

Difficult Knowledge: Possibilities of Learning in Holocaust  
Education

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit mention is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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## ABSTRACT

Within the last two decades, the study in UK classrooms of the Holocaust narrative (that is, the twentieth century events whereby six million Jews and many others perished through Nazi policies) has developed considerably. Reasons given for this are not limited to its importance in European history, but include its use as a stimulus to pupils in considering wider social and moral issues. Both the literature on the subject of Holocaust Education and classroom practitioners cite rationales which include countering racism and encouraging active approaches to citizenship. This is despite existing bodies of knowledge in related fields which indicate that sustained behavioural change among pupils as a result of such lessons is unlikely. Notwithstanding the depressing nature of the subject matter, teachers who are particularly committed to this topic often cite positive responses in the classroom in terms of pupil engagement.

The research question addressed in this study concerns what pupils may be learning in these lessons and involves qualitative research carried out mainly in three English secondary schools. Findings suggest that Holocaust Education can help pupils to develop a greater awareness of the nature of humanity and the fragility of social values, including an appreciation of the complexity of making moral choices.

The discourse within which the teacher approaches the lessons is a defining factor, but she cannot predict the way in which the pupil will respond. Pupil engagement may enable teacher desires to be fulfilled, while pupils may experience a perception of empowerment, deriving from a sense of partnership with the teacher as they confront 'difficult knowledge' together. While specific aims and objectives set for Holocaust Education are unrealistic, the development of positive classroom relationships and the possibilities for learning experiences may be enhanced.

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## Part I        INTRODUCTIONS

### 1    STARTING POINTS

#### 1.1    ASKING QUESTIONS

##### *The problem*

In 1987, as an experienced teacher of Religious Studies, I began to teach a History course to 14 year olds entitled 'Hitler's Germany'. Since then I have worked extensively both inside and outside the classroom with the topic we call 'the Holocaust'<sup>1</sup> – that is, the systematic murder of around six million Jewish men, women and children in Europe, together with millions of others, especially the Roma or Sinti people. This terrible event must of course be taught as a major incident in living memory, not least in order to present a better understanding of the histories and attitudes in our world today. However, in these last twenty years, the topic has also been promoted on the strength of some 'grand aims' for it which suggest that a full study of this history can be beneficial to society as a whole.

The starting point for this study was the growing body of statements made, by politicians in particular but also by educationalists, about the value of Holocaust Education in schools both internationally and, more specifically, within the United Kingdom (Rubenstein and Taylor, 1992, Imperial War Museum, 2000, Cesarani, 2001 and others). This was especially pertinent in the consultation period preceding the setting up by the Home Office of a national Holocaust Memorial Day (H.O. Communications Directorate 1999) and some rationales for Holocaust Education are linked to Citizenship issues; learning about genocides, and related topics, could, it is argued, help to promote social cohesion within British society. The interest taken by politicians (for example, David Blunkett MP in Levi, 2003) at a ministerial and even Prime Ministerial level presupposed

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<sup>1</sup> Terminology will be addressed more fully within this Introduction.

a role for such lessons which went beyond the usual objectives for the school curriculum.

When the national Holocaust Memorial Day was introduced by the government in 2001, I was asked to join the DfES<sup>2</sup> team producing material for schools in relation to the day. This invitation stemmed from my classroom experience in teaching Religious Studies and History, including Holocaust Education, together with my educational work with a charity dealing with Jewish/Christian relations. When responsibility for Holocaust Memorial Day was handed over to an independent Trust in 2005, I became a Trustee. In conjunction with the Holocaust Educational Trust, I have written a school textbook<sup>3</sup>. Although not the sole focus of my day-to-day work, Holocaust Education does form a significant strand, including visits to schools, providing training and advice for teachers and PGCE students and presenting papers at conferences on aspects of the subject.

In the course of all this, there have been many opportunities to reflect on the practice of Holocaust Education in the classroom with those engaged with it and concerned about it, including survivors, professionals in the field, government ministers and national religious leaders. A number of questions have begun to emerge, some deriving from the fact that there are some 'stock phrases' used to promote Holocaust Education which are clearly debatable, such as the opinion that learning about the Holocaust would 'ensure it never happens again' or that it would help to combat racism in our society. I wondered whether this could be true and if so, how this might be effected. This was especially important in light of the introduction of Citizenship on to the curriculum, where the teaching of the Holocaust has been included among suggested schemes of work (Watson 2003).

Those with different perspectives (e.g. elderly survivors of Auschwitz and young non-Jewish teachers) often made use of similar language concerning rationales. My experience of working in dialogue between different faith groups led me to suspect that, although there was a shared vocabulary, different users might actually be talking about different outcomes, or even that they might be

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<sup>2</sup> At that time, the government department concerned with Education was so designated.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holocaust: Faith, Morality and Ethics* (Clements, Gorsky and Boston, 2000)

using this shared vocabulary in an attempt to describe something which was essentially beyond explanation.

### *The aim of the study*

The aim of the study initially was to explore what, if anything, could be claimed realistically for Holocaust Education in schools in terms of learning outcomes. In cognitive terms, pupil knowledge of the events of the Holocaust can be and is regularly assessed. Pupils are examined on their ability to describe what happened, provide a range of socio-economic factors leading up to the events and make certain evaluations. Standard methods of assessment for Humanities subjects can provide evidence as to the effectiveness of the lessons in these terms. However, the objectives expressed for the topic in terms of personal development or benefits for society as a whole must be evaluated from a different perspective. The topic deals with terrible events. Furthermore, it asks difficult questions about human actions and the ordering of society. Learning in these areas might therefore be seen in terms of an invitation to engage with ‘difficult knowledge’.

With a wealth of written information about the value and practice of teaching this topic already available, as will be referred to in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis, it was decided to examine the value placed on the topic by teachers and pupils themselves. The focus of such research from the beginning was seen as being with the *perceptions* of those involved, rather than on any empirical study or observation. It was hoped that this might enable fresh insights either directly or resulting from disparities between the ‘grand claims’ made for the lessons and what teachers and pupils believed might have been gained by the experience.

In the process of formulating a single ‘research question’, it was possible to identify two main issues which might form part of the interrogation. These could be expressed as:

1. What might realistically be claimed by those involved in the process for possibilities of learning, other than in cognitive terms, from lessons about the Holocaust?
2. Could the process of engaging with 'difficult knowledge' have anything to say pedagogically?

Answers to these questions would help to address the over-riding concern regarding the value of engaging in this difficult topic. Claims made for any lessons in terms of pupil development, let alone for the benefit of society as a whole, must be approached critically. With lessons about the Holocaust and other genocides, the terrible nature of the subject matter also needed to be taken into account. Did the use of this narrative justify in educational terms an extensive engagement with it?

In an article entitled 'Holocaust Education for the New Millennium: Assessing our Progress', Gallant and Hartman (2001) argue for greater research and assessment in this field. However, their motivation is the need to evaluate the current performance of Holocaust Education with respect to "the vision nurturing this movement" (p 21). Such a description of a classroom topic was intriguing. While Gallant and Hartman are clear that the subject "has the potential to influence a turning of the heart towards virtue" and "of saving the future [from] lies and inurements that underwrite violence and hatred", it was unclear how these objectives might be met in the classroom.

The sensitivity of the subject means that critical questions about pedagogy are not often raised among those closely involved in it. However, in a particularly striking paragraph, Ruth-Anne Lenga (1998, p59) describes a view that is not uncommon among those involved in Holocaust Education and which deserves further discussion:

In reflecting on my own experience of teaching about the Holocaust, I have come to understand a rather curious paradox. While the Holocaust speaks of overwhelming evil, perversity and bigotry, an examination of the subject can trigger a sense of the numinous, spirit of hope, courage and an

understanding of what it means to be human. Greater knowledge of this complex area of learning is urgently needed so that we, the educators, can develop our expertise in order to realise the profound goals that a study of the Holocaust can surely achieve.

### *The parameters of the study*

The research carried out would aim to address issues primarily within the classroom context of 'Holocaust Education', rather than 'Holocaust Studies' in general. Knowledge about the events of the Holocaust has increased in recent years, although this does not necessarily indicate knowledge of the details<sup>4</sup>. A number of countries, in Europe and elsewhere, include the topic as a compulsory element on the school curriculum. In the USA, 20 states have legislation which promotes Holocaust Education and 27 states have a requirement to teach the topic contained within the general rubric for academic standards. Co-ordinated international objectives have been addressed through the formation of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research bringing experienced practitioners and academics together to ensure 'good practice' across borders.

In England and Wales, Key Stage 3 History teachers are required by the National Curriculum to teach a unit on the Holocaust as part of 'Hitler's Germany'. This is a minimum requirement and may take little more than two hours at the end of the Summer term. There are also options to study the topic as part of other schemes of work at Key Stage 4 and in Advanced level History. However, educational organisations involved in this field, such as the Holocaust Educational Trust, report a growing number of schools throughout the country who have made positive decisions to engage with the material as part of a topic in R.E., P.S.H.E. or Citizenship, and a number of History departments have chosen to expand, supplement or develop this on their syllabus (Watson 2003).

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<sup>4</sup> A YouGov poll carried out prior to national Holocaust Memorial Day 2007 showed that, while an impressive 97% were aware that Jews were targeted, over half were unaware that there were other victims. Similar figures relate to the recognition of the word 'Auschwitz', without knowledge of other death and concentration camps.

There are also several schemes which offer ‘fellowships’ to teachers<sup>5</sup> who embark on special courses and produce dissertations on Holocaust Education; these schemes tend to be oversubscribed, even though they require extra work in the teachers’ own time. These schools, where engagement with the topic is more intensive than the basic requirement, provide greater opportunities to explore both teacher views about its value and the classroom experience.

From the beginning, it was decided to focus on pupils at Secondary/High School level around the 13-15 year old age group. There were several reasons for this, the prime one being the concentration of school syllabi, materials and initiatives in terms of Holocaust Education around this age group. Also, at this stage in their development, most pupils can consider and articulate moral approaches while still arguably engaged in a process of positioning themselves within a range of social discourses. In addition, issues of pedagogy interested me particularly as a result of my own classroom experiences with this age group. During the course of gathering the data, the context of schools in England and Wales at Key Stage 3 became the main focus, although initially this was not clear and the pilot study included data from an American context.

## 1.2 TERMINOLOGY

### *The word ‘Holocaust’*

How one chooses to speak about a subject can never be a neutral decision (Barthes 1972, Kress 1989). The term ‘Holocaust’, especially with a capital letter, is widely understood to refer to the actions of Hitler’s National Socialist regime in Europe of the 1930’s and 1940’s. Holocaust Education courses may study these events within this historical context. They may also focus on more generic aspects of such a phenomenon, including other genocides, such as that in Rwanda in 1994.

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<sup>5</sup> Such as the Imperial War Museum and the American Foundation ‘Facing History and Ourselves’

There are problems with the word, as Tal (1995) and others have pointed out. Greek in origin, a 'holocaust' is essentially a 'burnt offering', a religious sacrifice, usually referring to Jewish cultic practices at the Jerusalem Temple in biblical and classical times. Because of this, there are sensitivities about its use, since it may imply a theological judgement in terms of the fate of European Jews. Words such as 'Shoah', 'disaster', or 'Churban', 'catastrophe', are often substituted when writing about this in academic contexts (Garber 2004).

However, in the field of education, and particularly in schools, the word 'Holocaust' is most often used. For this reason, it is retained in this thesis. The slight dissonance that such a practice creates is not out of keeping with the general tensions and sensitivities inherent in this topic as a whole.

### ***'Final Solution'***

The Third Reich used the term 'Final Solution' to refer to actions and policies towards the Jews. This was a reference to 'the Jewish Question' (what should be a state's response to its Jewish population?) asked by rulers and leaders since the beginning of the nineteenth century when the Emperor Napoleon addressed the Jewish community on matters of civil and religious life. Nazi policy thus involved the idea that Jews posed a problem which needed addressing in terms of statehood. This term will be used occasionally in this thesis when referring to the Nazi regime's official persecution, imprisonment and murder of Jews.

### ***'HolEd'***

This thesis will discuss the differentiation between general approaches to Holocaust Education in the classroom, and approaches by educators who accord particular significance to the lessons in relation to other aspects of the school curriculum. Chapter 4 will introduce the term 'HolEd' to describe the discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, of those in the latter category. 'HolEd' therefore denotes a specific approach to Holocaust Education which perceives possibilities of learning from the text, beyond the cognitive. It should be stressed, therefore, that 'HolEd' is not an abbreviation for 'Holocaust Education' but is used only to

denote the prevailing discourse of those especially concerned with Holocaust Education in schools.

### 1.3 ORDERING THE MATERIAL

In this thesis I shall argue that while the Lessons to be Learnt from Holocaust Education may indeed involve issues of morality and citizenship, the transformative experience takes place at the unconscious level, arising from an encounter with the difficult text, as teacher and pupil engage together with this. While the discourse of Holocaust Education describes the outcomes of the topic as learning *from*, it is the possibility of learning which may be taking place *within* the lessons which is more realistic.

Teachers who design lesson plans, select materials and engage the pupils in studying the Holocaust, and other genocides, are at the interface between the theory and practice (Billig *et al*, 1988). Inevitably, some teachers who teach lessons on the Holocaust will do so for no other reason than that it is on the syllabus, or because of its place in the socio-political history of Europe which they are teaching; what proportion falls into these categories is not currently known. The implication is that, where teachers elect to teach or expand on lessons on this topic, or are especially enthusiastic about it, this is because it fits within *their own framework* of what education may be about. This possibility is of crucial significance to this study: namely, that by exploring teacher perceptions of the value of the lessons, and by considering the nature of the classroom experiences in this context, some clues might emerge as to the dynamics and desires present generally in the relationships between teachers and pupils within Holocaust Education.

While beginning from a position of scepticism that the grand claims made for the possibilities of Holocaust Education may be too ambitious, this thesis will argue that there are indeed contributions to be made in the traditionally cited areas of anti-racism education, moral development and citizenship studies. However, rather than changing attitudes or introducing approaches, Holocaust

Education may reinforce traits previously held in some of these areas. While this reinforcement is usually positive, there is a risk that the pupil will ‘choose’ to locate herself within discourses which are counter to the aims of the subject. Furthermore, rather than reinforcing commonly held moral values, Holocaust Education encourages a complex approach which recognises the problems inherent in labelling actions ‘commendable’ or ‘condemnable’. Examples used in this thesis will show that the pupils interviewed showed, at least in some cases, a tendency to adopt positions of moral ambiguity.

As regards the reinforcement of lessons from Citizenship Studies, the questions that the topic raises regarding the nature of humanity and society mean that lessons learnt in this area are unlikely to be straightforward. However, the possibility that the pupils may grasp the concept of the fragility of ‘normal’ life and society is a difficult but substantial lesson in this area. The ease with which social values and structures may be inverted runs counter to the experience of most young teenagers in this country is a lesson which has the power to shock. In this sphere, Holocaust Education has a considerable contribution to make.

The process in which these lessons are learnt is not, however, a cognitive process. Rather it depends on the dynamics of the learning situation. While the relationship between teacher and pupil is central to this, the teacher cannot ultimately predict what the pupil will take from the lessons. Confronting the pupil with the text of the Holocaust is in fact a risky business.

There is a considerable body of work internationally on aspects of Holocaust Education. Chapter 2 will begin with this and examine some of the literary and historical background in terms of rationales cited for teaching about the Holocaust. It will outline briefly in theoretical terms the discussions about how the topic can address issues of racism, prejudice and tolerance, and possibilities for learning about Citizenship and virtues.

Following from that, chapter 3 will set out the steps in formulating a research question and in designing and carrying out the research itself. The methodology employed to address the question of the ‘lessons to be learnt’ will be traced

through a pilot study with structured interviews. Analysis of the pilot study will both confirm and raise further issues to be explored in this context; to achieve this, the main study will be described. Using semi-structured interviews of teachers and children in three state schools, the collection of data would enable a more thorough examination of these issues in subsequent chapters. Ethical issues and aspects of reflexivity will also be included here.

Central to this thesis is the premise that those teachers who are especially committed to Holocaust Education, and who make substantial claims for the lessons both theoretically and through experience, operate within a specific discourse – the discourse which is here labelled as ‘HolEd’. All but two teachers in this study (and who are identified and discussed) make use of this discourse. Chapter 4 will introduce the discourse of HolEd, outlining its nature and its possible implications. This chapter will also use constructionist theories to consider the importance of how teachers and pupils position themselves within discourses generally and, on the assumption that all reading is a creative and fluid process, the importance of ‘modes of address’ will also be considered.

Before considering further the possibilities of learning within Holocaust Education, chapter 5 will consider the contention that nothing can be learnt at all. Although the discourse of ‘HolEd’ claims outcomes in the field of moral education and prejudice reduction, chapters 6 and 7 will underline the likelihood that such claims on their own are unrealistic. However, the possibility for pupils to build on their existing structures of morality is emphasised. The way in which pupils engage with the morally ambiguous characters also relates, it will be argued, to unconscious identification with less obvious traits.

In the course of considering the relation of Holocaust Education to prejudice reduction, chapter 6 will also address the issue of the specificity of antisemitism.

The shocking nature of the text and the effect this may have psychologically on the pupil will be discussed in chapter 8. In this chapter it will be argued that the full horror for the pupil is found in the challenge to her accepted discourses of society and humanity. As the pupil realises that the ‘beast’ is potentially present

in any society, this may, it is argued, present a rationale for Holocaust Education in terms of Citizenship Studies. Confrontation with an ultimate reality – that we are not necessarily safe and that the dark side of human nature is not far below the surface – can be, it is argued, both a destructive and a creative lesson. This chapter will also discuss the encounter with answerless questions which the topic confronts.

Having examined some of the possibilities of lessons to be learnt within the topic, some implications for pedagogy will be discussed in chapter 9. Among these implications is the possibility that the experience of the lessons gratifies the desire of the teacher. The recognition that the teacher deliberately shares what she does not know may create a sense of empowerment for the pupil. In exploring these difficult themes, this chapter will finally introduce the contribution which psychoanalytic approaches can make to describing more fully what is happening in these lessons.

## **2      LEARNING ABOUT AND LEARNING FROM: AN OVERVIEW**

### **2.1    NATIONAL ISSUES**

A 1987 survey conducted for the University of Leicester by John Fox (1989), looked into the teaching of the Holocaust as part of History syllabi prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum. Following small-scale studies by Supple between 1989 and 1992 in Tyneside, Short (1995) interviewed thirty-four teachers, also of History, in the context of Holocaust education, looking at the issues of antisemitism as opposed to non-specific racism. Short and Reed (2004) followed this with studies in England with Year 10 pupils and in Canada. Again, there was a focus on attitudes of teachers and pupils with specific interest in antisemitism. They made the point that there was a “relative dearth of literature underpinned by research” (2004, p129). In the last few years, a number of research projects have been set up to consider what might be claimed in terms of moral and values education by the topic.

Holocaust Education has now firmly established itself on the curriculum in England and Wales, primarily in history, but also in English, R.E. and P.S.H.E. and, more recently, in Citizenship studies. Whole-school approaches, including assemblies, displays or special guest speakers, mark Holocaust Memorial Day, created by the Government in 2001. This event was supported by classroom materials provided by the DfES until handed over to a Trust in 2005.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore the many ways in which Holocaust Education is viewed or debated, nor the discussions concerning resources and methodology. However, in order to approach the question of what is being learnt, it is essential to consider first the claims made for such lessons and the objectives set. Rationales employed for its inclusion on syllabi and, indeed, legislation for the curriculum, have significant bearing on the outcomes expected. This chapter will consider some of the claims and rationales expressed both overtly and implicitly by those who argue for and against the educative value of teaching the text.

In the history of Holocaust Education as such in this country, there is no doubt that its inclusion in the National Curriculum marked a major turning point. Prior to that, a survey carried out by the University of Leicester in 1987 caused Polonsky to say in the introduction to the published results:

The overall picture is rather depressing since the general impression gained is that many educators consider the subject of the Holocaust to be unworthy of any more time and detailed study beyond its somewhat limited examination in many parts of the British educational system. (Fox, 1989 p3)

Discussions about the educational value of studying the Holocaust first received public attention when the *National Curriculum History Working Party Interim Report* (June 1989) was produced. The decision of the Working Party, whose remit was to design the History element of the forthcoming National Curriculum, to omit any study of Nazi Germany and, indeed, of the Second World War, was a controversial one. The Working Party had anticipated such a reaction and included the comment that ‘the rise and fall of Nazi Germany’ could, alongside other omissions, be included as special topics under the School Designed Themes. It concluded:

It has not been our intention to play down the importance of these or other events, but for every suggested addition, something has to make way, and in the process carefully-designed structures may be put at risk. (p44)

The repercussions arising from this omission are outlined in Rubenstein and Taylor (1992). A number of groups, including ex-service organisations, made representations but it was the involvement of an all-party group of MPs which appears to have been particularly influential. The submission made by the group makes it clear that knowledge of the history of the Second World War is crucial for understanding modern Europe. However, it is also clear that, above all, the MPs considered that the perpetration of the crime of genocide is important for

study not simply as an incident in history. In their letter to John MacGregor, Secretary of State for Education (29 September 1989), they wrote:

We believe that comprehensive study of this extreme example of prejudice and discrimination will give pupils an insight into the suffering experienced by minority groups in many parts of the world today. (Rubenstein and Taylor, 1992, p 48)

The History Working Group's Final Report (April 1990) duly reflected the strength of these submissions. The Second World War and, particularly, the Holocaust became part of the core curriculum – a requirement and not an option. A section on 'Essential Information' included required topics under the heading of 'Social and Religious'. Foremost among these was to be "Genocide: the Holocaust". "Refugees" and the "homeless" were also to be included. From the outset, therefore, it became apparent that, in the minds of some politicians at least, teaching pupils about the Holocaust was important in terms of modern society and not simply for reasons of historical explanation.

These assertions were not without their critics, especially within the Anglo-Jewish community, who feared that an emphasis on Jewish victimhood would have a negative effect, both on Jewish young people and on perceptions of Jews in society at large. Objections (e.g. Kochan, 1989) stressed this fear, but, interestingly, also expressed doubts as to whether teaching the events of the Holocaust could have any preventative role; after all, Kochan argued, teaching about historical wars had not resulted in the end of warfare.

There were similar concerns expressed about the establishment of a national day of commemoration. In October 1999 the Government sent out a consultative document published by the Home Office Communications Directorate. The consultations took place with a number of relevant bodies canvassing opinion on the subject of declaring an annual national Holocaust Memorial Day. The aims of such a day were clearly stated as being primarily educational:

Memory becomes history and as personal links to the period become ever more faint, it is essential that as a country, we ensure that the horrendous crimes, racism and victimisation committed during the Holocaust are neither forgotten nor repeated, whether in Europe or elsewhere in the world. The troubling repetition of human tragedies in the world today restates the continuing need for vigilance, and serves to remind us that the lessons of the Holocaust need to be learnt and learnt again. The time is always right to examine our past and learn for the future. A Holocaust Remembrance Day provides a national focus for education, and promotes a democratic and tolerant society, free of the evils of prejudice and racism. (Home Office, 1999, p1)

Cesarani (2001) explores some of the reasons given for opposing the institution of such a day, especially from journalists Nick Cohen and Anne Karpf and others, some of whom had family histories in which the events played a part. The journalists tended, not unsurprisingly, to be suspicious of anything they believed to be a subterfuge on the part of the government to draw attention away from current problems associated with the narrative of the Holocaust – refugees and asylum issues, criticism of modern repressive regimes and so on. However, alongside these suspicions was the view, exemplified in the USA by Novick (1999), and which will be discussed further in this thesis, that the very extraordinariness of the Holocaust could not impart learning experiences which were at all worthwhile.

## 2.2 LEARNING FROM

A number of educationalists, however, have been swift to see some sort of potential in the engagement with difficult knowledge. Lenga (1998) points out that the educational ‘benefits’ of Holocaust Education cannot be easily assessed and do not fall within the usual remits of subject objectives.

A study of the Holocaust can, I believe, do more than transmit accurate historical knowledge and understanding, albeit inherently worthwhile. It can engage in a form of self analysis and reflection where pupils can consider seriously their developing sense of human nature and become intuitive to its complexities – its weakness and strength, motivations, preconceptions and consider it in terms of values, moral absolutes, individual choice and responsibility. [ ] Attainment would therefore be seen not solely in terms of learning *about* the Holocaust but also in terms of learning *from* the Holocaust.(p 53)

The distinction between learning *from* rather than learning *about* the historical events is central to the debate. Holocaust Education is now a well-resourced area of the curriculum. Resources for teachers and pupils are regularly published on the subject and special training is widely available for teachers and PGCE students. Much of this training and advice is offered by professionals working primarily in this field. The Holocaust Educational Trust runs regular day trips to the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau for teachers and Post-16 students and, in 2005, was awarded a substantial government grant to enable it to do so. The Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom, in Nottinghamshire offers day courses to schools, including talks from survivors, and the Imperial War Museum's permanent Holocaust exhibit employs its own team of educational specialists. Indeed, Holocaust Education is an interesting example of extensive cross-curricular links developed from one particular topic. The Imperial War Museum has produced a Holocaust Exhibition Teachers' Guide, *Reflections* (2000), which states in its Introduction:

The establishment of a major new exhibition [at the IWM] on the Holocaust presents an opportunity for teachers of History, Religious Education, English, Citizenship, PSHE, Music and Art to collaborate on a whole-school approach to this most challenging of subjects.(p8)

There is hardly a subject in the curriculum which could not, if it wished, use Holocaust Education as a stimulus for considering subject-related skills or approaches – art, poetry, music, even sciences and Sports Studies. There is

certainly evidence (Hector 1999) to support the idea that schools where the topic is taught in different areas of the curriculum encourages pupils to consider the importance and significance of the Holocaust. Few would deny that the narrative of the Holocaust asks difficult questions and requires confronting the extreme; it might be seen as relating to the very core of what it means to be a human being in modern society. Such issues cut across traditional subject boundaries (Davies, 2000). Dwork and Pelt (2005) comment that:

In the 1960's the Holocaust might have been mentioned as an aside in a course on the history of the Second World War; today that war might possibly be mentioned in an aside in a course on the history of the Holocaust. (p 9/10)

However, the use of these historical events as a context for other areas of the curriculum has raised understandable concerns from the perspective of historical studies. Some of the History teachers in the study on which this thesis is based expressed doubts about the educative value of the topic, as will be noted in the following chapters. There is a perceived danger, for example, that the annexation of the event from its historical context may lead from oversimplification to avoidance of a range of significant factors, such as individual national histories, the experience of occupation, demographics, economics and so on. In terms of '*lessons from*', rationales which reduce the events to a basic formula - in which antisemitism resulted in events which teach that racism kills (Dwork and Pelt, 2005, 10) - are not in themselves sufficient to enable pupils to encounter the complexities of humanity and society. The balance between learning *about* and learning *from* history, especially in the context of such powerful narratives, is a significant one. The danger here is that non-History teachers may respond to the text intuitively and only *then* begin to look for the rationale for its use in the classroom. This issue will be explored further in this thesis.

Totten, Bartrop and Jacobs (2004) have reminded us that Holocaust Studies at post-16 level have only emerged and developed within the last three decades. Furthermore, the courses are taught by teachers from a range of disciplines –

such as history, religious studies, sociology, philosophy – who did not set out at the beginning of their careers to specialise in the topic. The question of why such interest has arisen in the subject in recent years is difficult to answer. Lenga (1998, p52) suggests a number of factors, including a perceived rise in xenophobia and the new body of evidence concerning the Nazi period to emerge from the archives on the break up of the former Soviet Union.

At around the same time, a parallel development was taking place involving survivors and eyewitnesses of the events themselves. Many of those best placed to provide primary source material were now overcoming decades of reluctance to speak out, driven either by reactions to Holocaust ‘revisionist historians’, such as David Irving<sup>6</sup>, who were questioning the historicity of the events to suit their own political agendas, or simply by the need to record eye witness experiences while it was still possible. Programmes to help teachers in making best and sensitive use of such people were established by professionals such as the Spiro Institute (now the London Jewish Cultural Centre) and the Holocaust Educational Trust. Lenga (op cit) also refers to the release of the Stephen Spielberg film, *Schindler’s List*, pointing out that edited copies for use in schools were widely distributed.

In the difficult area of meeting spiritual, moral and cultural requirements, the Holocaust text can be a useful tool. Stories and poetry provide material for reflection in assemblies, and can raise questions about moral decision-making and accountability in R.E. and P.S.H.E. lessons. In these subjects there is a degree of local autonomy within the framework. In a study involving schools in East Anglia, Watson (2003) sets out the responses of 28 Heads of RE Departments asked to provide examples from their existing schemes of work which they felt could “make a useful contribution to [Citizenship Education]” (p8). Among the 20 or so suggestions at Key Stage 4, “Racism, persecution and the Holocaust” was cited as a useful topic. Other suggestions included “Social

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<sup>6</sup> Whose unsuccessful litigation against Deborah Lipstadt for libel in this context took place in London in 2000, and who recently served a prison sentence in Austria for the crime of Holocaust denial.

responsibility”, “Conflict and Reconciliation”, “Authority in Society” and “Human Rights”.

Some available resource material on the Holocaust deals with religious and spiritual approaches, particularly from the Christian and Jewish perspectives, and these tend to involve difficult issues such as theodicy and the role of the churches. The Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (currently QCA – Qualification and Assessment Authority) *Model Syllabuses for Religious Education*, published in 1994, recommends a study of the Holocaust at Key Stage 4. In post 16 education, teachers regularly use units or guest speakers on this topic to meet the R.E. requirement. In the increasingly popular ‘A’ level paper on Philosophy and Ethics, some teachers choose to cover Eichmann’s use of Kant’s categorical imperative in his defence at his trial as a case study.

## 2.3 THE HOLOCAUST AND SOCIETY: ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

More recently, teachers have taken the opportunity to make use of the materials available to meet the requirements of Citizenship studies at KS 3-4. The 1999 booklet setting these out, under the requirement for “Promoting pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through citizenship”, states that Citizenship lessons provide opportunities for:

“Moral development, through helping pupils develop a critical appreciation of issues of right and wrong, justice, fairness, rights and obligations in society” (Citizenship: The National Curriculum for Schools, KS 3-4, DfES and QCA, 1999, p7)

The requirement for pupils to look critically at aspects of society is reinforced in the *Citizenship Guidelines for the National Curriculum in England* (1999) for Key Stages 3 and 4. The introductory pages make it clear that a primary aim is the promotion of spiritual, moral and cultural development *through* Citizenship

studies (p7). Examples given include aspects of injustice and cultural diversity. The document includes a number of quotations from public figures including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Terry Waite and Doreen Lawrence, which speak of the need for tolerance and the value of individuals within society. Skills of ‘participation and responsible action’ to be developed at Key Stage 3 require pupils to acquire the ability to:

“use their imagination to consider other people’s experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own.” (p14)

As noted earlier in this thesis, initiatives involving the Holocaust have been promoted by the government in this country (as is also the case in many European countries and American states). From this, it may be inferred that there are perceived benefits for society as a whole from such topics. Arguably, such perceived benefits have similarly led to the promotion of compulsory Religious Education and collective worship in schools. However, there is a difference pedagogically between using a powerful text as a stimulus for subject skills and using it to effect behavioural change.

This raises questions about public and private morality and the extent to which Holocaust Education or Citizenship must or can address these. Novick (1999) observes that the promotion of this topic in the USA through state legislation was part of a wider programme of civic and moral education, including ‘family values’. The historic events and the material available were used to promote a raft of ‘suitable behaviour’; this both misused the history, in Novick’s view, and caused resentment:

“Many teachers grumbled at the fact that legislators, not educators, were deciding what had to be taught.” (p 259)

Nevertheless, teachers are encouraged to make use of possible links between the topics. The Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem issues guidelines on its website ([www.yad-vashem.org.il/education](http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/education),

2002) for teachers engaged in Holocaust education. These Educational Guidelines begin with a sweeping statement:

“The Holocaust, an unprecedented event, has fundamentally challenged the foundations upon which human civilization rests. It has forced us to reflect upon our most basic assumptions about the nature of humankind and of society, of the modern state, and of our responsibilities as citizens of the world to speak up and act to stop the unjust suffering of innocent people everywhere. Clearly the Holocaust serves as a universal warning and places a heavy responsibility on us to teach this important subject.” (op cit 2002)

Yad Vashem’s claim is not for an Israeli narrative but for a universal one. The appeal to teach the Holocaust and to teach it effectively is made on the website not in terms of its historical importance but by using the words "responsibilities", "citizens", "civilization". The similarity of language suggests that the aims of Holocaust education are not, therefore, so remote from those of Citizenship – or are not to be perceived as being remote.

The concept of informed choice for future participants in democracy is an interesting one. In this regard, Passmore (1972) sees the promotion of critical enquiry as well established in education and valued by British society (p 421). However, he points out that teachers will find it “less troublesome” if they are selective about the subjects set up for criticism. Society finds it more acceptable, he suggests for example, to criticise ‘promiscuity’ rather than ‘monogamy’.

Study of the Holocaust, by its very nature, requires a critical appraisal of national government. Such study can also remind students that, in Nazi Germany and in some other places, participation in the machine of genocide was regarded as part of civic duty. Ordinary citizens assisted in the process out of a belief that such action was a necessary evil for the health and continuation of the

Reich (Marrus, 1987). In a Guardian article, Ted Wragg (2002) neatly summed up the position:

I always thought Goebbels was someone who would get a high mark in a citizenship exam.

Furthermore, the roles played or not played by the Allies are to be scrutinised and judged. For example, on the question of refugees, the documented failure of other countries to respond positively to the events led to thousands of deaths. However, among the arguments put forward concerning Holocaust Education, the criticism that it is in some way culturally subversive has yet to be levelled.

An apparent tension between the reinforcement of social values and the development of individual critical thought may arguably be seen to be implicit in Citizenship studies in the United Kingdom. An interesting example of this was provided by pupils absenting themselves from school to join the popular anti-war demonstrations of 2003. Although most Head Teachers warned that those pupils concerned would face disciplinary procedures, the irony was that the pupils were also meeting requirements of the Citizenship curriculum by exercising their right to protest peacefully in a democracy (National Curriculum, 2003, Citizenship).

It is possible that learning from the Holocaust is approached by different societies in ways which are subtly different, yet which may arguably reflect their own concerns. In writing about the “Americanisation” of the Holocaust, Novick (2001) considers the use of the Holocaust text to reinforce shared moral values and “to celebrate, by showing its negation, the American way of life” (p 13). An illustration of this may be provided by a teachers’ symposium in the USA, in March 2002, at which more than 20 American teachers participated in an informal discussion on the nature and value of Holocaust Education (32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Scholars’ Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches, 2002 - Teachers’ Symposium; unpublished note). There was general agreement expressed by the teachers present that both Holocaust and Citizenship studies should encourage students to support those social and political forms which, in

their opinion, made for a just and open society – namely democracy and freedom of speech. The promotion of these values, believed to be the essence of American life, were regarded as helpful, even patriotic, goals in the USA less than 6 months after the destruction of the World Trade Centre. Political and social change, and critical inquiry, were not. Explicitly, Dawidowicz (1990) asks whether students in America, who live in a democratic society, even need to learn lessons of civil disobedience which Holocaust Education may impart.

The opportunities for critical engagement with the nature of society are only one of the many reasons given for the potency of this text in the classroom. For those teachers and educators committed to Holocaust Education, the case for its place on the curriculum is “unassailable” and knowledge of the genocide of the Jews of Europe is vital to understand both subsequent history and what it means to be human (Short and Reed, 2004, p1).

In the United States, Totten, Feinberg and Fernekes (2001) are clear that any rationale for teaching the Holocaust must focus on the 'whys' and not simply the historical detail. They see the study of the Holocaust as having the potential to inform at both an individual and a national level. They state at the outset of their discussion:

By examining the causes and consequences of the policy decisions to be made by the Third Reich, as well as those by other societies during the Holocaust period, we help students gain a deeper understanding of how governmental policies can lead to persecution, discrimination and the destruction of human life. The moral and ethical dimensions of Holocaust study, often embedded in the context of memoirs, diaries, and other first-person accounts, help students re-examine their own values and actions, and provide opportunities for reflection on genuinely caring responses to patterns of prejudice and discrimination. (p 4)

It is interesting to note that Totten *et al* move directly from government policies to the moral values of the individual student. Lessons on the Holocaust have the

potential, it seems, to encourage the learners to reflect on “genuinely caring responses” to their fellow citizens which lead, in turn, to adopt positions against prejudice and discrimination of some kind. This is further illustrated by Facing History and Ourselves, an American educational foundation, which gives as its first aim “working to engage students of diverse backgrounds in citizenship education”. The approach which the programme adopts is overtly couched in the language of democracy and citizenship. It goes on to say that:

Facing History and Ourselves is based on the belief that education in a democracy must be what Alexis de Tocqueville called "an apprenticeship in liberty." Facing History helps students find meaning in the past and recognize the need for participation and responsible decision making. [For] more than 27 years, Facing History has engaged teachers and students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism 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 collective violence, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. ([www.facinghistory.org/home](http://www.facinghistory.org/home) - 2003)

The education of electors is seen as being vital to democracy. Furthermore, the course is designed to promote democratic engagement with the specific aim of eliminating prejudice. Democratic engagement and the fight against racism are placed together as if they are synonymous. Responsibility means to be more humane. Finally, Facing History and Ourselves states that students can learn lessons about how to make moral decisions in their own situations. This is an “essential connection”; learning about the events of the Holocaust cannot fail, it would seem, to impart moral lessons which enable students to become involved democrats seeking to eliminate racism.

The Facing History and Ourselves programme is, however, a controversial one. An opposing view is articulated by historian Deborah Lipstadt, whose (1995) article *Not Facing History* argues that the historical specificity of the Holocaust can be diluted by such universalistic approaches. Lipstadt hopes that all her

students will be able to ‘pull out’ moral lessons for themselves from all historical study, but she does not regard it as the job of the Holocaust narrative to provide a vehicle for exploring issues of concern to today’s students and their societies.

The search for a balance between these positions is a common concern for those setting out rationales for teaching school pupils about the Holocaust. ‘Lessons of the Holocaust’, an educational resource pack produced jointly by the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Spiro Institute (1998), asks what lessons can be drawn from this “unprecedented catastrophe” (p 22). It goes on to point out that a new generation has grown up in Germany (in point of fact, two) who have “become committed democrats and drawn appropriate conclusions from their country’s past.” While emphasising that this is a “positive development”, it acknowledges the continuing atrocities and ethnic cleansings which have been perpetrated since:

The problem is universal and the lessons remain urgent and have yet to be fully absorbed. The Holocaust reminds us that hatred of others who are different from ourselves and whom we place beyond the pale of humanity can only lead to group violence and atrocity. It tells us that any society, however culturally, scientifically and technologically advanced, can become totally criminal once it loses the ability and the will to distinguish between right and wrong. (‘Lessons of the Holocaust’, 1998, p 22)

The writers of this resource pack suggest that the world continues to perpetrate such terrible acts because it has failed to ‘absorb fully’ the lessons which the Holocaust may teach. The collective culpability of a society is clear; like an ordinary pupil, having failed to pay sufficient attention, however clever it thinks itself, it has become delinquent. There is no question here as to whether lessons about the Holocaust can teach anything. The failure to learn is stated as both dangerous and avoidable and, rather than simply addressing the pupil’s own moral approach, these lessons are vital for the healthy functioning of society as a whole.

But even beyond the national, there is a global dimension. Ervin Staub (2003) writes about the role of international intervention in preventing genocides, completely lacking in the case of Rwanda in 1994. Despite representations to the United Nations, there was an international refusal to declare the killings officially 'genocide'. Only when the problem of refugees caused an obvious humanitarian crisis in neighbouring countries was there an international response. He comments:

It requires motivation to act. For nations to act requires that their citizens expect them to act. (p 42)

### ***The Individual as Citizen***

This expectation underlines the importance of citizens in a democratic society being educated and motivated – one of the prime rationales for Holocaust Education. The practicalities of this task, however, are far from straightforward. Furthermore, this argument presupposes that behaviour can and will be deliberately modified as a result of intellectual study. In a broader context, Gallant and Hartman (2001) address this expectation by making a case for "multiple objectives" in Holocaust teaching that are "constructive, creative and inclusive" (p 5). Opportunities abound in this subject, they suggest, for addressing issues of "inhumanity and unreason" in a practical sense:

Holocaust education not only brings us to a remembrance of the Holocaust as an event in history; it teaches us to go beyond mere historical description, to a constructive activism in which we attempt to repair the past so as to heal the future, that is, to practice *tikkun olam* [*Heb.* 'mending the world']. The problems in advancing this emphasis in education are diverse and complex. (p 2)

Totten, Bartrop and Jacobs (2004) invited college and university teachers to discuss their own motivations for teaching the topic and to reflect on the

rationales for doing so. In describing his own approach, Bartrop echoes many of the comments from fellow contributors:

The Holocaust was unprecedented in that the entire structure of a society was mobilized for evil and not found wanting. Murder became a civic virtue, and modern European industrial civilization, through this, made a determined effort to self-destruct. If the contemporary world is to learn anything from this, it must be that those who were killed died at the hands of other human beings who were not opposed successfully owing to ignorance, apathy and fear. [We] must all stand back [and] ask ourselves 'what does this mean to me?' At the moment of our asking, we are confronted automatically with our understanding of where we stand in relation to the rest of society - and to what our responsibilities and obligations should be both toward society and toward the state. ( p 12)

Bartrop's observation is both particular and universal. In keeping with prevailing discourses, he echoes the view that fundamental issues of citizenship and social responsibility are involved. However, he further suggests that engagement with this particular narrative involves examination of how the individual positions herself in respect to society. Determining "where we stand" is an almost impossible task, especially if one approaches the issue with the understanding of competing discourses of society and of ourselves. In order to begin to address this issue, it is necessary for the individual – in this case the Holocaust teacher – to identify how she is constituted in each of the contexts within which the narrative may place her. It is interesting to note, for example, that of the fourteen college and university teachers contributing to this collection in which Bartrop writes, more than half of them are of Jewish ancestry. A number of contributors refer to a post-Holocaust dialogue between the Jewish and Christian communities, in terms of personal guilt or through a desire for rapprochement. Either implicitly or explicitly, each teacher makes it clear that the shadow of the Holocaust is in some sense a personal shadow – an ever present grief. In most cases one can identify a desire to bring some sort of meaning – through teaching – to an otherwise meaningless event. If one is to make an honest evaluation of any outcomes of and rationales for Holocaust

Education, it is necessary to take into account the extent to which the process acts as a catharsis, not so much among classroom teachers but among influential scholars and other members of the discursive community involved in Holocaust Education throughout the world.

