

Thus, historians, teachers or students use historical empathy as an imaginative tool in order to make sense of the past. ‘A good historian … must have imagination, and a mediocre one lacks it. (No imagination!). Too much of it, however, is a downright bad one. (Sheer imagination!)’ (Lee, 1984, p. 85). Clearly, historical empathy is a complex and sophisticated construct. It requires expansive historical knowledge and is a prized accomplishment (Vansledright, 2001). Historical imagination or historical empathy is not creative in the same way as for example, imagination is in literature. It must be tied to evidence. Wedgwood (1960) makes this distinction very clear:
The poet, the dramatist, the novelist are free to exercise their imagination as widely as they choose. But the historian may not be allowed so long a tether. He must fulfil his function as a creative artist only within very rigid limits. He cannot invent what went on in the mind of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The poet can. He cannot suppress inconvenient minor characters and invent others ... The novelist can. The dramatist can. The historian, as Sir Philip Sidney has said, “is captive to the truth of a foolish world.” Not only is he captive to the truth of a foolish world, but he is forbidden by his conscience and his training from inventing it (p. 101).

Whenever empathy is deliberately employed as in history, it assumes the quality of understanding. In such instances it is more than a reaction or an identification; we try to comprehend — make sense of the goals and intentions of historical figures, the situations within which they acted as well as the reasons for their actions. This is essentially, the nature of empathy for the historian, (history) teacher and students of history.

Empathy plays an integral as well as an indispensable part in our social life Adam Smith’s (2000/1759) and David Hume’s (1968/1739) theories allude to the notion that our capacities for moral judgement — for praise and blame, condoning and condemning, rest on empathetic foundations. That altruistic behaviour is rooted in imaginative identification. Therefore, empathy is an altruistic attitude, as well as a means of communicating (or sharing) emotion. It is also an active agent – a motivator, as it involves, ‘an effort to step outside the self and ‘into’ the experiences of others’ (Davis, 1994, p. 7). Only two of my participants, (James and Sandra) expressed their preference for and beliefs in the value of using historical empathy as a means of enhancing their students’ historical understanding. Surprisingly, most of my participants reported that they do not use historical empathy as a tool to enhance their students’ emotional and historical understanding for an assortment of reasons.

Using historical empathy — the communicability of Auschwitz

Only two of my participants, (James and Sandra), expressed their preference for and belief in the value of using historical empathy as a means of enhancing their
students’ historical understanding and, consequently, frequently use it as a ‘tool’ in their teaching practices. James said:

I am a storyteller. I want to engage kids and get them interested in history and particularly in this [Holocaust] topic. After they have some knowledge, I try to put the kids I am teaching in the shoes of the subject. I would do things like, ‘All close your eyes’ and I would try and paint a picture. I might say, ‘Imagine standing in snow with a cotton dress or cotton shirt on and no shoes. Imagine wanting to go to the toilet and not being allowed to.’ I use that as a means of making it more real … 

I have asked kids to imagine themselves in the concentration camps. [Do you think this might be considered by some as trivialisation?] It depends on how you deal with these experiences. They were real people. As a teacher I would make sure that I had the facts fairly correct and accurate. I would not want bits invented or even unnecessarily dramatised … One of the reasons I feel comfortable doing this is because I have read a lot of survivor memoirs, diaries – over 60 personal accounts. So, I was able to use the stories or parts of their stories … I would be inclined to argue that this is one way that 16 year-old kids can actually get a sense of it. Things like that add to the reality, rather than trivialise.

Sandra teaches historical empathy in a unique and original way. She has created the persona of a young German woman, Clara Fritz, and her extended family to help her Year 12 Modern History students and Year 9 History Elective students understand the experiences as well as the complex choices ordinary German civilians faced in the years 1933–19414. She said:

… because they live in the here and now it’s difficult to understand why people back then, behaved as they did and understand why they did nothing … I have got a whole mythical family. She [Clara] is a young woman, a young married woman in 1918 when the war ends. Her husband Josef comes home, he’s been in the trenches and he’s lost his leg. So the story is about Clara and her family. She’s got three children, twin girls and a boy. They all go different ways depending on how they are indoctrinated by the Nazi Youth … Every so often during our discussions I get back to Clara Fritz. She’s just an ordinary woman so she doesn’t understand all this stuff that’s happening, the hyper-inflation. She just knows that this democracy isn’t working. This government doesn’t seem to be able to do anything in Germany. It’s a limited perspective in terms of how it affects her family and what she can understand from what’s being reported. She’s not an intellectual woman. She thinks the

4 By late 1941 Germany was considered ‘Juden frei’ - free of Jews.
Kaiser should be back because he gave leadership and Germany was in a good position then … She listens to all this stuff about the Jews and wonders, because she’s got a Jewish doctor and he seems a nice man. Her daughter goes to violin lessons with a Jewish teacher and she’s got a friend who’s critical of this … she has to puzzle this out. I created her as a way of developing historical empathy … I feel she’s part of my persona … Clara will come into the narrative now and then, and have her say. Every so often I forget because of the constraints of time and they’ll [students] say, “Miss, you haven’t told us what Clara thinks about this”. They’re waiting for the next instalment!

What becomes apparent from James and Sandra’s accounts is the key role that empathy plays in their own ability to empathise with their subject matter. James empathises with Jewish victims. Sandra is also able to empathise with ‘the other’. In her case, however, it is with a German housewife — Clara Fritz. David has a self-professed affinity with Jews and mixes socially, professionally and personally with them. He, therefore, is able to empathise with their experience. Sandra, on the other hand, teaches in a Catholic school and is Catholic herself. She only has sparing contact with Jews. Therefore, she is unable to identify with their situation. She has, however, no difficulty imaginatively empathising with German civilians, in particular a German, Christian, *hausfrau* and her extended family. Sandra’s perspective support’s Hume’s (1957/1751) view that it is natural for people to empathise more with ‘their’ kin than with strangers. Apart from being able to empathise with ‘the other’s situation, James and Sandra’s instructional choice to use historical empathy to develop their students historical understanding reflects their educational beliefs.

James and Sandra represent the only two cases amongst my participants who believe that historical empathy is a particularly valuable means of enabling students to grapple with the entire range of Jewish responses during the Holocaust — marginalisation, exclusion and annihilation.

---

5 For example her annual school visit, with her students to the Sydney Jewish Museum.
Avoiding historical empathy — the incommunicability of Auschwitz

Most of my participants avoid using historical empathy when teaching aspects of the Holocaust for four main reasons: beliefs — ‘incommunicability’ and trivialisation; emotional knowledge/emotional connection — ‘too close and too raw’, the context in which they teach, and the HSC or VCE syllabi. A significant finding of this study is that those who are emotionally ‘closest’ to the Event, the (Holocaust) second generation and Jewish South African teachers, avoid it altogether.

Beliefs

Kagan argues that teachers’ beliefs are ‘a form of personal knowledge, [or] teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms and the subject matter to be taught’ (1992, pp. 65-66). There is general consensus amongst theoreticians and researchers that teachers’ educational beliefs significantly shape their pedagogy. This is because, in many cases, teachers treat their beliefs as knowledge (Grossman, Wilson & Shulman, 1989). According to Grossman, Reynolds, Ringstaff & Sykes (1985); Wilson & Wineburg (1988); Grossman (1989), teachers’ beliefs or orientations to their subject matter largely determine the nature of their instruction. The following examples illustrate the ways in which teachers’ treat their beliefs as knowledge.

The incommunicability of Auschwitz

O you who know
did you know that you can see your mother dead
and not shed a tear
O you who know
did you know that in the morning you wish for death
and in the evening you fear it
O you who know
did you know that a day is longer than a year
a minute longer than a lifetime
Did you know that suffering is limitless
and horror cannot be circumscribed
Did you know this
You who know.


Unimaginable, unmanageable, unknowable, are words that are often used to describe aspects of the Holocaust. Writers talk about the impoverishment of language and imagery to translate the experience of atrocity for us, for those of us who were not there. Charlotte Delbo (1995), herself a survivor of Auschwitz, emphasises the imaginary chasm that the experience of atrocity creates between actual and indirect survivors. She distinguishes between those who know, and those who ‘think’ they know.

