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The History of Teaching the Holocaust in Public Secondary Schools in the United States, from the 1960s to the Present

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The History of Teaching the Holocaust in Public Secondary Schools in the United States, from the 1960s to the Present

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Dedication

To my Jewish heritage and ancestry.

"Action is the only remedy to indifference: the most insidious danger of all."

-Elie Wiesel

Introduction

In the preface to *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot says that he "grew up in a family where history sat at the dinner table."[1] The scene was very familiar to me from my upbringing. At a Passover seder or at a family gathering or when my mother and I were alone, she would talk about the Holocaust. In a very passionate way, so different from her normal demeanor as a real estate agent, she would call up the horrors of Kristallnacht, the concentration camps, the gas chambers, and the six million Jews who were killed. No one else in the family would tell these stories. They kept quiet about them. She was the odd one even though she did not live through it, her parents and grandparents did. And I was her rapt audience, fascinated by the details. Maybe it was her emotional investment in this history that drew me or something else. All I knew was that these times left me with a deep appreciation for authentic historical truth telling and total disinterest in any factoid, watered down, incomplete treatment of the past.

Not surprisingly then, I struggled with middle school Social Studies, which was the integration of multiple subjects to constitute a field of study. These subjects included social sciences and the humanities (history, geography, civics, economics, sociology, and culture), and together they allowed for the teaching and understanding of contemporary problems relating to civic education. There was no "history" class, and no platform for me to delve deeper into the authenticity of history and truth that my mother had made sure to bring me up with. Looking back now, I don't understand why they didn't call it History when that was exactly what we were learning. It made me feel like I was a child, which I was, but more than that I was a student, and I wanted to be treated as such and the title of Social Studies made me feel like I was not worthy to

[1] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995, page xvii.

learn at the level I believed I was at. The material was presented through games, activities, and the consumption of media as opposed to discussions and assignments that could have prompted stronger historical thinking in response to historical questions. That being said, the presentation of Holocaust education was slightly glazed over and left to the likes of books and movies as the main form of teaching.

In the fifth grade, we read *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen, which told the story of a twelve year old American Jewish girl who is transported back in time to 1942 Poland just as the Nazis are rounding up the Jews for the Final Solution. As a class we would sit on the carpet and listen to our teacher read, we were always allowed to interrupt with questions, comments or concerns about the material. I remember feeling a sense of relatability to the main character, Hannah, because at the beginning of the story she was always tired of remembering and celebrating "boring" Jewish holidays (the Passover Seder in this case). This wasn't the first time I had encountered the Holocaust, but it was for a lot of kids in my class and I felt the book did an effective job in immersing us in the real horrors of the Holocaust without losing the child-like, fictional elements that weren't as horrifying.

However, after reading this in the fifth grade, I did not encounter Holocaust education again until eighth grade when we watched *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg. Looking back, I don't remember having a discussion of any kind after watching this film. Unlike my fifth grade experience, this one lacked any thought processes to take place after. Walking away from an intense Holocaust movie without any space for an intimate discussion is a dangerous historical situation as students are left feeling a magnitude of emotions with no place to feel heard or to learn more. In the same year of school, we had an assembly for all eighth grade students to listen

to a survivor of the Holocaust talk about his experience as a hidden child. It is sad to say but I do not fully remember this experience. In talking with my classmates now, we noted that the assembly took place for the length of class time (forty minutes to an hour) and we were allowed to ask questions and speak to the survivor after the assembly if we wished to do so. However, the consistent problem that seemed to be happening was the lack of discussion and evaluation that occurred within the classroom after being presented with this history.

In looking back at my social studies classes in middle school, I went onto my school's website to see if they had made any changes to the curriculum, which they had. Now, in the seventh grade, students have a class available to learn solely about the Holocaust through the resource, *Facing History and Ourselves*, which I will be discussing in detail as a Holocaust resource for improving curriculum in Chapter 3. This was very promising and inspiring to see from my alma mater as it shows that while perhaps I didn't have the best Holocaust education in middle school, the next generation of students will have better opportunities to learn.

It wasn't until high school that I found a personal interest and almost inspiration in learning about history and its lasting effects on our lives today. Becoming enamored with history allowed me to push myself and excel in a subject that I believe is of utmost significance to our learning experience as we grow into young adults. With that in mind, Holocaust education was not at the forefront of our learning experience, but rather there was an innate focus on American history throughout high school. Only in my senior year did I encounter Holocaust education again, when I took a non required AP European History course. This class spent over a month on World War II and the Holocaust and it wasn't contextualized for an American perspective. Our teacher brought in the son of a survivor to tell his story and the impact the Holocaust had had on

his own life. To me, this was my best memory of learning about the Holocaust in secondary school because it took into consideration our age and place in the world through a sense of trust in our ability to understand and think critically about the horrors of the Holocaust and the moral implications on our own lives.

It was Michel Trouillôt who gave me a scholarly pathway for understanding the divide between my mother's transparency and my relative's silences that made me question the notion of silence versus truth and exposure. On the one hand there was my mother and her passionate confirmation of the horrors of the Holocaust, and on the other hand there was a majority of my family members who did not want to take part in this discussion of the Holocaust because it was too difficult. I always wonder why the rest of my family was unwilling to discuss the Holocaust while my mother wasn't. What did the retelling of the Holocaust threaten? Rather they wanted to concentrate on a more optimistic view of the human, Jewish experience. Maybe they felt that the evil had been squashed, or that in discussing it, they had to relive the trauma they desperately wanted to escape? Was discussing the Holocaust not useful to the national identity they wanted to embrace in England and America? Whereas for my mother something else was going on? My mother seemed to come alive when I peppered her with questions about the Holocaust. Her passion and telling of a difficult past was inspiring. She verified the pain and suffering of the past while my other (extended) family members dealt with it through remaining silent and avoiding discussion and questions. It was an interesting combustion to be a part of, and I felt most safe discussing the Holocaust and my family's history with my mother because of this. It produced an engine in me to approach history in a way that sought out other stories and personal narratives.

In this project, I want to address the issue of Holocaust education in public secondary schools in the United States. Through researching and discussing the establishment of history and social studies as subjects and the Holocaust in American Jewish memory, I plan to examine the mandates, curricula and outside resources that are available to educators as they teach history. I am primarily concerned with the establishment of teaching the Holocaust and the selective nature of the Holocaust's curriculum. I hope to show how the United States has approached the teaching of such a violent and prejudiced event in history. What does adequate and authentic teaching of Holocaust look like? Do federal, state, and school district mandates allow for adequate and authentic teaching, or do teachers have to look to other outside resources? How do American Jews come into the discussion when they were not necessarily directly a part of this history?

I chose sources and materials that allow for an open discussion to review and understand the history of teaching, the lasting effects of the Holocaust on American Jewry, and the creation of Holocaust curriculum. The sources that consider the memory of the Holocaust allow for debate over perspectives of remembrance and the implications this historical event has created for the American Jew and non-Jews alike.

The sources I utilize in Chapter 1 trace the evolution of the introduction of social studies and subsequent displacement of history from the beginning of the twentieth century, roughly 1916 to the end of the 1900s, which I argue has had implications on the teaching of the Holocaust. By looking at sources from David Saxe, I will discuss the creation and then alleged demise of social studies as a field of study and curriculum. I will utilize the reprint of the Seminal 1916 report on the creation of social studies to set the groundwork for why and how the

subject was introduced to American educators. Historians and authors, Francis FitzGerald and Michel-Ralph Trouillot both review the history of textbooks in the early twentieth century, and through their reviews they approach the debate on what secondary students should be learning about and how they are taught the material. I utilize the writing of Sister Joseph Marie from 1938 as she introduces the concept of social efficiency through social studies as a means to cultivate and create sensible and upright future citizens. With the work of historians, Kyle Ward and Dana Lindaman, I will briefly discuss how the United States portray themselves in textbooks in conversation with World War II. The writing of historian Milton Meltzer discusses the use of nonfiction in the classroom and how educators can teach and write about historical events, specifically using the Holocaust as an example. Lastly, I introduce a journal article from David Lindquist where he writes about the rationale and moral imperative of teaching the Holocaust in history and the classroom.

By looking at these materials I hope to learn about the reasoning and foundation of the switch from history to social studies as a subject in secondary education, while also establishing a focus on sources that discuss and debate the teaching of the Holocaust in a classroom setting. How did social studies come to replace history? Did it replace history entirely or just convolute it in conjecture with social studies pedagogy?

As I transition from the foundation of teaching history and social studies, Chapter 2 focuses on the history of Holocaust memory in the United States in conversation with American Jewry and the American context in general. The fifteen to twenty sources I use were written by scholars such as Peter Novick, Deborah Lipstadt, Hannah Arendt, Yehuda Bauer, Alan Mintz, and Steven Katz. Through looking at these historians and scholarly sources, I hope to show the

discussion and debate surrounding questions of uniqueness, victimhood and trauma, Jewish assimilation, proper memorialization, and the politicization of the Holocaust in American context. This discourse sets up an understanding of how American Jews define themselves in the context of the Holocaust and Judaism (in America), while also diving into the aspects of American history that allows for proper memorialization for a historical event that did not take place in the country itself but that eventually became involved.

As I transition from the Holocaust in American Jewish memory, I will review the establishment, evolution and history of Holocaust education in public secondary schools in the United States. I will review New York State's Holocaust education mandate and a popular world history textbook in conversation with the outside Holocaust resources that are easily accessible and usable for educators. Therefore, my final chapter will explore the teaching resources that are available for teachers to accurately and justly educate students on the Holocaust and its implications on our society over time and now. These free sources include Facing History and Ourselves, the Jewish Heritage museum in New York City, Echoes & Reflections, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.. In discussion with these resources, I will also be utilizing scholars, such as Simone Schweber, who have discussed the question of what to have in the curriculum and how to make sense of a violent and prejudiced past. The methodology behind preparing and presenting the Holocaust in the classroom must be a thoughtful, careful and proper culmination of pedagogy as "by virtue of its subject matter alone, [it] is a venue for instilling moral values."[2]

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[2] Simone Schweber, *Making Sense of the Holocaust: Lessons from Classroom Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), 7.

In understanding the nature and objectives of teaching history and social studies, I hope to show that while Holocaust education mandates are important and necessary, the curriculum that exists is not enough; therefore, the use of outside resources is highly recommended. Through surveying ideas about how to teach the Holocaust responsibly, I will establish the discourse surrounding scholars and historians on how to justly teach the Holocaust while dealing with existential questions and arguments that do not have one clear answer. In setting the framework for the history of teaching history and social studies and discussing the Holocaust in American memory in the Jewish and American context, I plan to use the curriculum that already exists for teaching the Holocaust to demonstrate the importance of exercising accurate and genuine understanding of a monumental and violent historical event.

Chapter 1: History versus Social Studies: A Background in the Switch from History to Social Studies in Conversation with the Holocaust

What is the difference between teaching history versus social studies in secondary school classrooms? What are the different themes and narratives that emerge when approaching these subjects? Why was there a shift at the turn of the twentieth century from history to social studies? What is the importance of studying history instead of social studies? To answer these questions it is necessary to distinguish the difference between history and social studies.

The study of history allows students to understand the society in which they live while also bridging the gap between the changes in human nature over time and the current political and historical climate of the time. History provides an understanding for the other subjects and fundamentals that students are taught in school. It poses as a framework for the comprehension of a complicated world while simultaneously giving it context. While social studies aims to cultivate and reproduce civic mindedness centering around the idea of how to make the best citizens. Instead of focusing on the past (history) as an avenue for identifying and engaging with students, social studies works to create functional and good citizenship through civic education and the teaching of governmental principles as a means to understand the changing world. Social studies is an expansive category of learning that included a convoluted point of view of American history but focused more heavily on civics education.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a number of educational committees met to discuss the framing of humanities and history education for the turning of the century. Authors Broom and Evans note that “these committees articulated the importance of history education. Continued social, economic, and political change led to more calls for school reform in the early

years of the twentieth century."[3] In 1916, the National Educational Association (NEA), which is the nation's largest professional employee organization committed to advancing the cause of public education, released a Social Studies in Secondary Education report that was the basis for establishing social studies in schools as a replacement for history. The report defined social studies as "to be those whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society, and to man as a member of social groups."[4] Furthermore, the report said that:

> The social studies differ from other studies by reason of their social content rather than social aim; for the key note of modern education is "social efficiency" and instruction in all subjects should contribute to this end. Yet, from the nature of their content, the social studies afford peculiar opportunities for the training of the individual as a member of society… They should accomplish this end through the development of an appreciation of the nature and laws of social life, a sense of the responsibility of the individual as a member of social groups, and the intelligence and the will to participate effectively in the promotion of the social well-being.[5]

This description of the ideology and goals of social studies raise an interesting observation about the push for cultivating a particular kind of individual in society. The nature of social studies content relies on the success of students properly and effectively ingraining this attitude into their lives outside the classroom. The pressure for this change in education can be associated with the reaction of entering World War I as a majority of citizens started to fear for their livelihood and blame the government and countries that started the war. Conservatives were a big proponent of

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[3] Catherine Broom and Ronald W. Evans, "Social Studies within and across Borders: Exploring the Transfer of Ideas in Time and Space," *Citizenship Education Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2014): 56, PDF.
[4] Murry R. Nelson, *The Social Studies in Secondary Education: A Reprint of the Seminal 1916 Report, with Annotations and Commentaries* (Bloomington, Ind.: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 1994), 9.
[5] Nelson, *The Social*, 9.

this reaction as they did not think learning about other countries' histories was necessary, safe, or valuable for the next generation of American citizens.