### ***‘Never Again’: Making Progress?***

Totten, a leading American Holocaust educator, offers an extensive guide to identifying rationales (2002) and lists seventeen of those he believes to be most useful<sup>7</sup>. These challenging and far-reaching statements mostly relate to questions about the nature of humanity and society, as well as the placing of the events themselves in their historical context, and include the aim:

to develop in students an awareness of the value of pluralism and diversity in a pluralistic society; [and] to examine the nature, structure and purpose of governments. (p 5).

A number of the rationales he includes, together with one or two he rejects, are worthy of further exploration at this stage. One often-articulated aim in the early days of Holocaust education was the conviction that good practice could ensure "it never happens again". Although this statement is clearly both simplistic and inaccurate, something of the sentiment lingers on in Holocaust education. Totten, who devotes an entire chapter to cautions against the use of such clichés as ‘Remember’ or ‘Never Again’ comments:

Indeed, when the terms are used in talks at Holocaust conferences, political speeches, classroom lectures, and/or in Holocaust curricula, it is rare for the speakers or authors even to mention the numerous genocides perpetrated since 1945. Rarer yet is a speaker or curriculum that addresses how and why society failed to prevent post-World War II genocides. And still rarer is the speaker or a curriculum that broaches and seriously

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<sup>7</sup> These rationales, likely to be widely accepted by those involved in Holocaust Education in the classroom, are listed in full in Appendix 4.

examines what society needs to do to prevent future genocides. (2000 p 140)

However, Totten points out that this rationale can be effective if it leads to action, in that:

Inherent in the call for remembrance is a challenge to be vigilant [and] only through the nurturance of *authentic remembrance*, one imbued with the need to act when others are treated unjustly, will we, humanity, forge the possibility of stanching potential genocides. (p 148/9)

Cesarani (2001) also argues that understanding of the racist background to the Holocaust and other genocides provides “the building blocks of prevention” (p 54) and, in the context of the European Union, Short, Supple and Klinger (1998) use the language of international consensus to say much the same thing:

The most compelling reason for studying the Holocaust is to help secure the future against further violations of human rights based on a ‘race’, religion or ethnicity. (p13)

Adorno, as discussed in Schreier and Heyl (eds., 1997), has taken the approach that; “the first demand on education is that there not be another Auschwitz” (p 11). For Adorno, however, it is *all* education which must be transformative and preventative, not just Holocaust Education. Adorno argues for an emphasis on both early childhood in terms of character development and a ‘general enlightenment’ to promote spiritual and cultural development. In Adorno's analysis, however, it is the social rather than individual psychological development, which allowed the Holocaust and which therefore, must be addressed educationally. The goal of preventing another Auschwitz, at least within one's own sphere of influence, may be attainable, but this requires education to explore the social power play, which exists behind all political structures. From this perspective, the study of what we might call Citizenship must be analytical and not merely instructive. This means that skills such as the

ability to reflect, and self-determination, need to be developed rather than simply providing information. Adorno believes that education cannot prevent the development of 'evil geniuses' such as Hitler but it may do much to prevent the growth of the willing helpers. The question of 'whether' and, perhaps, 'how?' the classroom lessons may do this remains to be seen. However, it does appear that some of the rhetoric of Citizenship Studies in relation to Holocaust Education perpetuates the idea that this is both possible and an achievable outcome.

## **Part II            METHODS AND FRAMEWORKS**

### **3            TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1        THEORIES CONSIDERED**

The aim of the study was to explore what might realistically be said about the learning process, other than in cognitive terms, in lessons about the Holocaust. This indicated a broad field for the development of a research question, rather in terms of “a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied.” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p 41). Any methodology employed would need to enable the exploration of perceptions concerning what teachers believe to be the value or otherwise of such lessons. The development of expressed objectives may be based on literature, training and/or teachers’ own experiences. The extent to which the teachers might reiterate the rationales of the theory, or express similar aims in their own terms, or speak about quite different outcomes, would, it was hoped, provide clues as to what might be happening in the lessons. The methodology selected would have to take into account the many different individual concerns and approaches to the topic, experiences within the classroom and issues of pedagogy.

As there is a considerable amount of literature available to teachers concerning rationales for this topic, the pilot study should offer an opportunity to explore those statements which the teachers selected (if any) or, alternatively, how they expressed objectives in their own terms. Crucially, therefore, the words and phrases to be used by the teachers were important. For these reasons, an interview process, structured or semi-structured, was deemed to be the most useful in enabling theory construction.

Initially, this was a ‘grounded theory’ approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Such a methodology involves the collection and analysis of data in sequence, with each analysis suggesting the next step in the data collection, whether it be by interview, observation or some other means. This process allows for initial ‘working theories’ to ‘emerge’ as the study progresses, which can in turn be

examined and re-evaluated in the light of the analysis of the data recovered. The nature of the research was therefore seen in terms of a recontextualizing process, affording opportunities to explore various hypotheses which might emerge as the process progressed. When De Vaus (1996) sets out the process of theory testing, he points out that results may or may not support the initial hypothesis. However, such a possibility offers positive assistance because it enables the modification or development of the initial theory in a way which encourages progress (p 20).

For the pilot study, it was decided to use structured interviews as an inductive strategy to enable the development of a working hypothesis. Silverman (2001) cautions that, before embarking on an interview-based methodology, one should ask whether the research might be conducted using any other method, and indeed other methods were considered and some used during the research. However, it was hoped that, at this stage, structured interviews would both provide opportunities for as wide or as narrow a range of responses as interviewees felt the topic merited.

### 3.2 THE PILOT STUDY

With these considerations in mind, it was decided to interview two groups of teachers from very different situations, but each of whom had already indicated some interest in teaching the subject. The pilot sample comprised ten interviewees and the interviews were conducted privately and on a one-to-one basis. To an extent, the sampling was dictated by convenience, but it was important to ask for volunteers who might already have considered aspects of teaching the subject in order to engage specifically with stated rationales for teaching the topic.

A first group was identified comprising those who had little experience and were therefore unlikely to have been exposed to much of the literature; their perceptions would therefore be less likely to be influenced by specific language

and practice on the topic. An English University conducting a special elective day for PGCE students from different disciplines on 'Teaching the Holocaust' was approached and three students volunteered to be interviewed. Their involvement with the day and their willingness to be interviewed indicated that they had encountered opportunities to discuss issues of good practice and rationales with others. This ensured that they would be familiar with at least some of the claims made for the subject.

The second group comprised seven American High School and Junior High School teachers attending a Teachers' Symposium on Holocaust Education in the USA, which followed on from an academic conference on the Holocaust. These were again volunteers. They were all very experienced teachers with a declared interest in Holocaust Education. While their experiences might be different from those of qualified teachers in UK schools, their access to the main body of international literature on this topic indicated a familiarity with widely stated claims for its educative value.

In both cases, I was given time during a plenary session to explain that I was researching issues of 'what could be taught and learnt in Holocaust Education' and would be grateful for volunteers who could give up some time to be interviewed. It is worth noting that in both the pilot and main studies, teachers involved were keen to make a contribution to the research. While the number involved was largely a matter of their time available and what could be achieved within the time frames of the conferences they were attending, it was also a manageable number for the purposes of evaluating the data gathering process.

The study overall began from a position of scepticism that, while there were a number of very definite benefits for teaching the topic in the classroom, some of the 'grand aims' often expressed, including the idea that society as a whole could benefit from such teaching, appeared unrealistic. Some of these aims and rationales have been discussed earlier in this thesis. However, I was interested to see whether experienced teachers made use of the 'stock phrases', such as the opinion that learning about the Holocaust would 'ensure it never happens again' or that it would help to combat racism in our society, and whether those

currently in training also tended to articulate these. Of particular importance were the perceptions of the teachers themselves, and how these were expressed. It was what the teachers believed about the lessons, irrespective of whether their perceptions were born out by any objective measurable outcome (Kvale, 1996). While the language used by the interviewees, in terms of an almost instinctive response, was a key factor, it was also vital to be aware of how students, and experienced teachers at a specialist symposium, might have been inclined to 'polish' their answers.

In addition to stated perceptions, and perhaps more crucially, I wanted to see whether their discussion of such teaching elicited other comments, or non-verbal responses, which might indicate hitherto unexplored aspects of the experience. It was hoped that responses might produce a clue or clues to be followed up more closely in the main bulk of the research and might provide a theory to be explored in the way suggested by de Vaus (1996).

In attending so closely to the vocabulary used by the teachers, including any hesitations and apparent inconsistencies, there were specific ethical considerations. Each of the participants was informed regarding the general nature and purpose of the research and was made aware that they were participating in a pilot study. The fact that they were already informed about issues relating Holocaust Education, and that this was an important focus at this point, was made clear. As the research progressed, this assurance was repeated to all participants, as was the issue of anonymity, for schools, teachers and pupils.

Both the PGCE students and the American teachers were asked the same group of questions (See Appendix 1). Breakwell (1990) sets out some useful guidelines for question design which were incorporated. While some may consider these too prescriptive, they do provide a useful checklist and include such advice as not asking, effectively, two questions at once or inviting comments on an unacknowledged hypothesis.

Analysis of the responses in the pilot study revealed several interesting observations. (An overview of the findings is provided in Appendix 2.) Issues of the efficacy of Holocaust Education in terms of moral or civic education were of particular importance. Although these issues were certainly acknowledged, it appeared that the teachers had difficulty in evaluating the role of the lessons in terms of their contributions to these fields. Two further factors were highlighted by the interviewees.

*i) Emotional engagement*

There appeared to be a shared perception among those interviewed that emotional engagement was vital to the ‘process’ (whatever that was), although they were clear that this emotional element was an area which required professional sensitivity. Encouraging an immediate sentimental response to the subject material was, almost all interviewees said, something to be avoided. However, at least seven of the ten clearly felt that, unless the pupils were emotionally engaged in the process at some level, learning was not taking place. As one PGCE student, Nick B, put it: “This is the principle which underpins all my teaching. You can’t engage fully with anything unless emotions are involved; you have to *feel* it.” This vital function of emotional engagement with the Holocaust narrative amid the dangers of sentimentality was described by one of the American teachers, Bill R:

I try to keep emotion out of it, but to tell you the truth it’s kind of impossible. It is a very emotional topic in terms of and the danger is you really don’t want the person depressed - you want to move them, you want to motivate them, but you don’t want them to get so depressed. I personally am very passionate about it and I think as a teacher it’s okay to be passionate about it. What I try to do is in all subject areas, whatever I’m teaching, I try to present all points of view. History is a picture and you look at it but in something like this it is very difficult to look at this picture other than in one way. I take them to the water but I don’t force them to drink it. But logically there’s only one thing to do - but I want them to think of it.

Bill R wants to enable a learning process wherein the pupil's response will be a positive one. He is aware of his own emotional response, but he does not want this to effect the process unduly. It seemed that this emotional element and the effect of the teacher's own emotional engagement might provide useful avenues for exploration. It was also interesting that Bill R saw his own role as pivotal and acknowledged the problems inherent in how he chose to present the text to the class.

## *ii) Elements of Uncertainty*

The second factor was that although all interviewees were clear about lessons they thought 'could be learnt' from Holocaust Education, there was a degree of confusion or uncertainty; quite what was happening in the lessons – and why – could not be clarified. Although the interviewees referred to theory, thought-out objectives and written rationales, it seemed that the practical outcomes remained elusive. While interviewees were aware of conventional rationales regarding such 'lessons to be learnt', their expectations and experience led them to be wary of any unrealistic claims.

Classroom assessment concentrates predominantly on subject skills or knowledge; the teachers had little evidence to help them gauge the social or moral objectives attained. They were reduced to using verbs such as 'think', 'believe' or 'hope', or to use 'hindsight'. Rebecca A, one of the American teachers, spoke about this in terms of 'deferred benefits' or of benefits to those already receptive to such ideas:

You're asking a person who's taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade for 30 years. And that peculiar amalgam of egocentricity and rebellion that makes a 13 or 14 year old student kind of defies explanation. But I would say I have to say, for my sanity I have to say I hope that the lessons are in the long run, because what I see through having taught this through all those many years in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom is that kids empathise with the lessons as they are being taught about others, but when it comes to that particular time in their own

lives to applying them to themselves, they're not very good at it, because they'll go out in the Hall and they start yelling 'not nice names' at one another and putting people down and labelling and all that thing. So I have to say that once they kind of move ahead into maturity that the lessons can be adapted to the world they see around them. When they kind of return to earth and become a normal person again, they can apply the lessons to life because many of my - many of my former students have come back, you know when they're High School and college students, and even after they've graduated, and they've said what an impact this kind of education has made on their life.

Rebecca A suggests here that the pupils are responsive to the lessons and expresses the hope that the results will emerge even though they are not apparent to her. She observes that the pupils' *moral* behaviour, the way they deal with each other, is *not* affected outside the classroom (despite the fact that during the lessons "14 year olds are very, very grasped by this material"). Because of this, Rebecca A is forced to *hope* for *long-term* behavioural change. 'For her sanity' she has to believe that there are positive outcomes of the lessons, even if they are unobservable to her. Her comment indicated a sense of doubt in terms of outcome, although this did not diminish her desire to continue the lessons in the hope or *belief* that learning had somehow taken place despite all appearances to the contrary.

The interviewees were agreed that there were lessons to be learnt from the Holocaust in terms of prejudice reduction, consideration of others, moral development and social or civic action, but issues of moral and ethical complexity were also raised by some of the American teachers. Not being 'given all the answers' was mentioned by Bill R not just as occurring but, in fact, being a desirable educational outcome:

I start out by saying - when we've finished talking about the Holocaust, if you don't have more questions when we're finished, than you do right now then I'm not doing my job.

In a particularly significant extract, Jeanne C highlighted the moral ambiguity inherent in lessons about the Holocaust:

We even talk about what makes people good. This is a difficult question. I teach in the Bible Belt and people have a strong idea about goodness. But if you look at someone like Oskar Schindler<sup>8</sup> - how was *he* good?

These responses suggested that moral development as a result of these lessons was by no means conclusive, even when taught by experienced teachers committed to Holocaust Education. Furthermore, there was a sense in which the possibilities of moral ambiguity were more important than any straightforward moral imperative. Such considerations seemed to identify two further related avenues of exploration – namely what role if any could Holocaust Education be said to play in moral development and in what ways might the recognition of moral confusions be regarded as a successful outcome?

### ***Conclusions***

The pilot study had identified a number of interesting and unexpected issues. Although the interviewees were able to theorise and to borrow the language of thought-out objectives and written rationales, it seemed that the practical outcomes remained elusive. Classroom assessment concentrates predominantly on subject skills or knowledge; the teachers had little evidence to help them gauge the social or moral objectives attained. They were reduced to using verbs such as ‘think’, ‘believe’ or ‘hope’, or to use ‘hindsight’.

While those interviewed, especially the experienced American teachers, appeared convinced that Holocaust Education was of great importance in terms of behavioural and attitudinal change, they had no real evidence of this. In fact, their experience suggested otherwise. Secondly, they were keen to leave their students with the impression that questions had been asked to which the teachers

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<sup>8</sup> Schindler, perhaps the most widely known rescuer, was a businessman whose interest in Jews initially was as a source of cheap labour for his factory. He was also a notorious womaniser.

would not be giving any answers and, furthermore, that issues of morality and ‘goodness’ were perhaps more difficult to define than was often thought.

These responses, intriguingly, suggested that a certain ‘unknowability’, uncertainty or messiness was not only implicit in Holocaust Education but was openly recognised and acknowledged. The experienced (American) teachers remained committed and convinced of the benefits to both pupils and society as a whole, while having little real evidence for this. They used similar vocabulary to the PGCE students when discussing ‘Citizenship’ possibilities regarding lessons to be learned from studying this topic, but they did not expect the effect of these lessons to be self-evident. On another level, there was a hint that, while the study of the Holocaust dealt with morality on a grand scale, the moral lessons to be learnt were not necessarily the more obvious ones.

These findings indicated that the investigation might fruitfully continue to address the experience of the lessons for both teachers and pupils. By providing greater opportunities for reflection, it might be possible to understand the nature of the experience of the lessons for those concerned, to explore how issues of morality might be linked, to consider further aspects of emotional engagement and to explore in greater depths the issues of uncertainty. As a result, it might be possible to align the analysis alongside the ‘grand aims’ for the subject – moral development, combating racism, citizenship education and so on – and consider what sort of learning process could possibly be taking place, in these spheres or in other quite different ones.

### 3.3 THE MAIN STUDY

#### *Focusing the work*

A first question to be addressed regarding the main study involved the number and nature of schools and teachers to be targeted. Since the process would involve encouraging teachers in particular to talk freely and reflectively, it was clear that gathering data from too wide a field was inadvisable both in practical

terms and because of the range of variables involved. While the vast amount of international material available on the subject is pertinent, the decision was made to focus on the specificity of the British classroom experience and, more narrowly, teaching within the National Curriculum for England and Wales. While it was hoped that any conclusions drawn or issues raised in the final analysis would be widely applicable – especially in light of international cross-fertilisation<sup>9</sup> – it seemed that the curriculum in England and Wales would provide a useful framework for carrying out the research. The number of opportunities for the topic to be taught in England and Wales, both as a requirement and as an elective subject, provided a fruitful source from which to gather data.

The intention at this stage was to look at either R.E. or History lessons. However, it became apparent during initial conversations that, while methodology and overall aims differed in each subject, there were a number of shared objectives, perceptions and experiences in pedagogy, and many similarities in terms of pupil responses. As the research continued, it was noticeable that the similarities between the experiences in these lessons and how the teachers spoke of them were greater than the disparities. Including both subjects might, it was felt, enable things to be said about the topic of the Holocaust in the classroom in its own right.

### *Identifying schools*

The main body of data for this research was collected from three schools in the public sector which, it was hoped, would offer different frameworks for exploring the issues. These comprised a semi-rural school, identified in this thesis as Norfolk Community School, a girls' selective school in Buckinghamshire (Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar) and a boys' comprehensive school in London (East Thames Boys' School).

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<sup>9</sup> For example, through the work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, *Facing History and Ourselves* and initiatives from Yad Vashem, all mentioned further elsewhere in the thesis.

The schools were identified through personal encounters with an individual teacher at each school; these encounters occurred at a range of conferences relating to Holocaust Education. The presence of the teachers at the conferences indicated that they, or someone at their school, had a specific interest in the practice of Holocaust Education within History, R.E. and/or Citizenship. The amount of experience which each teacher had with the topic was not a factor, since the articulation of rationales and perceptions of the process were considered to be the most important features at this stage.

Each of these teacher contacts were Heads of Department who agreed to facilitate research both within and beyond their departments, with departmental and other colleagues and with pupils studying the subject under their tuition. Their willingness to assist with the formalities of organisation involved was the main criterion for their selection, although it was felt important to be aware of the need for diversity of approach which these schools also offered.

### ***Schools and teachers involved***

#### **i) The Norfolk Community School**

The 2001 Ofsted report describes the school as follows: (While the interviews were carried out just over two years later, the basics of the school remained similar.)

This large voluntary controlled comprehensive school has 1347 boys and girls aged 11-18, of whom 244 are in the sixth form. The profile of attainment on entry varies from year to year but is usually above average. Very few pupils, about 3%, are from minority ethnic groups, mainly Indian and Chinese. Only two pupils need support because English is not their first language. 17% of pupils have special needs, which is broadly average. Only 1 % have statements, which is below average; about half of these have moderate learning difficulties and half have emotional or behavioural

difficulties. Around 12% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared with the national average of 18%.

The school campus is mostly of 1960's construction and lies within a former local authority housing estate; it is well respected locally<sup>10</sup> and the discipline is generally good. Despite its homogenous ethnic profile, the pupils showed an understanding of issues of class and wealth divides in the interviews. It has no specific religious ethos. The RE department, which was the focus at this school, appears to be well-regarded by staff and pupils. In part this may be due to the personal stranding in which the teachers themselves appear to be held.

The initial contact here was Mrs Rotherham, Head of the Religious Studies Department. Mrs Rotherham was identified as a potential interviewee following her contribution at a teachers' conference about Citizenship, prior to its introduction on the National Curriculum, where, in a feedback session about topics which could help to promote 'citizenship skills', Mrs Rotherham provided a detailed account of how her school used the topic of the Holocaust extensively to promote learning in the spheres of moral and social education. Her enthusiasm and commitment to teaching the topic was apparent.

Describing herself as having "Christian principles", Mrs Rotherham had come into teaching relatively late after a career in business management. She was passionate about education and saw the Holocaust narrative as being extremely powerful in terms of its potential for classroom learning; she had designed the RE syllabus within national guidelines to include a substantial unit of six weeks on the Holocaust in Year 9. The course was delivered in one 70 minute lesson per week. Mrs Rotherham was in the process of organising a school visit to Poland for Year 10 pupils to explore these themes further; it had not been easy for her to persuade the Headmaster of the value of such a trip.

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<sup>10</sup> During my visits to the school, I was able to talk informally with a good range of staff and also with a few members of the local community who had not school links.

Mr Simons was an experienced teacher and a member of the Senior Management team (Head of Sixth Form). A committed Christian, Mr Simons had been unenthusiastic about teaching the topic of the Holocaust in previous years and had not in fact done so, being worried that the events were too overwhelming to provide any useful learning opportunities. He had been obliged to teach it for the first time this year because of timetabling constraints and was ultimately reassured by the process. He was, however, deeply concerned that, while there were definite RE lessons to be learnt from the topic, such as questions about 'good and evil' and the silence of God, he expressed misgivings that whatever was being learnt in this, his first, effort was effectively "not RE".

Mrs Hardy was the third member of the department. Her approach to teaching generally emphasised the experiential rather than the academic; her view was that the narrative of the Holocaust could impart "important moral lessons" and "lessons about life". Mrs Hardy clearly enjoyed her work and her relationships with her pupils.

Particular insight into the school was gained through my own opportunity to teach a number of lessons in different topics in return for interview time and co-operation in the research. Discipline at the school was generally good and the atmosphere was friendly and purposeful.

## ii) The Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar School

The Ofsted report for the school in 2003 described it as a large, popular girls' grammar school of 1425 pupils, serving a town and large rural area, and which operated a selection policy. This meant that pupil attainment on entry was well above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs was 4.2%, mostly with dyslexia (the national average for a school this size was 19.5%). The school was ethnically diverse, with a strong percentage of pupils from Muslim families.

My initial contact here was Miss Kay, Head of the RE and Citizenship Department, whom I met at another teachers' conference on 'Citizenship and RE'. Miss Kay attracted my interest as a result of her public assertion that one of the main rationales for teaching RE was its implication for Citizenship studies and that, furthermore, all assessment of RE up to GCSE level, should be via the aims and objectives of Citizenship. As a result of this thinking she had just introduced a study of the Holocaust into the Year 10 General RE syllabus.

A feature of particular interest at the Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar School was the disparity in pupils' experiences of Holocaust Education. Some pupils were taught by teachers who were enthusiastic and who extended the unit of lessons outside the timetabled lessons. Miss Kay suggested that I interview the Head of the History department, Miss Hastings and a colleague, Miss Nunn, both of whom she described to me as having "very different views about teaching the Holocaust", presumed to be 'different' from her own. The subsequent interviews with these teachers ultimately appeared to offer possible 'deviant case' data (Silverman, 2001).

In contrast, the third member of the department, Miss Downing, personally organised a visit to the Holocaust Exhibit at the Imperial War Museum where her pupils heard the testimony of a survivor. Pupils in Miss Downing's class appeared to have had a different encounter with the subject from those who had received three or four classroom lessons and nothing further. This enabled the exploration of issues such as the contexts in which certain terminology appeared, the engagement of emotions and the language used in reflecting on the experience, but presented issues in terms of the interviews. Clearly these pupils' engagement with the topic might differ significantly from that of their peers. One problem was deciding how and when to raise the experience through the questions. In the event, the pupils raised this themselves and were able to consider aspects of the visit without prompting. The youngest member of the department, Miss Downing was in her first teaching job and her enthusiasm for teaching the topic derived, as she described it, from what she had personally "observed" in the reactions of her pupils in terms of "a learning experience".

### iii) The East Thames Boys' School

This is a large 11-16 comprehensive school with over 1200 pupils and is designated a 'specialist technology college' for boys. The buildings are fairly new and the school is set in a recently developed area, as part of the planned London expansion east beyond Greenwich. Overall standards of pupils joining the school in Year 7 are described by Ofsted (2004/5) as "well below average". The report also states that:

A very high proportion have special educational needs and an equally high proportion have a language other than English as their home language.

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is "above average." However, the report also describes the school as providing 'good' teaching, with some 'very good' aspects. For example, pupil behaviour, spiritual development and school leadership are also singled out as being "very good". During my time at the school, I was able to confirm that standards of discipline and expectations of pupils are consistently high. Organisation and management are also noticeably very good. The overwhelming majority of pupils come from African, Caribbean and Asian family backgrounds and, although the school has no religious ethos, many of the pupils come from homes where religion (mostly Christianity and Islam) is an integral part of family and community life.

The initial contact at the school was Miss Mackie, a Fellow of the *Facing History and Ourselves* programme<sup>11</sup>, whom I met at an international conference for educators held at the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Her commitment to Holocaust Education was, as would be expected, substantial, and she saw it as offering "a method of both identifying and addressing issues in the world today". The ethnic diversity of her students was part of this commitment, in that she abhorred racism and discrimination wherever it might be found, and, while

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<sup>11</sup> This is referred to more fully in the previous chapter.

she saw the Holocaust as the paradigm example offering opportunities for “good history teaching”, was as equally passionate about active lobbying for the people of Darfur in 2006. A talented historian and an inspirational teacher, Miss Mackie had expanded the National Curriculum Unit to incorporate material and approaches from the *Facing History* programme, taking up the entire Spring term in Year 9.

Miss Mackie’s colleagues in the History department were Miss Hall and Miss Overton; both capable and enthusiastic teachers who also taught RE within the Humanities Faculty. Miss Hall saw both Holocaust Education and RE as “opportunities” to explore difficult social and personal issues with pupils. While the decision to spend so much time and effort on Holocaust Education had been Miss Mackie’s, both Miss Hall and Miss Overton appeared equally committed to the topic. In particular, Miss Hall used the experience of being interviewed and observed in the course of the research to reflect on her own discourses of pedagogy more generally.

In the initial group interview with the teachers, they were asked whether the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the pupils (both strongly Muslim and Christian) noticeably affected the pupil approaches to the topic. In response, Miss Mackie referred to issues of prejudice and discrimination, which the pupils themselves experienced or were aware of generally, and believed it helped them to understand the Jewish experience during the Holocaust. This did indeed appear to be the case and there was no hint that current discourses of antisemitism informed the pupils’ approaches<sup>12</sup>. The fact that pupils at the school were “very aware of certain world events” and “more politicised than you’d expect from boys who don’t read newspapers and watch the news”, led Miss Mackie to believe that the ‘lessons of the Holocaust’ were more likely to be internalised than with pupils who are less aware. In response to a question about perceptions specifically from Muslim pupils, Miss Hall replied that “even

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<sup>12</sup> There was anecdotal evidence during this research that some schools have decided to teach only the basic National Curriculum requirement and no more because of concerns that pupils and parents may not be keen on ‘emphasising the Jewish experience’. The report published by the Historical Association (2007), *Teaching Emotive and Controversial History*, cited incidents where schools had refrained from selecting the topic for GCSE because of fears of Muslim antipathy. This, however, was certainly not the case at the East Thames Boys’ School.

the ones who aren't in the so-called minorities, are more aware [of world events] sometimes".

Ten teachers therefore were interviewed in the main study. Just over forty Year 9 pupils of varying ability from the three schools were interviewed. The question of sample size was an important one and, given the time-consuming nature of the research, there were also practical requirements. While the sample could not be expected to provide complete information about attitudes and practices nationwide, it did address the issue of 'generalizability' in terms of theoretical sampling (Silverman 2000). That is, anything which could be inferred from the data might contribute to the development of theory, rather than be said to apply universally.

In all of the schools, pupils were taught in classes grouped by general academic ability.

### ***Collecting the Data***

The focus in the main study was to be the accounts of experiences within Holocaust Education, both from teachers and pupils. Opportunities therefore must be provided for both teachers and their pupils to talk freely about their experience of the process in the hope that further clues might arise. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001)'s description of structured and unstructured interviews suggest that one might be expected to move from the latter to the former. It was envisaged that the selection of vocabulary, together with non-verbal signals, would be significant. For the semi-structured interviews of pupils, the questions (see again Appendix 1) were designed to elicit information about what and how pupils remembered the classes, what was significant for them and how they evaluated the experience. Flexibility was important, however. The desire to encourage pupils to talk about their views and experiences was seen, in the long term, more valuable than standardisation. In this respect, it was useful to think about what Oppenheim (1992) calls *stimulus equivalence* (also Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001); that is, how each

respondent understood the question rather than whether they heard exactly the same words.

The interviewing of both pupils and teachers involved in the same process was seen as vital, since each would be expected to have different approaches and expectations of Holocaust Education. Although subject specific research would undoubtedly enable a clearer focus on aspects of approach and methodology in the classroom, here the text of the Holocaust itself provided the focus for exploring how teachers and pupils approached it together, irrespective of framework. In some cases, the pupils considered how the topic might help them address issues of Citizenship. However, it was important for the purposes of the research that the pupils and teachers were interviewed on their recent and combined experience of embarking on this material.

The pupil samples were determined by the opportunities within each school, although there was certainly a theoretical element (as outlined in Brown and Dowling 1998) in the sampling, given that the schools were selected on the basis of interest in the topic by teachers. This interest was vital if one was to explore perceived values in teaching this topic. The teaching staff of the schools concerned controlled the selection of pupils. Criteria used in the choice included pupils who 'usually had plenty to say' as well as those who had permission from another subject teacher to be removed from a timetabled lesson. This teacher selection seemed unavoidable if the research was to be conducted smoothly within the school context - the goodwill factor (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001) being crucial.

Interviewing pupils in small groups was seen as being most effective in encouraging responses; the opportunity to observe any interaction or agreement/disagreement might also be useful (Krueger, 1994). However, the teachers in the study were interviewed on a number of occasions, both individually and with colleagues, sometimes in unstructured, sometimes in semi-structured interviews. Observation of classroom lessons also provided a useful source of data, both to complement and inform the stated perceptions of what

was happening during the lessons, and to enable the continuing process of recontextualization and this aspect of the method is outlined further below.

Participation in the research was entirely voluntary; participating teachers were aware that the process was designed to explore the rationales of Holocaust Education, and to investigate how teachers and pupils viewed the experience. Pupils interviewed were also made aware of this and their agreement in the process was sought. At the East Thames Boys' School in particular, the desire of the teachers concerned to be part of the research process on this topic was a major factor. The teachers were keen to receive eventual feedback which they hoped would be 'positive', and enable reflection, not only with regard to the subject itself, but also in terms of their own development. When told that I had offered to teach some classes in return for her time and co-operation, Miss Hall replied:

We'd have taken part anyway.

At the Norfolk Community School, Mrs Rutherford reported that the pupils were pleased to be asked for their views and felt positive about 'being able to contribute to research'. Immediate feedback was delivered by means of an oral summary made to the teachers, with the use of notes, but the complete transcripts were not offered at this stage.

Pupils were interviewed in semi-structured interviews in small groups of about 4. Each group of pupils had been taught about the Holocaust in either R.E. or History classes by subject specialists, each teacher following a departmental scheme of work but with different levels of experience and different approaches. While the East Thames Boys' School made use of the 'Facing History and Ourselves' material – a controversial programme which also offers opportunities for the pupils' to reflect on their own experiences of discrimination and identity issues – and one of the teachers was a 'Fellow' of the programme, the course observed followed the History curriculum guidelines and emphasised historical material and approaches throughout.

The emphasis on confidentiality was stressed, especially since, at the Norfolk Community School, Mrs Rotherham remained in the room throughout the interviews. The rapport between her and the pupils seemed good and it did not appear to inhibit their responses. It is worth noting that, despite her presence, they did not appear to be in the least inhibited and spoke quite freely and in personal terms about their teachers. While there was nothing negative in what they said, some comments regarding their teachers dealt with emotional issues which less inhibited pupils might have been wary of expressing. Those who were pupils of Mrs Rotherham herself also spoke freely on such matters.

It was necessary to ensure that the interviewees were put at ease as much as possible. This was partly because the topic in question dealt potentially with sensitive issues, but more importantly as an aid to conversation. An informal atmosphere was to be encouraged, notwithstanding the possible element of the 'Hawthorne effect' (Brown & Dowling, 1998), in which the experience of being asked their views might make the pupils either more enthusiastic or more reflective or both.

Each group interview began with a restatement of the purpose of the interview, with the emphasis placed on the desire to hear whatever they thought it was important to say. It was made clear that there were no 'right answers'; this was to be viewed as far as possible as a conversation rather than in any sense an assessment and that they were the 'experts' here. Pupils were assured that details of what was said, especially if concerning individual pupils or teachers, would remain confidential. Clearly, the experience of learning about the Holocaust, if certain conditions are met, including the engagement of emotions in a controlled way, can be a destructive experience for the pupil. However, both teachers and pupils were willing to talk freely about the experience, in which the pupils had clearly been engaged.

The 'right answer' issue was a constant concern. With such difficult material, it was inevitable perhaps that pupils would utilize shared language and approaches, particularly where derived from teacher-given clues. The solution to this seemed to be not to 'bracket out' these responses – if, indeed, they were

being used in this way – but to include them in the process of analysis and see what directions their presence might indicate.

### *Classroom Observation*

It was decided that observation of the teachers and their classes could inform the comments and reflections of both teachers and pupils. Information gained through this observation was intended primarily to qualify that obtained by means of the interviews; pupil and teacher perceptions, descriptions and understandings remained the focus. Observation was carried out in all schools and all teachers were observed at least once. Three classes in particular at the East Thames Boys' School were observed over a period of four weeks; these comprised two 'top ability' classes and one class containing pupils designated as having special needs.

At both the Norfolk Community School and the East Thames Boys' School, the classrooms were arranged with five or six groups of tables around which the pupils sat. Each table group of tables served up to six pupils. The whiteboard was fixed on the wall nearest the door and the teachers made physical use mostly of the space in front of this. As observer, I occupied a space at a table away from the teacher. At the Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar, one class observed was held in a lecture theatre; I sat half way down at the side. In another, the room was arranged with desks in 'boardroom style', with my sitting behind them. In all the classes I was introduced, the pupils were told something of my role, such as that I was there "to find out about how we teach Holocaust Education". My presence did not appear to inhibit the participation or otherwise of the pupils in the lesson.

Each lesson observed was taped and accompanying notes made as the lesson progressed. The strategy employed for this process was based on that recommended by, among others, Silverman (2000). This involved brief but wide-ranging notes made during the lesson, which I was able shortly afterwards to type up and expand. The layout of the classroom, whiteboard and other

material, positioning of pupils, movement of the teachers and, where applicable, wall displays were also noted as far as possible.

It was hoped that the additional information gained by this process would be useful in comparing and perhaps contrasting what the teachers perceived was happening and what might be apparent. It might also be useful in comparing how teachers set up 'learning experiences' with how the pupils described their own learning, but overall this observation was intended to supplement and inform the data collected in interviews. The focus of the study remained the insights, views and perceptions of those engaged in the process.

### 3.4 OBJECTIVITY, REFLEXIVITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations required that the exploratory nature of the research be made clear to the participants at each stage, as well as the objects of interest - namely their selected rationales for the topic and if and how it might be considered 'effective' in terms of a learning process. As has been stated earlier, the teachers were generally interested in helping with the research, even though they were aware of its 'grounded theory' nature. An emerging feature of the study, namely the combination of enthusiasm for the lessons and uncertainty as to outcomes, meant that a number of the teachers were particularly interested, even excited, at the possibility of exploring this further. The teachers to be interviewed in the study knew, or might reasonably assume that I was personally involved in Holocaust Education and this may have encouraged the view that I would be unlikely to criticise the lessons *per se*.

In order to be as open as possible with the teachers, it was important to discuss a number of ideas and theories with them after the research process but before the analysis. Transcriptions and an initial general analysis paper were made available later to each school. At the request of one school, I agreed to inform

the teachers of any thoughts or findings which might lead them to want to change significantly their practice. (There were none.)

Total confidentiality was assured to both pupils and teachers in the research, even though, as has been mentioned above, one Head of Department remained in the room throughout the interviews with pupils. The co-operation of each of the schools in the process was invaluable, not least in accommodating the pupil interviews which, as has been stated earlier, was conducted on a voluntary basis. In return for their assistance in the research, some of my own time, as a qualified teacher, was made available to the school to use as required. Where the schools responded to this offer, it was vital that this occurred with classes other than those involved in the research, and subsequent to it.

The methodology chosen involved semi-structured interviews in which teachers, and pupils, were encouraged to talk about their experiences and perceptions of the learning process. A potential drawback of this method is the danger of inferring too much from the way in which teachers choose to relate their feelings and perceptions. Block (2000) comments on the dynamics of the interview process:

The point is that in the course of an interview the same research participants might change voices depending on the way they situate themselves vis-à-vis a particular question and the person asking it. What is produced comes to be seen more as symptomatic of a particular state of mind and even ephemeral, ongoing social interaction than as a reflection of underlying memory or mental models of particular domains of knowledge and experience. (Block, 2000, p 760)

This was particularly important with regard to issues of reflexivity. Furthermore, while the structured interview method was intended to maximise objectivity, it has to be acknowledged that objectivity is probably impossible to achieve, certainly in qualitative studies. In addition, the very nature of the 'minimum input' model, which uses very few questions to elicit responses, raises issues of

its own. Silverman (2001) discusses a number of these important considerations and adds:

Where the researcher maintains a minimal presence, asking few questions, this can create an interpretive problem for the interviewee about what is relevant. Moreover the passivity of the interviewer can create an extremely powerful constraint on the interviewee to talk.(p 92)

The interviews did not take place *in vacuo*. Having met some of the teachers already, and through spending some time with most of them, relations between interviewer and interviewees were generally relaxed and friendly. Because of this, the issue of objectivity was of special concern, both in general terms but also more specifically in relation to Holocaust Education. Knowing my involvement with the topic, it was reasonable for the teachers to expect that I possessed a set of rationales for Holocaust Education myself. In other words, I could be perceived as asking them questions *to which I myself had answers*. Furthermore, the fact that I was undertaking research into the topic presupposed a specific approach of my own and one which had been occasioned by some considerable thought. The knowledge that I was in some sense a ‘stakeholder’ and had, at least, read the literature, might lead the interviewees, sub-consciously or otherwise, to try to furnish the ‘right answers’. Of particular concern were any possible attempts on the part of the interviewees to ‘second-guess’ me; to give me ‘what I wanted’. This concern was illustrated at the end of interviews when teachers asked questions such as ‘was that alright?’; that is: ‘did I give *helpful* answers?’

Consideration of the perceived relationship between interviewer and interviewee was an important factor (Cicourel, 1964). This was the case with both teacher and pupil interviews, but both in the pilot sample, and more acutely in the main study. It was therefore especially important to attempt to position myself as researcher and not as expert. One method was to conduct a number of different unstructured interviews, both with the teachers together and independently, beginning with more basic questions and moving on to more analytic questions later (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p75). The selection of an unstructured

interview method in the main study was also an attempt to minimise a 'right answer' response.

An academic colleague, with whom I discussed some of my initial findings, found the way I referred to myself as researcher to be suspiciously devoid of any sense of identity, and referred to this position as "the avatar JLC". By removing myself totally from the picture of the research, I was in effect leaving it incomplete and it became apparent that in order to understand more fully the process and evaluation of the research it was essential for me to address issues of reflexivity.

As an experienced educator in the field of Holocaust studies and involved to the extent of Trusteeship of the national Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, it was vital to reflect on how my own values, experiences and approaches had affected the research. Issues such as my relationship with the teachers in the study also needed to be addressed. In adopting a grounded theory methodology, it was crucial to examine and re-examine my process at every stage, to ensure that theories were arising from the data and not from any preconceptions of my own.

Drawing on Gadamer and others, Bramall (1999) comments on the necessity of recognising how one is situated in relation to the research and 'bracketing off', that is, temporarily suspending the explanatory frames - the origin of the initial questions. He goes on to point out:

"But at the same time, it is precisely through the interplay between one's interpretive frames or pre-understandings and the elements of the actions one is trying to understand that knowledge is developed. In other words, one's pre-understandings, far from being closed prejudices or biases, [actually] make one more open-minded because in the process of interpretation and understanding they are put at risk, tested and modified through the encounter of what one is trying to understand. So rather than bracketing or 'suspending' them, we should use them as the essential starting point for acquiring knowledge." (1999, p 28)

The question at this stage was how my own expertise in the subject could be a positive factor in terms of the usefulness of the research, rather than a barrier. The key factor, Bramall makes clear, is the recognition of the situation of the researcher. Since relationships, tensions and positioning were likely to become significant factors in the research, it was not too difficult to keep this element in mind. It was important to acknowledge that the starting point for the research was to explore the blank space - the *x* factor - which existed between the objectives of Holocaust Education and any outcomes. I possessed no theory which would explain why pupils appeared so receptive to the material, nor whether the whole process could be integrated into any sort of learning theory. In short, I had no preconceived ideas as to what might be going on in the lessons and, indeed, when analysis of the data began, I encountered ideas hitherto outside anything I might have contemplated previously. At the outset, therefore, it was necessary to allow for the possibility that nothing at all was being 'taught' or 'learnt' in these lessons which could not be gained from any other topic in History, Citizenship or Religious Studies. This research might, in effect, have significant personal consequences and it was vital that I remained open to that possibility.

What I did possess, unquestionably, was knowledge both of the objectives and claims relating to the subject, and issues of good practice. I had also experienced for myself the engagement of pupils with the topic, the discussion of difficult issues which the material encouraged and the response of pupils to the barest of facts. The desire to find the trail which united all these elements or, at least, made some attempt to account for their presence, was the intention of the research.

In addressing the question of 'why teach the Holocaust?' Haynes (2004) suggests two reasons:

Scholars of the Holocaust need to acknowledge that we are teachers; that we teach the Holocaust because we care about the future of humankind; that we have a role to play in training tomorrow's leaders; and that we are

drawn to the Holocaust and Holocaust Education, in part, because of personal concerns. (p 120)

The first of Haynes' reasons is altruistic – the desire to make a qualitative difference to the future of humanity. As the pilot study had highlighted, this is a difficult area to quantify. His second comment is vague but relevant - “because of personal concerns”. Sometimes Holocaust Educators, particularly at University level, are motivated by family involvement; they may be ‘second generation survivors’ or have experienced anti-Semitism at some level themselves. However, this was the case with none of the teachers in the study, nor with me. Furthermore, it has generally been my experience that the overwhelming majority of teachers in schools who choose to spend longer on the topic than the basic requirement, or who address it from other perspectives, do not fit into this category either.

The suggestion that “we care about the future of humankind” and see ourselves “training tomorrow’s leaders” sounds over-grand. However, there may be a desire to make a contribution to the shaping of society on one level and to promote what we might consider ‘healthy development’ of the individuals in our care on one level. This much is true of all teachers, not just those involved in teaching about the Holocaust. The narrative of the Holocaust and the attendant discussions presents an undeniably powerful text, and the use made of it in the classroom remained the focal point of the research. However, the possibility that this narrative was able to meet not so much its own particular objectives, but the objectives of education as a whole, was an interesting aspect.