These beliefs are shared by some of my participants. For example, Jonathan is vehemently opposed to using historical empathy in teaching the Holocaust. He fervently believes that the experience is beyond the power of communication. He said:

One thing that dominated the Holocaust was a sense of diurnal fear. Fear that you’re being exposed, fear that you’re going to be shot. *How can you pass that on?* I mean, what’s the Holocaust experience apart from being killed? The fear you’re in a camp, you don’t know what’s going to happen, that fear of things being worse, that fear of degradation. *You cannot empathise. There’s just no model that you can compare with.*

Janet expresses similar sentiments. She believes that historical texts as well as Holocaust literature are unable to translate for us, who are so far removed from the experience, — the ‘extremity,’ it’s anguish and horror — a life lived in the constant shadow of death. She shares with Lawrence L. Langer the belief that ‘the experience of atrocity … remains hermetically sealed in a private universe of torture and suffering that cannot escape into the realm of ideas’ (1978, p. 203). She said:

I just don’t think you can. I think the fact is no matter how much you imagine what it must be like it is important for the children to know that they weren’t there, and they have no real
understanding of what it was like. So to get that across, that you can never really fully grasp what it must be like … I mean I can’t even imagine, and I’ve read so much …

Rachel also believes that imagination doesn’t stretch far enough. She stands behind Lawrence L. Langer (1982) when he says:

Language alone cannot give meaning to Auschwitz. In the jungle world of atrocity, one could as easily argue that the death camps deprived sacrifice of meaning, that the depth and uncontained scope of Nazi ruthlessness poisoned both Jewish and Christian precedents and left millions of victims without potent metaphors to imagine, [not to justify] their fate (p. 27).

Rachel said:

…it’s [the Holocaust] sacred and it’s too real, it’s too real … It is beyond words in many ways … There is a silence. There is a silence at the heart of it.

Likewise, Elie Wiesel believes ‘that Treblinka and Auschwitz cannot be told’ (1990, p. 18). He grapples with the same dilemma — how to translate ‘our experience of madness? How could we say what had to be said, that we could never express in words — coherent, intelligible words?’ (Wiesel, 1990, p. 14). As the above cases illustrate, teachers’ educational beliefs are pivotal to teachers’ professional thinking, and classroom practice.

**Trivialisation**

A number of teachers in my study believe that using historical empathy-style questions about the Holocaust (in particular in the world of the concentration camps) trivialises the Jewish experience. Rachel believes that the Holocaust is a sacred site. It is not some distant, quasi–fictional event that one reads about in history books and literature. These people aren’t strangers but people with whom she shares a personal and emotional history. Rachel said:

Not really [use historical empathy]. For me it is too sacrosanct in many ways. It becomes a classroom activity. I always say to them [students] that when I teach the Holocaust I don’t try and use techniques, interesting techniques … It’s very real … for many of them [students]
there are still Holocaust survivors. So if I started doing activities like that [historical empathy] I would feel I am diminishing the experience.

I will use empathy in other situations but for the Holocaust I can’t … I can’t. I can’t. It is something in me that says, no …

All attempts at using historical empathy-style questions trivialise … it’s the same reason that I have difficulty screening material like *Escape from Sobibor* even though I know it’s pretty accurate … I go along with my colleagues who do like to use it as a resource … but my gut feeling is that I don’t like it — it’s too clean.

Claire shares this belief. She said:

I haven’t done a lot of that [use historical empathy] because, not because it’s holy or it’s a sacred space, but I don’t think we have a right to do that … Maybe, because I’m protecting them from what it could have been like. As much as we try we can never get them to understand. I think it’s also disrespectful, I don’t think that it is right … Interestingly with Vietnam I do it, absolutely with Vietnam. I bring a Vietnam vet into school in the same way that I bring a Holocaust survivor in.

Janet is as incensed as Rachel, Claire and Irene, at the idea of using historical empathy to develop her students’ historical understanding of Jewish ‘life’ in the Nazi concentration camps. She said:

… I would find it abhorrent to ask children to do that from a moral point of view … I just sense it … I think it would trivialise the experience. I don’t think it does the right thing by the people who were actually there … I can imagine if a survivor read a child’s account of how they think it might have been to be there!

Prominent American academic Samuel Totten shares the beliefs of Rachel, Claire, Irene and Janet. He says that:

There is absolutely no way that students will ever be able to experience what it was like for the victims of the Holocaust, to be forced from their homes, herded into ghettos, crammed into suffocating, hot or freezing cattle cars for days on end, or subjected to torture and murder at the hands of the Nazis… Attempts to do so trivialise and mock the experiences of those who were killed and those who survived (2002, pp. 12-13).
Another reason cited for some teachers avoiding the use of historical empathy when teaching aspects of the Holocaust is that they believe it is beyond the power of words.

**Emotional knowledge or emotional connection — ‘too close and too raw’**

Some teachers avoid using historical empathy when teaching the Holocaust is its physical and emotional proximity to the present — they are still linked to it emotionally. They feel that it is still ‘too close and too raw’. Even though it is over sixty years since the defeat of Nazi Germany and the liberation of the concentration camps, Holocaust survivors are still alive to tell their personal stories. The Holocaust is in fact in the process of passing from memory into history. It still is a living entity — ‘a living history’.

It makes particular demands on teachers who teach it. This is especially true for the Holocaust second generation teachers who are emotionally, privately and personally linked to it. The same, but to a lesser extent, applies to the Jewish South African teachers who also have a personal and emotional connection to it. It is therefore understandable that the emotional vulnerability of dealing with something that has not fully receded into history makes teaching the Holocaust particularly painful for Jewish teachers.

Esther said:

… in part because of the scope of the horror, the closeness of it, in terms of our families; it is raw. I’m not comfortable with it (using historical empathy). I’m just wondering if the passage of time has something to do with it. This is too close and maybe in 1000 years teachers will be comfortable to use that sort of methodology. It’s still too close to home.

Rebecca, talks about the pain of being directly connected to the Holocaust, and how this ‘wound’ often opens when she enters her classroom:

---

6 Taken from an interview with Rebecca.
7 Taken from an interview with Judith.
I think considering modern advanced Germany could behave so badly and so accepting of an evil regime seems more powerful than a bunch of crazed Crusaders centuries ago. Of course, the fact that direct relatives of mine perished through the evil of the Holocaust has to make it more emotionally difficult and close to me. I try to be sensitive to everything I teach … I admit that this history we’re doing on the Holocaust years will in two generations be quite ancient history and that the power and the touching us tends to get lost over the years … but what makes something closer in time more horrific is that we are still products of that, and we are still defining ourselves by it, and that my generation is definitely affected and different from others, in subtle and different ways.

According to Berger and Berger, ‘the second generation is intimately connected to the Holocaust by both a physical and psychic umbilical cord’ (2001, p. 3).

**Context — small worlds, different worlds**

All of my participants’ experiences (to a greater or lesser degree) support Sockett (1987); Mc Laughlin & Talbert (1990); Siskin (1991); McLaughlin (1993); Siskin & Little (1995); and Fahey (2007) who argue that context — in particular subject departments — is one of the most powerful forces that determine practice. The importance of the contexts of teaching (that is school, subject department and classrooms) in shaping teachers’ pedagogy has in the past, been neglected in the literature. However, there is at present a surge of studies (as cited above) that regard context, in particular, subject departments as being ‘highly collusive in orchestrating instruction’ (Fahey, 2007, pp. 30-31). According to the literature, subject departments are the main organisational unit of the school, ‘defining in crucial ways who teachers are, what they do, where and with whom they work and how that work is perceived by others’ (Siskin & Little, 1995, p. 1). Subject departments or disciplines are distinct communities with distinct workplace practices and cultures. They are the primary determinants of teachers’ instruction and behaviour.

The following cases demonstrate the ways in which context frames as well as inhibits practice. It is particularly problematic in cases where the teacher is emotionally, privately and/or personally connected to the subject matter under consideration.