David Saxe, a professor and historian of heritage education at Penn State University, explains why social studies began to take the place of history in public secondary school curriculum. The NEA and Committee on Social Studies (the largest organization in the United States to focus exclusively on social studies education) were eager to "promote social ideals; [to] develop an understanding of our economic institutions and [to] provide social intelligence needed to cope with our economic and political problems which are great in magnitude."[6] In living in the events and aftermath of World War I, the government and teachers felt that the students would be better equipped to be efficient and effective citizens if their education was sculpted around producing and adapting "physically, morally, religiously, vocationally and intellectually" students as they entered society.[7] They wanted to prepare the "urban" student in an Industrial period, and cultivate engagement as the focal point for good citizenship with the temporary world. Instead of creating good citizens based on learning of America's past (good and bad) in the context of global history, conservatives were suspicious of international history and wanted to emphasize Americanism. The goal was to prepare students for the world and shape their loyalties and engage as democratic citizens. Social studies education relied on "its flexibility, its adaptability, its contemporary orientation, its absence of a coherent core of

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[6] Marie, Sister Joseph. "Teaching for Social Efficiency." In *The Social Studies*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis, LLC, n.d. Excerpt from *The Social Studies* 29, no. 8 (1938): 353-56. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1935.11016322, page 353.
[7] Marie, Sister Joseph. "Teaching for Social Efficiency", page 353.

knowledge…[and] life adjustment, expanding environments… issues-centered education, reflection, [and] critical thinking…"[8]

Furthermore, social studies began to be perceived by scholars as "an apprenticeship in passive spectatorship" that created "a school-based experience of a rapid succession of memorizing people, places, and things, across time and space, often introduced to students on a Monday, tested on Friday, and forgotten by Sunday."[9] This observation of social studies becoming facile as a mode of learning was further emphasized by the passivity and lack of engagement from students with the material at hand.

In researching and discussing the nature and function of social studies in education, John Hockett describes the objectives of social studies as the conditioning and learning of "a marked increase in emphasis on the functional aspects of civic education, more attention being given to the making of good citizens than merely to teaching the principles of good government."[10] There appear to be three issues surrounding the content, method and goals of social studies curriculum and education. In terms of the content students are learning, how much time should these students spend studying American history versus global history? What is considered "more important"? The method of social studies curriculum seems to focus on memorization of dates, names and figures as opposed to an analytical approach to learning. This brings into question the goals of social studies education. Is the goal to produce active citizens or to focus on learning

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[8] David Warren Saxe, "On the Alleged Demise of Social Studies: The Eclectic Curriculum in Times of Standardization - A Historical Sketch," *The International Journal of Social Education* 18, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2004): 3, digital file.
[9] Mark Helmsing, "CHAPTER TEN: Life at Large: New Materialisms for a (Re) New(ing) Curriculum of Social Studies Education," *Counterpoints* 501 (2016): 137, http://www.jstor.org/stable/45157534.
[10] John A. Hockett, "The Nature and Function of Social Studies in Education," *Review of Educational Research* 11, no. 4 (1941): 424], https://doi.org/10.2307/1168642.

information? Approaching either goal generates questions of what to teach, how to teach the subject matter, and what the goal of teaching it is?

With these issues and questions in mind, there seems to be a disconnect between producing good citizens through civic education and actually engaging students in the material and foundation of their country. Scholar Eugene Asher reflects on this disconnect within the social studies curriculum; "it is the observation that the need to serve the societal drive toward peace and harmony tends to force into the curricula distortions of the past — to encourage glossing over of real problems existing between now friendly nations."[11] His perspective is significant as he brings attention to the presumably governmental need for a harmonious society that then creates an intellectual problem due to the lack of honest material. This intellectual problem raises concerns on how to teach without the "distortion of other people's behavior, half-truths, and isolated incidents which are mischievous."[12] When history becomes convoluted to fit the particular requirements and narrative of social studies, how can accurate and "good" teaching take place?

Numerous observations and perspectives have been established in the academic world on the teaching of social studies and textbooks. Frances Fitzgerald's *America Revised*, published in 1980, discusses the various changes in American textbooks for children. *America Revised* is a nuanced book based on Fitzgerald's *New Yorker* articles in the late 1970s, drawing on her extensive, thoughtful reading of the broad collection of historic textbooks at Columbia Teacher's College. Fitzgerald poses a surprising and informative historiography about the range of

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[11] Eugene L. Asher, "The Social Uses of History in the School Curriculum," *The History Teacher* 12, no. 1 (1978): 61, https://doi.org/10.2307/491348.
[12] Asher, "The Social," 61.

textbooks in the 1930s, the cracks in the supposedly-consensus history of the 1950s, and the 1960s and 70s shifts from social movements of the right as well as left to the business pressures of textbook publishing. She claimed that the fierceness of the debate over what is contained in history textbooks, and therefore what was taught in schools, resulted from the need to redefine national identity and a concern that the protection of traditional conceptions of Americanism was crumbling.

Fitzgerald writes a candid and personal recollection and reaction to the problems in the teaching of history, and its overarching question is what exactly should students be taught? It also asks the purpose of teaching: is it to shape the characters of children or to cultivate in them the seeds for independent and critical thinking? Should they learn an inspirational story about the Constitution, or about the people who wrote it, or what it left out? Should they learn about artists and musicians or "important people" or everyday people? Learn who wrote "The Federalist Papers" or know what it actually means and said? Memorize facts, dates, numbers and people or engage in the dialogue and debate of history?

Fitzgerald's book relates to the future debates surrounding the questioning of social studies, which happened at the turn of the 21st century, as the foremost curriculum as it reaches its breaking point of effectiveness. She writes from the perspective that one must understand history to understand the present. It analyzes how history textbooks have shaped the way generations have viewed the American dream, and how the textbooks have changed in response to special interest groups to the point of becoming watered down and boring. While some might view the book as outdated, it poses important questions about the ideology shaping the American history curriculum and thus the minds of the children who study it. In the first 20 pages of the

book, Fitzgerald evokes the notion of public truth and permanent expression. She says that "what sticks to the memory [of students'] from these textbooks is not any particular series of facts but an atmosphere, an impression, a tone."[13] It is the impression that is most influential, and thus dangerous as it expresses an ideology that seems unquestionable since it comes from the "truth" of history. It makes the "victims" of learning this perspective of history wonder about how humans decide, evaluate and tell the history of their societies. Should we base it around a certain historical figure, president or group? Should we base the telling of history only around major events, and how do we tell those stories with nuance, avoiding characterizing them as wholly negative or positive? How might students benefit from the telling of major constructive and cooperative happenings in the world and the past, or how might they be inspired from the telling of minor victories towards social justice?

With an interest in the shaping of history (and social studies) curriculum, Trouillot writes about the power and importance of history as not only a subject and curriculum but as a means to understand the influence the past has on the present. He defines history as both "what happened" and "what is said to have happened." He distinguishes the two because it is not always clear. He describes this process through the lens of a reader, stating that it is up to the reader to understand and interpret the history they are reading as they chose. The implications behind his statement "what is said to have happened" contributes to the idea that social studies encourages a glossing over of historical events to fit a certain narrative for teaching.

He places human beings into two categories of participants (actors) and as narrators of historical events, allowing us to have a deeper understanding of history and our role in it. The

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[13] FitzGerald, Frances. *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century*. Boston - Toronto, US/Canada: Atlantic Monthly Press - Little, Brown and Company, 1979, page 18.

sociohistorical process, which is knowing how the historical experiences of an author may have affected the presentation of the material, is emphasized through the meaning behind "what happened," and "what is said to have happened", directly speaking to our knowledge of that process.[14] He goes on to highlight the significance of how a statement describing a historical event creates different tendencies and observations of such statements. An example of this process from Trouillot considers the following statement: "The history of the United States is a history of migration."[15] This statement can be interpreted as either "the face of migration is the central element in the evolution of the United States", or it can be understood to mean, "the best narrative about the United States is a story of migrations."[16] The distinguishing between a sociohistorical process and our knowledge of that process provides context and a deeper understanding to the history we are consuming.

Trouillot speaks about the creation and professionalization of the discipline of history in the late twentieth century, and how the belief that the more distant the sociohistorical process is from the history that is being written, the easier it is to claim scientific professionalism within the discipline. And so, the role of positivism came to fruition with the solidification of history as a profession. He further explains how the positivist position dominated Western scholarship, and historians were no exception. Trouillot argues that "the role of the historian is to reveal the past, to discover or, at least approximate the truth. Within that viewpoint, power is unproblematic, irrelevant to the construction of the narrative as such. At best, history is a story about power, a story about those who won."[17] Because he thinks power is problematic and relevant to the

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[14] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 2.
[15] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 3.
[16] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 3.
[17] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 5.

construction of narrative, Trouillot cautions historians to be aware of their role and power in narrating the past. He builds upon this viewpoint in relation to the theory of narrative and analytic philosophy.[18] The issue surrounding truth within a historical narrative circumvents the argument of narrative power because there is consistently a pretense of truth. How can we distinguish between narratives on the premise of truth and power? Trouillot examines this distinction between truth and fiction. He claims that Western historians view non-Western scholarship as non-historical because they assume that history is based on a linear sense of time, essentially excluding non-Westerners from the discussion of their history.[19] He states how Western colonizers initially thought the academic discourse around language and linguistic practice did not have an intelligent structure because there was no "Western" form of grammar. Therefore there became a "need for a different kind of credibility [to] set the historical narrative apart from fiction."[20] Historical narratives need this different kind of credibility in order to accurately discern the line between truth and fiction. The other option is to "occupy an undefined position" which then leaves the narrative up in the air in terms of categorizing it as history and fiction.[21] This credibility can be derived from specific groups deciding what narrative belongs to either history or fiction.

By the end of the 1980s social studies had reached a breaking point of effectiveness and some of the programs faced backlash as there was less of an interest from students in citizenship education, and rather parents and students were interested in traditional American and global history. Therefore, the distinction between history and social studies became important again to

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[18] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 6.
[19] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 7.
[20] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 8.
[21] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 8.

education departments and state mandates. In 1987, following the release of Fitzgerald's book, the Bradley Commission "was created to respond to this perceived deterioration in knowledge and to the belief that our youngsters do not know enough, or care enough, or read enough about our national and our global past."[22] With the growing concern of inadequate teaching of history in elementary and secondary schools, the Bradley Commission was "the first national group to devote its attention exclusively to history in the schools."[23] The learning of history did not survive the introduction of social studies during and after World War I, but the subject of history was originally intended "to broaden and cultivate the mind…[and] prepare students for enlightenment and intellectual enjoyment in after years, and assist them to exercise a salutary influence upon the affairs of their country."[24] This model and reason for teaching history was affirmed once again by the Bradley Commission as a means to establish American heritage as a binding commonality for citizens. The Bradley Commission's goal was to employ "a democratic vision of liberty, equality, and justice… to preserve that vision and bring it to daily practice"; furthermore, "it is imperative that all citizens understand how it was shaped in the past, what events and forces either helped or obstructed it, and how it has evolved down to the circumstances and political discourse of our time."[25] Through the inclusion of classroom teachers and members of the policy-making group, the Bradley Commission were able to bridge the gap

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[22] Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Bradley Commission on History in Schools: A Retrospective View," *The History Teacher* 23, no. 1 (1989): 74, https://doi.org/10.2307/494603.
[23] The Bradley Commission on History in Schools, "Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools," *The History Teacher* 23, no. 1 (1989): 8, https://doi.org/10.2307/494598.
[24] The Bradley Commission, "Building a History," 8.
[25] The Bradley Commission, "Building a History," 8.

between the individuals creating the curriculum and the individuals who would end up actually teaching it in the classroom setting.[26]

The Bradley Commission set out two main goals for accomplishing the task of creating an effective and engaging curriculum:

> • to explore the conditions that contribute to, or impede, the effective teaching of history in American schools, Kindergarten through Grade 12.
> • to make recommendations on the curricular role of history, and on how all of those concerned—teachers, students, parents, school administrators, university professors, publishers, and boards of education—may improve the teaching of history as the core of social studies in schools.[27]

In the article that sets out the guidelines for creating and teaching the curriculum for history in school system, the Commission divided the guidelines into eleven sections that outlined why the study of history was needed, their own recommendations, modes of thoughtful learning, vital themes and narratives, topics for American history, topics for Western civilization, topics for world history, the place of history in early grades and in middle and high schools, course structures and priorities, and the most effective modes and methods to teach the curriculum.[28]

In conversation with the criteria, lessons, methods, and information that is included in the creation of history curriculum, it is important for educators to recognize what is included in historical memory, how it is written, and how it is presented to students and the public sphere. This typically lies in the hand of a historian or scholar. Historian Milton Meltzer reviews the action of teaching and learning history. Meltzer asks “What is the historian? The historian is the creator and custodian of the memory of civilizations. A civilization without memory is no longer

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[26] The Bradley Commission, "Building a History," 8.
[27] The Bradley Commission, "Building a History," 8.
[28] The Bradley Commission on History in Schools, "Building a History," 11-32.

civilized. It loses its identity. If it doesn't know what it is and where it comes from, it has no purpose. Without purpose it withers and dies."[29] In conjunction with Trouillot's discourse on describing history as "what happened" versus "what is said to have happened", Meltzer discusses the trust the society puts in the hands of a historian to take care of facts and understand how those facts inform the memory of a nation.[30] We look to historians as the individuals who teach and inform us about the historical narratives of our own nation and the world, while also accounting for our own experiences in the past and present. The memory of the past is often shaped and transmitted by the historian, and so how can we trust and become interested in history when textbooks "treat the past very gingerly"?[31] Thus, the writing of history is always political and informed by ideology. There is no such thing as neutral, unproblematic historical writing. In trying to combat this , textbooks and the teaching of history become so focused on "being politically safe, beyond criticism or reproach" that collective memory is in danger of becoming obsolete.[32] In certain learning environments and situations where history becomes entangled with dishonesty and deception, young developing minds become distrustful of what they are learning and "confuse basic issues and values."[33] How do we create a curriculum of history that does not vary based on the government's position?

All of these issues surrounding education and cultivating a curriculum come into play when teaching about World War II and the Holocaust. As the Holocaust did not directly happen in the United States, it is a difficult subject matter to approach and more issues arise in how to

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[29] Milton Meltzer and Wendy Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom: Milton Meltzer on Writing, History, and Social Responsibility* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994), 30.
[30] Meltzer and Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, 30.
[31] Meltzer and Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, 31.
[32] Meltzer and Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, 31.
[33] Meltzer and Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, 31.

structure the curriculum and what to include. On learning about World War II and the Holocaust in public secondary schools, "U.S. textbooks typically offer a linear history, focusing on the military conflict; … these textbooks, moreover generally offer a polarized, binary vision of history, in which the good guys are good and the bad guys are bad."[34] This black-and-white methodology of teaching tends to focus tightly on the United State's involvement in the war without taking the international context into account. Furthermore, the history of World War II and the Holocaust should include an all-encompassing understanding of "*when* events happened, *how* they happened, and *why* they happened."[35] Otherwise, students are left with a distorted sense of historical memory and are more than likely to misunderstand the past and its implications on their current society.