However, while I positioned myself as subordinate in knowledge to those who were involved in the classroom on a daily basis, it became apparent that my own background and, I suspect in some cases, my more advanced years, caused some of the teachers to position themselves differently. On one occasion, after a lesson in which I had been observing a difficult class, I made the remark to Miss Hall that “I can see you have a good relationship with them”, to which Miss Hall stopped what she was doing and responded eagerly, “Oh, thank you. Yes, I feel I do. I’m so glad you can see that.” What had been for me a simple statement,

intended as a throwaway line, was for her a compliment. The presence of another in one's classroom alters the dynamic and can often cause anxiety, however mild, and irrespective of the relationship between pupils and teacher. As a researcher and with a declared interest in the subject material of the lesson, I had shifted the power dynamics. Although I did not locate myself in a position of power – in fact, quite the reverse - it was clear that Miss Hall located me there. Miss Hall valued her positive relationships with her pupils, and for her my recognition of her achievement appeared to provide validation.

There is a thin line between establishing a sense of trust for the purposes of the research and the development of a relationship which undermines the search for objectivity. Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) caution against interpreting data by means of emotions towards the interviewee; that is, positioning the interviewee in relation to one's own ideas and experience. There is a need to recognise one's own subjectivity in respect to the interpretation and analysis, a process which was especially important here, and a necessary step is to make oneself aware of subjective engagement with the situation or the interviewee. However, experience need not be a barrier to effective research. They also point out that the more experiences one has as an individual, the more "potential points of contact" there are between subject and researcher (2001, p107).

The positioning of myself in relation to the teachers was important not simply in terms of what was acknowledged consciously, but also, more significantly, unconsciously. As someone with considerable classroom experience, developed over a period of many years, but who was no longer involved in the intimate relationship with pupils, however difficult, which I was observing, it was important to consider whether I harboured any feelings of my own impotence. I considered the painful question as to whether this research was merely a means of positioning myself as "empowered" in a combination of areas – classroom pedagogy and Holocaust studies - in which I am, in effect, now marginal. The work of educationalists such as Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody were particularly helpful in addressing such issues, making clear that:

For the researcher actually to ‘hear’ what the interviewee is saying to her she needs to acknowledge her own fantasies. We hear what we expect to hear or feel comfortable with and screen out the rest. (2001, p 89)

One way in which this was addressed was through the gradual acquisition of an “academic identity” (Parry, Atkinson and Delamont, 1994, p 36); that is, the development of an approach which called upon the exploration of certain intellectual traditions which were totally new to me. By this means I was positioning myself as a novice embarking on a totally new professional field – a student myself rather than an experienced practitioner. The development of such an approach involved critical consideration of discussions such as those on psychoanalysis and film theory. Although I possessed a knowledge of both classroom practice and the theory of Holocaust studies, the ability to make sense of ‘what was happening’ during the lessons seemed to require other areas of knowledge. The probability was that neither classroom experience nor knowledge of HolEd would in themselves be sufficient to enable understanding of the process. In other words, although I spoke the language, I remained ignorant at the outset of the concepts being described. The desire to make sense of this made the acknowledgement of a starting place from ignorance much easier to adopt. The importance of a reflexive approach to my own pedagogy, however painful (Boler, 1999, Moore 2004), remained a vital part of the analytic process.

### 3.5 ANALYSING THE DATA

As in the pilot study, interviews were audio taped and transcribed. After some consideration, Silverman’s (2001) transcription symbols, used in the pilot study, were omitted at this stage. Primarily this was because perceived gains, in terms of a more comprehensive record of how the interviewees spoke, did not balance out against the amount of data involved and the hindrance to the fluidity of reading.

The nature of the data itself seemed to suggest the selection of an inductive or generative approach to analysis, whereby categories of similar data can be identified and examined, and the theory developed. In analysing the data, the process of 'coding' was employed; that is, significant elements of data were identified and categorized (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). With this method a certain amount of flexibility was required in order for the categories to be determined by the data itself, rather than by any expectations of the researcher.

There are, of course, problems inherent in analysing such data by this method, the most obvious being the danger of limiting analysis by expecting it to conform to a rigid grid (Silverman 2001, p 123). As part of the attempt to minimise such danger, it was important to take more time examining the passages which did not fit into the coding pattern and simply to consider what might be said about them. Therefore, a process of microanalysis was employed first (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) whereby each small segment of data in terms of words and phrases, including hesitations and verbal uncertainties, was considered independently (p 59). This process involved a detailed interrogation of each section, considering possible interpretations of each phrase and deciding on a label or labels which would help identify content. At the end of this, it was possible to identify a range of 'codes' whereby each segment of data could be sorted into one or more categories. An example of this process is provided in Appendix 2.

### *Conceptual names*

Initial analysis was made by means of identifying and codifying elements within the verbal responses. The groups of phrases thought significant – the 'conceptual names' – included categories such as 'emotional reactions' or 'confusion'. These were then described in more detail so that, for example, 'emotional reactions' might be further identified as 'to be avoided'. Other 'conceptual names' included general statements such as 'teacher interest [specifically in this topic]', 'length of course', 'racism' and 'not too graphic', with the latter referring to both the nature of the material used and the stated approach of the teacher. A further range indicated responses or comments:

‘pupil interest: evidence’, ‘pupil interest: reasons’ ‘shock: desirability [of]’, ‘complexity/ambiguity’ and ‘no answers’ (the latter relating to the interviewee’s approach to issues of the Holocaust, rather than a lack of any response on her part). Some conceptual names related specifically to either pupils or teachers, but others, such as ‘emotional reactions’ were common to both.

This process identified a number of factors. One of these was that of familiarity or similarity, whereby those interviewed included words or phrases also used either by other respondents or by Holocaust education literature – such as ‘never again’ or ‘combating racism’. Other conceptual names were used to identify expressions of emotion, which were further analysed as evaluations or qualifications of the emotional experience appeared. This process of conceptualisation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) included instances where pupils linked the emotional experience to a particular event, such as a teacher’s reaction, or where the teachers commented on the desirability or value of observable emotional responses.

### ***Second and third level coding***

It became clear that there were a considerable number of expressions of doubts or confusion engendered by or in connection with the lessons. These were consequently also identified and further coded, as were attempts to ‘make sense’ of the horrific events. An initial interest in ‘what the lessons might achieve’ required that any statements or clues about future behaviour or changes in attitude be carefully included in the categorization. Some of these codes were obvious, such as the mention of a specific subject, while others were based on evaluation and were added at a second analysis, such as ‘good relationship’.

A process of colour coding was employed next, using specific computer colour charts, whereby, code by code, segments which appeared to deal with similar issues were highlighted in turn. This effectively identified ‘families of data’ and made it easier to collect together those examples which related to similar aspects. This procedure in turn enabled the selection of examples from each colour for more detailed or written analysis. In the chapters which follow in this

thesis, each 'family of data' provides a section which is addressed, and examples used are taken from each collection.

### *Issues Identified*

These 'families of data' included a number of responses identified which occurred with interesting frequency. These included the expected rationales such as 'combating racism' and 'benefiting society' but also, more interestingly, as with the pilot study, comments relating to moral complexities and ambiguities, the issue of a 'lack of answers' and an inability to make any sense of the events. These issues had also been highlighted by the American teachers in the pilot study. An underlying thread was the positive nature of the classroom relationships between teachers and pupils, accompanied by evidence of pupil engagement with the lessons, which teachers expressed as being specific to this topic.

In the course of this analysis, it became apparent that the initial list of outcomes considered in the pilot - namely racism and prejudice, social and citizenship issues, the importance of individual action, moral development and school and local community benefits - remained pertinent but could not provide extensive statements about outcomes of Holocaust Education lessons. However, the way in which teachers and pupils spoke of the lessons, and their reflections on possible learning outcomes, opened up some new avenues of exploration based on the dynamics and experiences of this encounter. The responses of the interviewees indicated areas of personal reflection both in terms of pedagogy and pupil discourses of humanity and society. Such reflections further indicated less obvious outcomes, such as the way in which Holocaust Education might address aspects of desire and empowerment in the classroom. This suggested a path of engagement with the material to explore in Part III:

- i) the possibilities for Holocaust Education in terms of anti-racism education (discussed in chapter 6)
- ii) if or how the topic might relate to moral development and values education (to be considered in Chapter 7)

- iii) contributions to citizenship education (explored further in Chapter 8)
- iv) the nature of emotional or other engagement (together with v. below, this would be explored in chapter 9)
- v) relationships between teacher and pupil and further implications for pedagogy.

## 4 THE DISCOURSE (Ho)lEd) OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

### 4.1 A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before exploring the implications of the data which forms the body of the research for this thesis, it may be helpful to set out suppositions about the conceptual framework in which the majority of teachers in this study are operating. The National Curriculum requirement for Holocaust Education in England and Wales may be met by means of two one-hour lessons, which does not allow for any in-depth study. While some of the History teachers at the Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar School preferred to take no longer than was required, the other teachers in the study appeared convinced that this topic merited considerably more time and exploration. For them, Holocaust Education was a recognisable entity with its own recommendations of good practice, much-discussed resources and significant outcomes, even if they found these hard to articulate without resorting to clichés ("Make sure people don't forget", "- that one person can make a difference"). The approaches and attitudes of these teachers appeared to be central in determining the reception of the material by the pupils, although such a statement may indeed be true of most other topics encountered in the classroom (Kyriacou, 1991).

The discussion of a conceptual framework presupposes a 'social constructionist' approach, addressing issues of how and why an apparent consensus of opinion around the topic – in this case, Holocaust Education - has been constructed. There is no simple, agreed definition of social constructionism, but Burr (1995, p 3-5) suggests four basic tenets which, if present, help to define the approach:

- a. A critical stance towards 'knowledge' that is assumed to be empirical and correct
- b. An agreement that our understanding is historically and culturally specific
- c. The idea that knowledge is sustained by social processes
- d. An understanding that what society 'knows' affects how society acts (the example Burr gives is that of how views about the causes alcoholism

lead society to consider it either a crime or a sickness and act towards the alcoholic accordingly).

### *Constructions of meaning*

Ferdinand de Saussure (1983) pioneered the science of ‘semiotics’<sup>13</sup>, or ‘semiology’, in the early days of the last century. He made the distinction between ‘langue’ – the structural framework which enables the speaker to speak with meaning – and ‘parole’ - the use of the elements of the language themselves - believing this to be the key to understanding the use and manifestations of language in any given culture (Edgar and Sedgwick, 1999).

In semiotics, a ‘sign’ denotes that which represents something else and which therefore enables ‘meaning’ in language. A sign has two components – the ‘signifier’, which is the form taken by the sign, such as the written word, and the ‘signified’, or the abstract concept to which it relates. For example, the concept (signified) of ‘sky’ is expressed by means of the written word itself (signifier).

The use of signs is, according to Saussure, governed by a code which determines their use, although over time, meanings of signifiers can change and re-attach themselves to other signifieds. Thus, the context in which words are used may alter. The word ‘holocaust’ is itself an example of this; originally referring to real conflagration, it has developed both a symbolic or general meaning of fiery destruction and, when written with a capital letter, is associated widely with the specific events of the Nazi era. By this means, not only is language constructed, but also, effectively, the signs themselves are constructs.

For Saussure, language comprises units or signs which unite sounds and concepts to enable understanding. Barthes (1972) expands this concept by looking at the cultural associations of different sounds. He describes this process in terms of ‘cultural mythologies’, by which an entire association of meaning is

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<sup>13</sup> The term ‘semiotics’ was coined by Locke in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but it is more generally used than Saussure’s term ‘semiology’.

inherent in a concept denoted by a given word and can be implicitly understood by those familiar with that culture. For Barthes, a sign has both denotation and connotation functions. For example, a photograph of two adults and some children may denote a 'family'. The connotations of the family will depend on how the viewer 'reads' the photograph: a sunny day and a brightly lit photograph, and perhaps the arrangement of the family may invoke pleasant aspects of family life. A 'cultural mythology' will build upon these denotations and connotations so that the viewer sees in the photograph a reinforcement of values and ideas about the abstract concept of family (Edgar and Sedgewick, 1999). In similar ways, the use of the word 'Auschwitz' in western culture also provokes associated connotations, although Barthes generally uses more prosaic words to make his point.

The use of a given signifier not only derives from a shared culture but also serves to reinforce it. Following this theme, structuralist theorists have argued that rather than linguistic systems being tools for use in communicating shared experiences, the subject or 'signified' is *constructed* by the 'signifiers'. Complex concepts, therefore, may be seen as arising from the ordering and structuring of individual linguistic components - the signifiers of Saussure.

These signifiers can be pinned down by what Lacan (1977) describes as 'les points de capiton', (p 154) literally 'upholstery buttons'. Žižek (1989) refers to these 'points de capiton' as 'quilting points' (p xii) and describes the way in which signifiers "float", without location and meaning until they are pinned down and processed into an ideological quilt. The example he gives is 'Communism' (p 87/88), whereby signifiers such as 'democracy', 'feminism' and 'class struggle' become pinned down in relation to each other into a 'quilt' of specific meaning.

Language is seen here as the process whereby meaning is constructed, as a result of experiences and discussions, rather than merely described. Writing in the context of social constructionist theory, Gergen (1999) describes meanings as being constructed by relationships (1999, 48); there cannot be said to be an objectivity of meaning, since all knowledge is socially and historically specific.

Our own identity, even our notion of 'self', is constructed through language and, therefore, cannot be said to have an intrinsic meaning outside of its own discourse, its system of construction. Gergen points out that, in this case, relationships are vital to the process of self-definition. In fact, he suggests, identity may be redefined by amending Descartes' dictum ('*Cogito, ergo sum*') to '*Communicamus, ergo sum*' – 'We relate, therefore I am' (1999, 221).

In the context of language as a means of constructing as well as defining meaning, it is useful here to consider the Foucauldian concept of 'discourse' (Foucault, 1992, p 49). The word discourse has many different meanings; Foucault's conception centres around the construction of meaning. Edgar and Sedgwick (1999) define discourse in this context as :

the way in which linguistic elements are conjoined so as to constitute a structure of meaning larger than the sum of its parts. [A discourse] is a means of both producing and organising meaning within a social context.  
(p 117)

If we take, for example, the concept of 'law', the discourse surrounding it not only describes the practical function, but also imbues it with its own characteristics, language, importance and mythology. A discourse in the Foucauldian sense, thus determines and delineates a social practice, it is sustained by its own language, fortified by its own 'knowledge' and reinforced by the discursive community within which it operates. The function of a discourse is, essentially, to conceal its own construction.

The organisation of sets of statements into a 'discourse' not only enables a social group to talk about a subject, but also serves to define and delimit the parameters of attitude and behaviour shared by the group (see also Moore, 2004, p 28 and Parker, 1992, p5). By means of such discourse, argues Kress, society not only speaks about the process of education, for example, but also constitutes it linguistically (1989, 5). Discourses deal not only with immediate concerns of an institution or group but, as they engage with other related areas, incorporate

these into a wider discourse. The process is not rigid, but fluid, developing and changing continuously. Kress describes the 'layers of discourse' (p 11) which build up over the years as a result of different experiences and social factors.

The process by which such discourses develop involves constant interaction and the resolution of tensions, as the experience and location of one voice conflicts with another. It is the presence of such tensions and necessary resolutions which enables the dynamism of the discourse which can therefore be seen as:

No longer a pre-given unity awaiting critical reconstitution, but one site of the potentially infinite and unstable processes of signification. (Eaton and Neale, 1981, p xi)

#### 4.2 THE DISCOURSE: 'HOL/ED'

The use of capital letters for the term 'Holocaust Education' suggests implicitly a theoretical framework which encompasses aims and objectives as well as defining what constitutes good classroom practice. It might be further suggested that the term indicates a system of value judgements and normative statements which those engaged with teaching the subject come to acknowledge. It is indeed possible to see Holocaust Education in terms of a discourse, whereby the processes and rationales of teaching pupils about and through the text of genocide are not simply described by the term but, in effect, constituted by it (also Edgar and Sedgwick, 1999, Kress, 1989). In Foucault's concept of discourse, the object itself does not exist outside of the discourse, nor does it prefigure the discourse. The *discourse* of Holocaust Education (not the *practice* itself) will be designated in this context as 'HolEd'.

It is important to make clear at this point that while ways of presenting the Holocaust in the classroom may be described as constructions, this is not to imply that the events themselves are not objective fact. Potter (1996) uses the metaphors of a mirror and a construction site (p 97f) in his discussion of discourses. The mirror represents reality, wherein human activity is simply

reflected. The construction site, on the other hand, provides innumerable possibilities for originality:

[‘Discourse’] emphasizes that descriptions are human practices, and that descriptions could have been otherwise. There is nothing much that can be done about the reflection in a mirror; you can clean the mirror, make sure it is flat and smooth, but that relates only to its ability to receive an image passively. (Potter, op cit, p.98)

It may be helpful to view the text of the Holocaust in terms of the mirror; the events happened and are recorded as historical fact. People gave orders and people died. Not only is this one of the central pillars of the discourse, but to consider this otherwise is ‘Holocaust denial’. A crime in some European countries, Holocaust denial is a real symptom of racism and antisemitism (Lipstadt, 1994), the existence of which, paradoxically, provides one of the major rationales for the importance of Holocaust Education. The affirmation of the historicity of the events of the Holocaust at the same time embodies the ideology which the discourse serves to promote – that is that racism must be acknowledged and fought. However, the objectivity of the events of this and other genocides must be viewed separately from the discourse of HolEd, which involves rituals and ideologies of its own. This is the creative ‘building site’ which is ordered and constructed. It is important to stress at this point the separation between the ‘mirror’ of the Holocaust events and the ‘construction site’ of HolEd.

Identifying and describing the nature of the discourse of HolEd as essentially a construct brings with it a number of inherent difficulties. One of these, and perhaps the most important, is the assumption that there is no underlying reality to the discourse; the lessons may be useful in terms of meeting History curriculum general objectives, but can do little in terms of combating racism or developing skills of citizenship. This is of significance in the field of pedagogy because it may imply that the discourse informs the actions of the teacher in the classroom, but is also self-perpetuating.

A relativist position might hold that there is no objective reality at all, but that all the concepts we use are constructs, given meaning through language, which essentially describes what is not real. Parker (1992), however, differentiates between the ontological objects which can never be truly 'known' and those in the epistemological realm, which can be described by discourse. A third category comprises those in the moral/political realm, which have no ontological status but which can be 'given' a reality through discourse. An example he gives is 'schizophrenia', which has epistemological status as an object, is dependent on something called 'chromosome 5', which is ontological, and is described within a psychiatric, medical approach, in the moral/political realm (p 31). That these relationships exist in a rather messy form in terms of the HolEd discourse is possible; the discourse (epistemological) deals with both historical events (ontological) and observable classroom practice (moral/political), albeit held within a discursive framework which gives it objectives and meaning.

Rather than talk of a single 'discourse of HolEd', it might be more correct, if more confusing, to talk about 'discourses of HolEd'. While each group of educators operating in different contexts and countries and at different educational levels may tend to develop its own discourse, it is possible to identify an over-riding consensus of opinion on many of the aspects which constitute the main discourse of HolEd. This is especially the case following the setting up of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research which aims to ensure good standards through international co-operation. With respect to British school teachers who are 'dedicated' to Holocaust Education, their discourse will derive from a number of local factors, but it seems likely that a major source will be academic discussions, elements of which filter down through practical manuals and continuing professional development. One example of this may be found in the issues of moral complexity raised by the pupils and, as will be discussed later in this thesis, the view of the teachers that an appreciation of the complexity of motivation is one of the goals of Holocaust Education. Totten, (2002) for example, advises teachers to "avoid simplifying complex situations":

Students need to learn that there were varied and complex reasons as to why people acted the way they did during the Holocaust years. The ways in which they acted depended on a complex set of circumstances. *[No] situation was black and white.* (Totten's italics; p 99/100)

The HolEd discourse has developed in the last twenty or thirty years or so as the result of a social process, with specialists and teachers speaking and writing on an international basis, often with reference to each other. Cesarani, a noted Holocaust historian, sets out in his argument for the educative role of a national Holocaust Memorial Day:

Any commemoration and education about the Holocaust that aspires to best practice will encompass a vast spectrum of issues including genocide. It will include the ways that racist and intolerant politicians will seek power in democratic societies and then subvert the pluralism they benefit from. It will explore everyday racism as well as its institutionalised forms and the ways in which people become habituated to discrimination and exclusion. Good teachers look at Jewish responses to persecution and the experience of refugees cast on an unwelcoming world, and the refugee policies that blighted their chances of survival. A sound lesson will embrace issues of personal responsibility in normal as well as abnormal times, asking students whether they would intervene if they witnessed a racial [incident]. Good pedagogy also directs the pupils to look at other victims of racial policy and intolerance in the Third Reich, including the mentally and physically disabled, Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, Black Germans and certain church groups. (2001, p 53/4)

There are a number of interesting points arising from Cesarani's outline. The first concerns his enumeration of the concerns of what we might identify as the HolEd discourse, referring to 'genocide', 'racism and intolerance', 'discrimination and exclusion', 'politicians', 'democracy', 'refugee', and 'personal responsibility', which in themselves are also discourses drawn together within this new discursive framework, and which are invoked as rationales for the promotion of Holocaust Education. These may also be seen as

the *points de capiton* of the 'quilt' of the HoEd discourse. By implication, Cesarani makes it clear that the central focus of Holocaust study is the Jewish experience, but that other victims of Nazism should also be included. Further on in the article, Cesarani also points out that he is not writing merely from an academic historical perspective, but because such teaching, alongside commemoration, is one of "the building blocks of prevention" (p 54).

Nothing that Cesarani has written would be unfamiliar to those in the discursive community. Although there are individual differences over the weight given to non-Jewish groups – in particular, gays and Jehovah's Witnesses – Cesarani's approach represents current thinking, developed as a result of policy making, teaching and writing on the subject in different contexts and on different levels. As with all discourses, some voices may well have been marginalised, while others have become more prominent. In addition, certain characteristics of the discourse have been included or reinforced while others have been gradually rejected. Kress (1989) uses the metaphor of an occupying power, "[colonising] the social world imperialistically" (p 7). This metaphor provides an illustration of how a discourse selects and appropriates those elements which enable it to grow, develop and function.

With respect to the classroom, it is interesting to note how Cesarani writes about 'good teachers' and 'sound lessons', in Holocaust Education and he assumes that what he describes is acknowledged as 'best practice'. As Moore (2004) points out, it is in the nature of discourses that they should be seen as "having 'arisen' as some kind of natural process, representing shared, common-sense wisdom" (p 28). This is illustrated by the way in which teachers are advised about what is 'acceptable' and what is not, and how decisions on these matters are made. For example, Wieser (2001) provides a chapter on "instructional issues and strategies" in Totten and Feinberg's handbook *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*, a volume which combines both the practical and the theoretical, and constitutes part of the canon of American and, to a large extent, British approaches to teaching the subject. In setting out his aims, Wieser enumerates the issues his chapter will tackle, including the role of history in multi-disciplinary contexts, the use of literature, the involvement of parents and

the occasional need to “sell” the topic to some communities. He then discusses his approach to resources; he does not wish to criticize materials that teachers have found helpful, since there is more than one method to teach a lesson. However, he does offer some guidelines, since:

there is now a large enough body of knowledge concerning Holocaust education that we can speak of methods and materials that are recognized as ‘sound’ and ‘powerful’. Educators in the field should be aware of these. (p 63)

Wieser’s guidelines are indeed based on principles which are fully in line with accepted norms of good practice and social values - that is, to be concerned about addressing issues of racism, sparing children from traumatic material and so on. The point of interest here, however, is that Wieser, as with Cesarani, acknowledges a set of approaches which are “sound”, deriving from the “large enough body of knowledge”, and which, when utilized, constitute ‘good practice’.

In Cesarani’s argument, it is also interesting to note his use of the word “good” in conjunction with teachers and pedagogy, to denote, one presumes, competence in delivering fully the aims and objectives of the subject. As Walkerdine (1990), Moore (2004) and others have pointed out, there may be no consensus on what makes a ‘good’ teacher or constitutes ‘good’ pedagogy. However, the particular skills and attributes valued in the discourse of HoLEd and to which a ‘good’ Holocaust teacher must aspire include a sound understanding of the historical context, irrespective of the teacher’s own subject discipline (Gallant and Hartman, 2001, Totten, 2002), an understanding of the needs and abilities of her pupils, an avoidance of anything which minimizes the experience (Wieser, 2001), the ability to make good use of personal source material such as diaries and poetry (Davies, 2000, Roth, 2001) and to relate the lessons to the pupils’ own experiences (Supple, 1998), together with a clear idea of the aims and objectives of the lessons. Alongside this, the ‘good’ teacher will be creative and thoroughly committed to the topic (Wieser, 2001).

Discussion and evaluation based on sound and accurate historical knowledge is an important feature in the discourse of HolEd (Gallant and Hartman, 2001, Totten, 2002). For the moral complexity of the Holocaust to be fully appreciated, exposure to many different voices and perspectives within the text is necessary. The greater the knowledge of historical detail, the more opportunity there is to engage in evaluative and re-evaluative thought. This is why schools and departments which choose to spend longer on the topic than the statutory requirement, like the East Thames Boys' School, or who embrace wide-ranging possibilities and rationales, offer a qualitatively different experience of 'Holocaust Education'. This also underlines what many teachers might describe as the "frustration with the textbooks which cover the Holocaust in half a page accompanied by a photograph of corpses" (Supple, 1993, p xiii).

Ability to identify with the victims as real people is an important part of the discourse of HolEd (Schweber, 2004), both to encourage acknowledgement of the events as historically real and to enable pupils to internalize any Lesson To Be Learnt. The fact that these events occurred within Europe, that they involved so many people in an age of growing mass communication, that the world stood by and that there were extensive bureaucratic procedures involved at every stage are all emphasized in HolEd in order both to encourage vigilance and to make it clear that this was an extreme example – but still an *example*.

It is not within the purpose of this thesis to consider in any real depth the process of development and the precise nature of the discourse of HolEd, although there is scope for further consideration. However, the traumatic nature of the events, the experiences, perceptions and concerns of those who lived through them, the threats of competing and hostile ideologies and the socio-political pre-occupations of the late twentieth century have all combined in the construction of the discourse. Gergen (1999) describes this general process:

Meanings are born of co-ordinations among persons – agreements, negotiations, affirmations. From this standpoint, relationships stand prior to all that is intelligible. (p.48)

The ways in which the Holocaust has been discussed, the language used and the variety of approaches and experiences involved, have laid the foundations for the construction of an unusual discourse in terms of Holocaust Education. The discourse of HolEd is essentially an international one. Following the conference at senior level held in Sweden in 1998, the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research was set up, which enables best practice internationally on education, as well as issues of commemoration. Commissions of various member countries meet regularly to share and inform, although different nation states will naturally develop their own variations depending on national discourses (Dror, 2001). Such variations depend on a number of factors, not least the values of the national discourse which it is hoped HolEd will reinforce. Thus the American HolEd discourse will tend to include a focus on issues of 'democracy' and 'liberation' (Schweber, 2004), while the UK approach uses the language of diversity (Levi, 2003). Essentially, these are variations in the 'points de capiton' which construct the quilt of meaning.

The community of Holocaust scholars tends to promote education actively at both school and university level (Totten, Bartrop, and Jacobs, 2004); the idea that there are 'lessons to be learnt' may itself provide a rationale, or even an excuse, for studying the horrific events. By 'excuse', I mean the desire of those with a personal interest, such as family involvement, to explore and even wrestle with the topic (op cit). The terrible events of the Holocaust are within living memory and have affected the lives of many more born since, whether through family narratives, absence of a grandparent generation or living with parents who have undergone trauma. For those of Jewish origin, modern manifestations of antisemitism can also affect the decision to study or promote HolEd. For teachers of HolEd, this provides a challenge in terms of reflexivity.

In a particularly moving description of this, Zev Garber (2004), a noted international scholar and teacher, writes of his Orthodox Jewish upbringing in the Bronx, his discovery of the Christian roots of anti-Judaism and his initiation into the idealism of early Zionism. The fact that these events permeates every aspect of his academic interest and personal identity is made forcefully plain. As

a religious man, he wrestles with the unanswerable questions and the discourse of eternity, describing his pedagogical approach as “passionate objectivity” (p 76). In setting out his rationale for teaching the subject, Garber writes:

Six million Jewish men and women, one and a half million children among them, were taken to die in gas and fire; their very ashes spewed from the chimneys of Auschwitz and other camps to mingle with the soft breezes of the air and spread, nameless and graveless, over a continent that had itself become a graveyard. Consequently, men and women of integrity, intelligence, wisdom, and moral will can penetrate the satanic edifice, then (in our accurate understanding of the past), now and in the future. Respect, tolerance, and responsibility can depreciate the dreadful fear that one can get away with it. In this era of strife and suspicion, let the healing voices proclaim that humankind is improvable. (2004, p 76)

It is interesting to consider the relationship between Garber and the discourse of HolEd. Although he uses and contributes to the discourse, his commitment is more than that. Informing Garber’s objectives in his teaching – respect, tolerance and responsibility – is the painful reality of the events. Indeed, Garber’s own identity is embedded within the discourse of HolEd; it is his motivation and his method of coming to terms with what happened to those with whom, being Jewish, he identifies personally. Such a personal motivation is quite common among those whose writings and discussions have contributed substantially to the construction of the discourse, although it should be made clear that not one of the teachers interviewed in this study was aware of any personal link to the events or was herself Jewish. In receiving the personal narratives of some Holocaust educators, we understand them as individuals by ‘reading’ the texts of the social meanings which surround them, and by analysing these to identify the discourses which construct each person. If the narrative of the Holocaust has the potential to connect at the level of the unconscious, as it surely must at least now and again, the personal ‘chords’ which are struck in teachers and pupils can neither be predicted nor, in the classroom at least, fully explored.

This raises a number of difficult issues, not least those arising from the extent to which the experience of selfhood is also constructed by discourse. In poststructuralist thought, how we see ourselves derives from discourses of gender, class, social structure, sibling positioning, ethnic identity and so on. In the case of teachers, there are professional discourses to be considered (Moore, 2004). In addressing this issue, Burr (1995) raises the possibility of the subject as able to exercise an amount of choice in terms of discourses which she may use, even “critically analysing” them in some circumstances (p 90). In this sense, the person may be seen as a discourse-user, arguing and selecting discourses which describe not only her thoughts and approaches, but also feelings, actions and desires. Furthermore, there are important relationships to be explored between psychology and the narratives of selfhood which we construct for ourselves.

### *A discourse of sensitivity*

Confrontation with the narrative of the Holocaust can be traumatic in any situation – a film, a visit to Auschwitz, an encounter with a survivor – but in terms of classroom lessons, what the teacher *believes* to be true about the lessons and, therefore, how she presents them, will almost certainly affect the nature of the experience. The discursive framework within which she places the topic in an educational sense is central to this.

Every discourse is inevitably selective (Robertson, 1997). For example, the discourse of HolEd warns against the dehumanising reduction of individuals to numbers and promotes the use of individual stories. The retention of the dignity and identity of the victims is an imperative (Bloxham and Kushner, 2005). Nazi iconography, including pictures of impressive-looking young men in smart uniforms, is acknowledged as a potential pitfall to be used with care, and then only usually to illustrate the attraction of Hitler for ordinary Germans, rather than during the carrying out of the Final Solution (Doneson, 2001). Another example is the emphasis placed on the personalization of the facts (Totten 2002, Totten and Feinberg, 2001) so that even where numbers or dates need to be

presented and learnt, there are associated biographies and narratives which the teachers are encouraged to access and utilize.

This selective aspect is the *repressive* function of the discourse, as described by Edgar and Sedgwick (1999):

A key function of discursive formation, on this view, is not merely its inclusive role but also its exclusive role: discursive formations provide rules of justification for what counts as (for example) knowledge within a particular context, and at the same time stipulate what does *not* count as knowledge in that context. (p 117. Also Kress, 1989)

The use of the word 'repressive' should not be considered as having negative value. The limits of the discourse not only exclude those elements which are seen as being in opposition to or not concerned with it, but also reinforce those elements which serve and feed the purpose and nature of the discourse. Aspects of education which have value elsewhere, such as, for example, the stimulus to creative work - 'imagine you are....' - are taboo in the context of Holocaust Education. Inviting pupils supposedly to 're-enact' in the safe atmosphere of a classroom the desperate and debilitating plight of people in extreme circumstances is not 'good practice' (Totten, Feinberg and Fernekes, 2001, 13); it encourages pupils to believe that they can conjure up something of such circumstances through the power of imagination. This is not to say that there is no room for drama, but it must be about the pupil engaging with the 'mirror' of the material, and not redefining it through her own performance (Zatzman, 2001, 263).

As with all discourses, that of HolEd can change and develop. For example, in recent years the role of 'bystanders' has begun to be taught less as a position which pupils should avoid in their own lives and more in terms of the difficulties of making moral decisions. The socio-educational climate in which the discourse

of HolEd developed may also be relevant<sup>14</sup>. Arguably, current moral approaches may be less about absolutes and more about making one's way through a 'moral maze', for example, or society may favour a less 'interventionist' approach in general.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the development of the discourse of HolEd may indeed follow academic debates in Holocaust studies. An example of this is the way in which the discourse of HolEd has dealt with 'victimhood'. Repetition of the idea that the victims of the Nazis went meekly 'like lambs to the slaughter' led to the growth of interest in contrasting 'resistance stories' (Bloxham and Kushner, 2005). In the classroom, the Warsaw ghetto 'uprising' and other examples of Jewish resistance then found their way into school textbooks (Clements et al, 2000)<sup>15</sup>.

These developments in the practice of Holocaust Education are the outward manifestations of the tensions and resolutions taking place within the discourse. Kress describes these manifestations as 'texts' (1989, 12) and emphasizes once again the social nature of the process:

No text is ever the text of a single speaker or writer. All texts show the traces of differing discourses, contending and struggling for dominance. Texts are therefore the sites of struggle, always, and in being the sites of struggle, texts are the sites of linguistic and cultural change. Individuals, as social agents and constructed in discourse, are the bearers and agents of that struggle. (1989, p 32).

The 'author's' task is specifically to make sense of these differences in the construction of the text. The role of the teacher, as the author, is to introduce the pupil to the total experience which is involved in 'reading the text' of the lessons of the Holocaust. The discourse of HolEd includes statements and rationales

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<sup>14</sup> Potter (1996, p 18) considers Merton's theory that the birth of modern science was enabled by the analytical Puritan values of the seventeenth century, although this is still disputed.

<sup>15</sup> By contrast, the partisan movement is less well-covered in classroom material. It is interesting to consider whether this may be because of its echoes of Zionist idealism (Garber, 2004, Supple 1993 p 200n, also Dror, 2001).

which have been discussed earlier in this thesis. The teacher utilises a variety of these in creating the text, in which they struggle together to form a unique blend, reconciling the differences and discrepancies between rationales and interactions. This results in a text or experience which provides, for both pupil and teacher, the objective reality of Holocaust Education. By this process, the teacher not only utilises the discourse but also contributes to it. The ensuing text may be seen as constituting the objective reality to which the constructed language, in this case of Holocaust Education, is linked.

Bourdieu's (1991) theory of practice may provide a useful tool for considering this. Bourdieu uses the term 'habitus' to refer to dispositions, which are gradually acquired through training processes from childhood (for example, table manners), and which derive from such factors as one's socio-economic surroundings (1991, 13). He also discusses how perceptions and practices both reinforce and are in turn reinforced by the habitus. In terms of the political habitus, rather than the religious or scientific for example, Bourdieu describes the 'training' of the politician, who must enter into the process of:

[the acquisition of] the corpus of specific kinds of knowledge (theories, problematics, concepts, historical traditions, economic data, etc.) produced and accumulated by the political work of the professionals of the present or the past. (p 176)

While a framework of aims and goals may be implicit within one's practice, no single action is the result of a specific and conscious decision (p 16). The individual acts in accordance with the way in which the habitus interacts with the circumstance – that is, the 'field' or 'market'. Bourdieu continues:

This means that, to gain a complete understanding of the political discourses that are on offer in the market at a given moment and which, when considered together, define the universe of what can be said and thought politically, as opposed to what is rejected as unsayable and unthinkable, we would have to analyse the entire process of production of the professionals of ideological production, starting with the way they are

marked out, according to the frequently implicit definition of the desired competence, which designates them for these functions, then considering the general or specific education which prepares them for these functions, and finally examining the action of continuous normalization imposed on them, with their own complicity, by the older members of their group. (p 176)

In terms of the discourse of HolEd, this would imply the impossibility of any attempt to isolate independent features, since everything is related to and derived from another discourse. Therefore, a teacher who embarks on an extended course in this topic will do so as a result of a number of factors, to do with her own approaches to pedagogy, her views of humanity and society, as well as what moves and shocks her personally. Similarly, the pupil will respond to those aspects which resonate with her own set of values and sense of identity among other things. This would also be true for the Holocaust Educator working within and contributing to the discourse itself. It reinforces the view that nothing can be claimed for the lessons, in terms of moral and social development, in isolation from the entire experience of both teacher and pupil, both inside and outside the school classroom. This is not to say, however, that the lessons do not serve to highlight, to reinforce, to reposition existing values and, indeed, to challenge others. Rather, it suggests that Holocaust Education can be a major catalyst in this process.

#### 4.3 READING AND POSITIONING

While the subject matter of the text is factual, its presentation to the pupil involves language which is both descriptive and subjective. The social space, in which the learning experience occurs, is located in history and place which differ from lesson to lesson and from pupil to pupil. Each lesson in Holocaust Education is, therefore a unique and creative performance, the experience of which, let alone any possible benefit, cannot be predicted.

While lecturers, teachers and educationalists need to consider issues of reflexivity in the analysis of the discourse, they must also recognise that the experience of the pupil is of equal importance (Burr 1995). Kress (1989) argues that the meaning of the text is not objective, but is determined by the discourse, without reference to the writer. (In the discourse of HolEd, the text is the *experience* of the educative process itself. The pupil ‘reads’ not just the narrative with which she is presented but also the teacher’s words and actions within the discourses, both inside and outside the classroom, to which the pupil is subject.) Moreover, the response of the reader contributes to the construction of meaning. Kress makes the distinction between a ‘reading position’, which suggests how the individual should read the text, and the ‘subject position’, which suggests modes of behaviour and attitude compatible with a given discourse. The roles of both writer and reader are largely defined by the forms of the discourse itself, and both contribute to the process.

This is particularly demonstrable in the area of gender discourse. Davies (1994) recounts the story of a student who approached her in great distress, apologising for her inability to meet deadlines. Events in her relationships with her fiancé and her daughter had overwhelmed her. Davies suggested that the student examine how she was positioned in the different discourses – as student, as fiancée and as mother:

I suggested that if she could locate which discourse was being used and how it constituted her in each of the contexts in which she was caught up, she could stop torturing herself about the fact that she could not find a consistent moral position from which to act. (p 27)

This example makes the point that even a brief analysis of the discourses involved and where she may be positioned within them will enable the student to take a broad, critical and more objective view<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> In this context, it is interesting to consider how pupils in Holocaust Education may position themselves in relation to the text, such as victim or bystander, and this may be dependent on their own sense of identity and the element of the narrative with which they are engaging.

### *Modes of Address*

Every discourse ‘addresses’ or assumes an identity for the subject, which the subject can accept or attempt to reject. Holocaust Education enables pupils to position themselves as subjects within unaccustomed discourses of empowerment, and teachers as significant and effective educators. Ellsworth (1997), writing in the context of film studies in relation to pedagogy, points out that the aim of a film is to meet the viewer as closely as possible to where she has positioned herself:

There is a “position” within power relations and interests, within gender and racial constructions, within knowledge, to which the film’s story and visual pleasure is addressed. It’s from that “subject position” that the film’s assumptions about who the audience is work with the least effort, contradiction or slippage. (p 24)

Film theory also discusses the difference between how a film seeks to address its audience and how it may be received. Both films and the curriculum begin by making certain assumptions, consciously or unconsciously, about the other involved in the event; certainly the director needs to make certain assumptions about the audience. Hanet (1981) points out that the discourses in which the viewer imagines herself to be positioned will affect the way in which she responds to the film. Moreover, the director will need to draw on cultural references, outlooks and experiences which she must suppose the viewer to possess in order to create points of contact which she can exploit for the pleasure of the other:

The ‘extra-iconic’ context, or general framework of reference (ideological, cultural, aesthetic) of the viewer is of paramount importance to the film. Because images are not arbitrary signs, they bear some relation to the reality a film uses as its pro-filmic event, hence the influence of, and, in some cases, the real need for the cultural knowledge and experience of the spectator, plays an essential part in the reading of a film.( p 163)

The image the director has of the viewer determines the 'mode of address'; this involves calculated choices on the part of those making and presenting the film with respect to the 'ideal viewer'. Each film contains clues as to who this ideal viewer might be, through use of language, setting, socio-cultural references and so on. Once the mode of address has been determined, the director sets about deploying all the tools at her disposal in order to create the desired effects for the audience.

Ellsworth (1997) asks whether a teacher might make a difference to a pupil's sense of the world not by what she teaches but by how she 'addresses' the pupil, and sees the unpredictability of the experience as an opportunity for the development of new social identities for the pupils:

The fact that there are no exact fits between address and response has made it possible to see the address of a text as a powerful, yet paradoxical, event whose power comes from the difference between address and response. (p 37).

This 'difference' or space between the address and response may be seen as a 'social space', formed by the social discourses of teacher and pupil. However, any such difference is not in itself observable, since it involves, according to Ellsworth, the workings of the unconscious. Furthermore, while the mode of address itself is not something that a teacher can consciously control, the creative space or difference *can* be used as a powerful pedagogic resource. This is partly because it exists at the interface between conscious and unconscious knowledges and desires.

The risk of locating competing discourses is present in the cinema just as it is in the classroom. Film theorists have concluded that any mode of address is likely to miss its audiences in some way or other (Ellsworth, 1997). Possible subject positions of the audience, and the discourses utilized in making sense of a film, are often too variable to predict. Sometimes, this can result in "box-office failures".

No film, however ‘true to life’, fully reflects reality, as Ellsworth points out. The medium is a vehicle through which to engage with reality, in the same way as HolEd enables an engagement with the nature of humanity. This means that the mode of address becomes crucial to the method of presentation and the way in which the film is received. A director of a film about, for example, the American civil rights movement, will have an idea of the ‘ideal viewer’ and will set the mode of address accordingly. If the viewer is not located at that point, but has experiences or prejudices of her own, then the film will have a different reception; it will be a “miss” rather than a “hit”. When Ellsworth brings her own observations about film theory to the situation of the classroom, it is clear that teaching rarely starts from the location of the student, but begins with a body of knowledge or skills – including sometimes ‘moral skills’ – which, it has been determined, students should possess. Classroom experiences which allow possibilities for pupils to respond from wherever they are located are likely to be both creative and empowering. A narrative such as that provided by the Holocaust will inevitably present a range of possible positions in which the pupil may locate herself.