---

Adrian is a descendant of Holocaust survivors. He teaches in a public school of 750 students, where he is the only Jew. His predicament is a testament to the ways in which context (in his case his subject department and his Head of Department) as well as the HSC Modern History syllabus curtails his pedagogy. Adrian said:

The HSC Modern History syllabus is so vast, so there isn’t the time to delve into the Holocaust into the depth I’d like to … When I first came to the school I was quite anxious to do as much as I could. I used to try and start by trying to develop some sort of empathy … they [students] have rudimentary knowledge about Jews but nothing in any depth. In order to make them more knowledgeable about Jews I used to start by showing them the opening scenes of *Fiddler on the Roof* … show them what Jewish life was like pre Holocaust … to show them as people, as individuals with faces and with children, with dreams and aspirations and how things changed when Hitler came to power. We’d go through the various stages, the ghetto, the Einzatsgruppen, and the use of gas vans. I also used to show them the film called *The Wave*, *The Hangman* and I also showed them *The Milgram Experiment* in one slot … Being in a non- Jewish school made it [teaching the Holocaust] all the more difficult. In the beginning my head teacher asked me whether I could teach the Holocaust. I think he wanted me to teach it like the bombing of Darwin, very superficially, not go into too much details … Some years into the job he said to me that, ‘ Its very important that teachers shouldn’t push their own barrow in the classroom’. I understood what he meant – that I must be careful not to let my own personal prejudices get in the way of what I am teaching …

As a (Holocaust) second generation teacher, Adrian has a wealth of emotional knowledge, in particular, second generation emotional knowledge about this history. However, his work place context as well as the HCS Modern History syllabus precludes him from doing the Holocaust justice in terms of the time and detail Adrian believes it deserves.

Like Adrian, Jonathan is also a descendant of Holocaust survivors and also teaches in a public school. He is either one of a handful or the only Jew on the staff. He is aware that as most of his students are not Jewish asking them to historically empathise with Jewish circumstances during the Holocaust would be futile. His case clearly illustrates Sockett’s observation that ‘diverse situations make radically different demands on teachers’ skills, knowledge, sensitivity … and judgement’ (1987, p. 210). Jonathan said:
First of all, most of these classes are not Jewish … and most of the teachers aren’t either … I am a secular teacher not teaching Jewish History at Mt. Scopus. Saying to my students ‘Imagine you’re a Jew in the Warsaw Ghetto.’ What do you mean, ‘Imagine you’re a Jew in the Warsaw Ghetto?’ What sort of bullshit is that?!

Irene is also a (Holocaust) second generation teacher who has serious misgivings about teaching subject matter (in this case the Holocaust) that she is personally connected to, in a non-Jewish context. Her position illuminates the professional and personal conflict this situation raises. Irene said:

The only reason [I teach it] is that it is part of the syllabus we teach here. I don’t in fact set out to teach it. If I had the choice I’d do the opposite … unless you’re in a Jewish school it’s one thing, but in a non-Jewish school it’s quite another … because of your bias … you can’t not have a bias with that [the Holocaust] when you have a personal background, so you have to be really careful, and therefore I don’t feel as comfortable teaching it, because it’s going to be hard for me to be objective … I’ve tried, but it’s really hard … As history teachers we do have a responsibility to try and help students see both sides of the story, to help them analyse things, and to do their own critical thinking. I know our biases are there anyway, but we are trying to help them, and I don’t know that I can help. I don’t know, when you feel so strongly connected, that you can, and you can’t do that [the Holocaust] justice.

Philip’s case also demonstrates ways in which context inhibits teaching. Teaching in a Jewish day school, he was reprimanded for being, ‘a little too unorthodox’ in his approach. Philip said:

I laid out a particular scenario and asked students to speculate on how a Nazi would have behaved in such and such a circumstance … It was held that was not really where we should be going. So I have shied away from stuff like that ever since. I think I have preferred simply to look at the record of those who were there themselves, rather than asking students to speculate as to frames of mind, and things like that.

The social, educational and professional contexts (his home life, social interaction with others and educational experiences at Catholic secondary and tertiary levels as well as his many years spent teaching within the Catholic education system) have circumscribed Jack’s teaching of the Holocaust. His primary as well as secondary socialisation was largely devoid of Jews. His knowledge of Jews has been largely premised upon religious texts (particularly, the Bible), textbooks and/or books he
studied or read. Opportunities for social interaction, like meeting or mixing with Jews and having weekly games in the local park, when he and his fellow students sighted students from a local Jewish school, were likewise limited. He, therefore, like Sandra, has difficulty in identifying Jews. His limited capacity to identify Jews makes it impossible for him to identify with them. Consequently, he is incapable of empathising with them on a personal level. When asked if he used historical empathy style questions in reference to the Jews’ situation during their marginalisation, and segregation in Nazi Germany and their eventual extermination, Jack said:

I am examining what happened from an outsider looking in at German society. I am not a Jew. I cannot ever feel like a Jew. I cannot ever have a Jewish perspective, so I don’t even try … Reflecting on what I said, I think that cultural ignorance could play a part in how I approach these matters.

My real fear is not doing justice to those victims, those millions who died … I was not there; I don’t know the suffering that took place. I have read about the events of the Nazi era but I have never experienced the terror or horror. I feel inadequate to convey the reality of this terrible crime … I haven’t used this technique [historical empathy] as it has not seemed appropriate to the students I have taught. As I mentioned earlier, I have never experienced horror and neither have the vast majority of my students. To ask them to imagine something for which they have no experience or appreciation does not seem practical … In part, my reluctance to wear Jewish shoes, is a concern that, it would be viewed as patronising and fake …

On the other hand, context can also enhance teachers’ pedagogy. The pedagogy of all the Jewish history teachers — Judith, Esther, Philip, Rebecca, Natalie, Claire, Rachel and Janet, who all teach in a particular type of schools (in this case Jewish day schools) and in a particular subject department (Jewish Studies) — is augmented by the contexts in which they teach. All of these teachers share Esther’s perspective. Esther said:

… In my class this year every single child in this class of 23 students … I have some connection with — every single family. Now if one guards their anonymity greatly, it is very, very difficult to work under those circumstances … There is no private life as such. Normally I would be very sensitive to that, but I am so much part of the furniture, I am so comfortable at Mt. Scopus that I am beyond that … I am so immersed in ‘us’ and ‘we’ and ‘our people’
and whether for Jewish kids it is their ancestors we are talking about … I am very immersed in this is ‘us’ … I do not have a problem saying, ‘Look, an example of this, is my parents’ …

The schools in which these teachers teach are large community schools. These teachers attend synagogues on Jewish holy days together with other congregants (composed of parents of students as well as the students themselves), they are conversant with the births, marriages, and deaths of community members, read the Jewish press (the *Australian Jewish News* – Sydney or Melbourne editions) and socialise with the broader community members at Jewish functions. Thus, there is a strong personal connection to as well as identification with their students and with their context — broader Jewish community in which they teach. This close affinity is mirrored in their teaching. Context is clearly axiomatic to practice. It is particularly restrictive to teachers who are emotionally, privately and/or personally linked to their subject matter. My participants’ experiences demonstrate that the assumptions of teachers in Short’s (1995) study — that they would teach the Holocaust irrespective of context is mistaken.

**HSC⁹ and VCE¹⁰**

In Victoria there are limited options to teach the Holocaust — especially within the discipline of history.⁰¹ It is not examined (within Modern History) at VCE level in Victoria. What is ‘problematic’ is the lack of mention of the Holocaust as a topic in the VCE. The New South Wales Board of Studies (BoS) offers HSC courses in a wide range of subjects. English is the only compulsory subject in New South Wales. In Modern History all students are required to study the Core Study: World War I 1914-1919, two National Studies, and one Modern World study¹². One of the National Studies options is, Twentieth Century Germany 1918-1945. This course requires teachers to focus on four key areas — Weimar Republic, rise of the Nazi Party, Nazism in power and Nazi foreign policy. The Holocaust is taught in the