In reviewing high school history textbooks, Diane Ravitch concludes that "there seems to be something in the very nature of today's textbooks that blunts the edges of events and strips from the narrative whatever is lively, adventurous, and exciting."[36] Through her detailed study and analysis of United States history textbooks, Ravitch comes to the conclusion that "if we continue to teach world history as a mad rush through time and space, we should not be surprised when students remember little of what they have studied."[37] If this is what studying history in American high schools is like, then how can students expect an accurate and adequate education on the Holocaust? When students are presented with these textbooks, they "often develop faulty perceptions of the Holocaust while missing the opportunity to consider a complex historical

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[34] Dana Lindaman and Kyle Ward, *History Lessons: How Textbooks from around the World Portray U.S. History* (New York, NY: New Press, 2004), 202.
[35] Meltzer and Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, 33.
[36] Diane Ravitch, *A Consumer's Guide to High School History Textbooks* (Washington D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2004), 63, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED485529.
[37] Ravitch, *A Consumer's*, 65.

topics at anything but the most superficial level."[38] In most aspects of learning history, there is a focus on facts, dates, figures and the people who were a part of said history. However, when one teaches with a primary focus on historical data, there automatically becomes a gap between the student and the student actually understanding and connecting to the history they are taught.

On speaking about the writing of the Holocaust for young readers and adults, Meltzer wanted his book, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, to explain all he could about the Holocaust and make it as personal as possible. While this is not exactly how textbooks and curriculum are devised and created, Meltzer voices an important and powerful message about the techniques he used to write and discuss such a volatile historical event that everyone should know about.

> I tell the story of the Holocaust in the words of the people who lived it. I used original sources throughout—diaries, journals, notebooks, letters, interviews, memoirs, eyewitness accounts, testimony at trials and at public hearings, even songs that people wrote to express what they were going through. This is not an anthology, however. All this firsthand material is woven into a narrative that carries the reader from the beginning to the end, from the origins of the Holocaust to its aftermath. Terrible and complex as the events were, they may be brought within comprehension if the reader is helped to see them from the inside. If the reader can be made to feel and to care, he or she will be much readier to try to understand. So the men, women, and children who lived the experience speak of it to the reader in their own words.[39]

This methodology is focused on appreciating the truth and personal experiences of the Holocaust. There is a purpose to this methodology that creates lasting implications of the Holocaust on our society while also fulfilling a moral imperative to "remember the power for evil that it demonstrates… but we must know too of the power of good."[40] Therefore, Meltzer

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[38] David H. Lindquist, "Avoiding the Complex History, Simple Answer Syndrome: A Lesson Plan for Providing Depth and Analysis in the High School History Classroom," *The History Teacher* 45, no. 3 (2012): 406, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23265895.
[39] Meltzer and Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, 90.
[40] Meltzer and Saul, *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, 91.

highlights “the importance of asking fundamental questions about the nature of humanity [that] can be juxtaposed against the contemporary tendency to refrain from taking substantive positions on ethical matters in the guise of being fair-minded and nonjudgmental.”[41] What is to be achieved from learning about a subject that is “both intellectually interesting and emotionally and psychologically challenging?”[42] For the developing minds of young students, it is important for them to examine their values and the society in which they live through the lens of an ethical dilemma in the events of the Holocaust.

Studying the Holocaust is an opportunity for students to engage in not just history, but critical thinking that allows for introspection and a development in human and personal behavior. This kind of human behavior can be “determined by what people believe, by the values they hold, and most of all by whether or not they will act upon them.”[43] The Holocaust is not just an example of an evil history; it also presents us with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of human nature and the effects of morality and ethics in context with prejudice and power. While the foundation of social studies is based on good and effective citizenship, it lacks the depth of learning from the past and understanding the changes of human nature over time.

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[41] David H. Lindquist, "Meeting a Moral Imperative: A Rationale for Teaching the Holocaust," *The Clearing House* 84 (2011): 27, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41149860.
[42] Lindquist, "Meeting a Moral," 27.
[43] Lindquist, "Meeting a Moral," 27.

Chapter 2: The Holocaust in American Memory and American Jewry

Introduction

The Holocaust was the genocide of European Jews during World War II by Nazi Germany between 1941 and 1945; it was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and extermination of six million European Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies. However, it was an evolving process that started when Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime came to power in January 1933 in Germany. When the Nazi party first came into power, they did not immediately plan for mass murder; rather they began to use the government as a means to target, exclude and force Jews to emigrate. In doing so, they falsely accused Jews for contributing to Germany's defeat in World War I and causing Germany's social, economic, political, and cultural problems in the aftermath of that war. The Nazis targeted Jews for these reasons and because they were antisemitic. Antisemitism is the hatred of or prejudice against Jews and was the foremost principle of Nazi ideology and propaganda. Their worldview was based on a belief that the so-called Aryan race was superior to others and the inferior Jewish race was dangerous to them. They identified the Jewish people as a race, and therefore the form of antisemitism that was used against the Jews was racially motivated.[44]

Towards the beginning of 1933, the Nazi regime began to implement a wide range of antisemitic laws, known as the Nuremberg Laws, and measures in order to expose anyone who they defined as Jewish. Before 1939, these measures were enacted against Jews living inside of Germany. However, in 1938 Germany annexed Austria (Anschluss), which subjected more than 200,000 Jews to the Nuremberg Laws. After the conquest of Eastern Poland in September 1939,

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[44] Yehuda Bauer and Nili Keren, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: F. Watts, 1982).

these measures were taken against Jews there, and throughout Europe as the Nazi regime began to conquer other countries. The Jews were expelled from their homes and physically displaced in ghettos and concentration camps where they were forced to do slave labor and where hundreds and thousands died from starvation, disease, and inhumane conditions. However, it was not until 1941 that the systematic mass murder of all Jews became an official Nazi policy. This was referred to as the Final Solution to the Jewish problem in Europe. It was the last stage of the Holocaust and took place from 1941 to 1945, and this was when the killing of Jews became deliberate and systematic. The methods of killing were mass shootings in villages, towns, and cities (known as the Holocaust by bullets), and the use of poisonous gas in gas chambers in six selected death factories constructed for this purpose. Auschwitz was an exception because it was already an established concentration camp complex.

The Holocaust was [a program of targeted murder and cultural destruction] committed on an unprecedented scale, thus making it an arguably unique event in history. Scholars have engaged with the question of the way the Holocaust is remembered, memorialized and studied to understand its effect on how we learn and remember history. Memory highlights the question of how we remember the six million Jews who died in Europe and where and how they once resided before their lives were erased from existence. Scholars such as Peter Novick, Yehuda Bauer, and Alan Mintz have debated the dangers of the argument that there is no such event that is comparable to the Holocaust, and so it cannot act as a tool to understand and interpret other countries' histories. While scholars like Steven Katz and Deborah Lipstadt have responded in support of this argument that the Holocaust is unique and incomparable.

How did American Jews interpret the Final Solution? How did American Jews respond or not respond to the Holocaust? Did they interpret it as an attack on their Jewish identity? If so, how did it affect their identity and life? Did they want to be seen as victims? How does it reflect on their own consciousness and lifestyle in American culture? The beginning of a battle of the Jewish character in America sparks from the questions and discourse around victimhood, uniqueness, the Americanization of Jews, and assimilation. How do American Jews want to memorialize the Holocaust today? Is it a reflection of how they see themselves in the greater American context?

The Question of Uniqueness

The question of the uniqueness of the Jewish genocide has become one of the most long standing debates around the Holocaust from survivors to historians, scholars and the general public. Stating that the Holocaust is unique implies that there is nothing comparable to the horrors endured during this time period. However unprecedented the Holocaust may be considered, is it safe to disregard the prejudiced nature of the Holocaust so that it can be exercised to better understand other aspects of mass atrocities in history? Or does the normalization of the Holocaust become a problem in itself? In *Holocaust: An American Understanding*, Deborah Lipstadt, author of numerous books on the Holocaust, explores the scholarly use of the term "Holocaust" to describe the extermination of Jews by Nazi Germany in World War II. The term Holocaust derived from trying to simply find the words or language to describe the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime, and "the first mention of the word [Holocaust] in conjunction with the murder of the Jews in the *New York Times* seems to have

been in 1959."[45] Therefore, she says, while "no one was looking for a name, it was inevitable that, given the scope of the tragedy, one would emerge."[46]

Before the term Holocaust began to be widely used, the word genocide, coined by historian Mark Levene in 1944 was used "with particular reference to the Nazi extermination of European Jewry."[47] While the extent of the Holocaust was still unknown, "genocide for Lemkin, therefore, consisted of two major elements: persecution of a group, meaning an attack on its 'political and social institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion, and…economic existence', with a view to undermining its viability, constituted genocide, just as did complete physical extermination."[48] In 1948, the United Nations Convention on Genocide employed Lemkin's definition to describe what the Nazis had done to the Jews. Lemkin's attempt to classify the extermination of European Jewry "was to create general rules about the nature and classification of genocide which would prevent what had happened to them happening to other groups."[49]

Besides examining the struggle to find the words to describe the mass extermination of the Jews, Lipstadt also examines how America has chosen to remember the Holocaust, and what that says about the larger contours of how America's culture and society has reacted to and confronted acts of terror in politics, history and memory. However, Lipstadt makes it clear that

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[45] Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Holocaust: An American Understanding* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 10.
[46] Furthermore, different groups of Jews from Europe and those that emigrated to Palestine gravitated to words like Shoah within their spoken languages such as Yiddish and Hebrew to convey the "meaning of complete destruction of devastation. (Lipstadt, *Holocaust: An American*, 8-9.)
[47] Mark Levene, "Is the Holocaust Simply Another Example of Genocide?," in *The Holocaust: A Reader*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Berel Lang (Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 420, PDF.
[48] Levene, "Is the Holocaust," 420.
[49] Levene, "Is the Holocaust," 421.

remembering the Holocaust should not be turned into a tool "for ensuring generosity, promoting vigilance, or winning support for a particular political position."[50] In doing so, this position would not only exploit the memory of the Holocaust, but also create a distortion for the people who may be scared or scarred by the event itself. Furthermore, with the creation of the word "Holocaust", Lipstadt explicitly states that she believes the word Holocaust should not be applied to other acts of violence or atrocities committed against Jews or other groups. In the second chapter of *Holocaust: An American Understanding*, which is titled "States of Questions" and is split into twelve different subsections roughly less than ten pages each, Lipstadt speaks about "this battle over the Jewish character of the Holocaust and the question of uniqueness" in reference to its place in the American narrative.[51]

This question of uniqueness—the idea that the Final Solution and the organization of the Nazi regime to exterminate the Jews in Europe was unprecedented in all aspects of warfare and politics—has been debated by many historians and philosophers. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt discusses and follows the Nuremberg Trials and the unprecedented nature of Nazi Germany and their crimes against European Jews. Arendt discusses the differences between crimes against the Jewish people, against humanity, against peace, against human status and all the variations that followed. These terms were created to help the legal system manage and understand the complexity and peculiarity of the Holocaust. The need and creation for new terms to describe the Holocaust directly relates to the uniqueness of this historical event and to Lipstadt's explanation for creating a language to talk about an almost indescribable atrocity. Arendt defined a crime against humanity as an attempt to kill those based on what it means to be

[50] Lipstadt, *Holocaust: An American Understanding*, 153.
[51] Lipstadt, *Holocaust: An American Understanding*, 108.

human (their authentic Jewish selves). This constituted a new category of violence and prejudice. Arendt argued that the actions of Nazi Germany "might be more than a crime against the Jewish or the Polish or the Gypsy people.[52] Arendt claimed that the atrocities might even be against the international order, and mankind in its entirety."[53] Therefore, to Arendt, the Holocaust or "the 'event of totalitarian domination itself'" was unique "but unique in such a spectacularly immoral way that it made no sense at all."[54] Arendt argues that because Hitler and the Nazi regime "were devoid of any 'utilitarian motives and self-interest of the rulers' the uniqueness of the Holocaust has to do with "the moral and cultural context" through the lens of totalitarianism (a system of government in which the state holds total authority).[55]

Furthermore, Levene (with Lemkin in mind) also discusses if other atrocities can ever be seen as comparable to the Holocaust or if the very idea is inapplicable. Levene argues that the idea of uniqueness is paradoxical because it involuntarily sets the Holocaust apart from the category of genocide, and thus "having established itself, in this way, as *the* genocide, one might be inclined to approach the broader comparative field by ignoring the Holocaust altogether."[56] This interpretation is harmful as it sets up the assumption that "the Holocaust has nothing to teach us about other genocides, or, more significantly, the context within which genocides continue to take place."[57] Though, it is clear that while some historians state that other genocides are incomparable to the Holocaust, others have shown what other genocides have in common

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[52] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1963), 252.
[53] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 252.
[54] Shiraz Dossa, "Human Status and Politics: Hannah Arendt on the Holocaust," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne De Science Politique* 13, no. 2 (1980): 312, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3229726.
[55] Dossa, "Human Status," 314-320.
[56] Levene, "Is the Holocaust," 423.
[57] Levene, "Is the Holocaust," 423.

with the Holocaust, which may lead to a better understanding of what happened under the Nazi regime.