Drawing on Donald (1992) and O’Shea, Ellsworth (1997) explores the lack of fit between ‘outside’ space, such as the curriculum and ‘inside’ space, such as the pupil’s understanding. However, the education process typically requires that there be ‘fits’ between what the curriculum sets out to do and what the pupil can demonstrate as having understood. This is the point of having targets, objectives and measured outcomes with which education wrestles. Pupils themselves also expect there to be personal goals which need to be achieved. For example, when pupils at the East Thames Boys’ School are asked if Holocaust Education can have a positive effect, Mohammed A replies:

It depends on what kind of person you are. ‘Cos like if some people – might change their whole perspective, but others might need more – work, I think. [my emphasis]

Mohammed A appears to envisage an outcome of Holocaust Education; if the pupil does not demonstrate the required approaches and understandings, the

teacher must put in “more work”. However, Ellsworth asks us to consider the impossibility of determining how a pupil will actually and essentially respond to the curriculum. If modes of address are as important a factor in education as they are in, for example, the cinema, then it is probable that a pupil’s response to the curriculum will be just as messy and as unpredictable as that of the cinema audience. While filmmakers thrive on the mix of “desire, fear, horror, pleasure, power, anxiety, fantasy, and the unthinkable” (1997, p 46), teachers and curriculum designers usually work hard to minimize this unpredictability. Like Mohammed A, the education process assumes that if pupils fail to ‘get it’, this is because of some lack in terms of presentation or limitation or lack of virtue, and the problem may be addressed by further ‘work’. In the cinema, on the other hand, if a film fails to make its mark, a “miss” in the mode of address may just as often be considered to be the cause.

Ellsworth points out the significance of this in terms of pedagogy:

By presenting themselves as desiring only understanding, educational texts address students as if the texts were from no one, with no desire to place their readers in any position except that of neutral, benign, general, generic understanding. And understanding doesn’t really count as positioning of students sought through a particular *mode* of address because, supposedly, understanding is both neutral and universal. (1997, p 47)

The way in which a teacher speaks to pupils also suggests a view of the pupils which may or may not reflect the pupils’ own sense of identities. For example, when Miss Hall at the East Thames Boys’ School discusses the Nazi ‘Euthanasia’ programme with Set 5 (mostly comprising pupils with special needs), she addresses them in a way which reflects the pleasure she feels when with the group, and they in turn try hard to please her by giving the correct answers:

Miss Hall: Well, why did they do this? Why were they killing people and sterilizing them?

Pupil: Because they weren’t wanted in Germany under the Nazis.

Miss Hall: Good. Excellent. And also, like I said, they couldn't be useful so they were a drain, they were just being a drain on it. Also, why else - not just being worthy - but what did they think that mixed race people would do to the German blood?

Pupil: They corrupted it.

Miss Hall: Good. You are fantastic. Excellent work.

The possibility of any 'neutrality' in terms of a mode of address is further reduced by the pedagogic aims which the teacher will have for the subject. If she is operating from within the discourse of HolEd, there will be certain approaches, described by the discourse, which she will want her pupils to adopt. For example, it is not easy - and perhaps ultimately impossible - for a pupil to consider as 'a reality' the events faced by a victim of the Holocaust. To be walled within the ghetto, locked into the railway car or herded into the 'shower block', without any hope of escape and precious little expectation of survival is a situation at odds with the sense of immortality and the overwhelming desire for life which is present in most 14 year olds. With this in mind, Miss Mackie carefully sets up her class at the London Boys' School to consider this in relation to Jews who were shot in groups by the Einsatzgruppen:

Now, one of the things we need to talk about - [to] think about briefly why it is - because I think people are always surprised by this - why it is that Jewish people did not resist at these points when they were being rounded up. Now, what I don't want to get into - it's very easy to get into - is being judgemental about people who are in a situation that we can probably never hope to understand - that hopefully none of us will ever, ever experience. Okay? And what I don't want to do as I said is to get into a situation of 'they should have done this, they should have done that. Why didn't they x,y and z?' So - what I want you to think about - think about this quietly first before you put your hand up - is why do you think there wasn't active resistance on the part of Jewish people when they were taken into the forest? Because we watched this on the video last week and said, 'I would have done this, this and this'. Why do you think it was such a terrible situation that people couldn't do anything?

Miss Mackie pre-empted the response of the boys and takes considerable time to encourage them to “think about this quietly first”, not to rush to any conclusions. She warns against “being judgemental”, points out that one cannot comprehend what it would be like in such an extreme situation and concludes that they could not do anything at all. Rather than indicating that they feel coerced or manipulated, the boys respond with answers which suggest they have thought critically about this: “they wanted to get it over with”, “they was tired”, “they might have had a worse death”, “the Nazis didn’t [choose to film] resistance”. Miss Mackie supports each of these with a comment, factual reinforcement or example:

You hope against - I think there’s a real - there’s a survival instinct, I think, and you hope that if you co-operate, you do what you’re told, then surely they can’t be so unreasonable, surely humanity couldn’t do that to you.

Finally she concludes by reminding them of the eye witness who narrated the video clip – a little girl who was able to hide in a ditch, now an old woman.

What you’ve got to remember - she was absolutely exhausted - is that she was a child, she was on her own.

The class are silent. Miss Mackie has worked hard to counter the resistance the boys are likely to harbour. Crucially, the boys had already been provided with considerable information; they had seen video footage, listened to the testimony of both a perpetrator and a victim and had acquired considerable factual information about how the Nazis operated. Not until all this knowledge had been acquired did Miss Mackie encourage the pupils to ‘look at the events from a perspective’ other than their own.

Even so, the conclusions the pupils will draw are far from controllable; there are too many variables, not least in terms of positioning. This is despite the fact that the whole process of pedagogy is strictly regulated with the object of controlling

and assessing the 'success' of such modes of address. The teacher selects material, or uses pre-selected material in accordance with agreed aims and objectives (Wieser, 2001) but inevitably the complete experience of the lessons will contain elements which are unpredictable. However much she may consider the selection and presentation of material, the design of tasks or the influencing of group dynamics by factors such as arrangement of the room, agreement of ground rules or whatever, what the pupils bring to the lessons and how they each choose to react will be largely outside her control.

This point is illustrated by Miss Mackie in another lesson, where she discusses with her class how people were coerced into doing the most terrible things. For her, the issues are about vulnerability and the incomprehensible cruelty, and she is keen to prevent her pupils seeing the victims as willingly co-operating with their tormentors. She provides some examples of victims being asked to carry out degrading acts. One of these involves rabbis being coerced into spitting on the Torah. In the later interviews, however, some of the pupils bring this up. In particular, two pupils with a religious (Muslim) identity, discuss this:

Mohammad M: I thought that when the rabbis, the Jewish rabbis, had to spit on the Torah, which is a Jewish holy book, was just - to me - that shocked me.

Mohammad A: What shocked me about the rabbis spitting on the Torah is that they actually did it. I thought they might've just stood up for it and said - you know - they get shot and I thought that they might have thought they'd go to heaven or wherever they believe in. I thought that they might have had more power not to spit on their Torah.

Mohammad and Mohammad can appreciate the predicament in which the rabbis are placed. However, they are shocked less by the actions of the Nazis, which they have come to expect as cruel, as by what appears to them to be an abrogation of religious duty. As observant Muslims, they understand the notion of the utter sacredness of The Text; no fate in this life could excuse, in their opinion, such an act by a religious leader. Had Miss Mackie allowed for the possibility of this reaction, she might have introduced this as an ethical dilemma

whereby, as was probably the case, the threat was not so much to the rabbis themselves as to their community.

While the pupils' religious identities had been underestimated in this instance, other aspects of their identities are acknowledged as a major factor in the positive reception of the topic by the pupils as a whole. East Thames Boys' School has an extensive ethnic mix. When Miss Mackie and her colleagues discuss reasons for pupil engagement, Miss Hall suggests that the language of combating prejudice and racism which is part of the HoEd discourse resonates with them.

Miss Hall: I think that it's connecting it not only with their lives but with what's happening now in the world now as well. [All] of them are aware that there is a mix of types of people in the school; even the ones who aren't in the so-called minorities are more aware sometimes.

Miss Mackie: I think they are very sensitive to issues of race as well.

Miss Overton: Yeah, extremely.

Miss Mackie: And generally I don't think the school has – there aren't problems with races in terms of racial harassment or anything like that; the boys are very wary of it, I think.

Miss Hall: But they also want to discuss it rather more than we give them time for.

The narrative of the Holocaust connects with the dominant discourse of anti-racism, both within the school and, arguably within society as a whole, together with the need to be vigilant about issues of prejudice and discrimination. However, when a reader of a text does not position herself within the social space occupied by the participants in a given discourse, she will tend to reconstruct the text for herself within the parameters of a competing or contrasting discourse within which she is already positioned. Kress (1989) points out that such reconstruction may serve to subvert an ideological position, or to reinforce an existing ideological position. This presents a major risk, since it implies that the pupil who cannot position herself as the HoEd discourse suggests – as an engaged pupil ready to adopt the behaviours and practices

involved – may use the experience to reinforce her position in a discourse which is different from – or, worse, in opposition to – the discourse of HolEd (as Schendler, 2002, illustrates).

Short and Reed (2004) consider how learning about the vicious antisemitism of the Holocaust may lead some pupils to conclude that no suffering that great could be inflicted without the victims bearing some responsibility; in short, that the Jews somehow ‘brought it upon themselves’. The notion that the suffering of the Jews was an inevitable consequence of their ‘rejection of Christ’, or their condemnation as ‘Christ-killers,’ was surprisingly common among Christians in Nazi Germany. Anecdotal evidence suggests these views are still held today in parts of Eastern Europe<sup>17</sup> as well as, worryingly, among some Christian students in the United States (Schweber, 2004, Novick 2001). Nazi propaganda portrayed Jews as becoming rich at the expense of ‘ordinary Germans’ and maintaining treacherous links simultaneously with both Russia and the USA. Such prejudices were sufficiently ingrained to enable the mass murder to happen across Europe. Any pupil already disposed towards racism might decide that, in the face of such meaningless horror, adopting a similarly racist discourse offers a viable framework as a means to ‘make sense’ of the apparently senseless.

While the risk of such positioning may exist, this does not seem to be the response of most pupils and is not articulated by those in the study (although it must be acknowledged that the pupils were largely those either selected by the teacher or possibly desirous of giving a positive response to the interviewer). However, the point may be illustrated by the comments of Ibrahim, an undergraduate student from Gaza.

Ibrahim was a member of a group of Israeli and Palestinian students electing to explore the narratives and discourses of each other’s histories, a difficult process which I was helping to facilitate. Part of this process included a visit to the Holocaust exhibit at the Imperial War Museum, where some of the Israeli

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<sup>17</sup> Concern over these views was sufficient to result in confidential discussions between The Council of Christians and Jews and representatives of the Catholic Church, at the request of the latter, following increased migration from the new nations of the EU to Britain in 2006/7 (unpublished minutes, CCJ Board of Trustees, 2007).

students whose families had been personally affected by the events, spoke about their own family histories. Ibrahim did not seem able to see the Jewish victims of the Nazis as anything other than proto-Israelis. Furthermore, his own experience had resulted in a discourse of victimhood which would not allow him to consider Jewish people as victims. For Ibrahim, Jews could only be Israeli perpetrators, acting always through the exercise of their power; the only victims were Palestinians:

As I looked at the pictures, I saw the faces of my own people, who have also suffered, and still do so.<sup>18</sup>

This was not the case with his peers; the related discourses of the other students appeared to leave room to acknowledge the plight of others apart from their own conflict. For Ibrahim, as with the pupils Mohammad and Mohammad, some of the major discourses in which they were positioned were easily identified. In other examples, this might be less obvious. When Miss Overton, of the East Thames Boys School, talks about the possibility of “startling consequences” she describes how, in a lesson about ‘identity’ in the context of Nazi racial and gender theories, one boy “came out [as gay] for the first time” in his written work. This pupil had made an effort to translate the narrative so that it could be understood in relation to other discourses about selfhood and about the world. The act of ‘making sense’ had necessitated a judgement and what Eco (2003) calls a ‘transmutation’— that is, translating not simply the words or signs directly, but relating the essence of the text in a way which engages meaningfully with the reader. Within his own discourses of selfhood, it made sufficient sense for this pupil to feel confident enough to share this dangerous knowledge with his teacher and, potentially, others. The issue of how pupils and teachers are positioned or imagine new possibilities for themselves is central to discussions about what may be ‘learnt’ from Holocaust Education.

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<sup>18</sup> Unpublished note (2006)

### Part III

### POSSIBILITIES OF LEARNING

This section will explore the issues raised at the conclusion of chapter 3 involving both the claims made for Holocaust Education by the discourse of HolEd and how these were addressed by both teachers and pupils. In looking at the perceptions of these ‘grand aims’, this section will consider whether they are achievable and, in the course of this process, this thesis will argue that some may be met to an extent and suggest reasons for this. In subsequent chapters in this section, this thesis will seek to identify other possibilities for learning which Holocaust Education enables and suggest some ways in which these may be described. This exploration will begin by outlining the position that very little in terms of educational value can be gained from the topic.

#### 5 IMPOSSIBILITIES OF LEARNING

For those who suffered through them, such as Charlotte Delbo (1995), the events may only teach that they can teach nothing. As Delbo writes:

I’ve spoken with death, And so I know the futility of things we learn (p 226)

The subject matter of Holocaust Education is acknowledged as difficult, to the extent that some educationalists question its use. Pupils are presented with a text which both shocks the pupil and engages the emotions. Furthermore, the outcome is uncertain. These aspects are, interestingly, perhaps most succinctly illustrated by the responses of two of the history teachers, Miss Hastings and Miss Nunn, at the Buckinghamshire Girls’ Grammar School. Their approach to the topic was in contrast to the other teachers interviewed, including several of their own colleagues, and therefore provided ‘deviant case data’ (Silverman, 2001) – that is, data which did not conform to the rest of the evidence on one level, but which was all the more illuminating because of this.

Miss Hastings and Miss Nunn “don’t choose” to expand on the requirement, and express unease at the nature of the topic and what it might entail. When asked about what might be gained from teaching this topic, both teachers, who were interviewed together, were hesitant. When I followed it up with “Is it just that it’s on the syllabus?” both visibly relaxed. Miss Hastings responded:

Well, it is really. I have very mixed views about it. I’m not sure they gain anything to be honest because it all happens again. [Probably] they should know about it – er – but I don’t like to dwell on it too much, partly because I think it’s using people’s suffering.

The choice of the word “using” in the context of “people’s suffering” is an interesting one, suggesting perhaps the sense of manipulation, which can be a false indication that any learning is taking place. Although honest about their misgivings, they were clearly not dismissing Holocaust Education as irrelevant; rather it was something that they were not ready or willing to engage with at this stage. They would rather address the topic in the context of other genocides although this would require discussion of ‘what human beings are capable of’; this whole area is “quite complicated” and better addressed at ‘A’ level. Both teachers are unhappy about having to deal with the events in Year 9 in the context of European twentieth century history. Miss Hastings sums up their views:

The trouble with the 20<sup>th</sup> century is it’s all death. And it just gets worse and worse, you know. And so I don’t think we want to develop that any further. It’s bad enough as it is.

These teachers devote the minimum amount of time to the subject and would rather not teach it at all outside the GCSE syllabus, where it could be more easily dealt with in chronological terms. They are aware of many of the issues surrounding the topic, but the depressing nature of the material, the danger of stereotyping Germans and the fact that they are “not sure [the pupils] gain anything, to be honest” are given as reasons for implying that the Holocaust makes an unwelcome intrusion into their teaching. They are clearly professional

about the way they approach it, but they remain unconvinced about any real 'benefits' in pedagogic terms which 'Holocaust Education' may offer. However, their doubts are based not on the idea that it is an impotent text, but rather that they are either uncertain or not at ease with its potential. Miss Hastings is unclear about what it could "turn into"; there is a recognition that whatever was occurring in Holocaust Education was not easily controllable.

The need to make some sort of 'sense' of the events and the recognition of the impossibility of this task may render the narrative of the Holocaust ineffectual in educational terms. The full enormity of the events may prevent their use as any kind of tool which can teach lessons about morality or society. When asked if learning about the Holocaust can help in making people 'better citizens', Thomas (Norfolk Community School) does not believe that it can:

I don't think that it will because the Holocaust – it was like such an extreme case – I didn't think that will be able to come across in just normal life. I don't think that will help it.

Thomas' reservations, and that of the Buckinghamshire teachers, echo those of educationalists who have questioned whether it is realistic to expect such grand aims as social - or even individual - change from one course of lessons in Holocaust Education. In the foreword to Totten and Feinberg (2001), Roth reviews some of the recent approaches in this field and is more interested in asking not 'what' one can learn from studying the topic but 'how' or, indeed, 'whether'.

Novick (2001) in particular expresses doubts on both pedagogic and pragmatic grounds. He argues that the extremity of the Holocaust detracts from its value as an illustration. The sheer scale of the horror threatens to overwhelm the student to the extent that it confers no benefit and, indeed, may have a negative effect. No amount of engagement with the material, or a visit to a museum, will "make one a better person" (p13). He comments that:

by and large people leave the museum with what they brought to it. (p 261)

By this Novick does not mean to suggest that there is no shock value or, indeed, that pupils cannot be stimulated to learn by such a visit, as Miss Downing states, but that such an encounter cannot 'change' people and that any learning experience which begins with shock may have little lasting value. Novick values emotional engagement in education but, while the engagement of the emotions clearly can and does occur in lessons on this topic, this does not denote for Novick that a lesson of any sort has been learnt.

With respect to the 'bystander' issue, Novick contends that the penalties usually involved in being a 'righteous Gentile' – that is, a non-Jewish rescuer of Jews – make it impossible for us to say how we might make moral choices in so extreme a situation. In terms of American society as a whole, Novick points out that political and economic interests determine government policies rather than considerations of suffering peoples and that the phrase 'never again' therefore has no real meaning. Any historical injustice is as useful as the Holocaust, Novick argues, including 'the Potato Famine', in terms of promoting tolerance and diversity. He concludes:

The desire to find and teach lessons of the Holocaust has various sources - different sources for different people, one supposes. Probably one of its principle sources is the hope of extracting from the Holocaust something that is, if not redemptive, at least useful. I doubt it can be done. (2001, p 263)

By such a comment, Novick is questioning whether the text of the Holocaust is being used to pursue an educational end, or whether education is being used to pursue the ends of those engaged with the text of the Holocaust. Writing within the context of American academic engagement, Novick is aware of scholars with a personal history tied to the events (as illustrated by the contributors to Totten, Bartrop and Jacobs, 2004), as well as the penitent reflection on the part of the churches which has influenced individual writers and academics (for example Cargas, 1989, Littell, 2000, Knight, 2000). The possibility is that by encouraging

successive generations to engage with the text, the suffering portrayed therein may be 'redeemed' – literally 'bought back' or repossessed - and the sense of futility which it engenders thereby be negated. This is an interesting question and one which may be painful to explore, although it may be possible – or even essential – for both desires (that is, the personal desires and the educational objectives) to be met.

Novick is sceptical that Holocaust education sensitizes the student to injustice because the atrocities go beyond issues of social injustice. More specifically, he argues that there appear to be 'too many' lessons that can be learnt from the Holocaust. Among those he cites are: "the presence of evil", "the fallibility of humankind or of society in general", "the imperfectability of humans", "the distracting of human beings from consequences of work" and the "fragmentation of society". He considers how this 'multiple use' of the text can lead to the trivialisation of the events. He notes, for example, the tendency of feminist writers, animal rights activists and even the 'gun lobby' to use aspects of the Holocaust in pursuing their own agenda:

The problem with most of these lessons is not that they're wrong but that they're empty, and not very useful. (Novick, 2001, p 241)

In addressing the points which Novick raises, one must first remember that Novick's starting point is a critique of the growth of 'Holocaust interest' in American society. The idea that encouraging this topic in the classroom can have an observable and beneficial effect on society as a whole is one about which this thesis is sceptical. In effect, his argument is that the grand rationales claimed for Holocaust Education cannot be substantiated. That is not to say, however, that there may not be some sort of learning taking place, and not just at a cognitive level, even if describing the value or outcome of the lessons is more elusive. This is especially the case when considering the grand aims of combating racism and reducing prejudice.

## 6 ADDRESSING RACISM

### 6.1 COMBATING PREJUDICE

One commonly cited argument among teachers, educators and liberal thinkers for the teaching of genocide is that it can help to combat prejudice and discrimination in general. Indeed, this issue was one of the main questions which this research initially set out to explore. The valuing of every individual in society and the encouragement to each to contribute are lynchpins in both the Citizenship and Holocaust education rationales. In a book for teachers, students and the casual reader entitled *'Did You Ever Meet Hitler, Miss?'* (2003), Trude Levi, a Holocaust survivor, presents and discusses some of the questions she is asked by school pupils in Britain and Germany. The foreword to the book is provided by David Blunkett MP, in his role as Home Secretary. His words rehearse familiar sentiments on this theme:

The Holocaust must never be forgotten. In combating prejudice and racism, we need to remind people of how the lessons of history must be vigorously implanted in the minds of those whose vigilance will be needed to avoid such horrors happening again. (Levi, 2003, p xiv)

It is of course arguable as to the extent to which any classroom programme can achieve that, as indicated by a recent study carried out by the Scottish Executive Education Department. While Holocaust Education is not mandatory in Scotland, the curriculum has demonstrated a strong commitment to anti-racism not least through its 'One Scotland. Many Cultures' programmes. Maitles, Cowan and Butler (2006)'s research among primary school pupils found that such lessons did tend to contribute towards the development of understanding about issues of justice and discrimination. However, their overall conclusions pointed out difficulties in terms of making claims for effecting any sustained behavioural change. A core sample of pupils, when assessed for a second subsequent time, were found to have "fallen back" slightly in terms of their response to certain minorities. In particular, Maitles, Cowan and Butler pointed out that there was still "a worrying hostility towards English people".

Most of the pupils in the study appeared enthusiastic in offering opinions as to what the lessons might teach, and all but one expressed the view that studying the topic had some value. When asked what they thought were the ‘lessons to be learnt’, the majority of pupils believed these to be primarily in the spheres of racism and discrimination. Implicit in their reasoning was a shared belief in the value of recognising and living with diversity. Usually this was referred to in simple terms, such as: “it also changes your opinions on what you thought about other people” (Samuel, East Thames) or with respect to “the knowledge of basic human rights and that all these people violated it” (Jane, Buckinghamshire). Sometimes, pupils chose to expand such observations with comments from their own experience, such as with Piers (Norfolk):

Lots of people in our class, like, they’re from all sorts of different – not ethnic, like – but different backgrounds. It’s good for them to see we’re all human beings.

Piers suggests that, while he may be aware of the need to treat everyone as equals, some of his peers are not. He sees the lessons as addressing wider issues of discrimination and makes it clear that he is not talking about overt racism. Some pupils chose to mention specific varieties of discrimination, such as faith, ethnicity and wealth.

When the teachers at the Norfolk Community School address the possibility of combating racism through Holocaust Education and in the context of Religious Education, Mr Simons, stresses the difference between the issue of racism and ‘R.E. issues’. For him there are a number of different issues, such as the nature of suffering, which the text of the Holocaust can be used to address:

I think the racism issue is an important one coming out of that. Again, I would want it to come out of – to use short hand – the RE issues. Rather than racism to be the focus and then say, ‘now, there are other issues as well, specifically to do with RE’. If I was teaching Social Studies, of course, or General Studies, I think I would focus much more on the racism

- the whole concept of antagonism to those who are different and such like, because it would be a slightly different subject.

Productive consideration of the issue of racism was a *possible* ‘use’ of the text, but by no means the only one. Mr Simons sees the issue of racism coming out more strongly in the context of a curriculum subject where prejudice reduction and anti-racism are already acknowledged. Challenging racist attitudes is a by-product of the Holocaust text, not the only obvious lesson, and not the one he would want to focus on primarily when using this text.

Where schools may be effective in combating prejudices, however, it may be through aspects of school ethos or models of pedagogy. Studies on aspects of behavioural change such as prejudice reduction (Lynch, 1987) make it clear that sustained, whole-school approaches which nevertheless recognise the individual development of each child, are most likely to be successful. Furthermore, Lynch points out the moral obligation on the school to enable this:

There are few certainties in the field, except that unless the school educates to counter prejudice and discrimination, it is inevitably reinforcing those attitudes and behaviours. (p 40)

This factor may help to account for the enthusiasm of many whole-school approaches, especially during the week of the annual Holocaust Memorial Day, through special assemblies, the collapsing of the timetable to enable special activities and the inviting of survivors to speak to year groups. By using the narrative of the Holocaust and the values and virtues which the narrative may be seen to help promote, the school is able to affirm its own values, predominant among them being the commitment to educate against prejudice and discrimination.

Lynch, however, believes that such studies can be helpful in underlining:

the professional role *vis-à-vis* the attitudes and moral behaviour of all students (1987, p. xi).

Lynch cites studies by Balch and Paulsen in particular which support this view and reject the 'quick fix' solution of schemes of work. He furthermore offers a definition of effective prejudice *reduction* as:

a deliberate and systematic process, which aims by means of coherent, rational, democratic and sustained educational and broader social strategies, policies and practices, at enabling individuals and groups to re-orient their values, attitudes, actions and behaviour in such a way that predispositions to prejudice and discrimination are reduced, amended and eradicated. p 40

All this suggests that the school process can, and indeed, must have a role to play in the reduction of destructive prejudices. A few lessons on a case study, such as the Holocaust, are not likely to achieve this. However, it may have a positive role in confronting pupils with the nature of prejudice. In his study of how prejudice may be 'acquired' among school pupils, Cullingford (2000) examines the tension between the individual 'I' and the need for social inclusivity as 'we'. It is this drive to 'acceptability' which can move a person from individual norms of behaviour which define personal identity to, ultimately, nationalism. Cullingford points out that it is possible for individuals to identify themselves as part of a moral culture which rejects prejudice while, at the same time, holding and even expressing prejudices 'for the good of society'. He in fact uses the example of the Holocaust in his conclusion:

The very same people who were party to a policy of extermination were shocked at the very idea of what they were doing. Those behaviours taken for granted at the time become terrible on examination. This contradiction lies at the heart of prejudice. Whilst one point of view can replace another, it is more common to see them held, even in contradiction, at the very same time. This ability to be ruled by instinct as well as reason, and to hold opinions based on rationally defined absurdities, needs to be understood. Education is not so much about knowledge as insight. p 227

Part of the blindness of prejudice, of course, is that those exercising it may often believe their views to be based on rational trains of thought. The Holocaust narrative illustrates both the irrationality of prejudice and its power to recruit.

The possibility that the lessons address traits and values already developed, rather than aiming at change, relates to a considerable body of work already carried out on prejudice reduction in schools. Lynch (1987) discusses a range of studies of methods aimed at modifying children's racist attitudes and concludes that no significant success can be claimed for any of them in the long term. A more effective approach is to understand how prejudices are formed – that is, largely, in the realm of the social – and address them from similar perspectives (Cullingford, 2000). As Lynch points out:

Just as prejudice comprises informational, emotive and behavioural dimensions, so strategies for prejudice reduction will need to apprehend these domains. (1987, p 40)

For some of the pupils, even less specifically, the broader focus appeared to be on the general imperative of equality:

I think it's just generally that we are all equal. Just because somebody's maybe richer than somebody else we're all equal. Just because we believe in something in different, we're just all the same. And it doesn't matter about the colour of the skin or religion or how much money you've got. (Chloe, Norfolk)

Such statements from the pupils take the unbelievable horrors of genocide and effectively reduce them to aspects of the pupils' own experience. In debates about Holocaust Education the issue of the extent to which the lessons should be rooted in the students' own experiences often surfaces. Lipstadt is among those who are sceptical. The teachers in the study, however, are quite clear that this is essential. Those at the East Thames Boys School cite this as an element in the apparent 'success' of the course; the pupils are engaged because they recognise

in their own lives the fragility of equality. The Head of the Religious Studies department in the Norfolk school believes that the pupils show little interest in the 'R.E. element' - such as implications for religious belief in the face of such suffering - because it is not relevant to them at this stage in their lives:

But I think the reason they don't pick up the problem of belief in a God is – or at least in general they don't bring it up – is 'cos that's not important to them at this stage in their life.

She is clear that, if the pupils are to take anything from the lesson, it has to be something which they can relate to their own experience.

## 6.2 A WORD ABOUT ANTISEMITISM

It is not possible to consider the Holocaust narrative, or indeed, the attendant aspects of the HolEd discourse and its effects, without exploring the fact that the narrative of the Holocaust deals with the phenomenon of antisemitism. While other genocides may also be included in this topic, and combating racism and prejudice in general is a central part of the HolEd discourse, the nature of antisemitism, and its own particular history, may have some effect on how a teacher approaches it and there are several implications which should be explored here.

### *The Specificity of Antisemitism*

Approaches to prejudice in UK schools, as Lynch also points out, have tended to start from the point of proposed eradication of one specific prejudice. Holocaust Education, on the other hand, while specifically focusing on antisemitism, ultimately appears concerned with challenging all prejudice. It is for this reason that the study of other genocides is now often incorporated into teaching materials. Although, while most text books are careful to point out that not only Jews were singled out for extermination, but also the Roma and the disabled,

through the 'Euthanasia' programme, less is said about the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses and very little about homosexuals.

In his argument for the institution of a national Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain, Cesarani (2001) underlines the importance of 'good' teaching which recognizes the scope and complexity of the issues. While lessons can show how genocide 'grows out of' casual acts of racism and bullying, these must be within a context which acknowledges all victims of Nazi racial intolerance, not just Jews, and presents the events of that era as "disturbingly relevant" today. In writing about the educational use of the Kindertransport narrative, whereby the British government allowed in hundreds of Jewish child immigrants while simultaneously denying entry to their parents, Cesarani concludes that:

As long as refugees from war and famine make their way to our shores the implications of this tragedy cannot be consigned to the history books. (p 54)

The idea that the main value of Holocaust Education is to be found in its contribution to prejudice reduction is a strongly contested one. Lipstadt (1995) describes as 'pernicious' the linking of the Holocaust to other horrors such as Hiroshima (p 212). Concerned that the historical specificity of the Holocaust can be lost by focusing on elements common to other prejudices, genocides and war crimes, Lipstadt argues for an engagement with the events which recognises the Holocaust as being more than the sum of its parts.

The context of the Holocaust is firmly within a European history of Antisemitism. That the horrific events were predominantly (although not exclusively) a Jewish experience, seems to be clear to the pupils interviewed. Adam (Norfolk) reflects that what he remembers most is:

How the Nazis got away with this, doing this to the Jews. When you've finished the topic and you think over how many Jews were killed –

Two other pupils at the Norfolk Community School also choose to comment explicitly on this:

Rose: Like, the Jews died because what their grandparents had thought – what they'd believed in.

Paul: Yeah, you've got to like – honour the Jews – for what they went through.

It is outside the scope of this thesis to consider the relation of different manifestations of prejudice to each other, but the fact that the main and overwhelming focus of Nazi racist theory was antisemitism is enormously significant in the discussion of approaches to Holocaust Education. Issues of Holocaust denial and revisionism, the history of the State of Israel and its relation to the Holocaust have all influenced the debate about rationales. Antisemitism has a particular context, not least in the history of Europe, traceable over more than two thousand years<sup>19</sup>. Survivors and survivor groups, second and now third generation descendants have contributed considerably to literature and educational resources, both in Europe, especially the UK, and more significantly in the USA (Totten, Bartrop and Jacobs 2004). Elie Wiesel, survivor, writer and Nobel Prize winner, and described as “one of the keepers of the Holocaust keys” (Hass, 2004, p 97) is prominent among those who, through a prolific output, have helped to establish a combination of literature and memory in the discourse of world Jewry and beyond.

In their study primarily of 15 year old students and their teachers, Short and Reed (2004) also questioned 10 and 11 year olds on their perceptions of Jews and Judaism, recording both ignorance of the meaning of the terms and the perpetuation of anti-Semitic stereotypes. The authors stress the necessity of engagement with the history of anti-Judaism in Christian teaching (as does Dawidowicz, 1990, and others) and the importance of reflecting Jewish European culture in its more positive history, which is a widely held principle in Holocaust Education (Imperial War Museum, 2000). Interestingly, results of a

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<sup>19</sup> There is a considerable body of work on this topic, including Wistrich (1991) and Langmuir (1990). An early and particularly interesting contribution in the context of European history and society is that of Lazare (1894).

survey published by the American Jewish Committee (Smith, 2005) indicate that in the seven countries surveyed, including the UK, USA and Austria, support for Holocaust Education was strong (75-90%), while contemporary perceptions about Jews and Judaism showed mixed results. The high correlation between factual knowledge about the events and the desire for further commemoration and teaching did not extend to the perception of antisemitism as a continuing and important issue in the modern world.

Short and Reed are critical of the neglect shown by anti-racist activists and educators towards the phenomenon of antisemitism and they suggest some reasons for this, such as the misconception that this is no longer an issue in modern British society. However, implicit in their argument is a suggestion that there is something *discriminatory* in this failure to acknowledge the specificity of antisemitism. They draw attention to tendencies among some “luminaries among the Socialist pantheon” to display anti-Semitic leanings, citing Karl Marx, although point out that there is no evidence to support a view that some anti-racists may nevertheless be anti-Semitic themselves and, indeed, many prominent anti-racist activists are Jewish (1989, p 33; also Short, 2004). The failure of anti-racist educators to make better use of the text of the Holocaust, however, has provided missed opportunities, Short and Reed argue, since it deals with issues of stereotyping and scape-goating, and provides examples of combating racism by ordinary people. Ultimately, it provides a terrible illustration of how racism can kill on a terrible scale. The importance of motivating anti-racist educators to use the text of the Holocaust is seen as crucial, because any teaching of the topic has to be carried out competently and professionally; failure to do this will also impact on anti-racist education through the danger of trivialisation, stereotyping and inability to engage with pupils who express racist tendencies themselves.

While some scholars such as Lipstadt (1995) believe firmly that the particularity of antisemitism should remain the prime focus of Holocaust Education, the pupils are overwhelmingly clear that, for them, the lessons are not limited to addressing this. A number of pupils clearly expressed the understanding that the phenomenon of racism which leads to genocide was not confined to this one era

of history, but reflected a universal possibility. One or two spoke about other genocides and the fact that such actions “still go on today all round the world.” The Jewish experience presented a paradigm because “it was only about 70 years ago; some people are still alive.” The fact that this tendency lurked in humanity as a whole was not lost on them:

The way all the people in the Holocaust suffered, they were just like normal people, and they should think – it wasn’t just the Jews they singled out. It could have been any kind of people; it could have been people from this area they’d singled out. It didn’t have to be the Jews; it just went that way. (Jack, Norfolk Community School)

### *The Ideology of Antisemitism*

As with other specific prejudices, antisemitism is a construct which describes the anti-Semite and not the Jew. Žižek (1989) discusses the ‘ideology’ of antisemitism in the context of Lacanian thought. According to Lacan, antisemitism is not a response to the presence of Jews. Rather it is a manifestation of unconscious desire. Crucially, rationality or rational argument especially, will not dismiss the ‘ideology’; it is necessary to identify the element of desire which created it. In a somewhat chilling observation, Žižek points out:

An ideology is really ‘holding us’ only when we do not feel any opposition between it and reality – that is, when the ideology succeeds in determining the mode of our everyday experience of reality itself. (p 49)

To illustrate this, Žižek gives the example of the German anti-Semite who has a perfectly affable and respectable Jewish neighbour. Rather than this acquaintance encouraging the man’s resistance to antisemitism, it reinforces it; he regards the neighbour’s pleasantness as an insincere ploy and an example of his duplicity. The man thereby defines his experience in accordance with his ideology and not vice versa. From this we see that ‘Jew’ is not the

symbolization of a collection of characteristics and properties, but ‘Jew’ is whatever defines reality – not so much the signifier, in psychoanalytic terms, as the signified. This, for Žižek, is the essence of true antisemitism.

Firmly within the tragic history of antisemitism is the presence of a ‘Christian’ strand or strands. While most teachers involved in HolEd would be unlikely to describe themselves as practising Christians, they may nevertheless be products of a cultural or intellectual heritage which has been influenced by an implicit anti-Judaic discourse.

The topic of Christian anti-Judaism<sup>20</sup> is the subject of a wide body of literature and forms part of the continuing discussion, including through undergraduate and post-graduate courses, on Christian/Jewish relations<sup>21</sup>. Described as ‘the longest hatred’ (e.g. Wistrich, 1991), the nature of this phenomenon is arguably qualitatively different, at least in those parts of the world with a predominantly Christian heritage, from all other prejudices and examples of discrimination. Although there is some evidence for anti-Jewish prejudice from the third century B.C.E. (Prager and Telushkin, 1983), it is only with the establishment of Christianity that observable anti-Jewish rhetoric and violence enters social discourses.

The main approach to Judaism for centuries involved a ‘teaching of contempt’ (Isaac, 1964) which denigrated its beliefs and practices in order to emphasize the superiority of the Christian faith. Emerging originally as a sect from within Judaism, Pauline<sup>22</sup> Christianity defined its identity by emphasizing its difference. Thus, what was “folly to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews” was salvation for the Church (I Corinthians 1:22ff). Furthermore, there has been an historic tendency for Christianity to describe itself, in its dominant

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<sup>20</sup> The term ‘anti-Judaism’ is used here to distinguish negative approaches to Jewish belief and practice from racially based antisemitism (for example Roth, 2000, Littell, 1975). For the most part, Jews in previous centuries who converted to Christianity were not subject to the same overt discrimination, although they remained at risk from prejudice and measures designed to test observance (Seltzer, 1980, Katz, 1980).

<sup>21</sup> For example, on those offered by specialist institutions such as The Centre for the Study of Jewish Christian Relations at Cambridge.

<sup>22</sup> That is, Christian doctrine as set out in the teachings of St Paul in the 1<sup>st</sup> century of the Common Era.

discourse, in terms of a ‘value-inversion’ of Judaism – where one was spiritual, the other was legalistic, and so on. This process suggests that the identity of the Church was maintained by externalizing factors seen as potentially unhelpful; in psychoanalytic terms, this is *projection*. The Church thereby projected onto all Jews, it has been argued, those characteristics which it wished to disown and distance from itself.

The pervasive nature of European antisemitism provides the background for the Holocaust and can be a difficult topic to introduce. When a teacher comes to address antisemitism, she may therefore need to address it both openly and perhaps also at the level of the unconscious. This will not be the case with every pupil by any means, but it must be expected that there will be a number, perhaps a large percentage in some classes, of pupils who will have been exposed to anti-Semitic discourses from one provenance or another<sup>23</sup>. Pupil resistances may be present, which make this an important issue to be addressed. At the Norfolk Community School, Mrs Hardy comments on this:

I would look at the issue of racism as well and I did pick it up in Year 10 PSE because I use the film ‘Life is Beautiful’, which is set in a different country. [They ask] ‘were other people against the Jews, then?’ so they actually do pick it up that it wasn’t just *belief* but their [anti-Semitic] culture and racism, and I think that broadens it for them, rather than just Nazi Germany, but this was happening in other countries....other Europeans did not want the Jews.

Mrs Hardy tries to make it clear that this is not about any theological differences or moral shortcomings on the part of Jews, but is because of racism and the Nazi obsession with race theory. But this comment of Mrs Hardy’s points out the dilemma for teachers in presenting antisemitism and why it gained such a hold, without giving any credence whatsoever to the inherent mythologies. There is indeed some evidence elsewhere to suggest that some pupils will want to assert

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<sup>23</sup> Evidence of the increase of anti-Semitic instances in the UK in recent years comes from the Community Security Trust of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and was highlighted in the Commons Enquiry (2006) into Antisemitism. Partly this increase has been attributed to approaches to events in the Middle East.

Jewish culpability (Schweber 2004), either because of anti-Semitic prejudices already held or simply because the events become more explicable. If Nazi propaganda had any basis whatsoever in fact, one can assert that the events of the Holocaust, while retaining their horror, begin to follow some reassuringly (for non-Jewish pupils) *rational* argument.

In the environments of pupils where the dominant discourse is racist, this is likely to include antisemitism; but some of those content to locate themselves within anti-racist discourses may see antisemitism as an exception to this (Short and Reed 2004). In an attempt to counter such discourses, or to prevent their domination, the teacher may be inclined to stress the illogicality of Nazi ideology. By highlighting the *faux*-science of racial theories, appealing to the appreciation of diversity in current social discourses and by including events such as Jesse Owens' prowess at the Munich Olympic Games of 1936, the teacher seeks to undermine Nazism and promote antipathy towards it in her pupils. In so doing, she reinforces the futility of the actions; the greater the innocence of Nazi victims, the more incomprehensible the events.

Another way in which the teacher may seek to combat antisemitism is by placing greater emphasis on the humanity of the victims; they were human beings first, Jews second (or perhaps even third or fourth). By this means, the pupils understand that, while in one sense 'it had to be the Jews', in another sense, we are all potential victims:

'Cos the way all the people in the Holocaust suffered, they were just like normal people, and they should think, it wasn't just the Jews they singled out. It could have been any kind of people; it could have just been people from this area they'd singled out. It didn't have to just be the Jews, it just went that way. (Jack, Norfolk Community School)

Strategies which teachers employ to counter such prejudices may serve to reinforce the utter horror and inescapability of what took place, of what was perpetrated by human beings on others. Stressing the fact that Nazi anti-Semitic ideology was founded on something other than a real and true threat increases

the sense of almost random meaninglessness in the Nazi actions. In seeking to discredit racist and anti-Semitic ideologies, therefore, teachers may reinforce the sense of horror at the actions of humanity and the failure of societies to oppose them. In other words, where a teacher is concerned directly to minimize any danger of pupils thinking 'the Jews must have deserved it', she may wish to emphasise to them the full irrationality of the events. In reducing the risk of reinforcing anti-Semitic ideas, such teaching serves unwittingly to strengthen the sense of abandonment of reason and morality underpinning the events of the Holocaust.

## 7 MORALS AND VALUES

### 7.1 MAKING KIDS MORAL

Three of the pupils at the Norfolk Community School – Piers, Luke and Tom, interviewed in different groups - provide some interesting insights into the relationships between moral and social imperatives highlighted in by the text of the Holocaust. When asked “Does it help you to think about things like Citizenship? Like your place in society?” Piers chooses to select a moral response:

I think, for me – like, I was brought up a Catholic. And I just can’t imagine anyone doing that to someone else.