---

⁹ An acronym for the Higher School Certificate.
¹⁰ An acronym for the Victorian Certificate of Education.
¹¹ As stated earlier, in Victoria, the scope to the Holocaust is limited to either Years 10 or 11. It is usually taught in the context of Twentieth Century History to 1945.
¹² The Modern History Course on which this thesis is based has been revised.
context of Nazi Germany. It is subsumed in two dot points of the syllabus — racism, and the nature and impact of Nazism. The marginalisation of the Jews during the 1930s, their segregation into ghettos, and their life as well as their eventual extermination in the concentration and death camps, is not part of the HSC Modern History syllabus. As Simon said, ‘You don’t have time to dwell on the impact from the people who were there, saying how things affected them’. A number of teachers (Gillian, Olivia and Ethan) do not seriously consider the situation of the Jews, when teaching Twentieth Century Germany, mainly for pragmatic reasons, — it is not examined in the HSC. Empathic understanding is part of classroom discourse. However, Olivia, Ethan and Gillian are conscious of the fact that their priority is to prepare students for the HSC. Consequently, all written tasks set in year 12, follow HSC style format.\footnote{There are no historical empathy tasks set on the Holocaust.} In spite of the fact that the Jewish experience is not examined in the HSC Olivia tries to get students to understand why people behaved the way they did as perpetrators, bystanders, victims, and denouncers. She expects students to look beyond glib generalisations. She teaches largely through the use of primary material — letters, interviews, diaries and video footage rather than the use of empathy. Olivia said:

> We don’t spend a huge amount of time on it. However, it informs everything we talk about when we talk about Nazi Germany. It comes in at various points … We do a little bit of work on the 1930s with anti-Semitism. I have got quite a lot of resources in my room and I encourage them [students] to look at this and we talk about it in class … We spend a short time on the extermination camps – the how and the why … I use what I have written in my textbook and talk about how it could be done under the cover of the dislocation of war … I try and get the girls to read things like Frauen, Victor Kempler's diaries, Primo Levi, Voices from the Third Reich, and Goebbels’ diaries and of course interviews from video footage. Whenever I come across something that offers a new perspective I get a copy for the students and draw attention to it.

Ethan teaches at one of the top academically selective high schools in New South Wales. The school prides itself on academic excellence. Staff members are expected

\footnote{See Appendix for some examples. All questions on the Twentieth Century National Study of Germany (1919-1945), with the exception of 2002 HSC Modern History Examination paper, have avoided, not only examining the Holocaust, but also avoided historical-empathy-style questions.}
to keep abreast of any new developments in their particular area of expertise. There is a lot of pressure on teachers to ensure that students perform near the top of the State. Ethan said:

I just set it out as this is the most recent interpretation. This is what he is proposing … and I recommend it to my class, not necessarily because I believe it, but simply because this is the state-of-the-art … So far as in-class discussion was concerned [historical empathy] would be a teaching technique with any particular period of history. I would use ‘imagine if’ as a proposition and how would you feel?! but I certainly wouldn’t use it as a home-type or formal type exercise. We wouldn’t use that because when you come to exams you are trying to adopt the neutral point of view …

I am not teaching the Holocaust. I am teaching a course on Germany that partly touches on the Holocaust … but only in passing. The Holocaust is but a small, minor part of the course … Regarding the HSC exam, a teacher would not expect a specific question on the Holocaust. At most, one might expect a wide-ranging question on racism … With this in mind I suggest to students that they read extracts regarding the fate of the Jews. Only a period or two of face-to-face teaching would be devoted to this.

**Outcomes: teaching history: teaching Jewish history**

Most\(^\text{14}\) of the history teachers in this study fall into two distinct groups or locations (that is, contexts) — teachers who teach secular history and ‘belong’ or are located in secular history departments, and teachers who teach Jewish history and are located in Jewish Studies departments. What comes to light, after careful scrutiny of the data, is that due to their respective locations or contexts (in either secular history or Jewish Studies departments) these teachers are socialised into two distinctive perspectives or ‘worlds’ on teaching history. Secular history teachers follow the guidelines set by the Board of Studies New South Wales in its *K-12 Curriculum Framework*. This framework mandates that K-12 syllabi meet a set of ‘broad learning outcomes’. These learning outcomes suggest that students will: understand, develop and communicate ideas, access, analyse, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources; understand and apply a variety of analytical, critical and creative techniques.

---

\(^{14}\) Claire is the *only* history teacher in this study who teaches both secular and Jewish history.
to solve problems, amongst others\textsuperscript{15}. In addition to this, the HSC Stage 6 History Extension Course encourages students to develop higher order thinking skills, including the ability to undertake historical inquiry as well as engage with complex questions like: What Is History? Who Are the Historians? Hence, teachers teaching secular history, endeavour to be objective, critical, and non-partisan.

On the other hand, Jewish history teachers follow a Jewish Studies curriculum that has a fundamental, over-arching aim of: focusing on the subjective, emotional and the personal — connecting students with their Jewishness.\textsuperscript{16} In the main, Jewish history teachers aim to develop students’ knowledge and ownership of their history — strengthening their students’ Jewish identity, heightening their sense of community, encouraging personal responsibility for ensuring Jewish continuity (not giving Hitler a posthumous victory) as well as fostering ‘the act of remembering’ (Fachler, et al, 2005, p. 4). The following comments reflect the kind of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, that both secular and Jewish history teachers think important for our youth.

**Historical knowledge: Knowledge of the facts**

Both secular and Jewish history teachers place a lot of importance on the possession of historical knowledge — what happened, how it happened and why it happened. Jewish history teachers, in particular, believe that their students have to be ‘armed’ with a strong knowledge base in the face of escalating Holocaust denial. Philip believes that possessing knowledge is foundational to judgement. Philip said:

> I want knowledge, knowledge of detail. I want some degree of you used the word ‘empathy’ before. I suppose sensitivity. I want them to be able to know who key Jewish figures were during the Holocaust, to be able to discuss in a mature way. I want them to know the history before passing judgement. I am not interested in students passing judgement on things of

\textsuperscript{15} For more information on the 7–12 syllabi see the Board of Studies NSW website: http://www.boardofstudies.new.edu.au

\textsuperscript{16} In New South Wales and Victoria, the situation is explained by Berman, ‘Although under the same roof, within Jewish schools, Jewish Studies and secular studies are in effect two separate departments … each with its own internal, and organizational structure’ [Berman, 2001, p. 80], as well as curriculum.
which they know nothing. There is too much of that happening in the world… There must be some measure of reflection, and such reflection should be informed …

Rachel, another Jewish history teacher, shares Philip’s sentiments:

I want our students to have sufficient knowledge, factual knowledge to be able to explain and respond to others [who try to deny the Holocaust took place].

Most of the Jewish history teachers in my sample agree with Berman’s findings that ‘one of the primary desired outcomes of Holocaust education … is knowledge of the historical facts and an understanding of what happened’ (2001, p. 97).

Critical thinking

A third of the teachers in my sample ranked critical thinking as the seminal skill for students to master. For Olivia, it is what separates humans from beasts. One of her core beliefs—a product of her socialisation—is the importance of teaching her students to be active and critical thinkers. Olivia said:

My overwhelming aim is to get them [students] to see the value of thinking. I think the life of the mind is what distinguishes humans from animals … George Bush and CIA prisons use torture, Guantanamo Bay etc enrage me, and I see it as similar to other outrages - not necessarily in scope but in style. I try to teach the girls to think about why these things happen, not just to feel angry [or not] about them.

Like Olivia, Charlotte also believes that critical thinking is an essential tool that her students need to possess. Charlotte said:

… to realise the importance of searching for the truth of what happened. It troubles me that things can be glossed over or diminished, even by one or two people who say it didn’t happen, wasn’t nearly as bad. So I want them to develop critical thinking and to have the desire to get to the truth as much as they possibly can. I want them to think about themselves as human beings and what is a just and fair society.
James also values critical thinking above all else. It is his primary goal. James said:

The only thing I really want them to do is to think. I say, ‘If you learn some history along the way, I’m gratified, but really I want you to think critically.’

Global citizenship

All of the Jewish history teachers in my sample agree that ‘most Jewish high schools recognise both the Jewish and universal aspects and implications of the Holocaust’ (Berman, 2001, p. 97). This is clearly evident in Esther’s opinion. Esther said:

It is very much about trying to make kids sensitive not just to the plight of Jews but there is a universal component to all this. Not to be silent when they see tragedy happening to other people.

Judith also teaches her students to look beyond their egocentric selves and to become responsible global citizens. Judith said:

I wonder if the world could have done more. I want the students to think that the world could have done more, and then [encourage them to see the importance of the bystander and how] it reflects directly on them. Like if they hear about things they shouldn’t just sit and do nothing. Elie Wiesel says that indifference is to him, worse than hatred. It was indifference of the rest of the world that enabled things like this to happen. I want them to think, well bad things are happening in the world today are you going to sit there and say, ‘that’s terrible’ and go on with you life? I want them to somehow get an awareness … they can write letters or they can raise money for famine victims – not to be complacent. I don’t want to teach this course and for them to go away untouched. I want them to think okay this happened to our grandparents and great-grandparents. How can we make a difference in the world? I want to touch their humanity.