However, historians opposite to Levene like Lipstadt, stand in the argument that the Holocaust was an unprecedented, unique event that cannot and should not be compared with any other atrocity in history as it not only takes away from the Jews themselves but creates an uneven playing field for other catastrophes. Historian Peter Novick makes a similar, though less nuanced argument, claiming that the assertion that the Holocaust is unique is offensive and means "your catastrophe, unlike ours, is ordinary; unlike ours is comprehensible; unlike ours is representable."[58] Novick argues that this creates an "intellectual sleight of hand" as it ignores "those aspects that it [the Holocaust] shares with other atrocities" on the justification "to declare the Holocaust unique."[59] The problem with the argument that the Holocaust is not unique is that it may push non-Jews further away from learning about the Holocaust. This might push non-Jews away because it promotes the idea that the Holocaust is not more important to other atrocities, therefore it does not need the level of recognition and solidarity it receives. There is still an opportunity to recognize the uniqueness of the Holocaust without claiming that no one has suffered to the extent that (European) Jews have. Both of these arguments can exist without demoralizing and alienating others that can relate and support American Jewry.

Historian Steven Katz lays out the uniqueness of the Holocaust in a manner that does not diminish another group's suffering, but rather emphasizes the way in which the Holocaust

[58] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 9.
[59] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 9.

happened is "phenomenologically unique."[60] In accordance with Elie Wiesel, Katz states that the Holocaust is phenomenologically unique "by virtue of the fact that never before has a state set out, as a matter of intentional principle and actualized policy, to annihilate physically every man, woman, and child belonging to a specific people."[61] This specification is essential to the discourse at hand as it does not compare the Holocaust to any other atrocity, but identifies the unique factors of the Holocaust without prioritizing the suffering that occurred.

This specification coincides with the question historian Yehuda Bauer asks: is the Holocaust explicable? He argues that "if the Holocaust is totally inexplicable, utterly mysterious, or 'uniquely unique' then it is also outside history and therefore irrelevant to rational discourse.[62] This notion that the Holocaust is indescribable creates a mystification that means it will remain a mystery to anyone who did not explicitly experience it. While this can be considered true, it should not control the public and specifically other Jews from being aware of what was experienced by survivors and victims. Furthermore, this idea implies that because the Holocaust is inexplicable; it is beyond historical analysis and comprehension from anyone who is interested or willing to learn about it. We know this is not true as we have learned about the Holocaust from school, books, historians, survivors, museums, memorials, and so forth. How can both of these narratives (explicable versus inexplicable) exist if they contradict each other? It is through how we came to learn and understand the events of the Holocaust that undoubtedly prove that it is explicable in nature.

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[60] Steven T. Katz, "The Uniqueness of the Holocaust: The Historical Dimension," in *Is the Holocaust Unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, by Alan S. Rosenbaum (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), 19.
[61] Rosenbaum, *Is the Holocaust*, 19.
[62] Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 14.

However, just because the Holocaust is explicable does not mean it is comprehensible, comparable or describable. Bauer brings in the work of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel to point out the contradictory nature of the explicable versus the indescribable discussion. “On the one hand, he [Wiesel] says that there are aspects of the Holocaust, mainly the suffering of the victims and the brutality of the perpetrators, that can never be fully grasped or understood, and that therefore the Holocaust is ultimately inexplicable.”[63] But, says Bauer, “On the other hand, he does everything in his power to transmit those experiences and make people understand them.”[64] By acknowledging this distinction between explicable and describable, Bauer is able to clarify that while the history of the Holocaust is “indescribable, by which we mean that we view them [the atrocities] with total revulsion,” it has nonetheless been described sufficiently enough to educate and tell the world what happened.[65]

Furthermore, historian Saul Friedländer discusses the feeling of incomprehension surrounding the Holocaust, especially the interpretations of the Final Solution. He states that this feeling is more often than not expressed by Jewish interpreters as the psychology of the Nazis and the Final Solution can be difficult to explain. Wiesel is an example of a Jewish interpreter who experienced the violence of the Holocaust while also struggling to comprehend it. The incomprehensibility of the Final Solution to the Jews is “highly subjective and derives directly from the emotionally charged vision of the group to which the victims belong.”[66] The feeling of incomprehension speaks directly to the question of explicability that Bauer poses. The narratives

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[63] Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 15.
[64] Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 15.
[65] Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 18.
[66] Saul Friedländer, "The 'Final Solution': On the Unease in Historical Interpretation," in *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World*, by Peter Hayes (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 24.

of the Holocaust will be influenced by the effects of the survivors' memory, forgetfulness, and trauma. Therefore, "each subsequent generation will reinterpret the same event differently, in line with its own predilection," and "it is the historian's task to try to come as close as possible back to the event itself, and attempt to differentiate between the influences on him or her of contemporary events and his or her analysis of the event from the standpoint of the time it happened."[67] Whether or not a historian believes the Holocaust is inexplicable or not, historians have a responsibility to explain the events of the Holocaust as best they can so as to make the implications clear for the future and to avoid another atrocity of this size to happen again.

We as humans have the ability to view, fathom and accept this history no matter how brutal or dehumanizing it is because it was committed by humans. Bauer argues that "the behavior of the Nazis was not 'inhuman'" rather "it was only too human."[68] It was "the closest approximation to what could be termed 'absolute' evil", therefore "the acts of the perpetrators might be repeated, under certain conditions, by anyone."[69] The outpour and consumption of information on the Holocaust since its occurrence has gradually increased allowing for American Jews and non-Jews to have a complete history of the event if they want. The stories of survivors, for example, can explain the unexplainable. Their accounts of what happened, how they survived, or how they almost did not recognize the evil that was enacted against them work to attempt to bridge that gap of the unknown for those who were not there during or after the time period.

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[67] Yehuda Bauer, "Holocaust and Genocide: Some Comparisons," in *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World*, ed. Peter Hayes (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 36-37.
[68] Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 21.
[69] Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 19-21.

During the years 1978 to 1979, Elie Wiesel, a survivor of the Holocaust, "prepared a report for the president" in which he "defined the six million Jews as 'the principal target of Hitler's Final Solution' and insisted that it was a 'moral imperative' for any memorial that emerged from the commission's work to place special emphasis on their murder."[70] Identifying the Jewish victims of the Nazi regime forced the government and the public to recognize who the victims were and why they were targeted as opposed to grouping them in mass with other victims ("LGBTQ individuals, the physically and mentally disabled, Roma (gypsies), Poles and other Slavic groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, and members of political opposition groups").[71] The European Jews, wrote Wiesel, "were fated to total extermination not because of what they had said or done or possessed, but because of what they *were*; to ignore this distinction, this essential fact about them, is to deny them."[72] The examination of the uniqueness of what was done to the Jews needed to be emphasized as they were attacked by government policy and ideology that prevailed throughout the country and continent as a means to exterminate a specific group of people. The extermination of European Jews, in turn, bridges the gap between American Jews and European Jews because the American Jew acts as a bystander to the events of the Holocaust; while also reigniting the fear of anti-semitism in any capacity in any place or time. Thus,

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[70] Lipstadt, *Holocaust: An American Understanding*, 105.
[71] Terese Pencak Schwartz, "The Holocaust: Non-Jewish Victims," in *Jewish Virtual Library*, by Jewish Virtual Library (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), 1998), https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/non-jewish-victims-of-the-holocaust.
[72] By Elie Wiesel, "PILGRIMAGE to THE COUNTRY of NIGHT," *New York Times (1923-)* (New York, N.Y.), 1979, [Page #], https://login.ezproxy.bgc.bard.edu/?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/pilgrimage-country-night/docview/123938830/se-2?accountid=31516.

"whether it serves as a stand-alone identity or as an add-on, identification with the Holocaust undeniably plays a role in the lives of American Jews."[73]

The Question of Assimilation, Victimhood, and Trauma

What does the Holocaust mean to and for American Jews? American Jews differ in their beliefs, practices and cultural traits; however, what unites them is their understanding of the Holocaust as a central event of twentieth century Jewish history and of what could/would have happened to them if they had resided in Europe at the height of the Nazi regime. This collective understanding stems from what has been passed down from great-grandparents to grandparents to parents, and to the current generation of (American) Jews. "There is a circular relationship between collective identity and collective memory" for most American Jews in the twentieth century as their symbol for unity was the Holocaust.[74] There was a consensus of collective concern surrounding the continuation of Jewish ancestry, whether it was in America, Europe, or anywhere in the world. This concern prompted the Holocaust to serve as a potential symbol of unity for all Jews. "In the face of declining religiosity, together with increasing assimilation and a sharp rise in intermarriage" the Jewish demographic in the late twentieth century was threatened in its existence once again.[75] Thus leading to the Holocaust as a symbol of Jewishness as a way to further the community: "*Trotzjudentum*, 'Jewishness out of spite': a refusal to disappear, not for any positive reason, but, nowadays, so as not to grant Hitler a 'posthumous

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[73] Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (n.p.: University of Washington Press, 2001), 166, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvcwnnzs.
[74] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 7.
[75] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 7.

victory.'"[76] However, Novick argues that because of *Trotzjudentum*, American Jewish culture may be too focused on the Holocaust and less on the religious practices and values of Judaism.

Historian Michael Meyer discusses the ambiguous effects of antisemitism: it may devalue the self-worth of a Jew, "or it may have entirely the opposite effect, resulting in renewed affirmation of Jewish identity."[77] Meyer and Novick both consider how American Jews have cultivated an identity surrounding the Holocaust as opposed to the time before the Holocaust when "American Jewish identity was for most Jews either a religiously based morality or a loose bond of ethnic solidarity."[78] It was through "preventing the identity Hitler sought to expunge" that caused American Jews to reject "the subtler pressures of assimilation," and instead sustain and build their Jewish identity as a way to revitalize the American Jewish community.[79]

American Jewish identity in relation to the Holocaust also brings up the question of victimhood. Who has it, who uses it, who dismisses it and what does it do for the entire Jewish community in America and the world? There is never a complete answer as everyone perceives victimhood differently, but American Jews fall into roughly two groups: those who believe they are vicarious victims of the Holocaust and those who do not. The American Jews who believe they are vicarious victims have created a foundation and discourse on the Holocaust as "not just a competition for recognition but a competition for primacy."[80] A primacy that leads to the sometimes angry insistence of the Holocaust's uniqueness. This notion works to negate any comparison or resemblance to other histories of violence and prejudice.

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[76] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 7.
[77] Michael A. Meyer, *Jewish Identity in the Modern World* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1990), 33.
[78] Meyer, *Jewish Identity*, 56.
[79] Meyer, *Jewish Identity*, 56.
[80] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 9.

The American Jews that did not want to be associated or considered victims press the notion that the attitude surrounding victimhood within the Holocaust might not be good for the Jews in America. American Jews fear that if non-Jewish Americans only learn about the Holocaust through school curricula and museums like the Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall in Washington, then what is being presented and inscribed to them is solely "the equation Jew-equals-victim."[81] This attitude could be harmful to American Jews because it implies that American Jews are entitled to specific collateral because of what they, their ancestors, or their European counterparts had to suffer at the hands of the Nazi regime. Novick asks "is it good for the Jews?", in reference to this problem that affects non-Jews and Jews alike.[82] What is at stake when Jews are portrayed as victims? Does this equation invite further abuse and antisemitism? Does it keep Jews from moving on?

The tradition of guarding and remembering the Holocaust is emblematic of the Jewish experience no matter where one resides. However, how we guard and remember the Holocaust does not have to fit one impression in the memory of American Jews or Americans in general. The narrative that portrays Jews as victims confronts American Jews with the question of how they can differentiate themselves from this notion without forgetting the Holocaust or relinquishing their values and traditions. It should not have to be one or the other, but the way in which the Holocaust is represented in America only allows for the equation of Jews with victims. Furthermore, this "equation" correlates with the (continued) narrative that the Holocaust should be considered as unique and incomparable to any other catastrophe. How can American Jewry

[81] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 11.
[82] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 11.

persevere if they are represented as victims and if no one can compare their atrocities to ours without stealing our Holocaust?

The Question of Proper Memorialization and the Politicalization of the Holocaust

Who gets to decide how and what we memorialize? Why is there a Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C.? Despite the fact that this historical event did not occur within the borders of the United States, our government has insisted that it be memorialized, whether one believes it is proper or not. Over the decades, groups have denied that the Holocaust even happened while others have worked hard to fight for the teaching and remembrance of its place in world and Jewish history. The intensity of these reactions reveals just how powerful the Holocaust's memory is within the American context.

The moral burden about how to remember and memorialize the Holocaust correlates to the question about the uniqueness of this historical event. An approach to remembrance that focuses on human identity and the necessity of not letting people and the violence inflicted upon them be erased allows for an honest, genuine, and ethical memorialization. However, not every historian or scholar agrees with the arguments surrounding the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its significance to American Jewish identity. Lipstadt believes the Holocaust was an arguably unique historical event, while Novick works to combat this perception as he believes it leads to the conclusion that Jews are inherently victims.

According to Novick, "The 'Americanization' of the Holocaust has involved using it to demonstrate the difference between the Old World and the New, and to celebrate, by showing its

negation, the American way of life."[83] This idea stems from the politicization of the Holocaust in congruence with whatever party's ideology it fits. For the right, the politicization of the Holocaust promotes anti-communitist rhetoric and interventions. For the left, it has been "used to demonstrate the moral bankruptcy of the establishment."[84] For liberals, the Holocaust bears important lessons concerning the evils of facism and prejudice. Therefore, on some level, for all Americans, "the Holocaust has become a moral reference point."[85] On all sides of the spectrum of politics deploring the Holocaust is agreed upon whether or not some politicians believe it happened or not. Historian Alan Mintz justifies Novick's argument of the politics of victimization and points out that "rather than pointing to what its members had accomplished in America, groups identified themselves instead with historical sufferings—slavery, discrimination, internment—to which they had been subjected to."[86] The narrative of victimization can create an environment of one upmanship, with various groups competing for the prize of having endured the most violence, in turn neglecting the fault of the perpetrators. Furthermore, it creates a narrative that Jews, specifically American Jews, have a monopoly on victimization yet have become incredibly Americanized to the point of succeeding in all aspects of society.