Describing himself as having been “brought up a Catholic”, he gives this as a reason for non-comprehension of the racism of others, suggesting that this is like a ‘code’ for having been instilled with a certain set of moral values of behaviour. The implications are that living in society involves moral choices and that ‘received moral instruction’ and ‘acceptable’ codes of behaviour militate against prejudice and discrimination. Tom goes further to suggest that he might have gained a ‘sense of proportion’ about life; an important aspect in adolescence whereby the natural self-centredness of childhood gives way to greater social awareness.

You realize that we’re not, like, always the best and not always right, and that you shouldn’t always go by what you think, you should consider other people as well as yourself.

The link made by Piers with regard to social and moral behaviour against prejudice was not unique, however. Luke makes an interesting distinction when considering whether Holocaust Education could affect people:

I don't think it would affect our *life*, but it would affect the way you'd want to be treated and how you treat other people.

He appears to suggest that this does not indicate any change within his own sense of self or sense of destiny, but might enable certain behaviour by providing paths or triggering responses already latent within himself. At the end of the interview he clarifies this further by suggesting that the lessons encourage an awareness of the need to act, rather than moving him to act in totally new ways:

It makes you sort of realize that although some things might not necessarily affect you, it makes you realize how other people are going to be affected by your actions or someone else's actions. Perhaps you can help stop it. It sort of makes you realize what's going on.

Luke sees the outcome of the lessons as making him more reflective. This is a pupil-centred response, but the implication is that a change can be wrought in society by more people being reflective about their own actions. This theme of awareness is a recurring one and pupils tended to offer it without prompting as one of the 'lessons to be learnt' from studying the Holocaust:

I was going to say that I think it will help us see the signs if anything like that starts to kind of happen again. I think it will make us more alert to the consequences. (Polly, Norfolk Community School)

The impetus to act against prejudice was a common theme raised by all the pupil groups interviewed. This impetus is strengthened by the fact that the events were historical and could be approached in the same way as any other event. Actions could be verified and motivations considered through familiar study methods. Lisa (Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar) comments that knowledge of the historical events can encourage this in the population at large:

So I think they have to be reminded of what happened and that we can't let that happen again.

At the Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar School, however, the two teachers who are nervous about the topic, Miss Hastings and Miss Nunn, cite a possible inability of pupils to do this as a major risk:

Miss Nunn: What I don't quite like to do – 'cos they think of the Holocaust and they think of Germany. So I try to show them in Year 9 that actually this could happen anywhere. And there's a rather nice poem which said – em – I can't remember now – 'What if Auschwitz were in Britain?' There's a poem that we look at. How would people have reacted? And then there's another one that talks about 'What was?' – and they pick a Nazi leader – 'What was he like?' And he's very ordinary. So that this could really have happened anywhere rather than pushing –

JLC: the German –

Miss Nunn: yeah. That worries me a bit. I don't like doing that.

The question of moral lessons or 'citizenship' themes seems to be left unanswered. However, what Miss Nunn expresses is a desire to avoid the impression that there was anything unusual about the nature of German humanity. In effect, she is saying that other groups – or even all groups – are capable of such things. In her desire to ensure the pupils are not specific about the horrors, she is affirming something about the nature of humanity in general. Although Miss Nunn is almost certainly quite clear about the socio-economic factors which led to the rise of Nazi Germany, the possibility of horrific acts is to be seen as universal.

Both pupils and teachers do acknowledge to varying extents that terrible things, including genocides, have taken place since 1945. But rather than suggesting that Holocaust Education is unlikely to make any sort of difference, some of the pupils express the view that the current social climate in Britain has been visibly influenced by knowledge of the events. Mohammad Y (East Thames Boys' School), for example, suggests that his current experience of valuing diversity in society may result from living with a knowledge of the events:

People today - well back then, they didn't have like – well, they had what they thought was right and wrong, but like since that Holocaust has happened, today the people know that that wasn't the right thing to do and they should have tried something more and so if anything does happen nowadays, there will be like support for the people that are getting killed.

As with Polly's comment above, some pupils suggest that knowledge about how the Holocaust progressed might act as an 'early warning system', whereby society could recognize the signs of moral degeneration in this way. This recognition was not left to the facelessness of 'society as a whole' but was part of the moral imperative to each of those so educated. As Bobby puts it:

You realize that you can do something. That, well, even though there's only one of you – I mean you can stop things.

The notion that there were observable milestones along the road to the 'Final Solution' is useful in educative terms. The introduction of the Nuremberg Laws, the events of Kristallnacht, the creation of the ghettos, all follow a well-signposted path which can provide clues to be read by other societies. In studying other genocides alongside the Holocaust, certain threads in the destructive process can be traced, such as the ethnic labelling of citizens, followed by propaganda dehumanising the selected group (Jews as 'bacteria' infecting Germany, Tutsis as 'cockroaches' infesting Rwanda). But while events such as the Bosnian and Cambodian genocides can and do address issues about the nature of humanity, there seem to be far more variables in the Holocaust narrative which defeat attempts to draw straightforward principles from it. These include the involvement of whole swathes of European citizens, the focused and cold-blooded approach of the perpetrators, the inversion of morality and, by no means least, the enduring enigma of anti-Semitism.

There are also questions to be considered about the nature of any lessons to be learnt. The pupils are quite clear that these lessons have not 'made them good' or transformed them in any way. Their responses rather suggest that they see

their own moral choices as being 'better informed' rather than radically altered. Similarly, the teachers make no great claims for long-term behavioural change on the part of their pupils. The pupils themselves see the lessons as reinforcing or developing further characteristics already possessed:

Fatima: I don't think it's changed us completely; I think it's just made us see that –

Lisa: - more aware –

Two of the London pupils are more explicit [my emphasis]:

Mohammed M: Some people who aren't that easy to get to would probably think it would be really different to what would really happen.

Mohammed A: It depends on what kind of person you are. 'Cos like if some people – might change their whole perspective, but others might need more – work, I think.

They suggest that effecting change is the desirable outcome of the lessons. For some pupils – the 'right sort' – the encounter with the text of the Holocaust can change their perspective. Those who are more resistant – not that "easy to get to" – fail to understand the reality of the text. The teacher cannot, however, leave it there. The pupils see it as her duty to put in "more work" on these pupils to enable them to reach the same conclusions, a desirable 'standard' perhaps, as the other pupils. Implicit here is the idea that the lessons trigger a moral approach which most members of society already hold in common. The route to this morality is through understanding and internalizing the text.

Schweber's (2004) study of four American classroom teachers addresses specifically the impossibility of legislating about what pupils may learn morally through lessons about the Holocaust. When a syllabus or curriculum is drawn up, Schweber points out that it is presumed that the 'lessons to be learnt' from studying the Holocaust, especially any moral messages, are self evident. As her work shows, moral lessons are far more nuanced than the original curricular guidelines envisaged and the scope of what students in the study took from the

experiences varied considerably. By and large, students took morally from the lessons what they brought to them. This is an important point and echoes Fatima's comment above that it "hasn't changed us completely" but "made us more aware".

### *Lessons in Tolerance*

The book jacket of Short and Reed's (2004) study refers to the "increasing relevance" of Holocaust Education "due to a growing intolerance across Europe and elsewhere." General comments about 'tolerance' and 'intolerance' may be misleading, but on the question of promoting tolerant attitudes alone, it is debatable whether the Holocaust narrative is the best resource. Alison Jolly (1995) sets out clearly what we mean by 'tolerance' in educational terms, pointing out that the concept has both positive and negative connotations:

Commonly it is said that to be tolerant we must first have the urge to be intolerant. It is only by suppressing our feelings of intolerance, or forbearing from acting on them that we are tolerant. p 48

Jolly uses the issues raised by the wearing of the *hijab* by Muslim girls in French schools with respect to the issue of human rights and non-discrimination. By this route, Jolly arrives at a definition of tolerance:

Unless we have a clear and legitimate reason for proscribing some forms of behaviour, we must respect all people's rights equally, and tolerate their behaviour equally. The converse of this is that we must be intolerant of violations of human rights whether we like the victims or not, and whether we agree with them or not. p 50

The 'Character education' programmes in early years, particularly in the USA, may appear to be based on the Platonic principle that narratives may 'work' pedagogically only where the pupil is already predisposed towards the value or virtue being offered. But if, in opposition to prejudice, the virtue to be prized is

the reluctance to pass judgement, there are problems at whatever stage this is being addressed.

Lang (2000) describes the confrontation of his students with Wiesenthal's semi-autobiographical piece, *The Sunflower*. In this small book, Wiesenthal describes how he, as a Jewish prisoner, is brought into the presence of a young German officer who is mortally wounded. The young man, from a religious Christian family, is haunted by his part in the murder of Jewish women and children who were trying to escape from a burning building. He is desperate to 'confess and obtain absolution' for this crime. Wiesenthal's dilemma as he portrays it is whether or not he could forgive the dying young Nazi officer on behalf of those who had been murdered. Although he is not unsympathetic to the needs of the dying man, he is unable to do so. Later on, he discusses this with a fellow prisoner who is a Catholic priest.

Lang's objective was to consider the Eichmann trial but, instead, he found his students diverted by Wiesenthal's inability to grant forgiveness for sins committed against others, even when different approaches to issues of forgiveness are explained to them. The students were adamant that he should have 'shown tolerance', by which they meant 'demonstrate forgiveness'. Lang observed that, in prizing tolerance above all else, the students failed to engage with the particularity of the setting itself and the 'evil' which was the background to the story. Furthermore, they failed to empathise with Wiesenthal's dilemma; to them there was no dilemma at all.

A similar example led to me to become curious about how pupils approached such ideas. In speaking to a gathering of three Year 9 classes at a girls' selective school in London, I told them of an event which had befallen me a few weeks earlier. While staying near Frankfurt, I had attended a commemoration of 'Kristallnacht', the Nazi pogrom of November 1938 when many Jewish businesses and synagogues had been destroyed. The event was held in a small Jewish memorial chapel beside a cemetery. It was led by a German-speaking rabbi from America and comprised mostly prayers and readings from the Jewish tradition. It was bitterly cold and the small, unheated building was packed with

people wrapped up in winter garments. Most of those present were elderly, a significant number were Jewish. The mood was one of sadness and reconciliation.

Because of the venue and the nature of the ceremony, the advance notice had stated clearly that those men present would be required to cover their heads. When the ceremony was well under way, the door opened and a man squeezed in and stood by the door. Automatically he removed his hat. He was the only man, and given the temperature, possibly the only person in the chapel who was bareheaded. A short while later another man came in. He looked around him and also removed his hat.

I asked the pupils whether someone should have asked them to replace their head coverings, as would almost certainly have been the case at any similar Jewish gathering in Britain. Overwhelmingly, they felt that it was the men's "right" to wear or not to wear their hats. They felt that it was the congregation who should show "tolerance" towards the men. No one offered a different opinion. Any appreciation of the age of all those concerned, the history of the village and the experience of those elderly Jews present was clearly not material to the case. What mattered for the adolescents was the right of an individual to affirm her own approach to normative behaviour and the necessity for others to be tolerant about it. This approach, drawn from their own desires, inevitably determined their own value judgements. Such conclusions cast doubt on the premise that pupils can develop new moral approaches through learning about the Holocaust; it is possible that in some areas their own will simply be reinforced.

Jolly (1995) points out that when we talk about 'tolerance', we are really advocating respect for the other. By contrast, whenever a teacher says, 'I will not tolerate this behaviour', clear signals are sent out about what is and is not conducive to facilitating a school community (p 53). Equally clearly, therefore, tolerance *per se* is not about permission but accommodation. This does not seem to be what Holocaust Education is about.

### *Education in Virtues*

While the elimination of prejudice is a value generally espoused in education, it could be argued that the sort of society we want our pupils to facilitate may not have been properly addressed. One reason for this may be the underlying assumption that there is some sort of consensus, at least among teachers, of what that might be. Another possibility is that we have forgotten the language in which to debate this; that we use the terminology, as MacIntyre (1985) suggests, but no longer understand the intention behind it.

Despite this uncertainty, the fact remains that schools do promote sets of values (Morrison & McIntyre, 1971 p 11). School communities make use of rules of conduct, both implicit and explicit, taboos and expectations of how pupils and even visitors should behave. The development of individual morality may be important in terms of the common good. With possibly (although not necessarily) the exception of those based on a religious tradition, schools, like society at large, do this primarily through the way in which they value certain 'virtues'. In the same way that was noted above with respect to prejudice reduction, the school ethos as a whole can play a significant part in those virtues which pupils choose to adopt or reject. It is useful for the purposes of this thesis to consider whether, where Holocaust Education is a significant factor in a pupil's school experience, it may provide useful learning opportunities in moral or value education.

Haydon (1999) asks whether talking about virtues could be the basis for a commonly understood dialogue in terms of moral goals in education. Although he acknowledges the difficulty of the task, Haydon states:

We cannot do without an imperative or prescriptive conception of morality in which there are norms telling people what to do. (Haydon, 1999, p132)

Haydon cites Habermas in suggesting that if there is public discussion of common norms and there are conclusions in terms of some consensus, then these norms may be considered justified. He identifies standard examples of virtues

such as courage, honesty and benevolence and points out that there is little consensus after this.

Haydon acknowledges here that there is an irony when one considers the events of the Holocaust; the apparent consensus in Nazi Germany to norms considered far removed from virtue and morality as espoused in Western society today, appear to militate against this view. However, Haydon points out that no opposition was permitted in Nazi Germany; social norms could not be considered as having been arrived at by consensus in a totalitarian regime.

Certainly, there are many prized virtues which Holocaust Education can help to reinforce. Sherman (1999) gives the example of a former fighter pilot talking to her students about his experiences during the Gulf War. Sherman points out

As teachers....we tend to focus on the abstract and forget the riveting power of an enactment to immerse a class in a gripping and nuanced discussion of a moral topic, such as the nature of courage. (p 38)

Stories of bravery and heroism are part of the Holocaust text. MacIntyre (1981) suggests that virtue, as such, is secondary to the idea of a role model whose characteristics are linked to contemporary culture:

A Virtue is an acquired human quality, the possession an exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices. p

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The status of 'courage', for example, says MacIntyre, comes from its relation to the life of the community. But while Holocaust Education may provide a fertile ground for exploring virtues, it is not obvious how the opportunity might be used. To describe rescuers as displaying the virtue of courage is, generally, wholly appropriate. However, to accuse 'bystanders' of lacking that virtue is unfair, given the extreme circumstances in which individuals found themselves. Carr (1991) sums up the unacceptability of any attempt to simplify lessons in morality:

There is a clear enough difference, for example, between the man who fails morally because he cannot see what is right (also a difference among men who cannot see what is right, between those who can be held responsible and those who cannot – those who could have known and those who couldn't) and the man who fails because though he can see correctly, his moral character or nerve fails him at the crucial stage and he falls prey to weakness and temptation. (p 251)

Langer (1998) doubts that study of the Holocaust can change hearts and minds, but he does believe that there is some scope for its use as an educational tool. Langer does not expect the Holocaust to provide new lessons. He coins the phrase 'preempting the Holocaust', by which he means:

using – and perhaps abusing – its grim details to fortify a prior commitment to an idea of moral reality, community responsibility, or religious belief that leaves us with space to retain faith in their pristine value in a post-Holocaust world. (p1)

Langer here perhaps warns against a complacency of Holocaust Education which holds up the narrative as an example: 'see here – I told you so'. There is a danger that teachers will make use or be expected to make use of the Holocaust narrative to illustrate approaches which society deems important. A re-commitment to already-accepted approaches – liberal, pluralistic and democratic approaches – offers few challenges. Is this what the teachers and pupils here are experiencing? Certainly, this would help them to 'make sense' of the inexplicable and to fit the narrative into a comfortable framework. However, we are left with a certain amount of confusion, ambiguity and shock and, above all, a sense of purpose and engagement from teachers and pupils, which suggest that such an explanation will not fully account for everything that is going on in the classroom.

The role of the teacher, Langer believes, is rather to provide keys to doors which widen moral horizons. These doors do not open up possibilities but, significantly, 'impossibilities'. From this perspective, the value of teaching from the Holocaust may be found in the opportunity to re-evaluate moral or religious values and, rather than accept what has been offered by society 'as a package', to consider for oneself the important principles by which one can live. Pupils are invited to re-evaluate their world-view by considering the events from all perspectives – bystanders and perpetrators, as well as rescuers and victims. Langer admits the risks involved in this, but believes it to be a worthwhile enterprise when handled properly (1998, p 198).

A painful process of re-evaluation occurs within the context of Catholic and other denominational education, where issues such as Christian responsibility and the Church's historic relationship with the Jews provide difficult lessons, precisely in the way Langer describes (Clements et al, 2000). The role of the churches, and the Catholic Church in particular, in the events surrounding the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, has been the subject of much scholarly and theological debate. Pupils may be asked to consider the negative effect of some Church teaching and to engage critically with issues of text and tradition. For all Christians, there are specific issues which can fruitfully be addressed; indeed, this is one concession which some critics of the lessons make in terms of the value of studying the Holocaust (Novick, 2001).

Schweber's (2004) observation of four American teachers mentioned above, each experienced and skilled in Holocaust Education, indicates that the 'lessons learnt' differed widely from classroom to classroom. While each teacher was concerned to further the moral development of the students, Schweber found that the goals set by both syllabus designers and, in the context of her study, state legislators in this respect were far too simplistic. Hopes expressed that lessons about the Holocaust would promote moral ideas about individual responsibility were unfounded. Her interviews with pupils demonstrated that many of the preconceptions and values which pupils brought into the classroom remained largely unchallenged at the end of the course, even where teachers had addressed such preconceptions directly. While the pupils certainly gained

‘something positive’, in their own terms, from the lessons, Schweber is clear that moral education cannot be achieved through such a diverse curriculum as the topic presents. Furthermore, she concludes that:

Morality, or at least generalized moral claims, cannot be educationally mandated. The mistake underpinning the mandate was to regard the moral lessons of the Holocaust as simple. This study, over and over again, reveals that, in practice, they are not. (p 152)

Understanding the varieties of human behaviours and motivations is key to approaching the Holocaust pedagogically. A well-trained teacher encourages her pupil to look beyond the ‘good versus evil’ stereotyping that this topic can invite, to appreciate complexities, to learn lessons about decision making and personal morality. If pupils can be helped to understand what permits the engendering and development of prejudice, therefore – and the complex narrative of the Holocaust may be useful here - then this may indeed help in the overcoming of prejudice as a whole. However, the issues raised in this section underline the obvious fact that no series of lessons can help to ‘instil specific virtues’ or combat prejudice on their own. It would seem, then, that any outcomes for Holocaust Education which imply that it can ‘make kids moral’,<sup>24</sup> or encourage them to be ‘good citizens’ are unlikely to be substantiated.

These issues point to a rather sophisticated understanding of the constraints on individuals to act ‘morally’. Haydon (1999) argues that there are many perceptions about ‘commonly accepted’ moral values but, in fact, reaching an agreement in society is more difficult than is usually supposed. Discussion about values must first be a theoretical one rather than a practical list of ‘acceptable’ behaviours.

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<sup>24</sup> Goldman (1965)’s discussion of ethics within the context of an R.E. which was then largely or wholly Christian in content is also interesting in this respect. His work questioned the notion of encouraging moral development by means of a stated classroom subject (in those days, R.E.). He also points out that there are no specifically ‘Christian’ approaches to the big moral issues such as war or divorce (p 60). While, similarly, one may point out ‘moral lessons’ which can be drawn from the Holocaust narrative, there will almost certainly be disagreements as to the precise nature or value of such lessons.

If studying the events of the Holocaust are unlikely, on their own, to address prejudices, then any grand claims for significant moral development must take a back seat to whatever else is going on. In fact, as examples will show, pupils tend to report a more complex approach to values, rather than a clearer indication of what is 'right' and 'wrong'. This issue of complexity is an interesting one.

## 7.2 MORAL COMPLEXITIES

While the pupils recognise the acts of perpetrators as inflicting something so terrible that it is beyond comprehension, a significant number of them were reluctant to 'pass judgement' or condemn those involved. Confusion is expressed in terms of the motivation of the perpetrators themselves. When asked what he remembers from the lessons, Jack (Norfolk Community School) offers a comment on the moral complexities involved:

I particularly remember the story of this man who was operating the ovens and he found a guy that was alive and he tried to persuade the guards to let him go but they said that he must 'put him in the oven alive or we'll do it to you' – so he had to.

Jack is clear that questions about responsibility went further than individual action. When asked how the Holocaust helped him to consider issues of prejudice, he replies by bringing up the issue of the failure of the allies to bomb the railways leading to the camps, despite having the necessary intelligence. He comments simply:

I find that quite – striking.

Jack's brief comment hints at a fairly sophisticated analysis of political responsibility and decision-making in times of war. His selection of the single

word 'striking' implies a perceived understanding of the different moral imperatives open to the military and political leaders, about which he deliberately chooses to say nothing. This is in contrast to his defence of the man at the ovens. Furthermore, a significant number of the pupils interviewed introduced ideas of culpability and responsibility; the idea that ordinary people can do evil deeds if their choices are limited was a recurring theme. Some pupils made an attempt to 're-humanise' those involved:

What really shocked me was that on some videos you had the prison guards talking about how they had to put the dead bodies into the – into the oven. But you have to feel how they must have felt. You can't exactly – it's not a really nice thing to do and you can't appreciate them for being a nice person but you have to feel how horrible it must have been for them. It's not easy to do something like that and talk about it on a video as well. It's a horrible, it's like a horrible thing to agree to do but you need to think of it from their point of view as well. You can't just be like 'oh, they did that so we're not going to like them at all'. You have to think that they had feelings too.(Barnaby, Norfolk)

When pupils at the East Thames Boys' School consider the actions of 'Police Battalion 101', they make an interesting distinction between the nature of the commander of the Battalion, who ordered his men to carry out the massacre despite being a policeman and not a member of the Nazi party, and a local bystander who did not shoot himself, but who acted without moral dignity.

Mohammad A: Miss, but some Nazis were different. They didn't actually want to do it. Like, we watched – no we read something the other day about this officer –

Mohammad Y: He wasn't a Nazi.

Mohammad A: Yeah, but they was starting to kill Jews and they couldn't actually do it, even though they were being ordered by Nazis but the leader didn't actually do it. And there was some other people. Like we watched a video of this guy, yeah? When Jews were getting murdered you could go

and watch and he went there and took clothes and then sold them and made plain money. And he was taking it for granted.

Curtis: And he takes this guy's jacket and he goes to him 'yes, this is nice; now I can go dancing tonight.'

Divorcing the actions and motivations of the individuals involved in such horrific events is a sophisticated process and yet the Year 9 pupils in the study appear to engage with it with some success. They show sympathy towards the Battalion commander who reluctantly watched his men 'following orders' from the Nazis. By contrast, they condemn someone who chose to be involved and demonstrated callousness and lack of compassion through his words and actions. It is perhaps this man's inability to recognise humanity and identify with it which the pupils are judging.

The appreciation of the complexity both of the variety of elements and motivations in the Holocaust narrative and of the difficulties of making 'moral decisions' in such extreme situations is arguably one of the watersheds of pupil understanding. For Miss Mackie at the East Thames Boys' School, such an understanding is certainly a desirable outcome which she actively seeks:

I think one of the most positive things I saw last year was an increase in the complexity of their understanding of human motivation. If you asked them why people participated or were bystanders, there was no longer just straightforward 'fear', I had kids not even mention fear. They said things like 'well, miss, you've got to look at things like their education, how much money they had' – and skip straight on to that. So there's an increase in complexity and it made their understanding of why the Holocaust happened much more sophisticated and complex.

Such an aim is commonly expressed. Totten (2002) provides suggestions for how teachers can and should "complicate" student thought on these issues by means of the Holocaust narrative. However, although such a process is clearly

indicative of intellectual development, it raises questions about how far such lessons may have anything to say about moral issues at all. There is a certain irony in a course of study which confronts pupils with paradigm examples of what is 'evil' and teaches them thereby that morality is complicated.

The effectiveness of narrative in children's moral choices was addressed by Kavathatzopoulos (1988). His study with Greek children, with a mean age of 7 years, found that those who had received some instruction related to a narrative found it easier to identify with the 'good' character in the story. Where teachers had indicated beforehand that a certain character was 'good', the pupils tended to read the story from that perspective and come to the same conclusion; in fact there was never much doubt in their minds about the morality involved. Where teachers suggested beforehand that 'a character' (unspecified) acted morally, there was a certain consensus among the pupils as to which character it might be, but this was by no means unanimous. Where no indications whatsoever were offered by the teacher, the conclusions reached by the children, regarding the morality of the characters, were far more varied.

Kavathatzopoulos is concerned with moral development and learning, rather than the value of the story; his finding that narrative alone was less effective than when it was preceded by instruction is interesting. If the teacher of the Holocaust narrative fails to present the characters in terms of 'good' and 'bad' and if, especially, she suggests there should be no simple categorisation of the 'bystanders', let alone the 'perpetrators', either overtly or otherwise, then this inherent complexity is in itself a useful lesson. As Langer points out (1998, p 190), pupils who view life in terms of moral certainties can be confronted, through the diversity of Holocaust narratives, by the moral complexities which engage human beings.<sup>25</sup>

Langer's approach points to a potential major shift in how we assess the 'value' of Holocaust Education. He suggests that pupils can be encouraged to use the

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<sup>25</sup> Developing this idea of the lack of certainty about moral values, Gergen (1999, p 9) suggests that if education is doubtful about absolute truths, it may be difficult to explain why an individual should be held accountable for his or her actions, rather than a family or other social group or influence.

text to confront and re-evaluate their own moral principles and their perceptions of humanity and society. They are not expected simply to gain some sort of 'moral instruction' from the lessons, nor to become galvanised into righting the wrongs of modern society, but to confront the grim and the terrible and be shocked. Questions about why we behave as we do or, more specifically, how the perpetrators believed that what they were doing was morally acceptable, are among those which Langer believes these lessons should address. The real educative value may be found in the opportunity to engage; the teacher herself is a partner in the process rather than an instructor. The implications of this will be addressed further in this thesis.

It may be argued that the theme of 'complexity' reflects in any case the contemporary approach to issues of morality. In an ironic twist, an understanding of the events of the Holocaust tends to oppose the acceptance of 'commonly held' views about anything, especially in the area of morality. The terrible events, in the perpetration of which thousands of ordinary Europeans were involved, could only take place because of commonly held views and accepted norms about issues of morality and citizenship within the Third Reich. Those 'values' which were apparently held in common by perpetrators could only exist because of the removal of any opposition (Haydon, 1999, p 132). Some educationalists have argued that any Citizenship curriculum would want to reinforce the pluralistic, liberal values which predominate in modern British society (Davis, Gregory and Riley, 1999, p 122). The question to be asked concerns the extent to which these values can and are challenged and whether such opposition should be allowed. In this context we need to ask whether Holocaust Education is concerned to perpetuate these values or to allow the development of opposition to these values. Certainly the language in which the pupils speak tends to reflect a contemporary common consensus on diversity, rights and individualism.

Moral confusion, and of unanswerable questions, are part of the discourse of HolEd. The teacher, by dint of a greater experience of life, has already learnt to incorporate these into her own framework. However, with the pupil, this is not yet the case. Kress (1989, 73) points out that children ask a great many 'why?'

questions, but that this behaviour is rare beyond childhood; this is because, as we mature, discourses are accepted which modify attitudes, approaches and language. When confronted with the narrative of the Holocaust, the pupils in the study clearly struggle with this process. Adam, from the Norfolk Community School, when first asked what he remembered from the lessons gives his immediate response as:

How the Nazis got away with this, doing this to the Jews. When you've finished the topic and you think over how many Jews were killed –

Adam's initial response is concerned with how the world at large *allowed* the Nazis to perpetrate what he knows to be unacceptable to usual human standards – and on such a huge scale. His own experience teaches him that he is punished for his own transgressions and that criminal laws exist to prosecute those who deviate. While he is experienced enough to know that miscarriages of justice do happen, the sheer numbers involved in these events and the evidence which he has seen himself, result in his inability to 'explain' how such terrible things could be perpetrated on so many people for so long. It may be that such an incomprehension is a mark of living in a reasonably healthy or stable society, where pupil responses to Holocaust Education fulfil the role of the canary down the mineshaft. When children begin to accept that such horrors are normal, as they are forced to in many places and at many times, then these lessons may offer a text to explore responses to individual suffering, but they will have nothing at all to offer in relation to society.

Interestingly, the confrontation with narratives about rescuers, and others who displayed special courage, are not aspects which the pupils tend to speak about. Rather they point to examples of moral complexities. One illustration of this is provided when Miss Mackie's class encounter the story of Police Battalion 101, who were ordered to shoot Jewish men, women and children. The pupils are asked to employ a method of 'silent conversations' (written comments on a large sheet surrounding a central information text) to discuss this. One group chooses to focus on the Police commander, Major Trapp:

- He feels like he can't do it. He is compassionate. He's quite reluctant. What do you think?
- I think the same because he doesn't want to do it so he passes the assignment onto the troops.
- Finally some of them feel ashamed.

Major Trapp's ethical dilemma is something which the pupils refer to on several occasions. It is interesting to consider why pupils at all three schools choose to focus on morally ambiguous characters. Perhaps here Lacanian theory, as illustrated by Žižek (1989), may offer an explanation for this, particularly through the discussion of 'the relation between the imaginary and symbolic identification'. Žižek writes about the distinction between imaginary identification, wherein we identify with the 'image' of what we would like to be in order to be likeable to ourselves, and symbolic identification as the location from where we and others observe ourselves in order to be likeable, "worthy of love" (p 105). The examples which Žižek uses to illustrate this demonstrate that the means of identification may not always be obvious; in particular, an identifying trait may be a weakness which we recognise in ourselves. This is the case, suggests Žižek, even with Hitler:

In his public appearances, people specifically identified themselves with what were hysterical outbursts of impotent rage – that is, they 'recognised' themselves in this hysterical acting out. (op cit p 106)

Aspects of the text with which pupils may identify, therefore, may not be those which educationalists can easily predict. Narratives involving individuals may 'speak to' pupils – prove to be 'surprise hits' – for any number of reasons and perhaps this accounts for the popularity of examples of 'unworthy heroes', such as Oskar Schindler. Rather than take from his story the lesson that 'even wicked, self-centred people can do good things', perhaps the identification trait is more related to his failings than to the consequences of his actions. If the Holocaust narrative as a whole is about the mess of humanity, then it is more difficult to see any linear progression towards salvation; the brighter aspects of

the story become ‘accidents of goodness’ rather than being recognisable in terms of admirable personality traits to be emulated.

When we return to the issues of ‘hope’ and ‘courage’, it is clear that the learner is in danger of desiring the quality of courage but, at the same time, perceiving that she cannot be viewed as being courageous. This disparity also creates a sense of loss and may, Britzman suggests, result in a tendency to reject the presence of such values in others in order to keep the experience of such loss at bay. Rather than create a gap between the image of a courageous hero and oneself, it may be easier to conclude that we cannot possibly adapt ourselves to that image. It is perhaps easier to look, as a number of the pupils in the study chose to do, at the less heroic characters – the police commander of Battalion 101, the man in the crematorium<sup>26</sup> – and to conclude that one could not pass any sort of judgement on their actions. While one might acquiesce to the injunction ‘not to be a bystander’, identification with the weakness in those who did exerts a stronger pull. This is the ‘complexity of motivation’ which the teachers value.

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<sup>26</sup> The crematorium worker cited was almost certainly a Jewish prisoner operating under considerable duress. However, what is important here is that the pupils saw the man as doing a job, as being part of the process and evaluated the role accordingly, as they perceived it.

## 8 LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

### 8.1 RIGHT ANSWERS: IMPOSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Asking questions for which there is no 'right' answer was continually stressed in the lessons observed. Miss Mackie at the East Thames Boys' School discusses the role of the Einsatzgruppen, responsible for shooting groups of Jewish men, women and children. The questions she asks are attempts to consider the decision-making processes of those involved:

Miss Mackie: "Why do you think [the Jews] did as they were told? Why did they dig their own graves before getting shot?"

Pupil: "Is there a wrong answer?"

Miss Mackie: "There isn't a wrong or right answer; I'm asking you. I don't know the answer to this question."

Of course, Miss Mackie does have some ideas which she may or may not share depending on how the pupils' discussion goes. However, asking unanswerable questions is part of the aim of the lessons; the apparent inability of pupils to make sense of the events within recognised frameworks of humanity and society is described as a further indication of the importance of the lessons. For example, Mr Simons describes his aim for any topic in RE teaching as:

'does it raise enough questions about what implication does this have for belief in God?' Clearly, the Holocaust has a huge one – the problem of evil and suffering and so on.

The questions the pupils ask are not so much concerned with 'what happened?' but 'what sort of view of humanity does this presuppose?' Perhaps, also, the pupils have not been given the vocabulary to approach these questions. They have been encouraged to ask the questions but have not been equipped with any skills to answer them. This is not often the case in schooling and it arises, not from any lack on the part of the teachers, but precisely because the lack of an

answer may be the lesson itself. Miss Overton and Miss Hall consider that the asking the questions is perhaps the most important aspect here:

JLC: What about - how do you answer questions – when they sort of - you mentioned one earlier – about ‘how can people do this?’ or – when this questions their view of humanity – how do you start to deal with that?

Miss Overton: I think the fact that they’re asking the questions is a good thing in itself, really. I think the fact of asking the questions is *maybe* a little bit more important than working out a definitive answer.

Miss Hall: I think I’ve gone for telling them that, you know, you think you’ve got the – you think you can give all these reasons – and then you’ll see the document or something – a monument - that just takes you back to the fact that it is completely incomprehensible and maybe that’s how it should be.

Quite clearly, the teachers have no answers themselves. Indeed, part of the discourse of HolEd is the implicit recognition that there may be no answers. For pupils, the idea that ‘the right answer’ to a question will not, in their lifetime, be supplied, is one to which they are accustomed. The idea that there may be no ‘right answers’ to a question can also be grasped; they have learnt to accept that there may be merit in different opinions. However, the internalization process of these acceptances is not easy, especially when the questions are not simply ‘academic’ but have real implications for their own approaches to life.

The engagement with apparently answerless questions is not unique to HolEd, but these are not simply any unanswerable questions. Those with which HolEd concerns itself involve aspects of emotion, responsibility, participation, agency, racism. Each one of these touches on the experience or social discourse of the pupils in ways in which other considerations in classroom lessons may not.

The asking of difficult, even impossible questions, is at the heart of the topic. The text of the Holocaust has no narrative framework and certainly no ‘conclusion’. Žižek (1991) points out that detective fiction, such as a Sherlock

Holmes story, only appears to have a conclusion when viewed in hindsight. Žižek also describes the filmgoer who sees the offered ending to a film as being a logical conclusion, even if several different possible endings have been shot (1991, p 61). Again, only with hindsight can the narrative be said to have a 'linear' appearance. Furthermore, Žižek adds, it is only if the narrative begins with the conclusion that a logical 'enchainment' can appear. However, while the Holocaust narrative comes to a sort of an end, too many questions remain unanswered. The deeds have clearly been done and the doers – or a few more prominent among them - 'brought to justice', but the motives remain a topic for speculation – fearfully so, since one of the stated aims of learning about this is to encourage some sort of prevention. At the East Thames Boys' School, Miss Hall considers the issue of 'answerless questions' before the course begins. Even after teaching about the system of international law designed to bring the perpetrators to justice, Miss Hall feels the main questions are still unanswered and, more importantly, believes that the pupils should be aware of this:

I think that we really show that we've got to get them to –[brief interruption]– if we get to [the lesson on] 'Judgement', like we really have to this year, then I think that will show. Because I was thinking it would end just like – there is no answer.

The possibility that there cannot be a logical or tidy 'conclusion' to the narrative, is also considered by the teachers at the Norfolk Community School. In discussing the issue of 'reaching a conclusion'. Mr Simons suggests that the pupils should be offered the theme (that is, 'there are no answers, only difficult questions') at the beginning of the course:

Maybe we should have raised the questions at the beginning and then said, 'well, look, not just this question, but others' and then said, 'well, look, we're going to look at the Holocaust'.

The best that can be hoped for is a sense of 'spiritual doubt' and perhaps this is an easier approach for teachers trained in Religious Education than in most other subjects. The possibility that the questions may be answered is less important

than the engagement with them. Such a 'lesson' is in stark contrast to much of the curriculum.

### *Difficult Knowledge*

When teachers struggle with the presentation of such a challenging narrative in the classroom, this is not simply a pedagogic predicament. The teachers themselves really have no answers – and this seems to be something about themselves or society which they are keen to teach. Miss Hall (East Thames Boys' School) talks about her own attempts to wrestle with the issues:

My moments of dawning, of complete incomprehension when it comes to the Holocaust have been away from the classroom. You know when you just have that moment, when you've studied it, and studied it, and you can give all these explanations and suddenly there's this moment when it's still – utterly incomprehensible.

To consider, at whatever level, that basic questions about oneself and one's humanity and one's place in society have no answers at all – and that this is itself The Answer, must indeed constitute 'difficult knowledge'.

When pupils grasp the full measure of the Holocaust text, they are forced to confront the reality of the nature of humanity. Questions about the nature of either 'reality' or 'knowledge' are essentially philosophical and certainly outside the scope of this thesis. However, the pupils in the study have come into the classroom with their own, clearly-understood concepts of humanity and society, developed within their own discursive frameworks. In confronting the text of the Holocaust, the pupils are challenged to re-evaluate and re-form these discourses. The concept of what it means to be a 'good citizen' or values which recognise implicitly a sense of 'common humanity' are threatened by the narrative. As Tom says, "I was just kind of shocked that one human being could do that to another one." Furthermore, the process of HolEd is deliberately designed to provoke confrontation with these discourses ("it just shocks the

students unbelievably”). Some aspect of ‘reality’ has therefore shifted for the pupils by means of this process. In the course of this, they have perhaps gained some sort of ‘knowledge’, but it is a destructive as well as a creative process, since the pupil is required to ‘give up’ some previously held ideas and frameworks. For some, it will require considerable re-evaluation.

The shock of recognising that they have gained the knowledge that they cannot find an answer is compounded by the realisation that the teachers do not have the answer either. When Miss Hall talks about the Nuremberg Trials, she expresses the hope that the pupils will see that there is not necessarily a satisfactory outcome in terms of justice and that no answers or conclusions can be drawn from the events:

Miss Hall: We try and look at different examples – Rwanda – and how – I think then, when they see me standing there going, ‘I don’t get it. There is no answer.’ Then, hopefully, then, they’ll see that.

JLC: You think that’s a good thing then?

Miss Hall: Yes.

JLC: Because - ?

Miss Hall: They need – it’s weird – they need teachers who know stuff ‘cos it reassures them. So I think that’s it – as long as they know that we know stuff, but on the big things we’re still working it out. There’s a balance – it’s tricky.

Miss Hall does not appear to have thought this out or expressed this before. She believes that she needs to have a sort of knowledge, a knowledge of “stuff” – historical facts and the ability to evaluate and discuss these – but she wants, at the same time, to teach her pupils that she possesses no answers to the ‘why?’ questions. There is some knowledge, therefore, that she must lack.

## 8.2 THE NATURE OF HUMANITY

Even where the narrative is presented in what Mr Simons calls a very “matter-of-fact” way, the lack of emotion and drama may also have the effect of increasing the sense of reality surrounding such horror. The ‘cold-blooded’ and ‘clinical’ way in which many of the atrocities were carried out renders them more chilling. Moreover, the apparently familiar framework of European society, institutions and bureaucracy increase the sense of horror. How much more shocking is the abnormal which appears normal. Many of the pupils interviewed spoke about the ‘ordinariness’ of victims, perpetrators and bystanders. When asked how she felt when watching film footage of the events, Marie (from the Norfolk Community School) chose to comment on the ‘round up’ scenes:

It did quite hit me when they got pulled out of their houses and that - because I wouldn’t like to have done that and pulled them out or been pulled out.

Arguably, the pictures of people looking ‘familiar’, fully clothed and having homes, make it easier to recognise the former ordinariness of their lives. Later ideas – camps, cattle trucks, nakedness and gas chambers – are so far removed from daily life as to make such recognition less easy. However, once the process of recognition has begun – ‘these were normal people, this could have happened anywhere’ – the horror may increase. Despite the removal of the events in terms of time and place, the pupils demonstrate that they can see the victims as individuals. Piers (Norfolk Community School), for example, clearly related this to real people and real circumstances:

Where I grew up – I used to live in London - there were lots of Jewish people there, like, at my school. I can’t imagine anyone doing that to them.

Recognition of the 'real and ordinary' people involved may even be extended to the perpetrators, and this will be considered further later in the thesis. Much has been written concerning the conditions – social and psychological – which enabled so many civilians to become participants in a vast discriminatory killing machine. Concepts such as social identity theory emphasize the fact that 'ordinary people' can commit 'extraordinary atrocities' (Fenigstein, 1998).

Identification with the perpetrators, while recognising the terrible nature of their actions, is also important for an understanding of the human condition. While pupils should be informed about the unique situations in which the events occurred, the reminders that such atrocities have happened since elsewhere, such as in Rwanda, indicate the streak in humanity which may be predisposed to such violence and hatred. As the Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar teachers are at pains to point out, in some respects, it might be true to say that the Holocaust could have happened anywhere.

In the classroom, the pupils in the study wrestled with the concept of responsibility of the individuals concerned. Generally, the pupils tended to see the perpetrators as 'ordinary people', not monsters, caught within an unusual social situation, as Barnaby, at the Norfolk Community School, comments on the crematorium worker:

You have to think that they had feelings too.

This encounter with the nature of humanity is indeed horrific. For a generation supposedly inured to graphic violence through television and video games, the pupils again and again cited the non-graphic horror as providing the shock. Even with a 'dramatised history' in the film 'Schindler's List', Bobby and his peers were affected by the thought of the hatred directed at the victims rather than any visual effect. It may be that the shock is largely engendered by encountering the effects of a destructive act on such a grand scale, perpetrated by seemingly 'ordinary people' towards 'real' people, some of whom may still be met with today. This confronts the pupils in ways difficult to ignore,

certainly within the context of the lessons. However, the use of descriptions of emotions appeared to be quite significant. The pupils are of course horrified as they would be by any gruesome portrayal, but the point of note here is not that the events themselves were disgusting or shocking, but what they revealed about the worst excesses of human behaviour. As Tom (Norfolk Community School) puts it:

Once they were in the Death Camps, it was the way they were treated - as if they weren't humans. They didn't know if they were going to be showered, sent off to work or gassed or burned. It was just...horrible. It just makes you feel....you just feel for them. It's horrible.

Tom chooses to highlight the torture of uncertainty, and the lack of recognition of the humanity of the other. The notion of 'humanity' resurfaced continually – either in terms of how the Nazis failed to recognise the humanity of others, or how their actions raise difficult questions about human nature. As Barnaby puts it:

It really makes you realize what people are capable of – and that's quite scary.

Since the text of the Holocaust presents perhaps the ultimate horror story, it is not surprising that it engenders a strong emotional response. The unpredictable nature of this response has important, and possibly even dangerous implications for the teacher. At the Norfolk Community School, Mrs Rotherham points out some specific elements in this process:

You have to give it a very careful introduction and set guidelines for reactions – because they don't think they're going to find it difficult because they're used to all this violence and so forth in films – and yet they do. Very much so.