Secular history teachers are also committed to instil moral values. Olivia said:

When I’m doing the racial state I’m quite disassociated and we get into the philosophical/ethical issues about what we should have the power to do. We consider whether a state should have the power to do anything. I want them more morally aware and I find that a rewarding task.
The outcome that James (like most of the other secular teachers) wants his students to leave with is a melding of thinking and feeling. James said:

I suppose the end of it is the ‘never again’ thing. Although it’s difficult, it’s trying to provide the sense of that. ‘Bad things happen when good people do nothing.’ So, the sense that if enough people, even though they consider themselves individuals, small, unimportant, if enough of them are concerned about something, and do something, then they can have an effect. It was those sorts of people not doing anything … let the Holocaust to occur to the degree that it occurred … thinking about what ought to be and what ought not to be …

‘Schooling’ emotion

One of the fundamental questions that teachers of the Holocaust have to grapple with is: ‘Beyond knowledge of the historical fact, what is it we hope our students to learn?’ (Baum, 1996, p. 44). In addition to a strong knowledge base, moral behaviour, critical thinking and activism, Jewish history teachers have a further agenda. One of the primary aims of Jewish history teachers is schooling emotions — teaching their students what they should ‘feel about the historical facts’ (Baum, 1996, p. 45). They place a lot of emphasis on schooling their students’ emotions. Janet’s experience attests to this practice and illustrates her location, including her socialisation into Jewish Studies. She also points to the differences that she perceives between teaching secular and Jewish history, and the importance she places on ‘pedagogical emotion’ (Baum, 1996, p. 46). Janet said:

When I taught history that [developing critical thinking and analysing sources] was very important because it was important for students to acquire those skills. In Jewish history we do that but I don’t see that as my primary aim. My primary aim is to foster Jewish identity and that they [students] should come away trying to get some of the passion that I feel for it. Feeling that is a way of connecting to their Judaism.

My definition [of the term ‘history’] is the same [as that of secular history teachers], it’s just my emphasis in teaching it is different. It’s less on the skills, and more on the content, and the children’s response to the content. When I taught history, I wanted them to be interested and I found it fascinating. Always have. I love history I did it right through university. But, most of my teaching career has been in Jewish history, because I only taught, maybe five years before I came to Australia, and from then onwards Jewish history. If I was asked to teach history my agenda would be different as I see myself very much part of the Jewish
Studies department ... Jewish history is part of the Jewish Studies department and it definitely puts it in a different light.

If you teach in the secular history context you are much more objective, much more neutral. There’s far less emphasis on the affective side of the educational process. It’s much more on the factual, and much more on the knowledge. Empathy, the identification, the concept of memory, and the importance of the personal connection – I don’t think they in history would dwell on that … Jewish history is teaching about the Jews, there’s that personal element. It’s about their [students] families and that’s how the personal empathy enters into it. They see the Jewish people as their people. Jewish history, and especially the Holocaust are personal, it’s part of our religion, its part of our culture, its part of who we are.

Like Janet, Natalie was initially trained in secular history. She too has abandoned what she learnt at university: ‘I’ve moved on from wanting to teach them like I learnt at university — facts, figures and the reliability of sources.’ She places a far greater emphasis on the affective curriculum, the importance of the 614th commandment, remembering (zahor) and pedagogical emotion — teaching to ‘the heart’. Natalie said:

I believe in Jewish history you have to teach to the heart, because that’s what gets them. It’s everything associated with Jewish history, and that’s why it is such a beautiful thing to teach … It’s our culture, it’s our people - it’s us. It’s an added dimension because this is our history … This is my Eastern European shtetl. This was my father. This was my grandfather who lived in the shtetl. Your grandfather lived there too. This is his experience it’s not someone else’s, it’s particular to ours … What you are doing is, you’re trying to get into every kid’s heart and into their soul.

Natalie’s and Janet’s approach to teaching Jewish history reflects the disciplinary training (that is, secular history) in which they had originally been trained. Their experiences support Wilson & Wineburg’s (1988) research concerning the important influences that disciplinary training plays in the methods used by teachers teaching history in classrooms. However, the experiences of Natalie and Janet also advances Wilson & Wineburg’s (1988) findings, in that even though these teachers attempted to retain the initial structures of the discipline within which they had been trained, they eventually jettisoned them due to location or context (their particular subject department) in which they teach.
Rachel’s experience also highlights the importance that Jewish history teachers place on pedagogical emotion — developing students’ personal and emotional engagement with their history as well as on the act of remembering. Rachel said:

If I were just teaching history, my level would be academic. Teaching [Jewish] history I always like it to come to the personal. I like to use the language of ‘us’ and ‘we’ so that it’s a personal history, whereas if I’m teaching something else it would be much more objective. So, I can be subjective. History is a strong component in teaching Jewish history because we are a people who have always guarded our collective historical experience, but as it says in the Pesach seder, ‘You must read it as if you went out of Egypt.’ That’s the combination of facts, but with a personal identification. In my teaching I talk about the unique and the universal, and the individual and the communal. I work on those pivots all the time. It’s false to separate it (Jewish history and memory) out. I teach both history and memory. I think there’s a continuum, an inter-meshing. It’s absolutely, the continuum being transmitted through the personal.

If I was teaching a straight forward history class where I was teaching the Cold War in Russia for example, I’d be teaching it very differently because it’s not my history. It’s impacted on the whole world, whereas Jewish history is me, it’s shaped who I am. It’s shaped who we are. I think that if I am going to be successful as a Jewish history teacher I will want to be creating empathy and ownership. It doesn’t mean you can’t create empathy when you are talking about events in China, Africa or the aboriginal people. Teaching Jewish history is layered. We aren’t just a people of history. Obviously I want to foster a sense of Judaism, because this is not separate from living and surviving as Jews.

Janet, Rachel and Natalie’s educational beliefs and their context — the Jewish Studies department — in which they teach highlights the ways in which the subject or subject department frames teaching practice. Their situation supports Siskin who argues that ‘departmental designations are not only labels that distinguish teachers, but boundaries that divide them into distinct and different worlds’ (1991, p. 15).

Totten speaks for all teachers when he says that what he wants is ‘… a governing conviction in teaching the Holocaust — that a primary reason for Holocaust education is not only to learn about the Holocaust, but to learn from it, in ways that

17 In Rachel’s case, her beliefs highlight her confusion about what is historical empathy. Having trained as an English teacher, this could be due to her lack of disciplinary training in History.
encourage sound ethical reflection, more respect for human life and greater
determination to mend the world’ (2001, p. xi). Ultimately, we want our students to be thinking and feeling human beings.

**Conclusion**

This chapter reveals that some teachers continue to misunderstand historical empathy and remain unclear about its meaning. My initial assumption that those closest to the Holocaust—the (Holocaust) second generation and the Jewish South Africans—would use historical empathy to develop their students’ understanding of this particular trauma is not supported by my empirical materials. Ironically, the groups that are closest to this history avoid using it because they find it too difficult emotionally. In fact, most teachers in my sample avoid using historical empathy in teaching the Holocaust. There is a range of reasons for doing so: beliefs; emotional knowledge and/or emotional connection; context and the HSC syllabus.

What emerges from this chapter is that context is the key agent shaping teachers’ classroom practices. Wilson & Wineburg’s (1988) findings that teachers’ beliefs about history as a discipline ‘legitimise content selection and pedagogy’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 33) is supported by the findings of this chapter. However, the teachers in this project demonstrate that, despite their initial attempts to retain the structures and knowledge of the discipline in which they were originally trained, they abandoned them due to the location or context (subject department) in which they taught. The most significant finding that comes to light in this chapter is that context trumps personal and emotional history. Context, and not personal history, determines how and what is taught. The above research findings support Little & McLaughlin’s view that ‘the dimensions of the school setting (subjects and/or subject departments) are the most influential in shaping the ways in which teachers think about practice, and what they do in the classroom … The subject department is the workplace ‘context’ of greatest consequence’” (1993, pp. 79 and 81).