Because Jews enjoyed increased opportunities and success in American society, "Judaism became an American religion."[87] American Jews were so open minded and thus successful in their assimilation and acculturation into American society that this created a degree of separation

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[83] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 13.
[84] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 12.
[85] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 13.
[86] Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 165.
[87] Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 6.

between American Jews and Jewish origins.[88] Yet, the discussion around the uniqueness of the Holocaust never leaves because as much as American Jews may advance in society, the Holocaust will always be a part of the Jewish experience. That being said, there needs to be a distinction between those American Jews who have stayed in the religion to deepen their Jewishness or those American Jews who continue the rhetoric that ties Judaism to the Holocaust in preventing Hitler a posthumous victory.

This distinction between American Jews staying in the religion for Judaism or preventing another Holocaust leads to the question of proper memorialization of the Holocaust and who is responsible for sustaining the memory of the six million Jews who died at the hands of Hitler and the Nazi regime. Why should non-Jewish Americans mourn, remember and memorialize the Jews who died in the Holocaust if they have no attachment to the historical event? Novick asks, "why make special provisions for teaching about the Holocaust rather than about any of the other atrocious crimes in the record of mankind?"[89] It seems that Holocaust (in its uniqueness) stands as a foundation of the kind of evil that can infiltrate and rise in governments and political groups if people are not vigilant against hate and violence. Elie Wiesel stated that the Holocaust had "universal implications", and thus anyone and everyone should learn about "the lessons of the Holocaust."[90] Through memorialization and the teaching of the Holocaust, Americans (Jews and non-Jews) should be aware of the implications of evil in the world. Their values and livelihood should include the lessons of the Holocaust and the dangers of hate and violence against a

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[88] Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 6.
[89] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 239.
[90] By, WALTER GOODMAN. 1984. Israeli clashes with American Jew about Persecution Past and Present. *New York Times (1923-)*, Sep 09, 1984. https://login.ezproxy.bgc.bard.edu/?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/israeli-clashes-with-american-jew-about/docview/122534467/se-2 (accessed March 28, 2023).

specific group of people. Yet Novick seems skeptical of this way of remembering the Holocaust. He states, "if Americans need a demonstration of the way these values (pluralism, democracy, restraint on government, the inalienable rights of individuals, the inability of government to enter into freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and so forth) were violated in the Holocaust to remain committed to them, we're in worse shape than I'd thought."[91] The problem is not necessarily with the lessons themselves, but rather how they are built into everyday life and present an understanding of the presence of evil. The problem lies with the individual and how deeply they think about the evils and dangers of prejudice in the world. What good does it do to remember the Holocaust, if no one learns from its implications of evil?

Contrary to Novick, what makes a lesson from the Holocaust successful and real? How can we tell if a particular lesson was learned because we learned about the Holocaust, or how will we know if that lesson was learned by some other route? Before examining these questions, we must understand the role of Holocaust memorialization in the American Jewish community. Most American Jews learned about the Holocaust and antisemitism from a place of physical safety and an awareness towards Jewish stereotypes and prejudice. While the event itself might be distant, the aftermath of the trauma has affected generations of Jews. This trauma created an awareness surrounding the ever-presence of evil and antisemitism that most Jews face in their lives. Therefore, the question of memorialization is an ongoing preoccupation of the modern Jew, and the lessons that are derived from understanding the Holocaust do not necessarily have to be acted on, but rather act as a connection to the Jewish community and to staying vigilant about their place in American culture.

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[91] Novick, *The Holocaust*, 240.

Scholar Alan Mintz describes "the dynamics of memorialization" as having two aspects of self awareness: "the current complexity of motivations and the future modes of memorialization."[92] These motivations contemplate the relationship and behavior all Americans either do or do not have towards the Holocaust. These aspects symbolize the present and future motivations of remembering and discussing the Holocaust. Therefore, the discussion of these dynamics should place non-Jews at the forefront of the conversation because what is their affiliation and relationship to the Holocaust?

Mintz's construction of "those who use and abuse the Holocaust and those who remain loyal to its true import" leaves little room for growth and evolution of the individual.[93] This is a continual dilemma that is present in not just Mintz's work, but also Novick's and Lipstadt's. These scholars do not account for the middle, the gray area of politics and self-awareness. People might not fully change, but they are always growing whether it is relatively good or bad, and so there needs to be a middle ground of learning the implications and lessons of the Holocaust without being grouped into rigid categories.

However, Mintz proposes an alternative method to the two aspects mentioned above: "the assumption is that beyond its factual core the meaning of the Holocaust, like all historical events, is not inscribed in the event itself but shaped by interpreters that come after it."[94] This seems to be a more justifiable and balanced approach to characterizing how non-Jewish individuals may interpret and comprehend a seemingly incomprehensible historical event. It allows individuals and groups to interpret the events of the Holocaust within their perception of the world. While

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[92] Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 170.
[93] Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 171.
[94] Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 171.

this can be dangerous in some instances of far-right groups, ultimately it creates a space in which the consumer of knowledge can feel comfortable learning or perhaps unlearning the outlooks and values of the Holocaust within their realm of knowledge. There is no perfect way to teach an arguably unique event in history as "we may reject the assertion that a text can mean only one thing, we also know that it cannot mean anything; and the field of possibility that remains is bounded by the affinity we feel with the minds and values of other interpreters."[95] Each group and individual is inherently different, yet the Holocaust can unify American non-Jews and Jews in the recognition of evil and prejudice.

[95] Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 172.

Chapter 3: Developing and Deciding a Curriculum for Teaching the Holocaust in Secondary Schools

History of Holocaust Education

In approaching the development of Holocaust curricula, it should be noted that the study of history must have an accurate portrayal of events and should include historical context to help shape students' understanding of how and why there is importance and value in learning these events. This begs multiple questions of the importance of teaching middle and high school students, ranging from ten to eighteen, about the Holocaust. The examination and study of the introduction, implementation and teaching of the Holocaust in the U.S. public school system will allow for an accurate and effective evaluation of the resources and curriculum that is available through museums and organizations.

In the beginning of the 1960s, the world was exposed to the events of "the arrest and trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi official who was head of the Department of Jewish Affairs in the Gestapo from 1941 to 1945 and was chief operations in the deportation of three million Jews to death camps in Poland."[96] Within the same decade, Israel reigned victorious against its Middle East neighbors in the Six Day War (1967) "and undoubtedly induced memories of the annihilation of European Jews just some thrifty-five years earlier."[97] These events prompted further recognition and traction in paying further attention and awareness of the horrors of the

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[96] Samuel Totten, "Holocaust Education," in *Educating about Social Issues in the 20th and 21st Centuries: A Critical Annotated Bibliography*, by Samuel Totten and Jon E. Pedersen (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2014), 224, ProQuest Ebook Central.
[97] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 224.

Holocaust; thus creating "the catalyst for Jewish educators" to bring Holocaust education "to their classroom and schools."[98]

With a growing desire for the implementation of Holocaust education, the Jewish communities and Jewish private schools in New York and New Jersey were the frontiers in recognizing and initiating a need for Holocaust education before a mandate was established. This led to "an explosion of activity in public schools vis-a-vis teaching about the Holocaust."[99] Before this, "the topic was hardly broached in educational discussions and was almost nowhere integrated as a unique and clearly defined component in curricula and school systems."[100] In gaining public traction on the importance of incorporating the Holocaust in public education, cities and communities in the Northeast started "to recommend the teaching of the Holocaust and genocide at the pre-college level."[101] However, even with the introduction of the study of the Holocaust in secondary schools "educators suddenly found themselves sharing in common the surprising discovery that their [public] educational systems had not fulfilled their duty in teaching the Holocaust and had not been aware of the educational values and opportunities which might be implicated in this subject, thus leaving their students unprepared for the confrontation with the problems the Holocaust evokes."[102]

The 1970s reached the beginning of "schools boards across the United States endors[ing] the teaching of the Holocaust" in their schools and curricula; this included cities such as

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[98] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 224.
[99] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 224.
[100] Chaim Schatzker, "The Teaching of the Holocaust: Dilemmas and Considerations," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450 (1980): 219, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1042571.
[101] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 224.
[102] Schatzker, "The Teaching," 219.

"Atlanta, Baltimore, Des Moines, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York City, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh."[103] This started a gradual increase in activity for the requesting and implementation of Holocaust education in public schools.

Then in 1976, "in Brookline, Massachusetts, an eight-to ten-week unit entitled *Facing History and Ourselves* [FHAO] was initially developed for use with the social studies curriculum in grade eight and was then later adapted for inclusion in English and history classes at the high school level."[104] Facing History and Ourselves is a non-profit public foundation that "provides teachers throughout the world with professional development in the form of workshops, institutes, and seminars" to further their Holocaust education.[105] In its initial introduction in 1976, it was mostly used in the state of Massachusetts itself, but reached California in 1985 after a law was passed that emphasized the teaching of genocides and Holocaust education in the state's public schools.

The current version of their curriculum is available on their website, but for a more concise and accessible resource the curriculum is also accumulated into a resource book that is over five hundred and sixty-five pages. It is broken down into chapters that focus on "The Individual and Society, We and They" in reference to putting the Holocaust in American history context, "Germany in the 1920s, The Nazis Take Power, Conformity and Obedience, Escalating Violence, The Holocaust, Bystanders and Rescuers, Judgment, Historical Legacies, and Choosing to Participate" is the final section that delves into the roles of American citizens as they grapple, teach and learn about the Holocaust as they understand their place in the country

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[103] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 224.
[104] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 224.
[105] Margot Stern Strom, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior : Resource Book* (Brookline, Mass.: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 1994), iv.

and world.[106] Even as of recently, according to its website, Facing History and Ourselves was identified in 2015, "as one of only a handful of programs that meet rigorous ESSA [Every Student Succeeds Act] standards for social-emotional learning in middle and high schools."[107] The ESSA is a United States law that was reauthorized and passed in December of 2015, and it governs the K-12 national public education policy that is committed to equal opportunity for all students.

However, it was not until November 1, 1978 that "President Jimmy Carter established the President's Commission on the Holocaust and charged it with the responsibility to submit a report 'with respect to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust."[108] Due to the President's Commission, there was a call "to implement the conviction of the Commission that the study of the Holocaust become part of the curriculum in every school system in the country."[109] In creating this curriculum, "the Foundation should include various support systems, financial aid, evaluation of Holocaust courses presently offered in public and private schools, consortia, conferences, teacher-training workshops, and summer institutes for educators and scholars."[110] This in turn led to the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), which is referred to as the Foundation in the report.

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[106] Strom, *Facing History*, v-xii.
[107] Facing History and Ourselves, "See Our Impact," Facing History and Ourselves, https://www.facinghistory.org/.
[108] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "The President's Commission on the Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/presidents-commission.
[109] President's Commission on the Holocaust, Rep. (Sept. 27, 1979). https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/presidents-commission, 12.
[110] President's Commission on the Holocaust, Rep. (Sept. 27, 1979). https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/presidents-commission, 12.

Even with the establishment of the President's Commission to teach about the Holocaust and genocides in schools, the issue of the decentralized public education system leaves the decision of what to include and how to teach it in the hands of school districts and individual states; thus making "the federal involvement in establishing mandates largely nonexistent."[111] That being said, the USHMM keeps a running record of how states handle the Holocaust in their schools. However, since Holocaust education requirements vary by state, not all 50 states are on the list as this curriculum is not mandated in all states. A lot of these bills and information are changing and up for interpretation as it appears that some states encourage the teaching of the Holocaust but do not state it as a requirement. Some of states have integrated the history of genocide as an alternative to specifically teaching about the Holocaust, while others, such as Illonios, Colorado and New York, mandate an adoption of Holocaust and genocide studies into their public schools curricula.[112] Furthermore, due to the curriculum itself being up to the state for public schools, some states address the Holocaust in history while others address it in language arts through written stories about the Holocaust.

The establishment of FHAO encouraged the teaching of the Holocaust while incorporating the still existent social studies citizenship education. Their mission statement "is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students

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[111] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 225.
[112] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Holocaust Education in the United States," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/where-holocaust-education-is-required-in-the-us.

make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they contront in their own lives."[113]

Researchers had found in the 2000s that through the implementation of *Facing History and Ourselves*, "students who were taught the unit increased significantly in their interpersonal understanding as well as factual knowledge about the event [the Holocaust]."[114] However, through the utilization of the extensive work of researchers and studies, historian Thomas Fallace found that while FHAO is effective "in terms of learning lessons from the event and understanding its factual historical components; it often lacks an increase "in students' moral reasoning and social awareness."[115] Furthermore, Simone Schweber's study of a California teacher in her book, *Making Sense of the Holocaust: Lessons from Classroom Practice*, "confirmed that the Facing History and Ourselves curriculum failed to convey important aspects of historical context."[116] Schweber found that the Holocaust was "discussed as a symbol rather than understood as events."[117] While these conclusions of FHAO's curriculum pose quite opposite deductions, they offer an important perspective on how even with the "right" materials and resources available an educator will need to understand their audience and plan accordingly with the implementation of said resources. This disparity between connecting the intellectual historical information and the emotional and moral implications of the Holocaust seems to be the major hurdle for educators to get past in order to teach a well-rounded and effective curriculum,

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[113] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 225.
[114] Thomas D. Fallace, "Teaching about the Holocaust in U.S. Schools," in *Teaching and Studying Social Issues: Major Programs and Approaches*, by Samuel Totten and Jon E. Pedersen (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2014), 144, ProQuest Ebook Central.
[115] Fallace, "Teaching about," 144-145.
[116] Fallace, "Teaching about," 145.
[117] Schweber, *Making Sense*, 42-59.

emphasizing the effect the educator "has on the framing of the event and its reception by students."[118]

With FHAO's mission statement in mind and the role and impact of the educator, it is important to remember that "by trying to make the Holocaust understandable, to shape it in accordance with our own and our students' perceptive capabilities in order to explain it and to derive from it educational lessons, values, and directions, there is a danger that it will be dwarfed, diminished, and will lose its unique significance."[119] Therefore, the popularization and inclusion of the Holocaust in education needs to be approached with specific methodologies and appropriate content so as not to lose meaning due to "a lack of focus and attention to detail."[120]

By the mid-1990s, Holocaust scholars and educators raised concerns about the lack of effective and acceptable pedagogical strategies in place for schools. Historian Lucy Dawidowicz deduced in a survey of twenty five Holocaust curricula that

> The testimony of classroom experience is too fragmentary and subjective to allow judgments about how any particular curriculum translates into effective classroom teaching. But the texts themselves reveal their shortcomings. Though most recite the facts, they do not stress the centrality of premeditated mass murder as an instrument of policy. But the more serious failure, to which I have already alluded, is the omission of the history of anti-Semitism — and especially its roots in Christian doctrine — as necessary background to the murder of the European Jews.[121]

In releasing this article, historians Samuel Totten, William Parson, and Karen Shawn referred to this work and agreed with Dawidowicz's concerns and criticisms of the lack of and poor quality of curricular materials and methods available and designed for educators. In the wake of this

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[118] Fallace, "Teaching about," 146.
[119] Schatzker, "The Teaching," 221.
[120] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 226.
[121] Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "How They Teach the Holocaust," *Commentary*, December 1990; https://www.commentary.org/articles/lucy-dawidowicz/how-they-teach-the-holocaust/.

concern, more studies and articles were written to bring attention to the Holocaust "curricula [that] were rife with errors and/or addressed key concepts in a perfunctory manner."[122]

According to Totten,"over the past fifteen years [roughly end of 1990s to 2010s] a massive amount of information about the Holocaust (articles about various facets of the history; essays on teaching about the Holocaust; Holocaust curricula, units, and lessons…) is available on the Internet."[123] This was a positive advancement as it opened up the door for educators and students alike to access an array of resources about the Holocaust (primary sources, articles, photographs, published work from survivors, trials), but more notably it prompted the origination of online Holocaust teaching resources (lessons, timelines, maps, guidelines, criteria, activities, multimedia).