Despite the ubiquitous nature of violent images in fiction and fantasy, real violence is something from which society expects pupils to be shielded. Pupils of around 14 years of age will have been introduced to possibilities of human ruthlessness but, for most of them at least, the reality retains the power to shock. Any presentation of the Holocaust in the classroom, for all its power, is a restrained text. Holocaust images may be used elsewhere to titillate (Bloxham and Kushner, 2005), but the discourse of HolEd ensures that the fascination with the horrific and the macabre does not fuel pupil motivation. The teachers at the East Thames Boys' School comment on this:

Miss Overton: It wasn't like a gory 'ooh, this is what happened'. The students were genuinely interested in what was happening, but actually in a thoughtful way.

Miss Hall: We spent very little time actually on the death camps.

Miss Overton: We didn't at all, did we? They'd had enough.

This is, of course, good practice in any school situation where the material can be traumatic, but there is also another aspect to this. The power of the 'horror-not-shown' often enables the brain to imagine something far worse. In classroom encounters with the text, once indications have been given as to the varieties of suffering meted out to the victims of the Nazis, the pupils' imagination may furnish details which are the more powerful for being unspoken. In this way, appearing to use restraint in selecting visual material may also have the effect of heightening the imagination. Grace (Norfolk Community School) comments on this:

Most of the passages really shocked me 'cos not just seeing it – like – seeing it in my mind, it was horrible.

Being presented with the images may be distressing enough but, as Grace's comment indicates, the process of 'thinking about it' can create a greater horror. Žižek (1991) compares the devices used by Hitchcock to evoke responses in his cinema audiences with those of Aeschylus. Both follow similar approaches:

according to which one must place the terrifying object or event outside the scene and show only its reflections and its effects on the stage. If one does not see the object directly, one fills out its absence with fantasy projections. [The] elementary procedure for evoking horror would be, then, to limit oneself to reflections of the terrifying object in its witnesses or victims. (p 143)

The eye witness accounts of the Holocaust, which both teachers and pupils value as a means of encountering the text, are important not simply as historical primary source material, but also as a reflection of the 'horror-not-shown'. The fact that such eye witnesses appear to be 'ordinary' people and generally speak in restrained, usually unemotional terms, serves to highlight the sense of hidden evil. Furthermore, if pupils have grasped the context and the unnatural nature of the Nazi process, this is the most important aspect. As Miss Mackie (East Thames Boys' School) points out:

And I think because we spend a reasonable amount of time looking at the 1930s, you know, they're shocked by Kristallnacht, so what's the point in going way overboard with the Final Solution?

There is yet another 'shock factor' present in HolEd. While the events of the Holocaust are terrifyingly awful, it may not be the sense of pain and suffering which evoke such responses in the pupils, as might be the case, for example, with a visit to the London Dungeon. Rather the questions which arise from these events – questions which remain even when the details of the events themselves have been forgotten – may account for the reactions. While the pupils in the study had little difficulty in describing what they had encountered by way of the narrative of the Holocaust, they seemed to find it more difficult to place the material in any sort of framework. For example, although Tom, at the Norfolk Community School, was generally able to express himself well, he found it impossible to talk about what he had learnt:

I was just kind of shocked that one human being could do that to another one. I just didn't think that one could do so much - and cause so much

pain and – it was just -shocking – I sort of - it was quite - I don't know – it was kind of – [sigh] – it was just really – bad to see that sort of thing – and you don't think it would happen.

Not only does Tom's response indicate an inability to make any sense of what happened, but it also makes clear the confusion engendered by the inexplicable actions of the perpetrators. In order to 'make sense' of this, the pupil must be able to accommodate the knowledge she has acquired within an existing intellectual framework.

### *Coping Strategies*

The process of Holocaust Education may suggest 'coping strategies', in that it recommends responses – traditionally, for example, by contrasting the roles of 'bystander' and 'rescuer' whereby rescuers are portrayed as ordinary people who displayed extraordinary courage (Totten, 2002). Since the re-evaluation of the immense difficulties facing those labelled as 'bystanders' (Kushner, 2000), educational objectives have been made more accessible, as exemplified by the 2006 theme for Holocaust Memorial Day – 'One Person Can Make a Difference'. This enables pupils to aspire less to heroics than to the more attainable goals of moral standpoints which can enable positive acts. Such responses are the desirable outcome of Holocaust Education articulated especially by politicians (Levi, 2003, p xiv). However, while such recommended responses enable both teachers and pupils to articulate the 'value' of HolEd, they do not provide any fundamental answers to the questions 'why was this allowed to happen?' and 'how could people act like this?'.

One group of pupils at the London school discussed issues of human responsibility with the idea that the perpetrators 'didn't act human'. Mohammad M's way of 'dealing with' the actions of the perpetrators is to refuse to consider them within a framework of the concept of what it means to be human. As the pupils discuss this, they attempt to make some sort of 'sense' of the facts before them:

Mohammad M: They didn't act human, the way that they killed the Jews. It wasn't a human thing to do, going around putting them into ghettos, like poisoning them with Zyklon B, shooting them, making them dig their own trenches. They weren't human.

JLC: They weren't human?

Mohammad M: They'd got some – twisted mind that they could –

Curtis: They were evil to a certain extent but, I think, Hitler, like, brainwashed them into thinking that the Jews were, like, the problem to everything and made everything, like, everything what had happened bad happen.

Mohammad M: They were quick to point the finger of blame, especially Hitler. As soon as he got power, he was like 'Jews this, Jews that', 'blacks this, blacks that' and he was just everything putting it onto them as if they were, like, aliens.

Mohammad A: Nazis could actually have been nice but Hitler made them – influenced them. Otherwise if they hadn't 've done what he said then they would have been killed or something worse.

Mohammad Y: I don't think the actual people were; the Nazis, they were just like Hitler. Because if there's like in the middle of a crisis, they're just like – it's just a simple way out of it, to blame someone else.

The language the pupils use is restricted, and the ideas are expressed with a certain naivety, but difficult issues of moral responsibility are being tried and reassessed in the discussion. Although the events are shocking enough to invite the judgements 'not human', 'evil', 'twisted minds', the pupils acknowledge that ultimately the horrors involve real people. This realisation is not far from Barnaby (Norfolk)'s comment about the man in the crematorium. Mohammad Y, however, reduces it to a level of common understanding: we all tend to look for someone to blame in a crisis.

Significantly, pupils generally choose to describe their responses in terms of their inability to ‘make sense’ of the events within an understandable framework:

I didn’t really feel anything because I couldn’t really accept that people could be like that because how people can just send people off to die – you just can’t imagine it. (Richard, Norfolk Community School)

I couldn’t believe what they were doing. Me and Mohammad couldn’t. (Mohammad M, East Thames Boys’ School)

Mohammad M wants to make it clear that this is not just a question of his own inability; he cites his friend, also Mohammad, as corroboration. When pupils learn about terrible events, whether it be contemporary disasters or historic cruelties, they may deal with the knowledge by means of an ‘escape hatch’ which enables them to believe it would never happen to them and, therefore, is beyond the bounds of real experience. Escapes include ideas that ‘I live in a more enlightened society’ or ‘I would have been strong enough or clever enough to avoid it’. The pupils whose emotions had been engaged, who had been confronted and shocked, appeared to understand the events enough to know what few options were open to those involved. This is a teaching approach Totten (2002) recommends, citing Langer’s (1982) description of “choiceless choices”. At some point perhaps the pupils had experienced a ‘jaw-dropping moment’ when the true implications of what they were seeing and hearing became real to them. Possibly, these were the moments that they chose first to relate, as with Nicki (Norfolk):

I really remember the bit where there was this big pile of shoes, because before that I thought – yeah, they killed a lot of people, you know you watch the video and you relate to it but you don’t kind of really – it don’t really hit you. And then I saw this massive pile of shoes and thought, kind of, where all those people had actually been wearing those shoes not very long ago, when they actually came into the camp. [my emphasis]

Claire and Lisa have experienced an extended scheme of work on the subject, which includes this visit, and have had the emotive experience of talking with survivors. Fatima and Jane have not.

JLC: Are there other events in history that could teach these lessons just as well?

Fatima: No

Jane: I think that the Roman Empire - and how they tried to take over the whole world. It seems like an earlier version of Hitler because they wanted so much to own the entire earth and to be completely all-powerful. And I think it's sad they had nothing else to do in their lives than to aspire to so much power.

Claire: I think nothing that I've learned equals to [the Holocaust]. It doesn't at all.

Fatima: Maybe it's because we haven't learned it - or we don't know about it.

Lisa: Yeah but the thing about the Holocaust - although a lot of other things are still bad and horrible, it doesn't amount to so much pain and suffering as in the Holocaust.

Jane: I think there was so much pain and suffering in the Holocaust because of the advancing technology they had. If the Romans had had nuclear warheads or any sort of armaments like that, it would have been pretty much the same but just a couple of thousand years beforehand.

Jane tries to fit the awful text into a recognisable framework that she can accept, one in which the enduring nature of humanity and society can be carefully placed – and at a distance. All totalitarian regimes are much the same in nature, Jane suggests, and the task of society may therefore be to avoid totalitarian regimes. Claire's response is simple; the economy of words is expressive in comparison to Jane's approach. Fatima suggests a rational approach; the Holocaust seems exceptionally terrible because they have been exposed to it. Claire and Lisa, however, are resistant to the idea of comparisons. They have been 'shocked' by the undramatic meeting with the survivor and heard her story; this was a real person, standing before them, who had experienced the terrifying

results of a racist, nationalist ideology which had uprooted Europe. The events have become real to them in a personal, emotional sense.

### *The Absence of the Thing*

In his discussion of Lacan, Žižek uses a story - Robert Heinlein's 'The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag' - to consider that 'reality', when properly viewed, is truly shocking (1991, p 15). In this story, Heinlein describes how a couple, having discovered that the world is not as it seems, are advised simply to drive home - but without opening their car windows. The views from the car are reassuringly 'normal' - people going about their daily lives in recognisable places. At one point, therefore, the couple decides to 'risk' winding down their windows just a little. The reassuring pictures disappear, to be replaced by a grey, swirling mist. Although nothing horrific occurs in the story, the disturbing element is found in the illusory aspect of 'normal life'. In effect, it takes only 'a little knowledge' to remove the comforting discourse of life as we experience and understand it. The glimpse of 'nothingness' in Hoag's story - a grey mist - which is the real world, may be not unlike the psychological effect which the text of the Holocaust presents. Perhaps we also tend to construct a safety capsule of reassuring discourses which function as a barrier between the 'eruption of the "Real"' and ourselves. The discourses of society and morality - what it is to be a 'good person' or a 'model citizen' - are revealed by this text to be unreliable, built on false, or at least, suspect premises.

The shock value inherent in this suggestion forms the central premise of the Wachowski Brothers' 1999 film 'The Matrix'. The film's true horror also comes from the idea that all we know as 'reality' is, in fact, nothing more than an illusory construct. However, the film also explores the implications of acquiring such knowledge. When the central character discovers early on in the film that he inhabits an illusory world which is far more comforting than the reality, he is offered the chance to return to the illusion. However, the illusion, and ultimately humanity itself, is under threat. Despite having to undergo a somewhat traumatic process to move from illusion to reality, he elects to do so, agreeing to live with

Knowledge and engage with reality itself outside the reassuring ‘matrix’, for the sake of humanity. In accepting this Knowledge, he displays true heroism. The converse of this – the comfort of Ignorance – is also explored in the film. A would-be betrayer asks that, as his pay-off, he be allowed to have his memory of reality erased so that he can live within the illusory matrix.

The premise of the film is a post-structural one: what if ‘this’ is all a construct or an illusion, and reality itself is too much for us to bear? The ‘Matrix’ is an action film; it is raw, stark and violent and relies on shock tactics which are both visual and psychological. Audiences enjoy it because they acknowledge that it is only a story. When the final credits roll, they can emerge back into the comfort of their own reality, perhaps with a *frisson* – ‘what if...?’ Having contemplated the Holocaust, however, discourses such as belief in the ultimate goodness of humanity, or the power of ordered society alone to combat moral chaos are less likely to be sustainable.

This is not to say, of course, that the shock value of the initial confrontation does not fade in time (possibly, with most, as soon as they leave the classroom and other, more mundane, issues clamour for their mental attention). However, it is not unreasonable to claim that A Learning Experience has taken place. The potentially traumatic nature of the text, which portrays the true horror of reality, may even set in motion waves of interaction and unease at the level of the unconscious.

It is also worth noting that many fictional classic horror tales centre around some terrible ‘Thing’, whether it be the fear of death or the future or industrialisation or science, or something more tangible. Lebeau (2001) describes fantasy in film as:

that which conceals something that cannot be symbolised, that veils an unbearable enigma. P 58

Žižek (1991) considers the lack of answers to be the ‘horror’ for postmodernism. Having discarded all meta-narratives, post-modern society may conclude that

any supposed central reality – ‘the Thing’ – is in fact no more than the sum of its parts, constructed by discourse. Now the ‘horror-not-seen’ is not a terrible Thing, but a reality which is essentially Heinlein’s grey mist. Žižek takes this thought to its conclusion:

Such a postmodernist procedure seems to us so much more subversive than the usual modernist one because the latter, by not showing the Thing, leaves open the possibility of grasping the central emptiness under the perspective of an “absent God”. The lesson of modernism is that the structure, the intersubjective machine, works as well if the Thing is lacking, if the machine revolves around an emptiness; the postmodernist reversal shows *the Thing itself as the incarnated, materialized emptiness*. (p 144/5)

It is not likely, of course, that pupils will be able to articulate this idea, even to themselves. However, the recognition that previously held frameworks and premises may need to be re-thought requires a response, and in some cases the pupil will be able to engage in subtle re-constructions of her own discourses as a result:

It shows you how we could eventually do it like everyone is doing it.  
(Samuel, East Thames Boys’ School)

The possibility that ‘something has shifted’, however marginally, can certainly be considered in terms of providing a learning experience. The threatened removal of comforting, illusory frameworks is shocking for adults; for children it is the stuff of nightmares. In some way, the perverted logic of the Nazis’ Final Solution to The Jewish Question is so bizarre as to defy its recognition as reality. This is highlighted in Benigni’s 1998 film *‘Life is Beautiful’* which caused controversy by attempting to portray the Holocaust with use of humour. The central character, Guido Cantarini, helps his young son to deal with the realities of life in the camps, by asserting that the whole process is an elaborate game of hide and seek. In discussing this, Wright (2000) points out that:

At one level, of course, the audience knows that the idea of a game such as Guido's is an absurdity. But arguably, in his absurdity Benigni creates space for us to reflect anew on the camp system. Guido's game is ludicrous precisely because the camp system itself was a highly bizarre universe, characterised by a myriad of rules and statuses and in which inmates brought there to be killed were for the intervening period of detention required to adhere to strict codes of behaviour, dress and organisation. (p 23)

Wright's ultimate uneasiness with the film is not its use of humour but rather the fact that the events are portrayed with too much realism. To be truly 'real', she argues, the portrayal must encompass the antithesis; the film's "style is not surreal or fantastic enough" (p 28). In other words, it does not jar or shock, because it appears to be situated within a normality which does not recognise any alternative realities.

### 8.3 POSSIBILITIES FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The acknowledgement, albeit implicitly, that the possibility of an immoral society exists, and that the framework of a tolerant and just society is a very fragile one, is part of the (largely unstated) implicit imperative of the Citizenship curriculum. While it is far removed from the simple objective of encouraging youth engagement in the democratic process, such an acknowledgement is present in the rhetoric of both Citizenship and Holocaust Education. Facing the horrors which racism and oppression can perpetrate is deemed necessary in order to combat their power. In defending Citizenship studies in school, Alibhai-Brown (2000) points out that through such study:

[Difficult topics like] the opium wars, the potato famine or the Amritsar massacre are understood rather than providing the potential for festering sores to damage our international relationships many decades later. (p 70)

One of the questions which the study sought to address was that of whether narratives other than that of the Holocaust could enable the same or similar 'learning experiences'. Both pupils and teachers do suggest other narratives which speak of the destructive potential of individuals, organised and rationalised by societies (pupils at both the Norfolk Community School and the Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar cited the 'Triangular Trade' and slavery in this respect), but the narratives of the Holocaust are particularly diverse, within living memory and accessible. The resources provided for schools include specialist packs, archival footage, day trips to Auschwitz and eyewitness accounts. This enables a greater surface of encounter than other narratives. Moreover the sheer weight of records, diaries and other material and the extent of human suffering and involvement is almost overpowering.

An area of initial interest was whether Holocaust Education had any place in contributing to Citizenship issues. Some of the teachers in the study spoke about the importance of considering other genocides and global conflicts, and the East Thames Boys' School included a lesson on these in their scheme of work. Furthermore, the discourse of HolEd is emphatic that the 'lessons of the Holocaust' are not simply of academic interest but are of modern significance for civic society. Jane (Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar School) expresses this:

It shows you what mistakes people made in choosing Hitler and choosing the Nazis, and it just makes you more aware of things - of politics. It just brings it home to you that what you think should count.

For it to be 'brought home', pupils may need to construct texts which relate to themselves and their own identities, in relation to surrounding social discourses such as disaffection with party politics, global issues, anti-racism and so on. There may also be tensions and conflicts between the pupil's identity and that of the society in which she wishes to function. In the context of gender identities, Schendler (2002) states that, when dissonance occurs between conscious and unconscious identities, pupils may construct texts of their own, in terms of their

own approaches and perceptions and behaviours, in an attempt to resolve these differences. While this may lead to problems which are observed or continue unobserved, this may also, Schendler suggests, create fruitful possibilities:

that we need to meet our students at these sites of discomfort. (p 124)

In acknowledging the space between the external (curriculum) and the internal (pupil experience and understanding), it is possible to look for the manifestations of 'fits' and 'hits', or of what Donald (1992) calls "oscillations, slippages and unpredictable transformations". For Donald, the relationship between the demands of the state and personal identity surface in the creation of 'cyborgs', to use Haraway (1991)'s term – citizens whose individual identity is linked with the techno-political machine of an ordered society. An understanding of the natures both of humanity and society are crucial to the process, and part of this is the acknowledgment that there are difficult, even unacknowledged unconscious elements. Such considerations are brought into focus as Donald explores the way that, within the process of training 'active, responsible citizens':

there is always a dark obverse to it, a story of uncertainty, anxiety and fear. (p 97)

Donald's objective is to consider how a truly 'democratic' education process can be developed which would take account of both social organisation and individual agency, although it should be noted that he is dealing in terms of the macro structure rather than classroom practice. In the course of this, Donald argues for a dynamic definition of cultural and linguistic literacy. The processes involved in developing identity and a sense of subjectivity cannot be explained either by sociology or psychology alone, but are the product of a more complex dynamic between the pedagogic and the performative. What he terms 'the soul of the citizen' (1992, p 96) cannot be subjected to laws or controls of the state, but develops as a result of:

an enactment of machinery and soul, of normality and actuality, and of authority and agency always in dynamic relationship to each other. (op cit p 96.)

Issues of representation are crucial to this process, according to Donald, and he explores some representations of the 'dark obverse' in post-Enlightenment culture. The way in which Donald approaches this appears to offer opportunities for the use of the text of the Holocaust in this context.

Donald points to the 'messy' periods of human history at the confluence of socio-political ideologies and events. The need to acknowledge this instability, the dark underside of society, is, argues Donald, vital for the development of a truly popular political approach. There can never be a single social identity and any political culture which does not deal with 'heterogeneity and fragmentation' is doomed to failure. Politics must take account of fears and anxieties which are signified by the fantasies of popular culture and, thereby:

be aware of the possibilities implicit in the critical manipulation and enjoyment of symbolic forms, the pleasures of the confusion of boundaries, and so also sensitive to the need for responsibility in the aspiration towards community that always remains to be brought into being. (p 121)

In other words, it is only by acknowledging the terrible reality of human potential that a society can hope to address its functionality, and only by a confrontation with the dark side that any truly effective educative process can take place. An education system which does not recognise the undercurrents of anxieties and fears present in society as a whole cannot be effective either in 'training' citizens or educating the child. The asking of difficult or unanswerable questions, such as those presented in the text of the Holocaust, is central to this.

The process of Holocaust Education may alert the pupil to the presence of the Beast, but it does so using language which suggests that the Beast can be tamed. The pupil is encouraged to 'watch for the signs', not to be a 'bystander', to

condemn racism and to make sure nothing like this ‘ever happens again’ – at least in the pupils’ own social sphere of influence. The pupils themselves cite this as a reason for studying the topic:

And to think that people knew about it and it took them ages to do something about it and I think that to have it on the curriculum, it'll help to prevent that sort of thing going on for so long again. (Claire, Buckinghamshire)

I was going to say that I think it will help us see the signs if anything like that starts to kind of happen again. I think it will make us more alert to the consequences. (Polly, Norfolk)

This is useful and reassuring, and enables the pupil to take away positive reinforcement of already-held values from the lessons – although whether sufficient people in society would indeed ‘recognise the signs’ or be moved to act is, of course debatable. Indeed, it is an ever-present concern to many in democratic societies that minority groups are vulnerable to prejudice and hostility. However, the knowledge that the Beast – the capability of so many citizens to perpetrate evil - lurks somewhere and that, moreover, the teacher has chosen to share this ‘adult secret’ remains both disconcerting and empowering. In effect, exposure to the narrative of the Holocaust may be seen as some sort of ‘initiation rite’ into the reality of what it means to be a citizen in society. There may also be an unconscious recognition on the part of the pupil that the Beast may never, in fact, be truly overcome but only held at bay, and that the rationales for Holocaust Education, while reassuring, may turn out to be nothing more than a case of whistling in the dark.

## 9 TEACHING 'THE HOLOCAUST': THE DYNAMICS

### 9.1 ENGAGEMENT

#### *Engaging the Emotions*

When pupils were asked initially what they remembered from their lessons about the Holocaust, specific incidents they had seen or read about were often recalled first. Classroom material encountered included photographs, video clips of contemporary film, interviews with perpetrators and extracts from films such as 'Schindler's List'. These provided dramatic visual images which the pupils chose to mention first. However, of particular interest was the tendency of a significant number to recount their reactions and feelings without a prompt, moving straight from the cognitive to the affective. Tom (Norfolk), for example, begins immediately to empathise with the victims:

Once they were in the Death Camps, it was the way they were treated - as if they weren't humans. They didn't know if they were going to be showered, sent off to work or gassed or burned. It was just...horrible. It just makes you feel....you just feel for them. It's horrible.

The expression of such sentiments initially and without prompting suggests a number of factors. They may have assumed this was, in a sense 'a right answer', despite my earlier disclaimers and that, for some reason, they believed an emotional response to be what I was seeking. However, the possibility of this being the main memory – that is, their own emotional response – may be more likely; an emotional response is often recalled before the details of what occasioned it (Sherman 1999, p 40). While the initial question of "what can you remember?" was intended to 'set the scene' and focus the thoughts of the respondents, the immediate appearance of the emotional memory was an unexpected element, which occurred across the groups and schools. Clearly their own responses were significant, although the nature of the emotional responses and what occasioned them appeared to differ.

Dealing with emotive issues is a central feature of school life as a whole. Zinberg, Boris and Boris (1976) report on a study between 1968 and 1971 of how certain groups of teachers and students dealt with emotional issues in the 1960s, such as racial bigotry, sex and drugs. While Zinberg was 'puzzled' by the premise that teachers were expected to 'indoctrinate' pupils in certain shared liberal values, he came to the conclusion that:

It was how people dealt with their feelings about these matters that determined their response, not how much factual information was available to them. (p5)

Some of the pupils, like Anna and Emily (Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar), explicitly see engagement of the emotions as an integral part of learning and are able to express this.

Anna: You have to feel things because, like, then you sort of learn more about what it was like.

Emily: Yeah, you could sort of think 'well, that was interesting', but you wouldn't really learn anything.

Emily here uses the word 'learn' more broadly than in the context of acquiring factual knowledge. The emotional element is presented as the key to an empathic understanding, which is seen as a desirable outcome of the process and not merely 'a side effect' of this topic. Both male and female teachers and pupils in the study referred to the necessary engagement of emotions, although it might be noted in passing that boys more readily spoke in terms of what they 'thought' rather than 'felt'.

The teachers were asked directly about the emotional engagement of pupils and its pedagogic value. This had been included in order to reflect the debate on the manipulation of pupils' fears or emotions (e.g. Totten and Feinberg, 2001, p143). Indeed, this danger was addressed explicitly by five of the teachers. However, engagement of emotions was spoken of as being, not simply

unavoidable, but a necessary part of education by seven of the interviewees. When asked this presents 'a hindrance', Miss Downing (Buckinghamshire) is emphatic:

No. Not at all. No. I mean, you have to engage their emotions or they're not interested. Full stop. It's the - the best way to teach – curiosity, pain sadness, any emotion you want as long as you engage the emotion - then they're there.

This is a delicate area, however, and there may be a fine line between 'engaging the emotions' of pupils to effect learning and simply indulging in sentimentality. The narrative of the Holocaust is potentially a deeply affecting one and, while a simple aim of 'making kids cry' in the mistaken belief that this is all there is to learning is greatly to be avoided, it may be difficult for some teachers to recognise the difference. A comment from Mrs Hardy (Norfolk) delineates further this fine line:

I think you have to let them know that if they get upset that that's okay. I mean I do find it very difficult when I'm reading that letter from the mother<sup>27</sup> in particular. I think probably being a mother and having daughters, I just can't help myself. [And] I don't know how many times I've seen 'Life is Beautiful' over the last year and it's only just now that I can stop getting weepy at the end (*Laughs*)— even then I had to leave it for a moment before I could turn it off because I felt very full. But when I looked at the class, a lot of them were very full.

Several of Mrs Hardy's pupils also referred to 'that letter from the mother'. It was a letter from a mother to the foster parents of a Kindertransport child and, while it uses very stoical and pragmatic language, the knowledge of modern readers as to the likely fate of the writer can render the letter deeply moving. It could be argued, however, that the deliberate provocation of an emotional response does not denote learning; rather it may be understood as an abuse of

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<sup>27</sup> A copy of the letter is set out in Appendix 5

the power a teacher may wield to influence the behaviour of her pupils. It is identical to the weeping response to a film brought about by its director, who uses elements at his or her disposal to manipulate the emotions of the viewer. The use of the text of the Holocaust to produce a sentimental response is contrary to the discourse of HolEd and not the usual practice of most of the teachers in the study.

Mrs Hardy has not, of course, presented her pupils with sentimental experiences purely to make them weep. She wants them to 'learn something' from the material - to appreciate the depth and consequence of the events. However, the fact that the text of the Holocaust can produce such emotional responses is one reason why some teachers regard it with foreboding. The two History teachers at the Buckinghamshire school, Miss Nunn and Miss Hastings, who prefer not to teach any more than the bare minimum of the syllabus, are particularly concerned about the manipulation of emotions which the topic can allow. Miss Hastings states:

I find it very difficult to teach it. I don't think it's the easiest thing to do. It can turn into – “

Miss Hastings does not complete her comment, despite prompting, but makes it clear that “we don't push any buttons”. By this she appears to mean 'emotional' buttons. By contrast, at the Norfolk school, when the lessons begin, Mrs Rotherham sets aside time for 'preparation' of the class. She describes how she introduces acceptability of an emotional response:

I always begin with a preamble, and set it in context, that some of these things I'm going to react to, even though I've typed them out from somewhere or found them in research. I might even cry a little in my voice – and that it's alright to react in that way and that part of learning about this is tolerance.

Not only does Mrs Rotherham present this as 'acceptable' but it also provides a clue as to how the pupils are expected to engage with the material. Mrs Rotherham demonstrates the need for tolerance of others' emotional needs by demanding it for herself. How the class reacts to the material may also be influenced also by the wider relationships within the classroom. Christophe and Rimé (2001) point to several independent studies which appear to show that, where individuals shared with others how they felt about hearing an emotional story ('secondary social sharing'), the emotional impact was more intense than when they had simply listened to the story on their own. Christophe and Rimé argue that:

First, people store dense dynamic information while listening to the emotional aspects of another person. [Second], aspects of the self are challenged by exposure to the emotional narrative. People would thus be inclined to restore or reconstruct these aspects, a task requiring interaction with significant others. [Finally], collective interest may also be served by secondary social sharing as it contributes to the spreading of emotional knowledge within a community. ( p 248)

If this is the case, then the experience of shared emotional engagement may have a role in reinforcing the dynamics of the lessons, to the extent where the pupils both remember the lessons and respond as individuals in relation to the society around them. The cultural framework of the classroom during Holocaust Education may also be seen as presenting an integrated structure within which the emotional elements of engaging in difficult knowledge are limited by an accepted framework (Markus & Kitayama, 2001). Not only do the pupils unconsciously learn the parameters of this structure, but they also both perpetuate and internalize them.

Not only do the pupils and teachers in the study agree the centrality of this emotional engagement in the learning process, but Mr Simons (Norfolk

Community School) goes further and suggests in that the realisation of this is an objective of teaching this topic:

We mustn't be afraid of emotion. I think we're still a culture that is relatively ashamed of showing emotion and - if you can teach them something that moves them at that kind of level, then I think they've learnt a tremendous lesson that this is learning – an important part of learning. And maybe by doing it in the classroom, makes them realize that this is not – I feel this at home on my own and I don't tell anyone because I feel a bit ashamed of it. Well, if we can break that down then I think it's an excellent lesson.

Mr Simons demonstrates a concern for the development of the 'whole child'. He does not appear to be suggesting that his time in the classroom be dedicated to teaching about emotion but is clearly keen for pupils to understand and work with their own emotional responses. The introduction of a topic which encourages an emotional response is seen by him, as by others in the study, as an important part of the education of the pupil as a whole.

Work done by Bassett and Smythe (1979) indicates that expressing feelings and emotions can promote the development of trust in teacher-pupil relationships. This is especially found where there is an element of the mutual exposing of vulnerabilities, and this in turn may promote a fertile social environment for learning processes. Furthermore, pupils develop perceptions about a teacher's intentions and, in so doing, form impressions about her motives.

Although learning how to express and deal with emotional responses may perhaps in some cases be an outcome of Holocaust Education, it does not preclude the addressing of the 'grand aims' in terms of social change. Maxine Greene addresses the aspect of emotional engagement, in writing the foreword to Boler's *Feeling Power* (1999). She wishes to emphasize the role of emotions within such a learning context and argues for exploring ways of utilizing these emotions in the educative process:

Within western patriarchal culture, emotions are a primary site of social control; emotions are also a site of political resistance and can mobilize social movements of liberation. (p xiii)

Emotions can be manipulated, as Holocaust Educators are aware and about which they express caution, but they can also, as Greene points out, stimulate individuals to action. In Holocaust Education, the teacher's motivations are clear, not just in occasional glimpses but in the whole thrust of the course; her discourse is about respecting identity, confronting prejudice and promoting pupil involvement in the building of a just society. These are goals with which the pupils can identify, whether they choose to speak about anti-racism, as the boys in the London School, or in valuing difference, as in the Norfolk school.

Bassett and Smythe also argue that perceived similarities are important to the development and maintenance of attraction between teacher and pupil, which encourages a positive teacher-pupil relationship (op cit, p 205). Perhaps this is one element which lies behind the teachers' – and indeed the pupils' - instinctive acknowledgement that dealing with feelings was an important element in terms of Holocaust Education and quite separate from the simple acquisition of factual knowledge. In engaging with difficult knowledge, the skill which teachers may seek to impart is the ability to deal with such responses.

Pupils may take their cue as to how to speak about difficult knowledge from the teacher and re-present it in their own terms. The process of internalization is a complex one, as each individual sifts and organizes competing understandings. Such a process, which is by no means unique to Holocaust Education and which is a constantly occurring one, is part of each pupil's continuing development of her concept of selfhood (Markus & Kitayama, 2001, p 120). Pupils react, compare their reactions, sift and store knowledge and then add it to their own internal database of experience. If, at some level, the pupils are aware of this, then they may indeed consider their own moral self not changed by the lessons but 'better informed'. Prompts provided by the teacher will be significant in this respect regardless of whether the teacher was conscious of this or not. Even

where perceptions differ, the role of the teacher is likely to exercise a considerable influence. This is made clear in Piers' description of his teacher:

You didn't cry. Well, Mr Simons, like. He's probably been teaching it for years, but even when he was telling us about it at the beginning, he didn't like, cry, but his eyes filled up. None of us actually broke down – well, a couple of people – sort of – but it really made us think.

Although an experienced teacher, Mr Simons is in fact teaching the topic for the first time. He himself suggests a different memory of the same event and speaks at some length about how important it was to remain outwardly unemotional:

I consciously, as far as I can, keep a very neutral voice, very matter-of-fact – 'well, you know this happened' - and I think that's important. Because it carries its own emotion, apart from anything else.

Significantly, his perception is of his role as a dispassionate facilitator. For the pupils, however, he had been a significant part of the emotional experience. Despite the boy's assumption that years of teaching would have rendered Mr Simons less susceptible, this pupil, at least, appears to see the teacher's reaction as an indicator of appropriate response to the material. This disparity in perception is interesting and raises the question of how 'controllable' the experience was in the classroom. While something had occurred or shifted in the relationship between teacher and pupil and, in the process, had qualitatively altered the experience for the pupils, the teacher is unaware of this. In fact, he tries very hard to remove any trace of it in his approach ("a very neutral voice"). Nevertheless, he acknowledges the contribution of the topic to the possibility of a learning which opens the pupil to her own emotional responses. In terms of the pupil's personal development, this is, for him, a desirable goal, but this is certainly not a learning outcome which the text of the Holocaust alone could or should enable.

Some of the pupils from the Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar School discuss the uniqueness or otherwise of the Holocaust text. One of their teachers, Miss Downing, speaks about the visit to the Holocaust exhibit at the Imperial War Museum. In doing so, she speaks in terms of the educational value of the 'shock' effect on pupils, whereby the pupils meet survivors and are stimulated by the unexpected:

The trip itself is invaluable. The people they have there – it just shocks the students unbelievably by saying, 'I just want to tell you a little story' and then they do. And then, 'I was that little girl' and the students are all like instantly like 'really?', which is quite fascinating.

This understanding of the reality of the events and the essential unremarkableness of those involved serves to increase the shock value of the events. When Miss Downing describes the trip to the museum as "[shocking] the students unbelievably", she seems to be implying that this reaction is desirable because it signifies that 'learning', albeit unspecified, has taken place. By linking it with the 'shock', the implication is that this learning – which is valued learning - is essentially a psychological process.

### ***Engaging the pupils***

An emotional element in Holocaust Education may not simply be an outcome, but is also a significant factor in how some of the teachers evaluate the success of the lessons, since they perceive it as an indicator that the text is in some way being internalized by the pupils.

While teachers in the study cite a number of rationales for their commitment to Holocaust Education (including the combating of racism and the imperative for individual responsibility), the factor which they mention most often is the notable engagement of the pupils with the lessons. The general consensus among the teachers interviewed, including those who expressed doubts about possible outcomes, was that pupils were certainly engaged. Furthermore, there

is also a tendency to present the pupils' responses 'as evidence' for the 'effectiveness' of the lessons. The responses mentioned are both in terms of the work produced and in behavioural indicators:

9G really are seen as badly behaved and difficult and hard to handle, but there was a heartfelt response to this. [But] you can play the piece from the end of *Schindler's List* just because they've finished their work, their research. And you can mention that one of them is going to look at Schindler as a rescuer, and explain this clip at the end when they all visit his grave and they're people that he saved. The bell will go and they don't move an inch. And they will sit and they will wait for the piece of music to finish. Then they'll quietly pick up their bag and stand behind their desk. Now that's effect. Because usually they're noisy – they want to go for the door. (Mrs Rotherham, Norfolk Community School)

Mrs Rotherham observes that a 'badly behaved and difficult' class are engaged by the topic to the extent that, even when 'released' from their obligation to remain in the classroom, they willingly defer their freedom. Although the director of *Schindler's List*, Spielberg, has, of course, used the cinematic tools at his disposal to create a certain mood, the film's mode of address is not aimed at adolescents in a British comprehensive school watching excerpts. The pupils will probably have seen other film excerpts before and may not have behaved so memorably. Mrs Rotherham also suggests that this is only one example; she is remembering "a heartfelt response to this", by which she means the lessons as a whole.

The teachers at the East Thames Boys' School also speak about pupil engagement. Miss Hall speaks of the use of accounts which are "more emotionally shocking than graphically shocking", including extracts from Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*. She comments:

That silenced boys I've never seen silenced before.

Her colleague, Miss Overton, suggests that, rather than the pupils presenting immediate ‘trigger responses’ to emotive material, it is the nature of what they are studying which has affected the pupils:

I just think that by that point they appreciated the importance and the severity of the events that we were looking at, and that the events merited their full and complete attention really.

Such engagement is not seen as dependent on academic ability and no specific ability range was identified as responding better overall. Bobby (at the Norfolk Community School) describes his peers as being “blessed by being a top set” because of the additional maturity he feels it brought. Mrs Rotherham commented directly on this, adding that: “the most affected I’ve seen have been in middle sets, not in top sets, because of their experience of life.” Miss Hall talks about one of her classes, a ‘Set 5’, which includes pupils with special educational needs:

But if you look at, say, the Set 5, academically they’re not good historians – academically – but they are in some ways better at this [topic] because they are so open emotionally. They’re very honest people because – I think it’s because of the nature of having been in a Set 5 – it’s always a very small class, most of them have had one-to-one intervention from adults. They’re far more – they’ve got fewer inhibitions, partly because they’ve been in the same group – they’re probably in the same class, almost, for every subject round the school. You saw the class size, there’s maximum - what? 15? in there and so you get a willingness to discuss things that you don’t get in an apparently academically able class, which means they’ve had time to explore things. I think they understand a lot that bit better than some of the other classes do.

The manifestations of the pupils’ encounters differ. At the Norfolk Community School, Mrs Rotherham talks on several occasions about Ben H, who, although

not considered to be a particularly “able” pupil, writes a poem about the Holocaust:

Suddenly we’ve got something we didn’t ever expect him to write.

Ben H’s poem is unusual both because he writes about his own emotions and because he uses vocabulary which has never appeared in his work before. Mrs Rotherham anticipates the obvious conclusion by saying, outside the interview, that if he had not written the poem in front of her in the classroom, she would have doubted it was his own work. For the first time in the experience of his teachers, Ben H ‘opens up’ personally and describes his emotional reactions to the difficult subject matter.

Independence of thought is another trait which the teachers appear to value. Pupils in Miss Hall’s ‘Set 5’ at the East Thames Boys School, a number of whom have special educational needs, appear enthusiastic about the lessons. They are keen to contribute, as perhaps one might expect with a class containing those who are especially interested in gaining the teacher’s attention. Cognitive learning is certainly taking place (“Miss, the Germans thought they were the Master Race; they had racial purity”) and their enthusiasm for the lessons is not without understanding. This is illustrated in particular by one pupil’s perceptive comment; when introduced to the concept of ‘bystander’ as someone who ‘looks on’ without getting involved, he asks:

Miss, is it like Germany attacking Jews and America and the British are watching them?

Miss Hall sees this as a significant insight; certainly the pupil has gone beyond the parameters of the lesson’s introduction (“Can you think of a situation where you’ve seen someone do something wrong and you’ve done something about it – your actions have been in time to stop something – not that you’ve been a hero – but you’ve stepped in and did something. Any suggestions?”) For Miss Hall, this is an example of how connections can be made in the pupil’s mind,

signifying that learning – of a type not usual with this boy or his peers – has indeed taken place.

Sometimes pupils make evaluations and judgements which their teachers do not expect. At the East Thames Boys' School, Miss Hall reflects on her experience of this:

One of the things I remember most from last year is the shock when Jamal said to me, he said 'oh, miss, this is still happening now' and he's like 'why has nobody stopped it?'

It is interesting that Miss Hall reports such an extreme reaction ("the shock") on her part. As an experienced History teacher, she must have experience of pupils making links between past and present events and conditions; indeed, her own teaching may tend to promote this understanding. Perhaps Miss Hall is shocked by the fact that Jamal has been able to develop an approach to the text in the context of contemporary world events, when the text itself does not, this time, lend itself directly to comparisons. This is not a concept that Miss Hall herself has introduced and she is surprised to find that Jamal has made the intuitive leap on his own. Despite the fact that Miss Hall is also experienced in Holocaust Education and has expectations about what the lessons might achieve in terms of her relationship with the pupils, she does not predict the range of responses the topic might engender. In essence, she is amazed that Jamal has derived meaning for himself.

In spite of these claims, this perceived engagement with the material, surprisingly, could not be corroborated. At the East Thames Boys School, I observed a number of different classes with different teachers. My weeks spent at the school also provided opportunities to observe teachers and pupils interacting around the campuses, especially at the usual 'flash' times of breaks and after school. At the Norfolk and Buckinghamshire schools, I taught a number of different classes of differing abilities in several humanities subjects and observed the teachers in non-Holocaust Education lessons. At no point in all this did it appear to me that the behaviour of the pupils in these lessons was

as markedly different as the teachers describe. Generally speaking, standards of behaviour were good in all three schools and the teachers were experienced and skilled in classroom management. Even in classes which the teachers described in negative terms as ‘challenging’ or ‘difficult’ or ‘badly behaved’, miscreants were dealt with effectively and an impression of productive learning was the norm. Conversely, there were incidents of non-compliance within the Holocaust Education classes; on one occasion at the East Thames Boys School, a pupil was sent out of the classroom for flicking water from a bottle at his neighbour. Neither the quantity nor the quality of written work appeared markedly different in terms of output between what was offered in Holocaust Education compared to other topics.

Quite clearly, however, the teachers *perceive* an engagement about which they speak favourably. One possible conclusion to be drawn from this is that pupils talk to and with the teachers about the Holocaust in particular ways. In the perceptions of the teachers, at least, the nature of the classroom relationships had shifted. Perhaps these conversations suggest subject positions for both participants which offer possibilities for positive pedagogical relationships.

### ***Implications for pedagogy***

Throughout the schools in the study there were obvious differences in the pupils’ academic ability and maturity, but it is interesting that while this affected their use of language and approach, they tended to speak in terms of some sort of positive learning experience having occurred. The exception to this was the Buckinghamshire sample, some of whom like Fatima and Jane above, having been taught by Miss Hastings and Miss Nunn, did not speak in these terms. These two teachers clearly engaged with the text of the Holocaust, to the very best of their professional ability, but they were wary of it, resistant to obvious emotional engagement. Their responses indicated that, like the other teachers interviewed, they acknowledged the powerfulness of the text; Miss Hastings and Miss Nunn perceived in the text a power to subvert. While all the pupils in the study are presented with essentially the same text, the reading experiences are

quite different. This suggests that there is something in the classroom dynamic which conditions how the text is read and internalized, rather than a factor inherent in the text itself.