Historical knowledge, critical thinking and moral behaviour are, in the final analysis, what teachers want their students to learn. What becomes evident from the above is
that teaching secular history requires teachers to focus on the objective, analytical and non-partisan dimensions of teaching history. Teachers teaching Jewish history focus on schooling their students’ emotions — their personal ownership, engagement, and identification with their history.

In this chapter the focus was on teachers’ orientations (the use or non use of historical empathy) to develop students’ historical understanding of this history. It is in this chapter that context emerges as the most significant player (Fahey, 2007) in determining teachers’ classroom instructional choices/practices. In the next and final chapter, I re-examine my research topic and theories that I have held, and record my key findings. I also signal areas in need of further inquiry.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

_Little Gidding V_—T.S. Eliot

Introduction

Having come to the end of my journey, I have taken time to reflect on my ‘travels’ as well as on my discoveries. I have come to the realisation that the voyage exposed three dimensions of my substantial self: i. the subjective, emotional, private and personal self—the daughter of Holocaust survivors; ii. the researcher or interviewer self—the research instrument; and iii. the self of the history teacher. These roles have enabled me to unearth ‘nuggets of essential meanings’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 3) through my interpretations and understandings of my participants’ realities or lived experiences. These discoveries are made on two levels, the external—objective and academic; and the internal—subjective and emotional.

My personal indignation of ‘How can ‘they’ (teachers other than direct descendants of Holocaust survivors) teach this history (the Holocaust), when ‘they’ have no knowledge or connection to it?’ fuelled this study. I soon realised that in order to answer this question, I would need to investigate the modalities of teachers’ knowledge—emotional, personal and/or professional as well as understand emotion and its relevance to teaching history (in this instance, the Holocaust). This chapter re-examines the research question, considers the contribution that this research has made to teachers’ knowledge (Zembylas, 2007) research, and identifies potential areas for further investigation.
Level 1: External objective and academic

Researcher’s assumptions & beliefs

I began this quest believing that the teacher’s biography was the missing paradigm—the centre piece of making sense or understanding his/her classroom instruction. This belief was premised on the following four assumptions. (i) There is but one concept of biography. (ii) Biography is the player of greatest significance in shaping teachers’ classroom instruction and, therefore, history teachers who are directly, emotionally, privately and/or personally connected to the history or subject matter they teach, would teach it with greater fervour, intensity and/or authenticity than teachers with no such connection. (iii) Biography determines teachers’ orientations to the subject matter; therefore, teachers who are closest to a particular trauma (in this case, the Holocaust) would use historical empathy to develop their students’ historical as well as emotional understanding of it. (iv) Biography is ‘a window on to teachers’ … ways of knowing and working’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 113). My research question, the design of the research and the methodology adopted for it are all governed by these four assumptions. In this thesis I assess the extent to which the empirical evidence supports these assumptions.

Biography as the written record of a person’s life

My initial assumption was that biography means little more than a chronological record of the formative experiences in a person’s life. However, I quickly recognised that this definition was both inadequate and superficial. As a consequence of becoming well versed in sociological literature on biography, I formed the understanding that biography was rather a sequence or process, arising from ‘the stages of social experience’ (Berger & Berger, 1972, p. 7) of an individual’s life experiences. Furthermore, as Mills (1959), Denzin (1984) and Sartre (1981) remind us, there is even another component to biography—one without which the construct

---

1 Initially I believed or accepted the everyday meaning of the term—a written record or account of a person’s life.
is incomplete. All three propose that there is a triadic relationship between biography, history and society:

Each individual sums up in his lifetime a segment of history. In their slice of history and in their projects, individuals reproduce the epoch they are part of. To understand people then requires that they and their projects be situated within the particular moment in lived historical time, world time (Sartre, quoted in Denzin 1984, p. 91).

Goodson’s (1980, p. 63) argument that the intersection of the individual and the context within which he/she lives his/her life is integral to that person’s biography, also supports this view. My findings that context is the primary influence in shaping teachers’ pedagogy is an extension of this proposition and is supported by arguments made by Socket (1987); Siskin & Little (1995); and Fahey (2007). My research also establishes context—in particular the subject department—as the ‘most consequential’ (Siskin & Little, 1995) for teachers’ work.

Biography as the principal influence on the teaching act

Both the literature and the findings of this study support the importance of teachers’ biographies (that accompany teachers into their classroom context) and the importance of the recognition of ‘the primacy and persistence of early personal experiences’ (Raymond, Butt & Townsend, 1992, p. 150) in crafting teachers’ subject practices. Reiterating this position, Connelly & Clandinin argue that, from an educational perspective, ‘a teaching act is … an expression of biography and history … in a particular situation’ (1985, p. 184). My findings clearly demonstrate that teachers’ biographies are the prisms through which teachers’ pedagogical choices and decisions are made visible. Teaching is a very personal act (Carter & Doyle 1996, p. 122) and therefore only a biographical approach can reveal its unique dimensions.

Furthermore, my empirical materials illustrate that teachers who are still emotionally and privately linked to a trauma (in this case, the (Holocaust) second generation) do,

in some instances, find it problematic to teach it. On the other hand, it is precisely because of their emotional connection, that these teachers are the ones who are best able to make this history real. Ironically, those teachers who have emotional, private and personal transactions with this history — the (Holocaust) second generation and Jewish South African teachers— avoid using historical empathy in developing their students’ historical and emotional understandings of it. They do so because they find it too confronting emotionally. However, whilst my empirical materials indicate that teachers’ biographies are seminal in directing teachers’ repertories, it is context that is of the greatest consequence. In line with contextual theorists, my empirical materials also ‘foregrounds context as (the most) manipulative in casting and colouring teachers’ decisions’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 197).

**Biography as a way of knowing**

The last 20 years have seen ‘the forceful emergence of an emphasis on teachers’ personal knowledge’ (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 122). Unequivocally, educational theorists position biography at the centre of teaching practice. This gives voice to the teacher as well as acknowledges him/her as an active component in the educative process. Current research has shifted from the study of teachers and teaching per se to the study of teaching practices which draw their source from the biography of the teacher. Both the advocates of this position, educational theorists, and the findings of this study suggest that teaching practices and classroom contexts are also inextricably inter-related and cannot be examined through conventional research methods—only though a biographical approach.

My interviews confirm the well supported notion of educational theorists that teaching is an emotional practice. Empirical materials suggest there is a new ‘vein’ of teacher knowledge that gives teaching its emotional dimensions. Further more, at a more incisive level (Fahey, 2007) empirical materials point to a more refined type of emotional knowledge. This is a knowledge—the ‘second generation’ (in this case, the children of Holocaust survivors) emotional knowledge (SGEK)—that only a unique group of teachers’ possess.
Level 2: Internal subjective and emotional

Nam Le’s (2008) assertion ‘not to write what no-one else could have written but to write what only [the] I could have written’ spoke to me strongly at the start of this journey. I and others of my generation (direct descendants of Holocaust survivors) are leaving history classrooms. Thus, it was particularly timely and perhaps even fortuitous to embark on this journey: a journey that is not only close to my heart but also has the added advantage of affording me a ‘privileged’ position in regard to two of my potential groups of participants.

The source of my initial resentment came from deep within me. It welled up and manifested itself by being protective of my Holocaust legacy. I needed my feelings to be vindicated or validated. I believed that I and those like me, the (Holocaust) second generation, should retain our ‘ownership’ of this history and, therefore, others had no business teaching it. At the time, I could not articulate, nor name, nor explain what I was guarding so fiercely. It is ironic, that it is only now, at the end of my journey, as I look back that I can recognise it for what it is. This quest has been generated, as I have already written, from deep within me: from the depth of my emotional knowledge (of this history)—my (Holocaust) second generation emotional knowledge (SGEK). I now realise that ultimately this research has been my quest to better understand myself and ‘… to arrive where [I] started and know the place for the first time’ (T.S. Eliot). I now also know that teaching this history (the Holocaust), for me and others of the (Holocaust) second generation is and always will be biography, while for other teachers (this does not include Jewish South African teachers who identify strongly with this experience), it will always remain just another history, any history—learned. Consequently, for the children of Holocaust survivors, teaching the Holocaust is teaching their subjective, internalised and emotional history. ‘We, the Holocaust second generation, have discovered that we are as tied to that history as we are to our parents. Their history as it turns out, is ours’ (Adler, 2008, p. 63).