However, it would be irresponsible and neglectful to not mention the negative effects of this accomplishment as well; "a vast amount of the material found online is produced by those neither with an expertise in the history of the Holocaust nor in pedagogy. A lot of this material is inaccurate, poorly documented, and even misleading."[124] The open forum for a surplus in Holocaust information allowed for an increased result in Holocaust deniers and denial literature to surface. Therefore, educators and students have to be aware and cognizant of the information they are consuming and trusting so as not to fall into the trap of denial literature posing as legitimate scholarly work. This may fall onto the responsibility of teachers "to teach their students how to ascertain whether a source on the Internet is legitimate, accurate, and worth using or is something that is misleading or outright false and should be ignored."[125] There is a

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[122] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 229.
[123] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 229.
[124] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 230.
[125] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 230.

great deal of responsibility for educators to be informed and selective about the information and resources they pull from the internet so as not to add to the already poorly facilitated Holocaust curricula.

More recently, in December 2021, Massachusetts enacted a legislation that requires public school districts to provide "instruction about the history of genocide to middle and high school students."[126] The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website goes through the frequently asked questions on the implementation of this updated legislation. This allows for easy access to understand and learn about what genocide and Holocaust education will look like in Massachusetts public school systems. Furthermore, the article goes through existing Holocaust education resources that are part of the implementation of genocide education. The USHMM, Echoes and Reflections, and Facing History and Ourselves are three of these resources that will be discussed throughout the chapter.

In 1993, Jimmy Carter's plan for a foundation to support and implement Holocaust education in public schools finally came to fruition; "the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) proved to be the beginning of a major effort to assist educators at all levels to teach about the Holocaust in a historically accurate and pedagogically sound manner."[127] Its ample resources, publications, workshops, seminars, and institutes have given educators a new, free and promising opportunity to further develop their thinking and practices of Holocaust curricula that works to fix and change the issues with state given Holocaust curriculum.

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[126] Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "Genocide Education in Massachusetts: Frequently Asked Questions," Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
[127] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 230.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), which is a public museum that is funded by the federal government, presents a list of guidelines in approaching an appropriate and effective teaching style to Holocaust education. With ten guidelines available on their website, each one emphasizes a historically accurate and responsible way of teaching. These guidelines establish a focus on the teaching of the Holocaust that should ultimately, "avoid simple answers to complex questions."[128] However, do teachers know they have access to these resources, and if so how do they decide what to include to an already existing curriculum?

Criteria and Evaluations of Holocaust Curriculum

How do teachers approach teaching such delicate yet complex subject matter without oversimplifying it? Is the curriculum that exists enough, or are some areas overlooked and not taught? How do you teach about a unique event? How much time do you spend on Holocaust education? How do educators balance teaching basic facts while grappling with the larger moral issues that arise: hatred, antisemitism, racism, and violence? Is the Holocaust contextualized for American students? What is the goal in teaching the Holocaust, and what do the students learn? What are the moral implications and lessons from teaching the Holocaust in secondary schools? Lastly, how can students learn about the Holocaust "in a way that [is] historically informative, personally relevant, and morally powerful"?[129]

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[128] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/guidelines-for-teaching-the-holocaust.

[129] Simone Schweber, *Making Sense of the Holocaust: Lessons from Classroom Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), 11.

Scholar David Lindquist reviews and considers how to choose the appropriate instructional approaches for teaching the Holocaust. He sets forth multiple factors that teachers must consider when they plan a unit around the Holocaust: "(a) historical accuracy, (b) the topics to be included, (c) the selection of materials to be used, and (d) the use of graphic materials given the possibility that unintended consequences may results from the use of emotionally wrenching images that depict the horror of the event."[130] Each one of these proposed factors represents an awareness of the sensitivity and intensity of the subject matter that students will be faced with as they learn about the Holocaust.

Before deciding on what topics should be included in Holocaust education, it seems imperative to address the problems and challenges teachers and students alike may face while approaching the complexity of the subject matter. As discussed in Chapter 2, many historians and scholars believe that the Holocaust is an incomprehensible historical event that therefore cannot be fully understood by those that did not experience it. This begs the question (1) if students are aware of the uniqueness phenomena that surrounds the Holocaust, and (2) if this closes students off from learning about subject matter that is incomprehensible to them?

In approaching these challenges, teachers should understand and think about why they "are teaching this history before deciding what and how to teach about the Holocaust."[131] The USHMM considers these factors to be the following: "your knowledge of Holocaust history, your unique student population, the particular course you are teaching, time available for study

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[130] David H. Lindquist, "Instructional Approaches in Teaching the Holocaust," *American Secondary Education* 39, no. 3 (2011): 118], http://www.jstor.org/stable/23100427.
[131] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Rationale and Learning Objectives," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/rationale-learning-objectives.

of the Holocaust, external curricular requirements, and the Museum's guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust."[132] In understanding this rationale, teachers should look to contextualize the subject matter "within the time frame of the Nazi era as well as events occurring before and after that time."[133] However, teachers need to be acutely aware of potentially "overwhelming students with depictions of the violence that occurred."[134] Furthermore, the studying of the Holocaust "does not necessarily lead to definitive conclusions about why it occurred or what meaning, if any, can be made of it."[135] This perspective is critical as students may not be able to grasp the magnitude of the Holocaust while simultaneously expecting answers on how and why an atrocity like this could happen and if it could happen again.

While this criteria is important and should be considered, every student is going to walk away from learning about the Holocaust with a different perspective on what they have learned based on how their school and teacher taught the material. Therefore many scholars have argued, a requirement that teachers establish a clear motive for teaching the Holocaust and what moral implications can arise from the subject is an important step in understanding the curricula at hand. Historians themselves struggle to decipher if the Holocaust is understandable or not, and so students are more than likely to struggle to comprehend the extremity of this human behavior. Lindquist recommends that "teachers must display a high degree of historical knowledge and pedagogical judgment in planning and implementing Holocaust curricula."[136] That being said, the

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[132] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Rationale and Learning," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
[133] Lindquist, "Instructional Approaches," 118.
[134] Lindquist, "Instructional Approaches," 118.
[135] Lindquist, "Instructional Approaches," 118.
[136] David H. Lindquist, "Avoiding Inappropriate Pedagogy in Middle School Teaching of the Holocaust," *Middle School Journal* 39, no. 1 (2007): 25, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23044324.

creation of a baseline for this curriculum should establish a rationale that provides students with goals and objectives that speak to the complexity and extremity of the Holocaust.

A consistent problem that arises for educators when using textbooks is that they typically glaze over the Holocaust without putting in the time necessary for effective teaching and learning of its place in history and in the present. Scholar Samuel Totten noted that "many of the state-sponsored curricula were better at describing the events that took place during the Holocaust than they were at explaining why and how the Holocaust happened."[137] There needs to be an opportunity for students to accurately reflect and understand the implications of human behavior and the moral imperative that the learning of the Holocaust forces as a catalyst for social and intellectual change.

What seems to be the biggest concern around Holocaust education in the U.S. public school system is the assertion that Holocaust curricula revolved around describing the events that took place during the Holocaust as opposed to focusing on why those events happened.

Totten argues that "it is, of course, one thing to recommend or even mandate that a topic be taught and quite another to actually teach it in a comprehensive and effective manner."[138] In dealing with such personal, emotional, and almost incomprehensible material, educators should be given the correct tools to approach teaching a unique event, to make an informative and lasting impression on students. Without the access and knowledge of effective pedagogical methods, teachers will not be able to avoid the arbitrary and simplistic teachings of the Holocaust, and so, a responsibility falls onto educators as typical methods of teaching do not cross over effectively to Holocaust education.

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[137] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 226.
[138] Totten, "Holocaust Education," 227.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust (based in New York City), which is a privately funded museum, "is committed to the crucial mission of educating diverse visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust."[139] The Museum "mobilizes memory to teach the dangers of intolerance and challenges visitors — including more than 60,000 schoolchildren a year — to let the painful lessons of the past guide them to envision a world worthy of their futures."[140] Under the banner for "Education," the website has their curriculum readily accessible with lesson plans, a glossary and a historical timeline. Furthermore, they have two separate sections for teachers to partner and participate in tours, guides and development, and for students there is a section on the young people who survived the Holocaust and to apply for programs and partnerships with the museum. The Museum of Jewish Heritage has numerous lesson plans readily available that set out the objectives and aims for each specific lesson.

On the Museum of Jewish Heritage website the lessons are divided into the warm up, extensive background information, a guided practice activity, questions to consider after each section, media, a student worksheet, and answers and background information for the educator themself.[141] This curriculum offers guides to deepen and expand upon the Holocaust curricula that already exists in their schools, and it is not only easily accessible but the instructions are laid out for educators to teach.

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[139] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Mission," The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, https://mjhnyc.org/.
[140] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Mission," The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.
[141] Jewish Heritage Museum, "Lesson Three : Jewish Responses to Discrimination in Nazi Germany: Nuremberg Laws and Kristallnacht," Jewish Heritage Museum: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, https://education.mjhnyc.org/.

Another outside Holocaust education resource that is easily accessible for educators is Echoes & Reflections: Teaching the Holocaust, Inspiring the Classroom. Founded in 2005, Echoes & Reflections "is dedicated to reshaping the way that teachers and students understand, process, and navigate the world through the events of the Holocaust."[142] They're a publicly funded organization that are partnered with ADL, the USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem. According to its website, educators and users of this resource have the appropriate guidance to "introduce students to the complex themes of the Holocaust and to understand its lasting effect on the world."[143] They have impacted 12 million students and counting, represented over 19,000 schools, empowered more than 125,000 educators, trained educators in all 50 states and DC and it has all cost zero dollars for the educators.[144] A resource such as this provides educators with formal guidance and the ability to adapt their classrooms to a productive and forthright learning environment.

On the Echoes & Reflection website, the educators that have used this resource have stated that they found that their students are able to personally connect to the material through utilizing videos, text, worksheets, stories from survivors and lessons that revolve around specific subjects within the Holocaust. Echoes & Reflections website approaches Holocaust content as "standards-based: compliant with state and national educational standards, interdisciplinary, personalized, multimedia and adaptable."[145] According to its educators and students that have

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[142] Echoes & Reflections, "About: Our Mission, Our Partners, Our Founders," Echoes & Reflections: Teaching the Holocaust, Inspiring the Classroom, https://echoesandreflections.org/.
[143] Echoes & Reflections, "About: Our Mission," Echoes & Reflections: Teaching the Holocaust, Inspiring the Classroom.
[144] Echoes & Reflections, "About: Our Mission," Echoes & Reflections: Teaching the Holocaust, Inspiring the Classroom.
[145] Echoes and Reflections, "Our Approach," Echoes & Reflections: Teaching the Holocaust, Inspiring the Classroom, https://echoesandreflections.org/.

partaken in their resources, this approach is a well-rounded perspective that allows for students to critically think about the Holocaust in the context of that time period while also bridging the gap from the past to the present as they work to make it relevant to contemporary events. On the website there is not only an overview of their resources and their pedagogical principles for effective Holocaust teaching is available for printing out, but there are eleven lessons plans available to anyone with "step-by-step procedures, estimated completion time, resources labeled by icons [subject areas], and print-ready pages."[146] There are also resources and activities available for students if they wanted to use this website themselves.