In Holocaust Education, while the narrative itself is unpleasant, those pupils who merely read or study briefly the events do not encounter the text in the same way as those who are invited to reflect on the experiences of individuals concerned and to respond in some way. Unless the lessons create *dissonance* between the world view, or discourses, of the pupils, and the material itself, the experience cannot be creative. The pupil may address these dissonances by attempting to ‘make sense’ of the narrative through the ‘screen’ of what she knows and feels. This screen is formed by learning experiences outside the HolEd lessons but may be employed to enable them to read and ‘understand’ the difficult text.

Josh (Norfolk) was asked what had struck him particularly about the lessons. He replied:

It’s not from anything I’ve learnt – it’s just like from my mum and on TV and that – but about how genocide still goes on nowadays and people still haven’t learnt – they’re still trying to get you to remember but it still goes on, like in Rwanda and Bosnia and, like there.

Josh’s choice of language here was interesting. He describes his knowledge as not having been “learnt” because it has not been acquired through school. In contrast, he refers to the lessons about the Holocaust as an attempt to encourage remembrance. Josh saw the lessons as being designed to provoke a behavioural response – ‘to remember’ in the active sense, as in ‘remembering a birthday’.

Pupils gain factual information in lessons which are complex and, on a number of levels, are not easy. At the same time, they may take the opportunity to re-evaluate a number of discourses and previously held values. This is essentially a task that each must perform for herself. That the pupils in these situations embrace the challenge may be partly due to the approaches they gain from their teachers. But also, perhaps, they may recognise that, contrary to the discourse of

HolEd, there is no clear path set out for them to take, and the decision of how to respond is entirely in their own hands. For these pupils, such a realisation – such a learning experience – may be empowering.

The pupils at all three schools were required to demonstrate factual knowledge, understanding and an ability to evaluate. The occasions on which such requirements were met appeared to be far less dynamic than those lessons where the pupils watched, experienced, questioned and discussed<sup>28</sup>. Rather than an ability to complete a written paper on the topic, one is left with the conclusion that learning of a different sort may occur when pupils are *unable* to express their thoughts:

Once they were in the Death Camps, it was the way they were treated- as if they weren't humans. They didn't know if they were going to be showered, sent off to work or gassed or burned. It was just - horrible. It just makes you feel - .you just feel for them. It's horrible. (Tom A, Norfolk)

I was just kind of shocked that one human being could do that to another one. I just didn't think that one could do so much - and cause so much pain and – it was just -shocking – I sort of - it was quite - I don't know – it was kind of – [sigh] – it was just really – bad to see that sort of thing – and you don't think it would happen – that sort of – (Tom B, Norfolk)

The experience of the classroom where the pupils are engaged with the content, discussing, producing thoughtful work, relating positively to the teacher may be an 'ideal' classroom experience. ("It feels like this is the teacher you should be most of the time." Miss Overton, East Thames Boys' School) There seems to be

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<sup>28</sup> As Jack (Norfolk) commented: I definitely think the way that we discussed not just writing things down, like, not all the facts in textbooks and read a few sources and that kind of thing. But with mostly discussion work and making notes, we remembered it afterwards, and I think that way allows you to learn quite a lot more. 'Cos when you're writing it's just mind numbing, you just write everything out, you go on auto pilot, but when you're talking about it, you actually think about it and it engages you more. So I think that's a better way of doing it.

no doubt in the minds of those interviewed that *some sort of educational experience* has taken place.

Traditional definitions of learning speak in terms of ‘meaningful learning’ which can be assimilated into existing cognitive forms or structures Ausubel (1963), as opposed to ‘rote learning’ which hangs in a kind of limbo, stored away in isolation, without making any sort of contribution to overall schema development. Meaningful learning is, according to Stones (1966):

an active process. [We] cannot say that learning has taken place until we can observe in some ways the changes in the behaviour. (p 51)

The changes in the behaviour which the teachers observe are short-lived, classroom-based: “they divert us with this”, “now, that’s effect”. ‘Successful’ classroom experiences – that is, when pupils and teachers speak in positive or enthusiastic terms, describing the lessons as ‘worthwhile’ in some sense – are essentially creative experiences and perhaps not easily measurable by recognised criteria. Miss Hall, for example, is of the opinion that learning from this difficult knowledge is possible, but her expectations are also modest:

I’m just happy if one kid in one lesson – suddenly there’s a moment of revelation. I think you’ve just got to be – happy with that. And I think this is the kind of topic where you can’t expect – everything that you would like to come of it. You can just hope to plant a seed and hope, even if it’s years from now, it adds – stuff adds up – and they get there.

The process of learning from this narrative involves not just the encounter with a difficult text, although that in itself may be both creative and unpredictable, but also the recognition of the nature of the learning experience by the pupil. At some level, she is asked to overcome a number of difficult hurdles which relate not only to the nature of humanity, but also to the process of learning itself. Even her teacher is prepared to acknowledge her own limitations in this respect. Osborne, Salzberger-Wittenberg and Williams (1999) consider how learning arises:

in a situation in which we do not as yet know or are as yet unable to achieve what we aim to do. It thus invariably involves uncertainty, some degree of frustration and disappointment. This experience is a painful one and if it is more than can be tolerated then it may be evaded. (p 54)

How does a teacher who is part of the discursive community of HolEd instigate this pedagogical process in these lessons as opposed to other lessons she may be teaching? In the process of Holocaust Education the teacher may locate a pedagogic discourse and position herself within it in a way which enables a new relationship with the pupil. The desire/empowerment dynamic which both teacher and pupil experience is a major factor in this re-location. Britzman (1998) writes about education as:

a frontier concept: something between the teacher and the student, something yet to come. The work of knowledge is not so much an accumulation of knowledge but a means for the human to use knowledge, to craft and alter itself. (p4)

This suggests a transformative process which is fashioned by the dynamics in the classroom, using the text as a tool. Dealing with difficult texts requires the development of a methodology which will enable engagement rather than avoidance. For example, O'Sullivan (2002) writes of humanity as being in "survival mode" in terms of the destruction of the world's resources, social patterns and demographics and so on, but as also 'in denial' regarding this crisis point. Writing in the first chapter of collected essays, O'Sullivan argues that transformative learning requires the courage to face this and must comprise the acquisition of skills to think critically in response:

We are in need of a resistance education that moves in the direction of cultural criticism and that includes moments of resistance and critical pedagogy. (p 5)

Such education has, at its heart, the promotion of an appropriate 'world view'. Previous ages had such world views; the shifts from medieval to industrial, and

to post-industrial 'Enlightenment' were each accompanied by new mythologies and visions of humanity. Post-modernism, by its very nature, struggled to argue that it could provide no 'world view'. Now humanity finds itself in "survival mode", we cast around for:

a wider cosmology in which human actions are embedded. (p 6)

For O'Sullivan, the challenge of education at this stage in the twenty-first century is the development of new modes of living and relating. Such a process must involve the realisation of the nature of human society and a new "grand narrative" which can help to confront the "denial, despair and grief", enable critical reflection and promote active engagement. In short, transformative learning for O'Sullivan is about learning for survival in response to world events. It is interesting to consider whether Holocaust Education can offer a means to engage with this. If it is not about making statements, but encouraging engagement with the reality of human possibilities at an unconscious level, then perhaps it has potential as a tool to help in this process.

## 9.2 ISSUES OF EMPOWERMENT

When engaging in the classroom with difficult knowledge, there may be a sense in which the act of sharing in the experience could be seen as empowering. In none of the schools observed did any teacher indicate that he or she was abdicating a normative role within the institutional structure of the school. However, interestingly, some pupils did speak in ways which suggested *an experience of* empowerment. Irrespective of the possibilities of *real* empowerment or otherwise, the *perception* of such empowerment is likely to affect the way in which the pupil views the classroom experience.

This is illustrated by pupil comments at the East Thames Boys' School where, before beginning this topic, the History teachers make use of a simple strategy to encourage tolerance of other pupils' views and reactions. The 'ground rules' are agreed beforehand by the pupils, who draw up their own code of behaviour from

a list of possible behaviours provided by the teacher. The fact that the teacher selects a 'short list' to present demonstrates that she is ultimately in power. However, the pupils speak about this in ways which suggest a sense of their own empowerment. In the pupil interviews, several pupils elected, without any prompting, to mention this preparation themselves. The way in which they did so was significant:

Mohammed Y: Miss, I've just remembered, right at the beginning of this section, yeah? Our teacher gave us a list of rules that we ourselves thought were right, so if – to prevent like people, er, taking it in the wrong way, you start telling them from the beginning, that 'you can't, like, laugh at anyone's opinion, you have to be understanding; put yourself in other people's shoes' and that kind of thing. So it really, like, stomps out all the wrong-taking.

JLC: But does that work? Because teachers can give you lists: 'this is how you're expected to behave' and some people do, and some people just ignore it.

Mohammed Y: no, but -

Mohammad A: - but, miss, she gave us them to *choose* -

Samuel: we had to choose the right ones.

JLC: Oh, right.

Mohammed Y: So it really gives you *freedom*.

Samuel: We worked out what we thought was right and put them together and made one list.

JLC: Okay. And tell me again what sort of – rules these were, what they were.

Mohammed Y: 'Don't laugh at anyone's opinion', or 'when you see – when you watch a video or when you read a text, don't start taking the mick out of the people –' and that sort of thing.

Although the agreement of ground rules is a fairly basic strategy for facilitating group activity and is often used in classrooms, this had a significant effect on the pupils' *perception* of power. The rules themselves appear to be fairly unspectacular, and the fact that Mohammed Y himself concludes "and that sort

of thing” suggests that he expected them to be familiar to me. However, the element of choice was crucial; the pupils are extremely eager to make this clear – “ she gave us them to *choose*” – and to dissuade me from thinking that this was ‘just another’ classroom strategy a teacher might use to effect pupils’ behaviour (“no, but”, “but, miss”). Mohammed Y is clear about the effect on them: “it really gives you freedom.”

It is not clear whether the behaviour of the pupils towards each other or with regard to the seriousness of the subject has been affected as a result. However, clearly both teachers and pupils perceive this exercise to be an important factor in determining the ‘success’ of the lessons, mainly because of the fact that the pupils had been ‘empowered’ to choose. The element of perception is important here, because the choices had been made from a list provided by the teacher; they were not totally ‘free’ choices by which the teacher would have been constrained to abide. The power shift *had not, in fact occurred* by means of this, but in some respects it had been perceived as having done so.

Such a strategy is not, of course, unique to Holocaust Education and is commonly used elsewhere in teaching. However, the fact that issues of choice and ‘freedom’ form the introductory lesson to the course may undoubtedly help to develop positive attitudes to this unusual topic. The teacher emphasises by this activity that the lessons require agreed rules, a consensus and pupil ‘ownership’. By this means, she is engaging in the essential task of ‘building community’ to enable trust and commitment – an openness to the views of others and new ways of being (bell hooks, 1994, p 40). It could also be argued that the unusual, emotion-charged atmosphere of the topic gives this simple device an added sense of significance. Clearly these pupils recognised it as such.

In seeking to observe the complexities of classroom interaction, Robinson (1994), notes that the process of interaction is a dynamic and fluid one, in which ‘good’ teachers empower their pupils and are, in turn, empowered in the process (p3). Creating the right conditions for a true experience of empowerment is not easy. Indeed, there is a persuasive argument for the view that the pupil can never

be empowered within a normative school experience. As Gore (1993) points out, pedagogy involves power relationships within the classroom in both obvious interaction, such as between teacher and pupil, but also less obviously in terms of school hierarchy, parents and so on. Furthermore, the desire to embrace a radical educational discourse involves the acknowledgment of the practice of pedagogy as potentially disempowering.

The desire of many teachers to reduce the effects of potential disempowerment cannot easily be fulfilled. Finke (1997) gives examples of teachers whose approach is aimed at subverting the power relationship usually present in classroom relations, but who, with their pupils exist firmly and obviously within the framework of the school institutions. Going further, McWilliam (1997) describes how critical pedagogies may themselves embody oppressive regimes in that pupils may not *want* to address radically some aspects of their society. For Finke, the classroom is not 'universal and generic', but a located space which operates within a specific institutional culture (1997, 117) - a culture that serves a range of disciplinary and institutional objectives (Foucault, 1975).

For Foucault, power is the essence of every relationship. Power incites, enables, prevents, limits; power is exercised, not possessed. In discussing the Foucauldian concept of *pouvoir-savoir*, Gore (1993) points out that power and knowledge are linked and form 'regimes of truth' not only in society on the macro level as Foucault used it, but also in the micro-social level, that is, in the exercise of radical pedagogies within the classroom. For Foucault, the significance of 'regimes of truth' was in the exploration of the development and operation of discourses in terms of power.

By truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true'. (Foucault 1980, p 132)

An 'intellectual' or 'holder of knowledge' occupies that role by means of her position in a discursive society rather than because she embodies any 'universal

truth', according to Foucault. While one can recognise current regimes and technologies and act to shift and change in reaction to them, creating new continual possibilities for freedom, it is not possible to escape totally from regimes of truth and technologies of self, according to Foucault's analysis. From this basis, Gore argues that it must be acknowledged that radical discourses and even feminist pedagogies have a repressive, power function as much as any other. As an example of this, Gore points to the circular seating pattern favoured in progressive pedagogical practice. There is nothing inherently liberating in this, Gore reminds us, as many have pointed out, just as there is nothing inherently oppressive about seating in rows (op cit, p 58).

From this, it might be argued that Holocaust Education cannot hope to offer empowerment any more than other approaches. Gore ( p 107) describes how critical theorists such as Giroux and McLaren have been reluctant to suggest classroom practices which will promote shifts of power. She points out that much of this reluctance stems from the dilemma of offering prescriptive dogma against which the whole tenor of their work strives. However, this leaves teachers with the duty both to consider the theories, their limitations and critiques and to determine consequently how to navigate the minefield they have planted. It is small wonder, says Gore, that teachers have not been swift to work with critical pedagogical approaches of their own. The more obvious approaches are insufficient to overcome the weight of power which keeps pupils positioned as disempowered objects at the mercy of structures and relationships.

The acknowledgement that all pedagogies, even feminist and critical pedagogies, can be inherently repressive not only raises questions but also, for interested teachers, must have practical implications. For Gore (1993), these are that she has "ceased trying to relinquish [her] authority, in search of "the *non-hierarchical classroom*" (1993 p 142) and has admitted a recognition of the importance of reflexivity – of self-critiquing. Consequently, Gore argues for a pedagogy which addresses and alters relationships within the classroom.

The possibility that student and teacher might be able to learn from each other, as a result of a shared classroom experience, is widely acknowledged (e.g. Gore,

1993), although in most political/educational discourses the expectation is that ultimately the pupil will 'receive knowledge' from the teacher (bell hooks, 1994). Pupils are trained to see themselves as the receptors of knowledge, not the instigators (bell hooks, op cit), but a classroom which truly seeks to empower pupils engenders a sense of "mutual responsibility for learning." Offered an opportunity for reflection, the History teachers at the East Thames Boys' School consider how they are positioned in relation to the pupils in terms of 'knowledge':

Miss Overton: "Well, I think that's another reason why they respond so well – because they realise that we're learning every time as well when we do it. Because we don't have all the answers, do we - to this? We don't - I don't – and I'm sure you don't either – ever pretend to, and I think it makes them more open to –

Miss Hall: - and we do make it that much more explicit, don't we?

Miss Overton: - because we are really just like them. We have a bit more background knowledge, but as far as humanity's concerned –

These teachers not only have no answers to the questions they have raised but also cite the recognition of this by the pupils as a significant factor in the success of the lessons. The expectation of the London teachers is that the pupils will realize that the teachers are "just like them", disempowered in terms of privileged knowledge. They have, in effect, brought the pupils to the edge of the abyss in offering them the full confusion of a 'meaningless' text. Neither is this necessarily a contrived position, as Miss Hall adds when interviewed on her own:

They like that notion that you're treating them like an adult and you're saying, 'I don't know either' and that you're sharing that situation with them as an equal. I think that's quite positive.

Nevertheless, there is still considerable room for the assertion of teacher wisdom. As has been noted earlier, pupils also look to teachers for clues as to how to react. As Miss Hall puts it:

They need –it’s weird – they need teachers who know stuff ‘cos it reassures them. So I think that’s it – as long as they know that we know stuff, but – on the big things we’re still working it out. There’s a balance – it’s tricky.

The tension between knowing and not knowing is clear here. Teachers must retain some elements of ‘pouvoir-savoir’ in order to enable the engagement with the ‘unknowable’. Among the criticisms levelled at contemporary pedagogical theory is the argument that the embracing of post-modern, post-structural and psychoanalytic approaches leads to the conclusion that there are no absolutes and, as Guerra puts it:

[That there is] no foundation to knowledge, that teachers occupy no privileged position, and that whatever students say is correct as long as it derives from some strange place within themselves (2002, p 4).

Perhaps the main difficulty with such a position is the meaning given to the word ‘privileged’. To possess, as the teachers at the East Thames Boys’ School point out, acknowledged factual knowledge does not detract from their abilities to be partners in learning. Indeed, the relinquishing of power in terms of having any pretence to ‘understanding’ may be seen as an essential act within the discourse of HoEd. The sense of awe expressed by both teacher and pupil suggest that both are aware of this at some level.

While it may be that the actions and reactions of the teacher is central in Holocaust Education, she may remain unclear concerning the rules of reception of the material by the student. In a sea of confusion, emotion and exploration, both pupils and teacher flounder together. It is perhaps for this reason that Holocaust Education ‘works’. For the first time, the teacher appears to be saying to the pupil, ‘I don’t understand what this is about, but I’m offering it to you.’ For both to enter this sea of confusion together, however, a change in the pedagogical relationship, specifically in terms of ‘power’, is required. It is a

frightening experience for the pupil, to perceive that the teacher has relinquished power deliberately – but it has the potential to be exhilarating also.

### 9.3 THE ‘GOOD’ HOLOCAUST TEACHER

The grand aims and rationales for HolEd are what society demands for the lessons and, also, what gives them status. The acknowledgement of this status may begin in advance of the lessons themselves. Pupils are bound to have expectations about the nature of the course before it begins. The treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany is often encountered by younger pupils both inside and outside of school. Even if they have never, for example, heard the details of Auschwitz or read ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’, the serious nature of the events is likely to be understood by means of some sort of ‘folk knowledge’, perhaps through television or overheard conversations. They may therefore approach the topic with a basic idea that the material is going to be challenging, even if they are unaware of the nature or extent of the challenge:

I heard about the Holocaust before we actually learnt it. In Year 6, I think, I heard about it and everyone said it was a horrible thing and I didn’t realize how horrible it was but now I realize it *was* horrible. (Marie, Norfolk)

How the teacher prepares to introduce the topic is a key element in how the pupil will react. In the East Thames Boys’ School, the teachers were asked about these aspects of preparation. The pupils are told in the first lesson that they will be studying a terrible event and that they will be looking at “difficult issues”. Later on, it emerges that the home environment is also involved in providing a sense of anticipation. Letters are sent to parents at the beginning of term, informing them that the History lessons will involve the study of genocides, and asking them specifically to talk with their child about the lessons. Notifying the parents in advance about the nature of the lessons is recommended in resources for teaching the subject (Wieser, 2001). However, this also alerts

the pupils to the fact that they are going to be encountering a difficult learning experience, to the extent that their parents need to be warned about it.

The presentation of such a volatile subject in the classroom will inevitably raise questions for the teachers themselves. As Britzman (1998) point outs, preparing to deal with ethnic hatred, genocides, state terror and worse provides the impetus for examining one's own theory of pedagogy. It is necessary to confront not just the difficult narratives that encompass the intense suffering of others, but also to examine the tensions and conflicts which exist for and within both the educator and the learner. Britzman notes:

If educators are to do more than hope that one learns from – as opposed to about – history (including one's own history), then the pedagogical staging of experiences of social violence must attend carefully to what the study of aggression might open. Moreover, how does the very tangled engagement with experiences of victimhood and the aggressor become difficult for educators themselves? What happens when that other war, the war within, meets the conflicts and aggressions enacted in the world outside? (1998, p119.)

As the teachers in this study consider their own approaches and experiences, some interesting responses raise questions both about the relationship between teacher and subject material and between teacher and pupil. For example, one of the teachers was concerned that the HoEd experience might have 'derailed' him slightly from his usual approach. Mr Simons at the Norfolk Community School, an experienced teacher but engaging with this topic for the first time in the classroom, expresses concern as to whether he is presenting the issues he wants to address as a teacher of R.E.:

If you looked at the question of suffering: 'why do people suffer?' And you can get all sorts of answers – they'll give the answers in general. And then you say, 'but what if it reaches such a point that there doesn't seem to be an answer? – and that's what we're going to look at in the Holocaust'. And then when you do deal with the Holocaust, what you've done is to

have taken their simple answer – oh, ‘if there wasn’t suffering we’d never live’ – then you’re able to push that further, able to push that deeper and say, ‘well, is it as simple as that?’ and finally you’d get back to the question of faith. Are you like Job, who says, ‘yet though you slay me, yet I will trust thee?’ or are you like Ivan Karamazov who shakes his fist at the sky and says ‘no, there’s no such being’? I’d like to think – and we did get there but that’s where I want to get. I’m doing RE teaching. And these are the big issues that I would want them to reflect on as well as the question of racism; however can we let these things happen? How can we stop them happening? These are important issues and relevant issues but they’re not right at the heart of it for me, as an RE teacher.

Mr Simons is clear about the importance of addressing issues such as racism, but he is not sure that the pupils have grappled with what, for him, are the real dilemmas and unanswerable questions. The interviews with his pupils demonstrate how engaged the pupils are generally in his lessons, how impressed they are with his own emotional engagement with the material and that the experience has had a definite impact on them. Mr Simons is wrestling with his own role as a teacher as well as attempting to define the goals he wishes to achieve. Simply being involved in the process is not enough for him as ‘a-teacher-of-Religious-Education’. Clearly this is not easy to reconcile and he is, effectively, looking for ways to ‘do it better next time’. Significantly, while Mr Simons asks a good many questions, and wishes to encourage pupils to ask the really difficult questions, he has no answers. In fact, one of his aims is to confront the pupils with the impossibility of answers. An impression gained from his comment is that, although he speaks about introducing these difficult concepts into his lessons, he is also expressing something of his own difficulties with the subject material.

By contrast, at the East Thames Boys’ School, Miss Mackie is clear that the text of the Holocaust enables her to realise her aims of pedagogy in general. Interestingly, this too involves the asking of personal and difficult questions:

I mean I think a lot of it is the kind of questioning that you'd like them to be able to have in all their subjects, but other subjects don't necessarily have something they can hook it around. I mean, I know it's awful to describe the Holocaust as 'a hook' for something, but it just gives you an opportunity to be doing all those things that in PSHE and in Citizenship, you would love to have the time to do, but you don't necessarily have [the] space for. And I think we're just – we're fortunate in that this topic seems to lend itself to asking personal and difficult questions.

Miss Mackie appreciates that the "use" of the text is extremely sensitive, especially since the discourse of HolEd may sometimes designate educators as 'guardians of memory' (Hass, 2004). As a committed and inspiring History teacher, Miss Mackie's classes gained considerable knowledge, insight and understanding about the events, as the assessment (demanded by school and educational directives) proved. However, the teachers in the study appear to see themselves as operating within their own discourses of good practice and good pedagogy. They are 'good Holocaust teachers', primarily because they are 'good teachers' first. As Miss Overton puts it:

It feels like this is the teacher you should be most of the time, I suspect.

And if they are only able to be 'the teacher they want to be' during these lessons, then it must be acknowledged that there is something within the experience of the lessons, informed by this specific difficult text, which allows this to happen.

Not only are there different and even competing pedagogic and social discourses for the teachers themselves, but there are also differences in discursive practice - that is, how the discourse manifests itself (Davies, 1994, p5). Experienced teachers will consider the possibilities for learning from the text within the context of their own subjects and it is likely that the pedagogical discourse of the teacher herself is an important factor in which approach and method she adopts in these lessons. While the teachers in the study may be governed to some extent by the discourse of HolEd, their own subject disciplines and pedagogic approaches also provide other discourses which define the practice; there are

likely to be areas which overlap (Moore, 2004). In addition, there may be pedagogical discourses which the teachers may hold in common, irrespective of subject discipline. These may be in the context of critical or feminist pedagogies, for example, or in terms of child-centred or 'transformative' education.

In writing about 'transformative education', Mezirow (1991) considers the process of learning in terms of remembering and re-evaluating experiences and information in new contexts. Naturally, the more experience the student has of life, the greater the opportunity to acquire frames of reference or 'meaning perspectives' in relation to such memories. These 'meaning perspectives' provide a structure of assumptions, beliefs and experiences through which the student assimilates and 'transforms' new experiences. The task, as Mezirow sets it out, is to address these meaning perspectives in ways which can challenge them, encouraging the student to form new structures and frameworks:

Transformative learning involves reflectively transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions and emotional responses that constitute our [meaning perspectives]. The relationship between educator and adult learner is like that of a mentor trying to help a friend decide how to deal with a significant life problem that the friend may not yet have clearly identified as the source of his or her dilemma. (p 223)

Thus, in order to encourage learning, to effect a change of some sort, teachers will need to present pupils with concepts which challenge these meaning perspectives in order to form new frameworks which give new knowledges and experiences coherence. Such transformative education is both the goal and substance of HolEd, according to its discourse; the goal in terms of 'affecting change' in pupils' perspectives, and the substance in terms of partnership learning. Factual knowledge is gained during the lessons but previously learned experiences – such as understandings of humanity, society, 'good and evil', moral codes and so on - are re-evaluated in a different context. This reinforces the view expressed by the pupils at the Buckinghamshire school: "I don't think it will change us" but "just make us more aware".

Guerra argues (2002 p 4) that a former view required teachers to create learning opportunities and then stand back, refraining from attempting to impose anything through teaching directly, whereas recent views have suggested that the reverse is more likely to prove successful, where teachers pass on their own 'mastery' of learning in didactic forms. However, if – and it is a big 'if' – teachers are able to assist the development of replacement discourses of society and humanity, then the creative moment in the process is also the destructive moment. When the teacher begins to 'offer solutions' or, at the very least, ways to approach issues such as humanity, society, identity, and she regains her normative role, the relationship alters. The creative moment of power loss/empowerment between teacher and pupil vanishes and the teacher regains her normative role in the power relationship.

The task for the pupil is to rebuild a positive, or at least functional, discourse of society, beyond the vague labels of 'right' and 'wrong', and to develop what Mezirow (1991) calls:

the structure of assumptions within which one's past *experience assimilates and transforms new experience*. (p 42)

But what happens if the pupil decides to rebuild discourses of humanity and society which are counter to the teacher's values? Perhaps the pupil will decide to identify with the perpetrator. These dangers are acknowledged in the discourse of HoEd and this is precisely why it is rightly obsessed with questions of imagery (for example, Wright, 2000). One challenge to pedagogy is to prepare for this.

### ***Presenting the text***

It is possible that Holocaust Education lessons may provide a text which, through its immense significance, enables a teaching and learning experience which is qualitatively different from the norm. One aspect of this is the nature of the relationship between teacher and pupil, as Miss Hall goes on to explain:

But also I've found that I got to know my students a lot more, teaching this, than I have – I had a group for three years since Year 7 and I'm sure I got to know more about them personally and more insight into their character in those weeks than I had done in the two and a half years before that.

Knowing one's pupils enables a teacher to be flexible enough to change her strategy or, at least, modify her content, based on what she perceives. This is not as simple or as widespread a procedure as it sounds, and it may be useful at this point to consider in some detail examples by way of contrast where the emphasis on pupil- and relationship-directed strategies no longer seem to apply. In Schweber's (2004) illuminating study of four Holocaust Education teachers in American schools, she observes and analyses a series of different and unusual classroom approaches. Each of the teachers chosen by Schweber is charismatic and inspiring, and a considerable number of former students clearly retain powerful memories of each of the courses. However, each also has a very powerful and idiosyncratic approach to teaching the subject. As such, they provide exceptions which can help prove the rule.

Mr Jefferson, the first teacher in the study, clearly fulfilled the requirements of the discourse of HolEd; his course was rooted in factual knowledge about the events and yet he also made specific the moral messages he believed the subject teaches. Schweber's study, however, indicates that these moral messages, delivered in the same way as the factual content, and by means of a lecture format, produced a mixed and not easily legible text. While the students were generally positive about the course, it had paid insufficient attention to their role as responders, readers or viewers. As a result, it was not easy to say what, if much, had been learnt.

By contrast, Mr Zee's class provided an enjoyable performance for the pupils. His approach was based on a narrative format, in which he told many stories, mostly derived from his own life and experience, and which 'met the students where they were'. Issues discussed centred on racism and discrimination such as the students at the school experienced on a daily basis and, while they spoke

positively about the experience, the 'lessons learnt' were again elusive. Perhaps most importantly, Schweber found that very little had been learnt about the events of the Holocaust; what students remembered was the opportunity to sit and listen to an able raconteur telling stories. Mr Zee epitomised the worst fears of Lipstadt (1995) and others in that, using the 'Facing History and Ourselves' programme, he had, in Schweber's words selected and incorporated material which enabled the students to, in effect, 'Face Ourselves but not History'<sup>29</sup>.

The other teachers in Schweber's study also used unique approaches and their classes, which were elective, were consistently oversubscribed. Mr Dennis used dramatic excerpts, including a play about Anne Frank, which produced powerful responses from those involved. His students also had a good understanding about factual events. However, Schweber found that some of the main questions remained unaddressed. Students were not asking rhetorically 'how could this happen?' at the end of the course, but were still expecting the answers to be there somewhere.

Miss Bess operated essentially outside the margins of the HolEd discourse in that she allocated real characters to each of the students and periodically engaged in 'simulations' whereby they decided the fate of themselves or their loved ones, and were subject to selections resulting in the death or imprisonment of their own characters or those of their classmates. While the students were able to empathise strongly with the Jewish victims as a result of this, the experience of the lessons for the students was a confusing one. Clearly the students were not empowered, and were unclear about both their role as readers of the text and, most importantly, Miss Bess's role.

Space has been given here to Schweber's study for several reasons. In the first place, it highlights the difficulties both in setting objectives for Holocaust Education and for designing a suitable and effective syllabus which can meet those objectives. While she is clear about the transformative effect of all

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<sup>29</sup> This is in contrast to the East Thames Boys' School which also use material from the 'Facing History and Ourselves' programme. While they explore issues of national identity through the resource and include the Armenian and later genocides, the emphasis on the historical events of the Holocaust is maintained throughout.

teaching and the need to understand how and why human beings act as they do in given, defined situations, Schweber also asks fundamental questions as a result of her findings. For example, she considers whether, as a Jew, she would rather live next door to someone who can repeat factual details about historical events or to another who would provide refuge at a time of crisis. Ultimately, Schweber is forced to argue for a balance in Holocaust Education – although she acknowledges this must be an unequal balance - between sound factual knowledge and moral instruction. Even so, Schweber concludes:

It is thus with far more questions that I leave this study than those with which I began; the questions of how experienced high school teachers teach about the Holocaust, what moral lessons they convey implicitly and communicate explicitly, and what their impact on students is, have been joined by a host of others. And while I pose some recommendations, [I] abstain from making broad generalizations about the teaching of this history. (2004, p 167)

But perhaps the most interesting point about Schweber's findings is the nature of the classroom experience in each case. Each teacher in her study has developed, over a period of time, a set format, an often innovative way of presenting the text to the pupils which produces a result in terms of pupil engagement. That the students are emotionally involved, and sometimes disturbed by the lessons, is not in doubt. However, in every case, the teacher is central to the action – he or she is not so much teaching the text but has become the text itself. The confusion that this generates in the students is especially acute in the case of Miss Bess who switches 'role' dramatically between teacher and Gestapo officer, one moment offering 'explanation', the next requiring the 'consigning of a "cherished one" to the gas chamber'. It is therefore unsurprising that the teacher whose approach Schweber feels comes closest to the desirable is Mr Dennis, who is, on one occasion at least, open to deviation from his script in allowing the students to pursue their own discussion of the 'meta-questions'.

While the teachers in Schweber's study knew that what they were doing was essentially risky, they believed that they had minimized the effects of those

risks. The fact that they had honed their lessons to well-constructed performances over some years and that their students were demonstrably engaged emotionally led the teachers to believe that they knew what was happening: namely, that the students had confronted the text, were shocked by it, remembered salient facts and had been affected emotionally. However, and this is a significant ‘however’, their perceptions of the nature of what the pupils took from the experience – what they had learnt in effect – were different from the reality because their modes of address “missed”. In case after case, Schweber found that individual pupils had not taken from the lessons what the teachers had either intended or thought they had taken. The learning objectives which each teacher had set for the course had not been met, in spite of the lessons being “successful”. In effect, the teachers had failed to realize that the students were not located where each had imagined them to be located.

Furthermore, while student participation was actively encouraged and a crucial part in most of the lessons Schweber observed, at no point was there any sense of empowerment of the student. The teachers may have played varied roles but their visible control was never in doubt. This is not to argue for lessons which are all spontaneous and unplanned – far from it – but rather to suggest that there is an essential and inherent ‘messiness’ in the engagement with such a text which must be acknowledged if we are to understand what may or may not be occurring in HolEd. Such a messiness may be reflected in creative pedagogy in general, and not only in respect of Holocaust Education. Indeed, messiness may be the indicator of a situation in which real learning is taking place.

An acknowledgment that there is an unpredictability in the lessons and a willingness to deviate from the lesson plan may encourage real opportunities for engagement with the text. While all the lessons discussed and observed in the study were indeed carefully planned, moments which teachers remembered with pleasure tended to be those in which the interactions with the pupils were surprising or at least not ‘scripted’. At the East Thames Boys’ School, Miss Hall gives an example of this:

I think it's one of those things where you have to see how it's going and you just have to be prepared to abandon your lesson plan. I mean, take for instance the Set 5, we started the 'No Time To Think' text and they were so amazed that we didn't quite finish it, but I said it was worth spending a second lesson, because they were *getting* it, and it meant that we then had time at the end of the second lesson to really – discuss it more.

Furthermore, she is willing to pursue this on an individual pupil basis, rather than as a class event. Miss Hall describes an occasion in a Year 10 class with a pupil who had taken the course the previous year:

But there was one lesson – I just thought – I looked at what everyone else was doing and David was asking me questions about the Holocaust: that's more important than that, because they're not doing anything. So I just sat and talked to him.

What does Miss Hall mean by "they're not doing anything?" Discipline in the classes was good and all the tasks set were carefully planned and varied in approach. Clearly the other pupils were engaged in written tasks on another topic. David may be attempting to escape this and Miss Hall, as an experienced teacher, is almost certainly well aware of this possibility. However, she obviously feels that to talk to and with David, to engage in one-to-one discussion with him, is "more important than *that*". Factual knowledge and understanding of the events of the Holocaust are vital within the discourse of HolEd, but this is seen as taking second place to a learning experience based around the pupil's own approach. In effect the occasion provides the answer to Schweber's question about which is more important – factual knowledge or the empathy and concern from the one who may remain ignorant? For Miss Hall, the crucial factor is the impact that the topic has on the pupils themselves and how they relate to this on a personal level. It should also be noted that this occasion gave Miss Hall pleasure also; she was sharing her thoughts, approaches and factual knowledge with an interested pupil. Such unexpected pleasure was equated with the 'success of the lessons. Indeed, the more unpredictable the

response from the pupil, the more ‘successful’ the teacher tended to consider the course to have been.

#### 9.4 DESIRE

An observable feature of the way in which most of the teachers spoke about the lessons involved perceptions of pleasure. Most of the teachers interviewed are largely experienced in HolEd and so have some sort of idea of what to expect from the experience of teaching the topic. Those interviewed before the new course began, speak of their expectations. Interestingly, several express anticipation of a ‘pleasurable experience’.

Miss Mackie: Yet again I’m really excited about teaching it.

Miss Hall: After that first lesson with Set 5, it was *so* lovely. I’m actually looking forward to it.

Miss Hall also speaks about the ‘surprises’ that teaching the subject brings:

There can be moments when you have conversations with the kids that you just think ‘I would never have had that conversation before we did this.’ I think that’s it – when they ask you questions or tell you things or not [laughs] – things like, you know, really discussing what national identity is and how that works – can you be British and Indian? That dawning realisation when one of them said, ‘Miss, you said genocides happen now – why aren’t we doing anything about it?’ These sudden – moments – I don’t think you can predict it. It’s brilliant, it’s one of the best things about it – is these moments you get with them. You know.

In her response, Miss Hall is clearly remembering positive experiences; her method of speech and body language suggest that the memories are positive ones. She smiles and laughs. The ‘opening up’ of the pupils to discuss personal thoughts and experiences, denoting a positive relationship between teacher and

pupils, is recalled with obvious pleasure. Bearing in mind the notable pupil engagement with this topic, it seems that the relationship may be viewed as more productive - and more pleasurable - than usual. By the end of the course, the teacher has the satisfaction which comes from a sense of having imparted 'worthwhile knowledge'. She may consider herself affirmed as a 'good' or effective teacher. She may even feel 'loved', reassured, confirmed in her role. In addition, the pupil is also likely to have received positive reinforcement and, while the usual requirements of behaviour, school routine and academic work do not diminish, evaluative work and especially oral comment are perhaps more highly valued than usual.

Pupils at the East Thames Boys' School appear to recognise the pleasurable effect for the teachers, and they attempt to recreate this situation once they have moved on to other topics. The teachers acknowledge this. When asked whether the pupils ever attempt to divert the lesson, they say not and, indeed, Miss Mackie adds "They divert us *with this*", which the others confirm. She continues:

I mean, your Year 10 and 11's, once they've done this [topic in Year 9] - if they want to get you talking about something, they just need to bring [the topic] up.

Irrespective of whether the reason for this is simply to avoid having to engage in more demanding written tasks, pupils here have recognised the desire of the teacher to revisit the experience of Holocaust Education. In terms of the interaction between teacher and pupil, and in the context of any 'learning outcomes', the significance of perceptions of pleasure and 'success' should not be underestimated.

Teachers and pupils certainly interact and respond to each other; it may be that they also rely on each other for 'rewards' (Bassett & Smythe, 1979). Perhaps pupils even experience a higher degree of emotional reward in Holocaust Education. In the Norfolk school, while discussing the lessons generally, Ben offers the comment: "I did a poem". This is an unusual event for Ben, who does

not find creative written work easy as a rule. That Ben's teacher chooses to mention this to me herself ("like with Ben H\_\_\_\_, suddenly we've got something we didn't ever expect him to write"), suggests that she made her pleasure obvious to Ben, for whom commendation and reinforcement were not usual. The poem is a source of pleasure to both.

Todd argues that desire is not to be understood simply as an acknowledgement of what is lacking, but as potentially creative. How teachers and pupils choose to act in the classroom is a key to 'reading' desires. Martusewicz (1997) posits two forms of desire: the desire to know the world and the desire to be loved. An experience in the classroom which is satisfying to all goes some way towards fulfilling both of these. The teachers gain pleasure from a sense of being 'effective' teachers, 'good' at their jobs. Their pleasure, enjoyment and, perhaps, perceivable relaxation, provides a more pleasurable experience for the pupils also. Issues of whether or not a teacher needs to be loved, or even liked, in order to be a 'good' teacher have been addressed from many perspectives (Moore, 2004). However, the teacher is also a human being who desires certain things, especially to be loved.

In exploring expectations and experiences in female teachers, Robertson (1997) asked subjects to describe the moment of greatest emotion for them in a 'bio-pic' about a teacher of disadvantaged children in the USA. They chose to focus on a minor moment in the film in which pupils spoke briefly about their love for their teacher. The construction of the scene – music, dialogue, acting – all perpetuate a fantasy which affects the teachers profoundly, even though they must be aware that it bears little relation to their normal daily classroom experience. In effect, says Robertson, the scene works because it addresses the unconscious desires of the teachers watching. Furthermore, Robertson points out that films such as these enable viewers less to identify with the text of the film itself than to make contact with their own fantasies.

Many of the female teachers in Robertson's study also identified other scenes in which advantageous news was received through the post. The teachers reported that they selected these scenes because they reminded them of their own

experience of receiving good (career) news through the post. Conversely, there is an element of fear also. The teachers viewing the film expressed fears about their work in terms of possible 'failure'; the hidden message in the letters had the potential to be harmful rather than empowering. Robertson points out (p 78) that the detail of the news itself is obscured; it is the *experience* of receiving the news, rather than the news itself, which has created pleasure for the teachers. What is important for the teachers is their sense of achievement and of 'being valued' and recognised. Therefore the concealed detail is crucial in its absence; if it were present, the fantasy would be limited and defined by real events. In Robertson's study, the women fantasize about receiving tributes from former pupils. The emotions supposedly expressed in the (concealed) letters are in fact those desired by the teachers themselves.

It may be worth noting in passing that a significant element in terms of teacher satisfaction may be the normative experience of the teacher. Those who teach the subjects in which HoEd is usually found - History, R.E., PSHE or Citizenship - may often find themselves having to justify these subjects to pupils, parents, colleagues and the wider society in ways that maths and English teachers rarely do. While each of these subjects will provide many opportunities to explore difficult issues and, indeed, deal with questions about the nature of humanity and society as part of their brief, the perception of them in terms of curriculum 'importance' is not always positive. Crucial to pupil acknowledgement of the status of the lessons is the recognition by society that this is An Important Subject and, indeed, HoEd is, as has been demonstrated earlier, couched in the language of Supreme Importance. Teachers are perceived and perceive themselves as making both a substantial contribution to both the education of their pupils and the alignment of future society. The entrusting of teachers with a topic which is recognised as being both dangerous and vital, to the extent that considerable specific teacher training is offered, is likely to reaffirm the teacher and produce pleasurable feelings. The behaviour of the pupils in the study, their affirmation of the importance of the topic and their positive comments about their teachers encourages a similar sense of being valued and recognised.

Of course, something is inevitably desired of the pupils in HolEd; on one level, they are required to internalize the ‘lessons’ and develop the behaviour traits which society admires. On the other hand, they are required to be ‘good’ HolEd pupils, which also satisfies the desires of their teachers. In effect, the teachers value the successful classroom relationship with their pupils, both for its own sake and for the possibilities it opens up for their own identities.

## 9.5 A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH

### *Teacher/Pupil Relationships*

Whatever teachers may ‘achieve’ in Holocaust Education, it is the result of an ‘invisible transition’ in which the teacher reveals some quality or qualities which the pupils emulate or attempt to reproduce. This may or may not be something to do with the subject taught, but it will be a great deal to do with those areas which the teacher indicates as important. Lynch (1987) argues that, in terms of such education, the relationship between the pupil and teacher is a key factor. He points out that pupils learn more readily from specific teachers; intuitively, a pupil makes this decision based on how she learns best (1987, p87) or perhaps on whether her desires have been in any way fulfilled.