---

3 (Holocaust) Second Generation teachers as well as history teachers
4 That other teachers (especially the Jewish South African teachers who had joined the staff of the school in which I was teaching and who, in the main, had no emotional, private or personal connection to the Holocaust) would teach the Holocaust.
Thus, on both levels, the external (objective and academic) and the internal (subjective and emotional), teachers’ biographies are the missing paradigm that unlocks understandings of their classrooms and their subject practices.

The contribution of this research

My belief in the importance of understanding the teacher’s biography and the need for it to be placed at the centre of teaching practice, locates this research in the growing legion of studies on the nature and development of teachers’ personal knowledge. My work is underpinned by the work of the following researchers: Butt (1984); Connelly & Clandinin (1985); Zeichner, Tabachnic & Densmore (1987); Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi (1988); Butt & Raymond (1989); Louden (1991); Goodson (1980, 1992); and Raymond, Butt & Townsend (1992). In the last 20 years, researchers have focused on ‘teacher knowledge’ (Zembylas 2007) and with it teachers’ personal perspectives with respect to that knowledge (Butt & Raymond, 1989). Studies like those cited above are based on a biographical perspective that requires ‘intimate’ and lengthy conversations with teachers and are premised on the belief that ‘teaching practice, teachers’ personal experiences and the nature of their instruction are deeply personal matters, inexorably linked to one’s identity and, thus, one’s life story’ (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120).

An emphasis on biography, in teaching represents the shift that has taken place in the way the teacher is regarded. He/she is no longer viewed merely as a tool in the educative process but as an active, capable and knowledgeable agent. This new perspective of teachers emphasises the teacher’s personal voice as well as a view of the teacher ‘as a source of practices and an educative medium’ (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120). For the purpose of this research, I have conceptualised biography as a composite of numerous intersecting and interacting forces that are part: family, emotion, biology, social, history, culture, community, education, occupation and

5 Pinar (1986) calls these experiences ‘the architecture of self’ – the private person composed of an amalgam of elements such as values, beliefs, feelings and personal interests.
chance. I also define it as, a unique form of knowledge, or orientation to the social world.

In this study I draw on the scholarship cited previously to explain the importance of the teacher’s biography along with his/her emotional knowledge (EK). I argue 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.\(^6\) In a similar vein, Daniel Goleman’s (1995) groundbreaking book, *Emotional Intelligence* or EQ, argues that our view of human intelligence is too restrictive and that our emotions play a much more significant role in thoughts, decisions and individual successes than was previously acknowledged. He maintains that EQ composed of: self awareness; perseverance; self-motivation; empathy and social skills (amongst others) are all attributes which predispose people to the challenges of life. Whereas Daniel Goleman (1995) is concerned with a form of *ability* or *intelligence*, I am referring to a *form*\(^7\) as well as *source*\(^8\) of knowledge.

My research extends the work on ‘biographic scholarship’ (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120) on teachers’ personal knowledge by unpacking the emotional, private and personal dimensions. Butt and Raymond and their colleagues have used ‘collaborative autobiography’ (Butt et al, 1988) to distil as well as locate the genesis and development of teachers’ personal, practical and professional knowledge. They have established that the influences on teachers’ personal, practical knowledge include: ‘their experiences as children, parents, cultural backgrounds, personal and professional experiences and peers’ (Butt & Raymond, 1989, p. 413). However, they do not denote the teachers’ emotional, private and personal knowledge (their emotional knowledge) as a distinct form of knowledge; nor do they identify it as a

\(^6\) The process of socialisation is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

\(^7\) I am referring to the difference between emotional knowledge and other forms or bodies of teachers’ knowledge, such – professional, practical and personal knowledge. See Chapter 2 pp. 50-62, as well as those cited by Shulman 1987, p. 8.

\(^8\) Other sources of teachers’ knowledge (for example text books and teaching experience) are discussed by Lee Shulman 1987, p. 8.
potent and potential contributor to the forces that shape and colour teachers’ classroom instruction.

Shulman’s (1987) study on the professional, knowledge-base framework for teaching proposes seven categories of knowledge that teachers need ‘to plan curriculum, transform content for a student audience and represent subject matter in authentic ways’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 35). He also establishes four main sources for teaching the knowledge-base. Shulman admits that the knowledge-base for teaching is ‘not fixed and final’ and that ‘much if not most of the knowledge-base remains to be discovered and invented’ (1987, p. 12). My project has uncovered history teachers’ emotional knowledge as an additional and distinct form of knowledge. Furthermore, this study argues that the history teacher’s ‘substantial self’, particularly, the substantial self’s emotional dimensions (emotional history and emotional knowledge) is potentially another source of content or subject matter knowledge, in instances, where the history teacher is directly — emotionally, privately and personally — connected to the history (in this case, the Holocaust) or subject matter that he or she teaches. It is only the ‘second generation’ (of war, atrocity, genocide and/or natural disasters) who possess this form of emotional knowledge.

Associated studies (Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Evans, 1994) have determined that, teachers’ disciplinary training frames teachers’ conceptions or beliefs about the nature of history, as well as shapes their pedagogy. This research builds on Wilson & Wineburg’s (1988) study by demonstrating that context rather than teachers’ beliefs (about history) ultimately determine their, ‘content selection and pedagogy’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 33). Teachers in my sample amended or even abandoned their initial disciplinary training or beliefs about the nature of history, depending on the location within which they taught their subject — the department (secular or Jewish Studies).

---

10 These are: scholarship in the content discipline, educational materials, school structures and resources and wisdom of practice.
11 The emotional dimensions of the ‘substantial self’ have yet to be fully mapped. I refer only to the emotional dimensions that I have identified.
In a related study, Evans (1994) explores the relationship between teachers’ biographies, their conceptions of history and their teaching styles. He constructed five ‘types’ or categories: storytellers, scientific historians, relativist-reformers, cosmic philosophers and eclectics. Based on his categorisation, he predicted an individual teacher’s approach to and delivery of a particular subject. Findings from Evans’ (1994) study suggest that ‘teachers’ conceptions of history grow out of childhood experiences and academic training and mirror schools of disciplinary thought and are often aligned with religious and political affiliations’ (Fahey, 2007, p. 35). Evans’ (1994) study is the only study to date that establishes a relationship between teachers’ biographies and their pedagogy. However, his explanations are at best superficial. My study extends Evans’ (1994) findings by providing detailed explanations of this link and establishing that direct links between the (history) teachers’ primary socialisation and their conceptualisations of history or their beliefs about the nature of history do exist.12 Furthermore, this project also addresses the gaps in the literature noted by Knight (1996), in the United Kingdom and Wilson (2001), in the United States.13

By describing the emotion work undertaken by secondary school history teachers to manage their emotions when teaching emotionally confronting subject matter like the Holocaust, my research advances the sociology of emotions literature—efforts to express, suppress or manufacture emotion—in the area of teachers’ ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1979).

Literature on the (Holocaust) second generation experience is diverse as well as extensive.14 Overwhelmingly, the ‘cargo of knowledge’ (Hoffman, 2004, p. 33), delivered directly to and carried by the sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors, is emotional in nature. According to Hoffman, what this generation received was ‘the

12 See chapter 6 for details.
13 Knight and Wilson note the need for studies that explain the genesis of teachers’ educational beliefs, judgements and behaviour and their consequences for history education.
emotional sequels of our elder’s experiences … not a processed, resolved, past, but the splintered signs of acute suffering, grief and loss’ (2004, p. 34). Wajnryb (2001) maintains that this particular kind of knowledge is acquired almost pre-birth and is ‘an oblique knowledge, more a visceral sensing, a subconscious rather than a cognitive knowing’ (2001, pp. 135-136). Berger & Berger (2001), Wajnryb (2001) and Hoffman (2004) all agree that the children of Holocaust survivors are the legatees of a chaotic cluster of emotions — grief, loss, guilt, fear and shame. However, they do not acknowledge this knowledge specifically or explicitly as a special form of emotional knowledge. Nor do they claim that it is a distinct and unique \textsuperscript{15} form of knowledge — one that only members of a ‘second generation’ (SGEK) can possess. This special form of emotional knowledge is generational — shared by and limited to children who have experienced trauma associated with war, atrocity, genocide and/or natural disasters.