A resource such as Echoes & Reflections has allowed educators to teach "with great[er] efficacy than is to be found in the situation we have considered."; their organization gives educators access to a plethora of Holocaust resources with instructions and guidelines on how to use them effectively in the classroom."[147] At a time where some states do not mandate the teaching of the Holocaust, it is critical that educators are aware of the resources that do exist and are readily available for them and their students; in order to honor the memories of the victims and the lasting moral implications the Holocaust has on the present world today.[148]

Lesson Plans for Teaching the Holocaust

Furthermore, it is pertinent to structure units around the Holocaust through lesson plans that avoid oversimplification and generality. In an active attempt to avoid inappropriate

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[146] Echoes and Reflections, "Lesson Plans," Echoes & Reflections: Teaching the Holocaust, Inspiring the Classroom, https://echoesandreflections.org/.
[147] Lindquist, "Avoiding Inappropriate," 30.
[148] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Holocaust Education," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

pedagogy for the Holocaust, David Lindquist confronts the complexity of the Holocaust through creating "a lesson plan that illustrates the application of such high-order thinking processes to a specific historical topic [the Holocaust]."[149] He sets out by setting up the historical context of the lesson plan for the purpose of "confront[ing] [the] historical complexity."[150] He begins by setting up his goal of the lesson plan: 1) to provide students with factual knowledge about Jewish emigration from Germany during the Nazi era; and 2) to complicate student thinking about that emigration, thus fostering analytical and critical thinking processes that will allow students to consider historical events in increasingly sophisticated ways."[151] While Lindquist is not creating an actual lesson plan, such as MJH or USHMM have on their websites, Lindquist's objective is to bring about the criteria, benefits, analysis and depth to instituting an effective lesson plan for teaching the Holocaust, specifically evaluating the decision for Jews to stay or leave Germany. He explains that through his lesson plan the benefits that students should acquire through its completion include:

1. learning and practicing the investigative process of history;
2. developing an in-depth study of an important historical topic;
3. applying critical thinking skills in the drawing of inferences and implications at higher-order conceptual levels;
4. applying the constructivist approach to studying history;
5. analyzing historical data drawn from various sources; and
6. utilizing an exemplary educational website as a reference.[152]

Even though this is a specific lesson plan, these benefits and conclusions can be applied to most of the already existing lesson plans set forth by resources, websites, museums and educators as

[149] Lindquist, "Avoiding the Complex," 407.
[150] Lindquist, "Avoiding the Complex," 411.
[151] Lindquist, "Avoiding the Complex," 411.
[152] Lindquist, "Avoiding the Complex," 416.

they approach engaging their students with the study of the Holocaust and the implications it has on the human experience and the contemporary world.

For the purposes of my own study on how a textbook differs from outside resources such as USHMM and MJH, I will be looking at New York State's framework for social studies and Holocaust curriculum. The mandated framework for New York State's social studies curriculum is divided into the following sections; "History of the United States and New York, World History, Geography, Economics, and Civics, Citizenship, and Government."[153] The framework states that in grade 10, students will learn and "examine the role of nationalism and the development of the National Socialist state under Hitler in Germany."[154] Through this background in setting up the rise of antisemitism and the strategic and calculated laws and rules that were implemented onto Jews at the beginning of the 1930s, students then transition to learning about human atrocities and mass murders. These are not limited to just the Holocaust; they also include the Armenian genocide and the Ukranian Holodomor. This is the main framework in which educators receive information on what and how they will be teaching their students for the school year. Additionally, in Grade 8, students will learn about World War II and "the damage from total warfare and atrocities such as the Holocaust [that] led to a call for international efforts to protect human rights and prevent future wars."[155] This criteria for Grade 8

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[153] New York State Education Department, "Social Studies," New York State Education Department, https://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/social-studies.
[154] New York State Education Department, *New York State Grade 9-12 Social Studies Framework*, 23, February 2017, https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/framework-9-12-with-2017-updates.pdf.
[155] New York State Education Department, *New York State K-8 Social Studies Framework*, 106, February 2017,

curriculum seems to be more fleshed out with relation to the United States involvement in attempting to remain neutral and their eventual fight on multiple fronts. There is a subsection of the World War II curriculum that asks students to "investigate the Holocaust and explain the historical significance of the Nuremberg trials."[156] While it is important that New York State has specific references to teaching the Holocaust within the history and social studies curriculum, it is not as in depth as most other sections and explanations of the information being taught.

However, there is a section on the New York State education department that is specifically devoted to "Holocaust Education Within New York State Public School Districts." This lays forth the "Holocaust Instruction Survey" and its findings, and has a truncated list of Holocaust Education resources outside of the New York State Learning Standards. In 2022, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul "signed into law Chapter 490 of the Laws of 2022 requiring a survey regarding instruction on the Holocaust within New York State public school district."[157] The results of this survey are available on said website, and they conclude that "99.9% of school districts attest to teaching about the Holocaust", and "100% of districts with secondary level instruction report the Holocaust is taught at the middle and high schools levels."[158]

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https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/ss-framework-k-8a2.pdf.

[156] New York State Education Department, *New York*, 107.

[157] New York State Education Department, "Holocaust Education Within New York State Public School Districts," in *New York State Education Department*, https://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/holocaust-education-within-new-york-state-public-school-districts.

[158] New York State Education Department, *Holocaust Instruction in NYS Public School Districts*, 10, 2022, https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/holocaust-instruction-report-final-2022.pdf.

Furthermore, schools responded to the survey question that asked how the district aligned with the curriculum set forth by NYS Social Studies Learning Standards at the elementary, middle and high school levels. These responses went on to describe how some districts embedded Holocaust education with Social Studies, English Language Arts, through special school events (field trips to museums, talking to survivors, various school projects), and one school has it as a separate elective course.[159] The final part of the survey "asked districts to report how their teachers have been trained for teaching about the Holocaust."[160] The results for this section were the most varied as it is all dependent upon the district, and while many "referenced specific professional development for teachers [from] sources outside their districts, others simply mentioned their teachers received such training."[161] With all this information available to the public, school districts and educators are held accountable for requiring Holocaust education and "a large majority of schools go beyond the New York State Learning Standards to create instructional programming about the Holocaust in courses and grade levels where it is not required content."[162]

New York State is a prime example of not just requiring Holocaust education in certain grade levels, but creating initiative to encourage and support further curriculum development through including outside resources, such as the USHMM and the Museum of Jewish Heritage, as options for additional advancement on Holocaust education. If educators relied solely on the textbook previously mentioned, there would be a multitude of historical context and analysis

[159] New York State Education Department, *Holocaust Instruction*, 12-14.
[160] New York State Education Department, *Holocaust Instruction*, 15.
[161] New York State Education Department, *Holocaust Instruction*, 15.
[162] New York State Education Department, *Holocaust Instruction*, 15.

missing from their lesson. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to consider and examine what other Holocaust resources are available for responsible and balanced teaching to take place.

This overview of how the Holocaust is included in New York State's social studies curriculum is essential in looking at the textbook that is used in New York State's global II (Grade 10) classrooms for stronger regents, honor level students in public secondary schools. The textbook, *World History: Patterns of Interaction* published in 1999, is widely used in New York and relates directly to the curricular standards and materials discussed in New York state's framework for teaching.

World History: Patterns of Interaction has a chapter of twenty-five pages dedicated to World War II with an additional two pages at the end for a chapter assessment. The chapter is split into five sections ("Hitler's Lightning War, Japan Strikes in the Pacific, The Holocaust, The Allies Are Victorious, and The Devastation of Europe and Japan") each ranging from four to eight pages per section with the Holocaust being the shortest section of only four pages.[163] The Holocaust section starts with two sentences on the main idea of the Holocaust and why it matters, and there is a small list of six terms and names in the top right corner: "Aryans, Holocaust, *Kristallnacht*, ghettos, 'Final Solution', and genocide."[164] The textbook sets the stage for the events of the Holocaust through emphasizing the Nazis new order, proclaiming Aryans as the "master race" and those who do not fall into that category, specifically Jews, were inferior and eventually would lead to the Holocaust.[165]

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[163] Roger B. Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," in *World History: Patterns of Interaction* (Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 1999), 818.
[164] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 831.
[165] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 831.

The section begins with a brief overview of the start of Nazi propaganda against Jews and the government establishment of the Nuremberg Laws included in this description is a photograph of Hitler's SS officers helping "spread the message of the government's anti-Semitic policy."[166] The two paragraph overview transitions into an explanation and retelling of *Kristallnacht* ("Night of Broken Glass"). Within this subsection there is a small box of text titled "A VOICE FROM THE PAST", which utilizes a quote from a survivor's experience during *Kristallnacht* as the textbook shifts to "The Flood of Refugees" and "Isolating the Jews."[167] There are pictures at the bottom of the page that depict "the pile[s] of shoes taken from Nazi victims", representing "the murder of thousands of Jews."[168] Furthermore, the picture used on the following page is of "slave workers in Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany," and "they were among the lucky to have survived the end of the war" with a special highlighted circle of survivor and author, Elie Wiesel.[169]

As the section reaches its last two pages, "Hitler's Final Solution" is split into four parts highlighting what the textbook deems as the most important information: a brief overview of the Final Solution and the term genocide,"The Mass Killings Begin, The Final Stage: Mass Extermination, and The Survivors."[170] On page 833, there is a small "Spotlight On" box that concisely describes the use of "Nazi Medicine" as experiments on prisoners in the concentration camps to promote "racial purity", noting that "even medicine became an instrument of pain and destruction."[171] On the final page of the section, there are four additional inserts of historical

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[166] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 831.
[167] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 831.
[168] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 831.
[169] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 831.
[170] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 833.
[171] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 833.

information that highlight the historical information that did not fit into the actual textbook writing in the chapter. In the top right hand corner of the page, there is a copy of the yellow Star of David that Jews were forced to wear when appearing in public places as a way to be identified. This is followed by a table of statistics of the number of Jews that were killed under Nazi rule; it is organized by country, original Jewish population, Jews killed, and the percent of Jews that survived.[172] There is another "Spotlight On" section that highlights the "Jewish Resistance" that took place in the Warsaw ghetto and concentration camps such as Treblinka, and there is one more quote from the past that showcases Elie Wiesel's mindset as he entered Auschwitz at the age of 15.[173]

To close out the section there is a short assessment split into four categories that require a form of historical analysis: "Terms & Names, Taking Notes, Making Inferences, and Theme Activity."[174] The assessment section matches the limited amount of historical information being presented as it focuses heavily on recounting said information without making space for a larger discussion to take place on the complex, violent, and unprecedented nature of the Holocaust. What is being presented is a superficial history that neglects to ask why and how the Holocaust happened instead it rushes to describe what happened and who was a part of it. This can lead to a dangerous learning situation for students as they are not given the correct amount of tools, information, and guidance to understand the magnitude and lasting effects of the Holocaust. With only four pages on the Holocaust, this mandated textbook may not be sufficient enough for teachers to accurately and effectively teach the Holocaust. This is why the New York State

[172] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 834.
[173] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 834.
[174] Black et al., "World War II, 1939-1945," 834.

Education Department website for Holocaust education recommends the inclusion and use of outside resources with this textbook curriculum.

This brings up the question of effective and informed commentary of the events of the Holocaust. Lindquist himself has already started the discourse on how "studying the Holocaust provides an opportunity to explore a fascinating historical topic whose impact on the contemporary world cannot be overstated."[175] As a better way to understand the approach of Lindquist's lesson plan and the resources that are readily available to educators in secondary public schools, I will look at two pre-existing lesson plans. In order to understand the specificity, accuracy, accessibility, and effectiveness of these lessons, I will examine one from the United States Holocaust memorial Museum and the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Lesson Plan on Antisemitism

The USHMM has a lesson plan on the History of Antisemitism and the Holocaust. This lesson plan will take "approximately 60-75 minutes (extensions available)", it is "multidisciplinary" and "adaptable for grade 7-12"; it will "focus on the history of antisemitism and its role in the Holocaust to better understand how prejudice and hate speech can contribute to violence, mass atrocity, and genocide."[176] Through "learning about the origins of hatred and prejudice", students will be encouraged "to think critically about antisemitism today."[177] The

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[175] David H. Lindquist, "Informed COMMENTARY: Five Perspectives for Teaching the Holocaust," *American Secondary Education* 36, no. 3 (2008): 4, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41406118.
[176] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History of Antisemitism and the Holocaust," in *Holocaust Lesson Plans*, 1, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20200327-lesson-plan-history-antisemitism-holocaust.pdf.
[177] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 1.

lesson plan is compiled into sections on how to teach the information and what students will learn and understand at the end of the lesson. There is an overview of essential questions that the unit will address, what educational outcomes to expect, how teachers can prepare, and any modifications and accommodations that allow for teacher flexibility.[178] This information appears before the lesson plan starts as a way to help prepare and guide educators as they embark on teaching. Students will utilize a KWL (What I know, What do I think I will learn, and what I learned) chart throughout the lesson plan as a way to keep track of the information and evidence they are learning. This way students will walk away from the lesson understanding the changes over time, the historical actors, the types of engines that drive change, an attention to coordinates, sources of evidence and the interpretive nature of historians' work.[179]

Part one focuses on the historical overview of antisemitism starting with asking students the differences between fact, opinion, and belief, and then providing them with the definitions of these terms. Teachers will then distribute a film transcript for students to annotate while they watch the 13-minutes film *European Antisemitism from its Origins to the Present*.[180] Through this explanation and use of historical media, students will be able to gather information and evidence to learn about antisemitism and its origins, changes throughout history, and any misinformation that has "been used to justify antisemitic beliefs."[181] After a discussion about the historical origins of antisemitism, teachers will review the information they just taught as foundation to introduce the next part of the lesson where "they will learn how and why Nazi

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[178] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 1-2.
[179] Myra Armstead et al., "HL516 - History Education: Teaching/Lab Strand" (working paper, MAT Program, Bard College, Annandale on Hudson, NY, n.d.), 1.
[180] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 3.
[181] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 3.

Germany gradually isolated, segregated, impoverished, and incarcerated Jews starting in 1933." [182]

In part two, students will start off with watching Chapter 3 of *The Path to Nazi Genocide: From Citizens to Outcasts* as they transition into discussing and writing about how and why Nazi Germany isolated the Jews and how antisemitism permeated German society legally and socially. [183] Student responses are recommended to include "the legal measures the Nazi-led German government used to gradually exclude Jews from public life, professions, and public education" and the "ways that Nazis demonized Jews and created a climate of hostility and indifference toward their plight."[184] With these responses in mind, students will engage in a discussion surrounding the evidence and historical information they have learned. They will consider and evaluate the significance of the changes of antisemitism over time as it reached an all time high in Nazi Germany.