In the literature concerning (Holocaust) second generation experience, only one person, Aaron Hass (1990) the author of \textit{In the Shadow of the Holocaust} recognises the existence of such knowledge. Whilst Hass (1990) makes the observation or passing reference\textsuperscript{16} that the (Holocaust) second generation’s knowledge is emotional as distinct from historical knowledge, he neither elaborates on his understanding nor explains what he means.

\textbf{Where to next: Areas for potential research}

History makes us aware that there is no finality in human affairs; there is not a static perfection and an unimprovable wisdom to be achieved.

\begin{flushright}
Bertrand Russell
\end{flushright}

The case histories presented in this thesis are biographical conceptions of my participants’ lived worlds. Collectively, they demonstrate the capacity of biography

\textsuperscript{15} “Second generation” emotional knowledge (SGEK) is a completely different form of emotional knowledge to the one used by, M. Zembylas (2007). His (2007) article focuses on the intersection of emotional knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. \textit{Teaching & Teacher Education}, 23(4) p. 356.

\textsuperscript{16} See Aaron Hass (1990) \textit{In the Shadow of the Holocaust} (p. 157).
to depict teachers’ working realities and their teaching practices. Biographical inquiry enables researchers to tap into the human dimensions of lives, with all their foibles and emotions.

Research on emotions in education is very much in its infancy. It is clear from the sociological and educational literature and my findings that there is still a great deal of work to be done in this area. The empirical materials have opened a window onto a largely unexplored terrain—teachers’ emotional knowledge. It has also identified a dimension of teachers’ emotional knowledge that is unique and uncharted—second generation emotional knowledge (SGEK). There is ample scope for research to locate and study other types or other communities with second generation emotional knowledge. A further extension of SGEK could lead to the exploration of the cultural and/or collective dimensions of emotional knowledge. This is particularly relevant to the twentieth century with its genocides. Arlie Hochschild’s (1979) invitation to develop the field of emotion work into other client-based services has tremendous potential and merit. Whilst my interviews highlight the specific nature of emotion work engaged in by history teachers to manage their own emotions in Holocaust classrooms, there is barely any literature on teachers’ emotion work in other subject areas. Although there are some studies on teachers’ emotions involving anger and frustration, there are no studies on more optimistic emotions like fulfilment and pride (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007).

Emotions continue to suffer from a poor image and are in a desperate need of a makeover. It seems that many researchers continue to regard emotions as irrational and childlike rather than as a valuable and indispensable means of understanding and interpreting our worlds. Researchers need to change their attitudes and beliefs, and recognise that the study of emotions, particularly emotion in teaching and learning, will prove rewarding both academically and personally as well as open the door to a revolutionary way of understanding the classrooms of the future.
References


Appendices
Appendix 1

Ethics approval letter
6 May 2004

Dr L Scanlon
Faculty of Education and Social Work
Building A35
The University of Sydney

Dear Dr Scanlon

Thank you for your correspondence dated 8 April 2004 addressing comments made to you by the Committee. After considering the additional information, the Executive Committee at its meeting on 30 April 2004 approved your protocol on the study below. Please note that subject to annual monitoring returns, the approved protocol is valid for five years.

Title: How does the life history of selected secondary school modern history teachers shape their teaching and representation of the Nazi Holocaust?

Ref No: 7342

Approval Period: April 2004 – April 2005

Authorised Personnel: Dr L Scanlon
Mrs Sophie Gelski

The additional information will be filed with your application.

In order to comply with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans, and in line with the Human Research Ethics Committee requirements the Chief investigator’s responsibility is to ensure that:

1. The individual researcher’s protocol complies with the final and Committee approved protocol.
2. Modifications to the protocol cannot proceed until such approval is obtained in writing.
3. The confidentiality and anonymity of all research subjects is maintained at all times, except as required by law.
(4) All research subjects are provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.

(5) The Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.

(6) The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Sheet. *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.*

(7) The standard University policy concerning storage of data and tapes should be followed. While temporary storage of data or tapes at the researcher’s home or an off-campus site is acceptable during the active transcription phase of the project, permanent storage should be at a secure, University controlled site for a minimum of five years.

(8) A progress report should be provided by the end of each year. Failure to do so will lead to withdrawal of the approval of the research protocol and re-application to the Committee must occur before recommencing. Your first report will be due on 30 April 2005.

(9) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Associate Professor Stewart Kellie  
Chairman, Human Research Ethics Committee

Encl. Participant Information Sheet  
Letter to Schools  
Consent Form  
Questionnaire

cc Mrs Sophie Gelski, 26 Martin Road, Centennial Park NSW 2021
Appendix 2

Past HSC Modern History examination questions
Option E: Germany 1918–1945

Attempt BOTH Question 12 and Question 13

Question 12 (20 marks)

(a) Account for the development of militarism in Germany between 1928 and 1945.  

OR

(b) Explain how Hitler made use of racism in German society between 1928 and 1945.

Question 13 (20 marks)

(a) Leni Riefenstahl

(i) Outline the main events in the career of Leni Riefenstahl from the 1920s to 1945.  

(ii) Assess Leni Riefenstahl’s role in the transformation of German social and cultural life under Nazism.

OR

(b) Albert Speer

(i) Outline the major events in the career of Albert Speer from 1931 to 1945.  

(ii) Assess Albert Speer’s role in the Nazi war machine.
Option E: Germany 1918–1945

Attempt BOTH Question 12 and Question 13

Question 12 (20 marks)

(a) Discuss the impact of the Depression on democracy in Germany in the period up to 1934.

OR

(b) Evaluate the success of the Nazi Party in transforming Germany into a Nazi society in the period 1933–1945.

Question 13 (20 marks)

(a) Leni Riefenstahl

(i) Identify the major features of the life of Leni Riefenstahl in the period 1920–1945.

(ii) 'Leni Riefenstahl's only significance was as a propagandist for the Third Reich.'

In the light of this statement, assess the significance of Leni Riefenstahl's work in Nazi propaganda until 1945.

OR

(b) Albert Speer

(i) Identify the major features of the life of Albert Speer in the period 1927–1945.

(ii) 'Albert Speer was clearly involved in Nazi terror, repression and anti-semitism during the Third Reich.'

In the light of this statement, assess the part played by Albert Speer in implementing and supporting Nazi terror and racial policies.
Option E: Germany 1918–1945

Attempt BOTH Question 12 and Question 13

Question 12 (20 marks)

(a) Assess the view that the collapse of the Weimar Republic was primarily due to the appeal of Hitler and his Nazi Party.

OR

(b) Evaluate the significance of the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943 for the military defeat and collapse of Nazism in 1945.

Question 13 (20 marks)

(a) Leni Riefenstahl

   (i) Write a brief biography of Leni Riefenstahl, outlining the key events in her life to 1945. 10

   (ii) 'Through her lens, Leni Riefenstahl gave the world the lasting images of Nazi Germany.'

       In the light of this statement, assess the view that Leni Riefenstahl was documenting history rather than creating propaganda.

OR

(b) Albert Speer

   (i) Write a brief biography of Albert Speer, outlining the key events in his life to 1945. 10

   (ii) 'Despite his claim not to be a committed Nazi, Albert Speer played a vital role in the Third Reich.'

       In the light of this statement, assess the role played by Albert Speer in the creation and maintenance of the Nazi war machine to 1945.
2005 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
Modern History

Section II — National Studies

40 marks

Option E: Germany 1918–1945

Attempt BOTH Question 12 and Question 13

Question 12 (20 marks)

(a) Assess the impact of conservative parties and elites on German politics in the period 1918–1934.

OR

(b) Evaluate the view that Germany was a totalitarian society in the period 1933–1945.

Question 13 (20 marks)

(a) Leni Riefenstahl

(i) Outline the main features in the public life of Leni Riefenstahl in the period you have studied.

(ii) Evaluate the role of Leni Riefenstahl in Nazi attempts to transform German social and cultural life.

OR

(b) Albert Speer

(i) Outline the main features in the public life of Albert Speer in the period you have studied.

(ii) Evaluate the role of Albert Speer in supporting and implementing Nazi racial policies.