Part three asks for examples of what students know of antisemitism today, whether it is prevalent in their local communities, state communities, the United States, or on social media.[185] USHMM also provides examples of three antisemitic incidents ranging from the last five to six years for teachers to use as references. In engaging with these incidents, teachers will refer back to the beginning of the lesson and have students choose an example of antisemitism to decipher where they see fact, opinion and belief intersect, and contemplate how understanding these differences can counter prejudice and antisemitism.[186] Lastly, teachers will then "ask students to

[182] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 4.
[183] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 4.
[184] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 4.
[185] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 5.
[186] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 5.

identify ways that people or groups in their communities have responded to antisemitism", and then consider the following questions in conversation with these responses: "How effective do they find these responses? What responses would they recommend?"[187]

As teachers conclude this lesson plan, USHMM sets forth six different options to assess what students have learned and what they have retained. These forms of assessment range from revisiting the charts and information that were collected from the lesson and constructing their own assertion, reasoning, and verifiable evidence (ARE) on antisemitism to selecting current events and posts related to antisemitism to analyze within the same framework of ARE.[188]

The goal of this lesson plan is to gather and consider the history and evidence of antisemitism as it relates to the Holocaust and how it can be seen and changed throughout time. Based on USHMM's curriculum for this lesson plan, educators have a precise understanding of how to approach this topic and the others on the USHMM website. USHMM offers instructors with a clear and concise plan on how to incorporate their lesson plan into the curriculum and how much time said lesson plan will take. This lesson plan allows for students to practice historical thinking and analysis through inquiring and contextualizing evidence that is necessary to understand the history of the Holocaust and can be related to the world now.

Museum of Jewish Heritage (MJH) Lesson Plan on Antisemitism

The MJH also has a lesson plan on how antisemitism affected Jews living in Nazi Germany and how it affects Jewish communities today. The objectives of the lesson plan are "to define antisemitism and briefly explain its history, to examine anti-Jewish discrimination in Nazi

[187] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 5.
[188] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "LESSON: History," 5.

Germany, emphasizing how Jews responded to this discrimination, and to discuss how antisemitism today impacts the Jewish community."[189] For setting up the lesson plan, MJH offers two reflections on identity and freedom in relation to antisemitism and the persecution of a group of people based on their religious, racial, and political backgrounds. These can be utilized before or after the teacher starts the lesson.

The lesson plan starts with an introduction into the definition and origin of the use of the word antisemitism. With six points of background information, the educator can use this to set the historical context for students to both understand antisemitism as its own entity and in relation to the Holocaust. Unlike USHMM's lesson plan, this one does not give a step by step plan for how to engage with the material they have given, instead it is a mix of using images, questions, and clips to approach the lesson and then deciding how to use the given historical information as the lesson transitions from detail to detail.

The warm-up asks students to examine an image of a sports club blouse of Mary Offentier from Germany in 1936; "at a time, when the Nazis no longer permitted Jewish children to attend school or play sport in sports clubs", and so "Jews created their own schools and teams."[190] Through this warm-up, the teacher will ask questions about first impressions of the image: "why do you think this sports club used the Jewish star as their symbol?", "why do you think Jews decided to respond to Nazi persecution with pride in their Jewish identity?", and "were you surprised to learn that the girls chose to wear it?"[191] These questions have possible

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[189] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," in *Holocaust Curriculum Lesson Plans: The Meilman Virtual Classroom*, 1, PDF.
[190] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 2.
[191] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 2.

answers available for the teacher to refer to, but ultimately the students will discuss these questions in a discussion with one another.

The lesson plan starts with an explanation of the Nuremberg Laws that were passed in 1935, taking "away the citizenship rights of German Jews."[192] Teachers will then explain the historical events that were fueled by Nazi antisemitism as a part of their diabolical and purposeful ideology to systemically target German and European Jews. Next, students will examine another image and are asked to describe what is a synagogue of Baden-Baden in flames from the night of November 10th, 1938.[193] This leads the class into the historical event known as "*Kristallnacht* (sometimes referred to as "Night of Broken Glass")."[194] The teacher is given the information on the event to explain to the class as they dive into their next list of questions and prompts to discern why synagogues would be targeted, what message does it send to the Jewish community, how it might have made the Jews feel, and how did Jews respond to this act of violence and antisemitism.[195] The next image that is presented to class is of a Torah scroll saved from the Bornplatz synagogue on *Kristallnacht*.[196] The story of the Torah scroll that was saved serves as an explanation as to the importance, meaning and mindset of Jews in Germany at this time. Students are asked to consider why Mr. Seligmann Bamberger would risk his life to save the Torah, and then use this example to contemplate how they think some Jews would have felt learning their synagogues were under attack.[197] As this section of the lesson comes to a close,

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[192] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 2.
[193] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 4.
[194] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 2.
[195] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 2-3.
[196] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 4.
[197] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 3.

teachers are guided to discuss and ask their students about the rise in antisemitism in the world today and how they think that impacts the Jewish communities.

To continue the conversation about antisemitism today, the lesson ends with a clip of Holocaust survivor Ruth Zimbler discussing "her reaction to the murder of 11 Jews at the Tree of Life *Or L'Simcha Congregation in Pittsburgh, PA on October 27, 2018."[198] Ruth and her brother Walter watched "the destruction of the largest synagogue in Vienna from their apartment" during *Kristallnacht*.[199] Luckily, Ruth and her brother were on the first *Kindertransport* (Children's Transport) out of Vienna in December 1938."[200] This testimony was given at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, where Ruth volunteers, and it shows the correlation and change over time between the events of the Holocaust and the antisemitism that still exists today. Students are asked to respond to this clip with the following questions in mind: "What message does Ruth hope to communicate to those who listen to her speak? Why do you think this message is important to her and to others who have witnessed violence firsthand? Why do you think this is especially important, given the rise of antisemitism in the world today?"[201] These questions allow for a culminating discussion on the history that the students have just learned as they think about the implications it has on the world today. The dangers of antisemitism and hate speech are still prevalent in American society and communities all over the world; therefore, this lesson plan and Ruth's testimony can help students understand and explain how patterns of human behavior can change or give way to another or the same ideology over time.

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[198] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 3.
[199] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 3.
[200] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 3.
[201] Museum of Jewish Heritage, "Lesson on Antisemitism," 3.

The rationale for explaining and examining these lesson plans is to prove that any teacher who wants to expand upon the mandated Holocaust curriculum in textbooks has the baseline framework, guidance and outside resources available to do so. With that in mind, these two resources offer different avenues on how to teach about the history of antisemitism in the Holocaust. While both gather and consider evidence as an explanation for the Nazi regime and ideology, they don't necessarily use the same historical context. MJH focuses heavily on the Nuremberg Laws and Kristallnacht as a way to explain and corroborate the ramifications of the growing antisemitic rhetoric and attitudes towards the Jewish community. USHMM does not spend as much time setting up these historical moments and instead focuses on student responses and engagement with the material and definitions. Each museum takes a different approach in creating the space for historical thinking and analysis to occur. USHMM has a more in depth overview and explanation for their lesson plan to take place effectively. USHMM set up the information and resources in sections that allow for a more clear approach for teachers to prepare for. However, MJH has more historical background and context available for teachers to utilize as they prepare for their lesson.

MJH speaks more to the history of antisemitism and its place in the world before the Nazi regime in order to create historical context for the extent to which antisemitism has persisted throughout time and as it reaches the effect it does in the Holocaust. USHMM uses more social science and English language arts criteria and skills to discuss the history of antisemitism in the context of the Holocaust and present. USHMM presents a perspective that does not fully encapsulate the extent that antisemitism has had on the Jewish community since before the Holocaust. There is a stronger focus on learning general concepts and reasoning in USHMM's

lesson plan. They aim to use reasoning as a way to categorize antisemitism and understand it in an abstract way and not necessarily grounded in the historical context of antisemitism and the Holocaust.

It is important to note the demographics of people that these museums are reaching with not just their curriculum and lesson plans but also their historical information and resources. The USHMM was created to memorialize the events and victims of the Holocaust with the goal to teach as many individuals as possible. Their appeal and information is designed to reach a wider audience of people, non-Jews and Jews alike. MJH is a privately owned and funded museum whose goal is to honor, remember and lift up Jewish heritage and ancestry. The Museum of Jewish Heritage is more meaningful to Jews than to non-Jews as it works to create a space for Holocaust memorial and Jewish identity. One possible explanation for these differences in their lesson plans and curriculum is the audiences they are trying to reach. USHMM is more broad in its context of the Holocaust and its audience, therefore the way the curriculum is taught can be used in a multitude of disciplines (social sciences, history, and English language arts). No one museum is inherently better than the other as they both work with a similar goal in mind: to remember the Holocaust so that it does not happen again to Jews or any group of people. I would recommend to teachers approaching outside resources on the Holocaust (or in this case antisemitism) to use both lesson plans in their curriculum. In order to achieve the most effective, accurate and powerful teaching, using both of these resources will allow for a well rounded lesson with attention to historical context and moral reasoning.

Conclusion

The teaching of the Holocaust is more important than ever in the United States as there has been a rampant increase in antisemitic incidents and acts of violence towards the Jewish community. As mentioned in the Museum of Jewish Heritage lesson plan, in 2018 there was a synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh leaving eleven people dead and six wounded. It was the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the United States. More recently, there have been several physical and verbal assaults on the Jewish community in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania within the past year or two. Holocaust education is necessary to combat and prepare students for the violence and prejudice that exists in the United States.

As Jews continue to grapple with their past and place in the world, Holocaust education can serve as a basis for studying and understanding "complex, emotionally charged and instructive" topics such as "genocide, human rights issues, civil rights, slavery, and apartheid."[202] Holocaust education is also important for all Americans to learn and understand because its lasting effects have implications for combatting and dealing with racism, xenophobia, and prejudice in general. For American Jews, Holocaust education serves as a reminder and an understanding of how Jewish history has always battled with antisemitism, yet Judaism has persevered throughout centuries despite violence and prejudice towards the community. With that in mind, there is "an ever-increasing amount of research into the efficacy of Holocaust

[202] David H. Lindquist, "Instructional Approaches in Teaching the Holocaust," *American Secondary Education* 39, no. 3 (2011): 125, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23100427.

education", and "it is likely that curricular programs and resources and the teaching about the Holocaust will benefit and become increasingly strong and more pedagogically sound."[203]

But how well does this country teach the Holocaust? What has been presented and researched in this thesis project is a truncated version of the history of social studies and history as growing subjects, the Holocaust in American Jewish memory, and the history of Holocaust education in public schools in the United States. In researching the establishment of social studies as a curriculum, I concluded that public American schooling works to integrate subjects that focus on human relationships as a way to understand American history and good citizenry. Only so much can be taught in a class period or in a school year, so what is prioritized? Based on my research, dates, figures, and a chronological timeline are the focus of most textbooks about the Holocaust. With only so much space to hold in a textbook, the Holocaust often gets sidelined within the learning of World War II in the context of America. The outside resources for additional Holocaust education focus on the historical context in conversation with the implications of the events of the Holocaust on the Jewish community then and now.

Through understanding the Holocaust in American memory, I demonstrate that many American Jews cling to the memory and implications of the Holocaust as a means to keeping the religion and community alive. As I reflected on my own experience in Judaism, I realized that I too was approaching the religion with a sense of contempt instead of interest and growth to learn and immerse myself honestly in Judaism. How we perceive the Holocaust, whether that is as unique and incomprehensible or explicable and comparable, affects our lives and how we learn

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[203] Samuel Totten, "Holocaust Education," in *Educating about Social Issues in the 20th and 21st Centuries: A Critical Annotated Bibliography*, by Samuel Totten and Jon E. Pedersen (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2014), 233, ProQuest Ebook Central.

about genocides in general. Although, there is the long standing debate with historians and scholars that if we see the Holocaust as unique it cannot help us understand genocides in general. I concluded from these positions that the Holocaust can be considered unprecedented without ignoring the possibility that it can act as a resource to better understand other atrocities and acts of violence and prejudice in the past, present, and future.

For me, having an open-mind for discussing opinions and history was critical as I reviewed and wrote about how historians and scholars worked to prove or argue their own narratives. I wanted my examination of the material in Chapter 3 to reflect the changing perspectives and values of scholars, historians, and educators as they approach the teaching of such a difficult and delicate subject. Teaching in general already holds its own hardships, but then when you take into consideration the prejudice and violence that has existed throughout time, it becomes imperative to plan and understand the resources available for the "best" form of teaching to take place.

And so, in approaching Chapter 3, I wanted to make sure the curricular materials I was collecting and analyzing were easily accessible and comprehensible for teachers and students alike. The internet can be a dangerous place when one click can lead you to false or misleading information. At first, I had a pretty harsh opinion against the already existing curriculum for public secondary education because of my own experience and those of my friends when I asked if and how they were taught about the Holocaust. I realized through my research that while it may seem simple to me, creating and mandating Holocaust education is filled with issues of politics and standards that differ with every state. Even New York, a blue democratic state, struggles with the preexisting curriculum and offers alternative outside resources to help guide

educators where they may lack the resources and information necessary to effectively and accurately teach the Holocaust.

The deductions and implications from this project can help inform the public about the history of the Holocaust for American Jews and why it is necessary for this kind of subject matter to be taught with a keen awareness to the effect it has on its audience. In the current climate of the country and world, this kind of teaching raises questions on how to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. Because there are not many Holocaust survivors left, many Jews feel that the memory of the Holocaust will not persist through time and the fear of something like the Holocaust happening again takes over. That is why I believe the teaching of the Holocaust is important now more than ever. In a world riddled with uncertainty, Jews should not have to worry about further violence and prejudice against their community. Museums such as the Museum of Jewish Heritage have started working to create alternatives to keep Holocaust survivors' experience and stories alive. Artificial Intelligence holograms of Holocaust survivors have been implemented in MJH and serve as a way to keep their memory present. Within this alternative approach, Holocaust education can continue to evolve in and out the classroom.

Through this project, I learned the importance of knowing where your knowledge comes from and why it is being taught. In a world where violence and injustice plagues many societies, the teaching of these atrocities becomes imperative for the new generation of citizens to know and understand. Through this project, I wanted to initiate my own form of “teaching” for my peers and those who read my project to gain an awareness of how different forms of schooling and education can shape our perspectives towards injustice. The line between truth and fiction is sometimes difficult to detect when we consume media with lighting speed. What we consume,

how we consume and what sticks with us can shape, influence or determine our values. it is important to know and research where our sources and information come from. Therefore, my own project is not just about the history of teaching the Holocaust in public secondary schools in the United States, it is also about teaching those around me about where education and curriculum is formed, how it is shaped, how it can be changed, and how it has influenced our perceptions and opinions of our own education and the educational system at large.

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