The possibility that pupils might pick up more than permission to be emotional from their teachers is illustrated by the teachers at the East Thames Boys’ School. As they reflect on their own approaches, they engage in a discussion about whether the pupils are expecting anything to be different before the lessons begin. Suddenly, Miss Overton raises the issue not just of *whether* they have an effect on the pupils’ expectations, but *how* this might happen:

Miss Overton: But, you know, I just – I don’t know how to explain the difference, but I do think it’s something that we do –

Miss Hall: It’s the utter seriousness, I think there is that point where you say, ‘yeah, there’s a list of rules’, like the rules – like my class were

discussing ‘well, should you always put your hand up on [unclear]?’ They said, ‘We know that. We don’t do it, but we know it’. But there is that sense that there’s a lot of rules that we always say - like, ‘you can’t insult each other’. I know that there’s suddenly deadly seriousness about me when I do this, it’s like ‘this time – you *don’t*’. And I think they know that and I think they think, ‘ooh, it’s something important’. ‘Cos there is that kind of: “really don’t annoy me on this one”’.

While it is not clear quite how the teachers encourage this understanding on the part of the pupils, both teachers believe that there is some sort of empathy involved. Miss Hall describes her pupils as recognising that, for her at least, this material carries a special kind of seriousness.

In most classroom lessons, the relationship between teacher and pupil, the inner desires and power relationships, not to mention the possible ‘hits’ and ‘misses’ of modes of address, create an unpredictable and constantly shifting situation. This is further influenced by the continually developing and changing perception of ‘self’. The usual age for pupils to encounter the Holocaust within the discourse of HoEd is during adolescence - a time of considerable psychological, emotional and psychic upheaval (Harper, 1997). The associated repressions, identifications and projections, to use Freudian terms, increase the tension between the perceived and the hidden self. The diversity of the Holocaust narrative enables the pupil to position herself in a number of different roles and to relate to the text on many different levels. Since the stories involve the extremes of human emotions and situations, they may be read as reflections or displacements of the pupil’s own emotions and situation, thus helping her to explore these at a step removed from her own life.

### ***Psychoanalysis and Pedagogy***

When one begins to consider the question of the relationship between teacher and pupil, not to mention the joint engagement with ‘difficult knowledge’, it is worth considering whether a psychoanalytic approach may offer some ways of describing and exploring these issues. Since Anna Freud offered psychoanalysis

to teachers as a way of conceptualizing both the pupil's learning and development and the teacher's own performance, psychoanalytic theory has been in constant use to provide insights into classroom practice (Britzman, 1998). Such use of psychoanalysis to approach questions of education can give rise to a number of problems as much as it can help to provide new directions of thought. Guerra warns (2002, p 4) that applying the axioms of one discipline to another may lead to over-simplification of both. In her exploration of the Lacanian perspective, however, Felman (1987) argues that, given its enormous implications for the discussion of human interaction, psychoanalysis is "first and foremost a critique of pedagogy" (p 71) and that all "good pedagogy" must, of necessity, involve a critique of pedagogy. The lesson to be learnt here is, according to Felman:

less that of 'the *application* of psychoanalysis to pedagogy' than that of the *implication* of psychoanalysis in pedagogy and of pedagogy in psychoanalysis. (p 22)

Teaching, as Ellsworth (1997) has pointed out, is not psychoanalysis, but the classroom does involve confrontations with a range of issues in terms of narratives and identities which the teacher needs to be able to consider and work with. For example, Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) deal with the social and psychological 're-invention' of womanhood in the current society, as girls seek to define their own place and position in a world largely devoid of traditional prompts. In the course of this, the authors make two main points with respect to post-modern approaches to psychoanalysis. The first is that, while psychoanalysis attempts to uncover desire and explore its relationship to rational thought, postmodernism presents the unconscious desire or fantasy as having a value in its own right. Secondly, the thrust of psychoanalysis is traditionally seen within a scientific, 'rational' or epistemological framework. Postmodernism would want a psychoanalysis which related more widely to social and cultural and, indeed, psychic factors.

Of particular interest in this context is the concept of transference. Transference, first described by Freud, is the unconscious redirection of one's feelings for one

person, whether negative and positive, in the direction of another. This may also involve the redirection of emotions experienced in one context, for example childhood, into another. Analysts are familiar with the phenomenon, since it is a crucial element in both understanding the analysand and effecting a cure (Freud, 1925) and this also has considerable significance in the classroom, as one considers the relationship between teacher and pupil<sup>30</sup>.

If it is possible, as has been argued, that Holocaust Education can provide pupils and teachers with experiences in the classroom that present desired opportunities – affirmation, empowerment, and so on – then it may also be possible that each transfers the pleasure of those experiences onto the other. In this way, teachers perceive the pupils as ‘remarkably engaged’, while pupils perceive the teachers as ‘giving them freedom’. Such pleasures strengthen the relationships and are in turn transferred onto the experience of the lessons themselves. Thus a cycle of pleasure and transference is set up in the context of such a difficult text. This is not to suggest that the text of the Holocaust has pedagogic value only in so far as it creates positive classroom relationships, but rather to raise the possibility that engagement with fundamental and unanswerable questions (that is, the acquisition of difficult knowledge) may enable an educational opportunity which addresses both the conscious and the unconscious. Such an opportunity may result in the acquisition of a knowledge which is qualitatively different from many other classroom experiences.

According to psychoanalytic theory, when a pupil interacts with a ‘text’ in a lesson on the Holocaust, for example, there is a third participant (Ellsworth, 1997, also Lacan). This is the unconscious which subverts the movement through the learning and teaching process and disrupts it. The unconscious itself is in a sense what Felman calls ‘unmeant knowledge’ (1987, 1997) – that which the subject ‘knows’ but cannot access consciously. Ignorance is thus not so much a lack of knowledge but a definite condition which determines the boundaries of what can be known. These boundaries are maintained, in

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<sup>30</sup> The emphasis here is on positive classroom relations because these were the main experiences recorded in the study. However, Freud (1912) also spoke about transference as “the battleground” on which the conflicts between analyst and analysand must be fought and resolved. This has major implications, of course, for pedagogy in general.

Lacanian terms by 'inner resistances' – a “*desire to ignore*” (Felman 1987, p 79). Rather than ending any attempt to describe what might be possible pedagogically, Ellsworth suggests that such a basis may provide a tool for accessing the nature of teaching and learning:

What if we teachers became as curious about the productiveness of our continuously remodelled ignore-ances, lacks of fit, and limitations of knowing as we have been about how to achieve full and complete understanding? (1997, p 53)

This dynamic, constantly shifting picture is attractive when one is considering why and how engagement with this particular topic appears to produce the effects of which the teachers speak. A psychoanalytic approach may offer opportunities to explore the classroom process apart from the rationales claimed for the topic of Holocaust Education in terms of moral development or citizenship issues.

The way in which pupils may learn from difficult knowledge will depend in part on what they intuit from the teacher's own anxieties and conflicts. Britzman (1998) suggests, therefore, that the views of the educator are important here; her own pain in considering the events will determine how she engages in pedagogy. Crucial to this process are the desire to be loved and the fear of the loss of love, both of which, as Freud observed, can suffer reversals. Britzman suggests that the danger of reversal can apply equally to learning, in which the 'desire for ignorance' can be projected into antipathy towards the teacher. Such an occurrence is rarely found within the discourse of HolEd; on the contrary, the pupil associates the teacher with positive aspects of her own well-being – emotional engagement, empowerment and the initiation into 'adult knowledge'. Perhaps the satisfaction of desires, the sense of being loved is somehow encouraged rather than threatened by these lessons. Britzman concludes that the engagement with 'difficult knowledge' may be effective, but there are caveats:

If education indeed can be a cure, it can be a cure only in the psychoanalytical sense: in creating new conditions for the capacity to love,

to work, and to learn without involving more harm and suffering. (1998 p 129)

Where a teacher has anxieties about presenting this 'knowledge' to the pupils, such anxieties can result in what Britzman terms an "ambivalent pedagogy" (1998), whereby the teacher places the focus on the possibility of "hope", emphasizes courageous responses and so on. Totten (2002) warns specifically about such "skewing" of history, where the stories of rescuers are given greater prominence than the events of the Final Solution, or the triumph of 'democracy' in liberation or justice at Nuremberg are evoked to present a sense of ultimate well-being in the world.

The process of introducing learners of any age to difficult knowledge, Britzman (1998) observes, is described in psychoanalytic theory in terms of the tensions between the inner conflicts and the external ones. How we determine what affects us and how it affects is largely dependent on our own identifications and projections:

Attention to and interest in the world is also a working through of the self. What becomes the ego and what becomes the object? What belongs to me and what belongs to the other? [Psychoanalysis] resides within these difficult tangles of implication: how *the me lives in that and the that lives in me*. Like the children who use the devil to recognize Hitler [as a projection of evil], adults work on themselves as they perceive and work on the world. (p126)

The sense of loss may also be present in terms of confronting the abyss. Britzman describes how Anna Freud writes about the death of her aunts in the Holocaust. Believing that elderly women living quietly in Vienna would escape any Nazi attention, the family agreed that they should not be moved to London prior to the war, but tragically the three women were rounded up a few years later and murdered in the camps. It was beyond the imagination at the time that all Jews would be identified, hunted down and taken away to die. Anna Freud's

essay<sup>31</sup> on this explores how one may move from guilt to grief and how to mourn in the aftermath of tragedies one has lived through with different emotions. Britzman suggests that loss is a “belated knowledge”, a form of hindsight, when the knowledge only appears when it is no longer useful. At such a point, the function of knowledge is to make the pain of loss felt more keenly, a case in which perhaps ‘ignorance is bliss’. Furthermore, it is noted that even those involved in the events failed to understand them:

If we can now look back and consider that those who lived through, and were murdered in, the Holocaust could not comprehend their own devastations, how can we expect from those who now look back the capacity to order and to rationalize the chaos and infinitesimal details of such destruction? How does anyone live with a knowledge that comes too late? (op cit, p 130).

This is perhaps one reason why the discourse of HolEd stresses the uses of such knowledge, not just in terms of understanding our present society in any sort of socio-historical sense, but as an indicator, a prescience of what can be avoided. (“You realise that people were suffering like that in the past and people don't want it to happen again,” Fatima, Buckinghamshire.) By this means, it is not a loss but a gain. But Britzman is clear that the engagement with difficult knowledge must include an acknowledgement that learning is:

crafted from a curious set of relations: the self's relation to its own otherness and the self's relation to the other's otherness. (p 134)

Both teaching and learning are, in Britzman's terms, psychic events in which the teacher and learner work through their own conflicts. The responses are unpredictable; they will vary, shift and change. But the interrogation of one's self in relation to the sense of loss which the engagement with difficult knowledge engenders may be an essential element in a learning process. This is a wider pedagogic issue than that encompassed by Holocaust Education and,

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<sup>31</sup> Britzman cites it (1998, p 130) as ‘About Illness and Being Lost’ written in 1946 after Freud's own illness.

therefore, outside the scope of this thesis. However, it may be that the process of engaging with difficult knowledge presents particular possibilities for the exploration of the dynamics of learning from a psychoanalytical perspective.

## Part IV

### CONCLUSION

#### *An Overview*

This thesis was initially concerned to address the question of what, if anything, could be claimed realistically for Holocaust Education in schools in terms of learning outcomes. In what has been described here as ‘the discourse of HolEd’, the lessons are clearly in the realm of prejudice reduction, personal morality, social responsibility and involvement, and genocide prevention. Learning *from* the narratives of the Holocaust are described as offering opportunities to consider roles of rescuers and bystanders, to emulate virtues, to be engaged in society in a ‘positive’ way.

There are, however, a number of obvious difficulties with such possible outcomes. Both research (Lynch 1987 and Cullingford 2000) and the teachers themselves suggest that prejudice reduction is a complex and long-term issue which requires more than can be accomplished from a handful of lessons. There do not appear to be any major changes in the social behaviour or moral values of the pupils and, again, this is born out by the body of established research including recent studies such as Maitles, Cowan and Butler (2006). Studies such as that by Schweber (2004) further indicate that we can never really know what the pupils will take from any lessons; those on the Holocaust seem to offer a particular danger on this score because they deal with perceptions and prejudices. The teachers in this study also demonstrate a lack of clarity regarding learning outcomes, despite the stated perceptions of most of them that these lessons are ‘successful’ in terms of pupil interest and engagement. In struggling to account for this engagement, the teachers make use of the discourse of HolEd, as indeed do the pupils from time to time.

Having raised the questions in the first chapter, chapter 2 noted the importance attached by politicians in Britain to the topic, largely because of its imagined

contribution to Citizenship issues. This chapter also looked at other rationales for teaching the subject and introduced some of the debate surrounding these. A number of basic aims for Holocaust Education were outlined in the realms of combating racism, warning against prejudices, instilling moral values and promoting positive engagement in society. It was noted that concepts such as ‘that the Holocaust never happens again’ are still quoted, although perhaps less frequently and usually with qualifications. The body of literature advising on best practice for the subject takes a realistic line in terms of what might be achieved, especially highlighting the importance of ‘complicating’ the lesson (Totten, 2002), especially in terms of moral judgements. Completing the course ‘with more questions than answers’ was a target for which the teachers, both in the pilot and the main study, regularly aimed.

Chapter 3 outlined the nature and development of the research from the initial design through the pilot study to the final collection and methodology for analysis of data. Issues of reflexivity were also addressed in this chapter. While this analysis had confirmed some suspicions regarding possible outcomes, it had also highlighted the moral confusion involved and raised some issues concerning interaction in the classroom. These formed the substance of the material discussed in Part III.

Since most of the teachers in the study operated within a certain conceptual framework, this was introduced and outlined in chapter 4. Approaches to the subject by those committed to it and enthusiastic about it were, it was suggested, governed by a discourse in the Foucauldian sense, which was designated for these purposes as the discourse of ‘HolEd’. The teacher who operates within the HolEd discourse is likely to attempt to explain the function and importance of the lessons within this framework. This chapter described the nature and content of the discourse, its special features and something of its development.

In the first chapter, it was mentioned that Gallant and Hartman (2001)’s argument for greater research and assessment in this field is based on the need to evaluate the current performance of Holocaust Education with respect to “the vision nurturing this movement” (p 21). In the discourse of HolEd, the topic is

not an education matter like any other, but has its own imperatives in terms of 'vision'; it may perhaps be considered as a 'movement' rather than simply an examination of historical events. Engagement with the topic may derive from many personal factors; for example, Garber's (2004) motivation to promote tolerance through HolEd was seen as coming from his own sense of identity. The point was made that the discourse of HolEd cannot be seen as providing any objective rationales or outcomes for the lessons, since it has too many complexities and dependencies of its own.

It was further argued that, notwithstanding the work of the teacher, the way in which the pupil will 'read' the text was largely unpredictable. It was not always possible to be accurate with a mode of address. However, despite or perhaps in spite of this, Holocaust Education did seem to be a 'surprise hit' when the teachers approached the subject from the position of the discourse.

Part III then began to explore what could and could not be claimed in terms of learning outcomes. Chapter 5 looked at the argument, primarily expressed by Novick (2001), that the Holocaust narrative is too overwhelming to impart anything in terms of learning outcomes; the events are both overpoweringly depressing and too deeply located in a specific socio-historical context to be of any 'educational use'. Novick's evaluation, however, derives from the situations and discourses within which, and concerning which, he was writing. His scepticism regarding the possibility of achieving overriding aims for the subject appears to be borne out by research done elsewhere (Lynch, 1987, Cullingford, 2000, and so on), as well as in this study. This does not mean, however, that there are no other possibilities of learning.

The more obvious rationales – moral development, values education and civic awareness – were discussed in the following chapters, beginning with anti-racism education in chapter 6. It was argued that while the data and, more widely, current research suggested that such lessons could not on their own address issues of racism, they did play a significant role in supporting the teaching of the school. Pupils who chose to locate themselves in anti-racist discourses found that the lessons helped to position them positively within them.

There was, however, a risk for those who were already inclined to locate themselves in discourses that were anti-racist. The phenomenon of antisemitism was also addressed in this chapter; it was pointed out that were issues linked to the specificity of antisemitism in the Holocaust narrative.

With regard to values education and moral development, it was argued in chapter 7 that Holocaust Education could serve to reinforce those traits which were already present; values encountered may connect with previously held moral perspectives. Of particular interest, however, was the frequency with which pupils chose to highlight characters in the narrative who were morally ambiguous – the guards clearing houses, those in the crematoria and the battalion commander. It was suggested that the perceived flawed traits connected with the pupils in ways which more heroic characters might not have done. This was to do with how pupils understood themselves – their own ambiguities and failings – and how the actions they knew to be heroic bore no relation to how they understood themselves.

The contribution of Holocaust Education to Citizenship studies was addressed in chapter 8. This chapter began with the shock offered by the text in terms of the nature of humanity and society. It was argued that this shock as experienced by the pupils related less to the material itself, but to the realisation that their own discourses of humanity and society are, indeed, constructed discourses and not objective reality. Such realisation cannot be articulated by the pupil, lacking the skills and language to do so, and so they rely on the language of the discourse of HolEd to express ideas about the learning value of the lessons. Not all pupils who follow a course of Holocaust Education come to this realisation, of course, but it may be that, where the lessons are taught by teachers with a particular interest along the lines promoted within the discourse, such an effect is more likely. The unpredictability of the encounter of the disturbing text with the unconscious was stressed.

It was also suggested that Holocaust Education may make a contribution to Citizenship studies because of the understanding it imparts about the dark side.

The work of Donald (1992) raised the possibility that in addressing the unconscious and connecting with this aspect of society as a whole, a pupil might come closest to understanding the nature of society and her role within it. This is most certainly a different contribution to 'Citizenship Studies' from that of, for example, Gallant and Hartman (2001)'s hope for a resulting "constructive activism" and the hopes expressed by politicians. Furthermore, the acquisition of this 'knowledge' does not necessarily confer immediate behavioural change. It is the process of engagement with the material in the classroom that provides significance in this respect rather than any grand claims for meaningful learning.

The implications of these discussions were explored in the context of the teacher herself and her relationship with the pupil. While both teachers and pupils tended to speak positively about the lessons, there was no indication that any major change in general behaviour was effected. There were also aspects which the pupils chose to highlight, including emotional responses, and the chapter also explored the desirability of emotional reactions from the teachers' perspectives. Both spoke in terms of worthwhile classroom experiences, however. The belief, on the part of both teachers and pupils, that this was an Important Subject was significant. The positive experience of teaching valued and 'successful' lessons, together with an opportunity to talk in depth with the pupils, was seen as satisfying the desires of the teachers concerned. The confirmation of their own sense of identity as teachers was satisfying for them; the pupils were also aware of this to some extent.

Theories of empowerment and disempowerment in the classroom were discussed and it was argued that, while the teachers clearly retained factual knowledge, they were clear that they had no answers to the big questions. Faced with teacher disempowerment, and with the reality of human nature, the pupils felt, momentarily at least, empowered. They appreciated that they had been entrusted with difficult 'adult' knowledge. Pupil responses which highlight the process of being 'shocked' are viewed by teachers as a desirable outcome, because it signifies that 'learning', albeit unspecified, has taken place. The implication is that learning which is valued is a wider psychological process than the acquisition of knowledge. Such an approach to the value of Holocaust

Education is worlds away from that which sees the events as part of twentieth century history to be studied and analysed. The learning is taking place in the pupil's mind at a level beyond 'knowledge and skills' with which lessons are usually concerned. If any assessment of such learning can be contemplated, it is the process rather than the content which must be valued.

As a tool to explore some of these final observations, albeit briefly, the use of psychoanalysis to inform theories and practice of pedagogy was introduced. The application of psychoanalytic theory opens up issues of loss, desire, splitting and transference, among other possibilities. Consideration of these elements is vital for a full discussion of what is really happening, unobserved in these lessons and would indeed provide fruitful avenues for further exploration.

### ***Addressing the Research Questions***

Two questions were posed at the beginning of the study. The first concerned what might realistically be claimed by those involved in the process for possibilities of learning from lessons about the Holocaust. In addressing this, the research process enabled reflection on the part of the teachers and they spoke in terms of complexities and unpredictabilities. Above all, they spoke about a learning *process* whereby engagement with the text had produced a greater intensity of engagement with unanswerable questions. The responses of the pupils appear to bear this out, albeit couched in different language. Wrestling with issues about the nature of humanity and society can be useful in terms of 'citizenship', but this cannot necessarily produce 'safe' and 'positive' outcomes.

The 'lessons of the Holocaust' are not simply about virtues or citizenship. Attempts to fit the events of the Holocaust into a discourse about 'good and evil' render the text impotent. Moral and social dilemmas raised can be extremely complex. Moreover, the questions asked cannot easily be answered; indeed, the asking of difficult, even impossible questions, is at the heart of the topic. Mr Simons, from the Norfolk Community School even wonders whether the pupils should be offered the 'answerless questions' at the beginning of the course. The text of the Holocaust has no narrative framework and certainly no 'conclusion';

it may be viewed as the ultimate horror story. It is not surprising that it engenders a strong emotional response.

Since the content of these lessons deals with issues of society, human action and responsibility, racism, it is assumed that pupils must be affected *in these spheres*. But it is what teachers teach the pupils *next* which really affects what they take away from the lesson such as the use of emotion in work, empathy, critical analysis of right and wrong, and so on. To this extent, the discourse of Holocaust Education may be limiting because it defines the borders of its own effectiveness by talking solely in terms of combating racism, essential and relevant though this is, rather than in terms of empowerment.

The second question asked whether this process of engaging with ‘difficult knowledge’ might have anything to say pedagogically. The study suggests that this topic offers possibilities for both the relationship between teacher and pupil which others do not. Rather than provide straightforward lessons in terms of moral development and civic virtue, the process of Holocaust Education requires that both teacher and pupil position themselves within certain discourses. Entering in to the field of ‘difficult knowledge’ together almost – but not quite – on equal footing, enables a shift of positions and a new set of discourses with which to engage.

The pupil is initiated into ‘adult knowledge’ – knowledge of the most terrible of events which occurred in Europe within living memory. Furthermore, there is the realisation which the events underline again and again – namely, that the framework of society is fragile. The teacher may make it clear that she has no answers, no solutions and, as she deliberately enters into a ‘shared ignorance’ of meaning, the pupil may experience a sense of empowerment, even though she retains in fact her normative role.

For the teacher, the engagement with such a difficult narrative may provide her with a sense of satisfaction in that she is addressing some of the most

recognisably fundamental issues. Knowledge of the text is perceived to be vital for the health of society, its darkness and difficulty require expertise and sensitivity. The teacher may feel reaffirmed, proficient, even loved. As teacher and pupil engage together in this exploration, they may associate their feelings of self worth with the 'success' of the lessons. And there is no reason why, in this process, the pupils may not listen more attentively or produce written work of a good standard, just as the propensity of the teacher to talk more and to discuss issues, to be "diverted with this", in the words of Miss Mackie, is pleasurable to the pupil who seeks to avoid the written exercise. The main contribution of this thesis may therefore be found in the exploration of the process of teacher and pupil engagement together with this difficult knowledge. The desires, anxieties, moral and discursive frameworks within which each individual operates determine the unique experience which the lessons allow. Furthermore, while it has been more usual to talk about learning *from* as opposed to learning *about*, it may be more accurate to describe the possibilities as learning *within*.

In the search for meaning, outcomes may be claimed for the lessons in an educative sense as an answer to the despair and negativity inherent in the narrative. The process of schooling demands that lessons be meaningful, but while there are moral lessons to be drawn from isolated narratives, such as the courage of rescuers, one cannot be sure what pupils will take from the story and the 'mode of address' may 'miss'. Teachers, however, are required to struggle constantly with the search for meaning, even though this may prove to be objectively elusive. In this respect, the discourse of HolEd is useful not simply as a practical framework for procedure but also as a language with which to describe the rationale for the lessons.

In addition, while learning outcomes are claimed here for Holocaust Education, they are not likely to be those usually stated, but involve subtle shifts in perceptions resulting from encounters with the 'dark side' of human society. Most importantly, while these outcomes may occur to differing degrees, they cannot in any sense be predicted or controlled. Teachers who enter into this area do so with considerable courage; the possibility of reinforcing unwelcome pupil

discourses is always there. However, it may be that this is in one sense what true education is about (“It feels like this is the teacher you should be most of the time, I suspect.”).

There is much scope for further work here, not least in exploring in greater depth issues of competing pedagogical discourses in this respect; we are still some way off from answering Lenga’s (1998) call for an effective pedagogy of Holocaust Education. In fact, this thesis suggests that such a process is more difficult than presumed and not less so. Teacher motivations for engaging or not engaging in extended Holocaust Education beyond this relatively limited sample would certainly provide useful links with other work done on teacher desires.

In conclusion, this thesis must argue for a new honesty about Holocaust Education, especially from those of us who are engaged in promoting and enabling it. The narrative of the Holocaust is immensely powerful and offers adolescents, certainly in this part of the world, the most extensive classroom encounter with the horrific truth of what it means to be human. It stimulates an exploration of the weaker side of our nature and the darkness of prejudice, particularly anti-Semitism in a European context, and dehumanisation. Such an exploration in partnership with a committed teacher may even be an empowering experience. But it cannot achieve anything in terms of combating racism or encouraging social morality apart from as a small contribution to the main thrust of liberal education as a whole. Resisting the use of the text of the Holocaust as a tool for moral education is not a new idea (Bialystock, 2004) but the objections are usually on the grounds that the text should stand on its own rather than as a tool to teach any sort of lesson.

Perhaps the greatest need for honesty lies with us as pedagogues, to recognise, in Britzman’s (1998) words that:

teaching, it turns out, is also a psychic event for the teacher. (p 134).

The experience of teaching which this topic can offer is not unique within the curriculum, but it is nevertheless special. The two teachers from the

Buckinghamshire Girls' Grammar, who provided the 'deviant sample', were unsure about the effects of teaching it and stressed the uncontrollability of the lessons. While most of the teachers interviewed appeared to find the unpredictability of the lessons exciting, these two did not and, for that reason, they were uncomfortable about having to teach it.

We must also be honest in acknowledging that this is a 'useful' text. This is an extremely sensitive area, since the events 'belong' to no one except the victims. As Miss Mackie puts it:

I mean, *I know it's awful to describe the Holocaust as 'a hook' for something*, but it just gives you an opportunity to be doing all those things that in PSHE and in Citizenship, you would love to have the time to do.

The psychic tensions which exist between the acknowledgement of the horror and the fulfilment of desires will inevitably cause splits and resistances for the teacher. As she 'makes use' of the text, she must simultaneously acknowledge that it is too terrible to be 'used' at all. Not just do the events provide an awful warning for societies, but, in educational terms, they offer a glimpse into the abyss which can connect with the learners on many different levels and in many unexpected ways.

The contention of this thesis has been that the narrative of the Holocaust, as presented in the text of the lessons by teachers who are located within the discourse of HolEd, enables pupils both to confront issues and to reposition themselves in new social discourses. The pupil 'reads' this text, not in isolation (as if that were ever possible) but within a framework of the teacher's words and actions, the mode of address she employs, in the context of dominant social discourses both within and without the classroom. It is not so much the events themselves, but the text which their selection and presentation educationally provides, the classroom dynamics, the mode of address, the 'shock factor'. How the pupil responds will depend on many factors, but they are factors largely outside the conscious control of the teacher. However, in spite of this sea of

unpredictability, the messiness and unfathomability of the unconscious, the essential point emerges that this sort of pedagogical experience is potentially creatable whenever this terrible text is approached through the discourse of HoEd. Although the claims made for the topic in the discourse may be unrealistic, they nevertheless allow a language of possibilities which help to create the conditions for a real engagement with the text. The implications for how we engage with pupils, how we select and present texts and, even, how we assess what pupils have really learnt are important not just for those who teach about the Holocaust.

## APPENDIX 1

### **Summary of questions used in the pilot study, and as basis for main study with teachers.**

- 1      What, in your opinion, are the lessons to be learnt from the Holocaust? How would you describe your rationale for teaching this topic?
- 2      Are these lessons for the benefit of the individual or are they ultimately intended to benefit society as a whole?
- 3      Could any other historical event or genocide be used as effectively? Is there anything in particular about the Holocaust which teaches these lessons differently?
- 4      To what extent do you think it is necessary for pupils to be emotionally engaged by the events? How do you deal with the emotional responses of the pupils?

### **Summary of questions used in pupil interviews.**

1. (*Focus*) What do you remember particularly about your lessons on the Holocaust?
  - i. to ascertain that some cognitive learning had occurred (e.g. 'we learned about how people were transported to the camps')
  - ii. to act as a prompt for recall
  - iii. to ascertain elements which stood out particularly in the memories of the pupils and whether there was any correlation between different groups as to what was viewed as significant.
2. (*Emotions*) How did you feel when you saw [or read or listened to] the resources? Do you remember how you felt at the time? Did anything affect you emotionally?
3. (*The particularity of the Holocaust as a tool*) Have you studied any other topics about people in difficult situations/prejudices or injustices? Is there anything about the Holocaust particularly that helps you to think about these things?

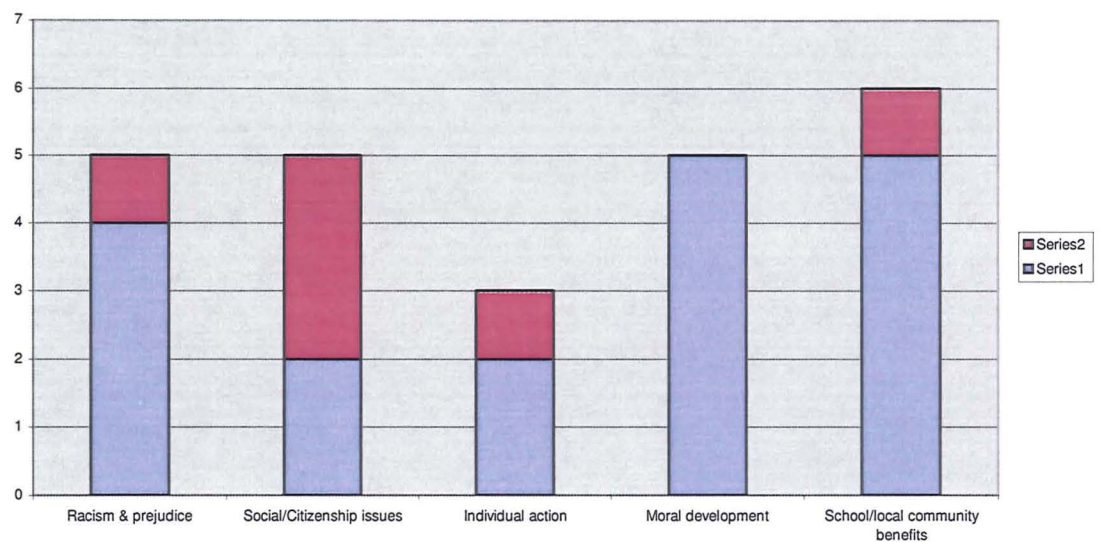
4. (*'Useless' or overwhelming knowledge*) Should people learn about the Holocaust in schools? Does it just make people depressed?
5. (*Has anything changed?*) Has it made you think differently about things now?
6. (*With relation to citizenship*) Do you think learning about the Holocaust helps to make you a better citizen? Can it help us in our society to be better?

## APPENDIX 2

### *Pilot study*

The pilot interviews were transcribed, using Silverman (2001)'s simplified transcription symbols. The questions are outlined in Appendix 1. The first observation involved the 'expected answers' – that is, those responses which echoed commonly held views about the value of Holocaust Education. These are shown in Fig. 2:1.

Fig. 2:1



The 'Y' axis indicates the rationales which those involved in Holocaust Education might have been expected to invoke:

- racism and prejudice
- social/citizenship issues
- the importance of individual action
- moral development
- school/local community benefits.

The 'X' axis indicates how many of the 10 interviewees in the pilot sample cited these.

Series 1: the American teachers

Series 2: the PGCE English students

As Fig. 2:1 indicates, there were some differences between the American teachers and the PGCE students. All three PGCE students saw Holocaust education as contributing to citizenship issues; they had recently attended a lecture on Citizenship guidelines. It was February 2003 and, given the high profile role of the subject at that time, it is not surprising the students chose to comment on this.

Jo W:            There's definitely advantages in the area of Citizenship - things like racism, persecution - modern day attitudes that are all the forces that are relevant today.

Elizabeth S:    [Initial benefits are for the] individual but that does feed into the whole idea of society, particularly with citizenship now as a subject - and the relevance of the Holocaust for today.

Nick B:           Many pupils can engage with it. There are hard lessons about power - it will be abused. The abuse of power can still go on and people go along with it, even ordinary people, and there's no reason why it can't happen in any country. Things are happening today - like issues about asylum seekers and so on. [If] individuals are active participants in society, there are tangible things you can get out of it, if enough people become involved. The important thing is the extent to which they're willing to engage.

Five of the seven American teachers mentioned the effect Holocaust Education could have in terms of moral development of the individual. These responses were less resonant of the 'grand aims' or 'stock phrases' often used in describing the perceived 'lessons to be learnt', but suggested a deeper understanding of both the pupils and the complexity of the subject matter.

Martina F:       The lessons I try to get across to my students is to go beyond the idea of just the lessons of tolerance - because I think that implies a negative connotation - so I try to teach them about especially

resistance and rescue, and how important it is not to be a bystander. And in everyday little things, you know like standing up for somebody that's being picked on in school to the ( ) of communities and organizations they belong to, and to be more compassionate and understanding human beings. They don't have to agree with people that they don't see eye to eye with, but they can be at least compassionate and understanding. So those are the two primary areas I focus on - resistance, resisting evil acts and attitudes, and rescue.

In a particularly significant extract, Jeanne C highlighted the moral ambiguity inherent in lessons about the Holocaust:

Jeanne C: We even talk about what makes people good. This is a difficult question. I teach in the Bible Belt and people have a strong idea about goodness but if you look at someone like Oskar Schindler - how was he good?

This raises questions about how, if accepted virtues are to be encouraged by means of these lessons, this is expected to be achieved, notwithstanding what these virtues are believed to be. It is also interesting that Jeanne C suggested that she has no answers; indeed she deliberately introduces issues of moral ambiguity into the lives of pupils who, more than many other pupils, are more accustomed to certainties.

The issues of prejudice and racism were cited by only five of the ten. This was unexpected since addressing issues of racism is a very commonly stated objective in Holocaust Education. The four American teachers who cited this rationale included school and community issues of prejudice:

Nancy S: The school that I teach in is racially mixed and there have been some tensions between races, and when I teach about the Holocaust we do talk at the end of the course about acceptance of

people - stereotyping other groups. So I think that they can learn history and they can also apply it to their situations

That the pupils could, in some sense become 'agents for change' or could affect society around them as a result of such lessons was also articulated:

Nancy S: Oh I think there are tremendous lessons to be learnt – that one person can make a difference, that hate is rampant in the world and that as one person can make a difference for good, others can also make a difference for evil.

The language used by the interviewees was interesting in that they qualified any familiar 'grand aims', such as the idea that Holocaust Education could help to prevent incidents of racism, with realistic caveats. So Martina F makes it clear that she has a sense of achievable goals:

It may not be that they can change the world, but they can change their piece of the world.

However, in contrast to this, Bill R, an experienced teacher, had begun by stating that:

Bill R: You want to get complete understanding as to what happened (.) very simply because you want to make sure that nothing like this ever happens again

Bill's use of the 'never again' rationale was unexpected. I wondered whether this was an example of what I had hoped to avoid; namely, that Bill assumed I wanted to hear the 'stock answers' and had, as he thought, obliged. Perhaps, alternatively, this represented some kind of 'short hand' answer, implying that we both knew what the rationales were, and surely he did not have to go into them. If so, this suggested that some of the 'grand aims' and often-repeated rationales are simply means of describing that which, for some reason, it is not

easy to describe – even, in some sense coded responses. This would be addressed again as the research continued.

Eight of the interviewees spoke about the importance of considering other genocides and global conflicts. Three of the American teachers, history specialists, pointed out that the ‘lessons of the Holocaust’ were not simply of academic interest but were of modern significance:

Martina F: Next year I’ve got permission from my school - I’m in a very rural school so this is kind of unusual - they are committing me to teach a contemporary literature and film course on genocide. So we’re going to take a look even in our country - what we did to the Native American Indians: was that a genocide? We’re going to look at the Armenian genocide. The Holocaust will be our focal piece but we’re also going to look at Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia. So, you can use any civil rights or human rights issue, but I think that the power of the Holocaust with students is so incredible, because, I mean, they can still find survivors or the second generation. And those live testimonies can bring the whole period of time to life.

Other genocides were important, too. However, the material available to teachers concerning the Holocaust made it the most practical classroom focus. A number of the teachers speak about the “magnitude” (Bill R) of the Holocaust or describe it in terms of specific horror (“the grossest example of man’s inhumanity to man” – Noreen B). Several comment that “there is more literature on that than anything else” (Nancy S). Elaine C refers to it as:

a paradigm case. [W]e also have enough distance from it to be able to analyse it. More recent cases of genocide, while we may have documentation and living witnesses, we don’t have the distance from it yet; we’re unable to always understand things and have perspective.

Finally, the respondents were also asked to comment on the emotional engagement of pupils and its pedagogic value. This had been included in order to reflect the debate on the manipulation of pupils' fears or emotions (e.g. Totten and Feinberg, 2001, p143). Indeed, the danger of simply 'making kids cry' was addressed explicitly by five of the teachers.

Rebecca A: And I think the emotion is good, however, I think that any teacher who teaches just to see how many people she can have crying in the aisles, that goal is totally irresponsible, but in order for it to succeed there has to be an emotional response from the children.

Engagement of emotions was spoken of as being, not simply unavoidable, but a necessary part of education by seven of the interviewees. The PGCE English students had clearly given the matter some thought.

Nick B: Absolutely. You can't learn unless you feel it as well. This is the principle that underpins all my teaching. You can't engage fully with anything unless emotions are involved. You have to feel it.

## APPENDIX 3

### Example of initial data analysis

Initial analysis was made by means of identifying and codifying elements within the verbal responses. In the following example, the 'conceptual names' are underlined:

JLC

Right – so – um – do you think there's any difference between a pupil you consider to be a 'good pupil' generally and one in this topic?

VH

[Long pause] um – it's quite interesting [teacher uncertainty], 'cos I mean there's some really talented historians [good pupil] like the one I've just described, he will also be very good at this subject [specificity of topic], but that's also due to the fact that because he's so good at history [subject] and, because I've told him that, we've got a very strong relationship [good relationship]. So I knew he wouldn't do anything to let that down at this stage [challenging], knowing that it's such an important topic [significance]. But if you look at, say, the Set 5, academically they're not good historians [good pupil] – academically – but they are in some ways better at this subject [specificity of topic] because they are so open emotionally [emotional reactions]. They're very honest [open] [good relationship] people because – I think it's because of the nature of having been in a Set 5 – it's always a very small class, most of them have had one-to-one intervention from adults. [So] when it comes to talking about how you feel [emotional reactions], and why people do things [motivation], and – they do actually have a vocabulary that you don't expect them to have [teacher response: unexpected]. Because most of them have either been through mentoring or counselling. So there is – a kind of – difference there.

#### APPENDIX 4

*Totten (2002, p 5) lists seventeen rationales (as referred to on page 31 of this thesis). Since they represent perceived 'best practice' by many teachers within the discursive community of HolEd, they are listed here in full. (The format and the American spelling are retained from the original.)*

Over the past twenty years, a number of thought-provoking rationales have been generated by educators in regard to the question: "Why teach about the Holocaust?" Those that we find the most thought-provoking and/or valuable are as follows:

- to study human behavior;
- to teach students why, how, what, when and where the Holocaust took place, including the key historical trends/antecedents that led up to and culminated in "the final solution" (Totten, n.d.);
- to explore concepts such as prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, racism, antisemitism, obedience to authority, the bystander syndrome, loyalty, conflict resolution, decision making, and justice;
- "to illustrate the effects of peer pressure, individual responsibility, and the process of decision making under the most extreme conditions" (Schwartz, 1990, p. 101)
- to become "cognizant that 'little' prejudices can easily be transformed into far more serious ones" (Lipstadt, 1995, p. 29)
- to "make students more sensitive to ethnic and religious hatred" (Lipstadt, 1995, p. 29)
- to develop in students an awareness of the value of pluralism and diversity in a pluralistic society;
- to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of individuals, groups, and nations when confronting life in an industrial/ technological/ information age, including the abuse of power, civil and human rights violations, and genocidal acts;
- "to develop a deeper appreciation of the relationship of rights and duties, and to realize that human rights and the corresponding duties

are not the birthright of the few but the birthright of all – every man, woman, and child in the world today” (Branson and Torney-Purta, 1982, p. 5);

- to examine the nature, structure, and purpose of governments;
- to become “sensitized to inhumanity and suffering whenever they occur” (Fleischner, in Strom and Parsons, 1982, p. 6);
- to provide a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of others’ oppression;
- “to teach civic virtue...[which is related to] the importance of responsible citizenship and mature iconoclasm” (Friedlander, 1979, pp. 532-533);
- to understand that the Holocaust was *not* an accident in history; it was not inevitable (Parsons and Totten, 1993, p.1);
- to develop an understanding that the Holocaust was a watershed event not only in the twentieth century, but in the entire history of humanity (Parsons and Totten, 1993, p.1);
- to demonstrate how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide;
- to illustrate that the Holocaust resulted from a cumulative progression of numerous historical events and deeds, *and* that it was not an event in history that was inevitable (Parsons and Totten, 1993, p.3).

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## APPENDIX 5

### **Letter from Irma Diamant to Mrs Rainford, regarding her daughter Vera Diamant, who had arrived in Britain on the Kindertransport.**

Celakovice July 1939

Dear Mrs Rainford,

We feel greatly indebted to you for your unexpected favour from the 5<sup>th</sup> inst., the receipt of which we acknowledge today with all our heart. You can believe us, in the first days, when we did not know the destiny of our child, we lived in a terrible anxiety and trouble. But as soon as we opened your dear letter, all our sorrow and uneasiness has been driven away directly. These last few days we feel happier again knowing that our little girl has come into your hands, into such an esteemed family with a loving heart and kindly feelings. This is indeed a great relief for a mother who had to do a sacrifice and send her darling daughter far away. Our good Lord in heaven may repay you, dear Mrs Rainford, [all] your kindness you bestow on our child.

We live here in straightened circumstances, both our children have been educated modestly, and we shall be much obliged to you when you will continue educating Vera in the same measure.

We feel very sorry that we are not able to contribute in no way to the educational requirements of the little one, as we are not allowed to send to England whatever amount of money it might be.

[Dearest] Mrs Rainford, your words our little girl is enjoying love in your family circle, have given us once more the faith in God and we trust that better times will come again over us. We have been so happy at reading your affirmation, you are our good friends, and we can assure you that our gratitude towards you is really great and sincere. Every day we shall pray to God to keep up your love for our child and your friendship for us here.

In the meantime we remain, Dear Mrs Rainford

Yours most sincerely

Irma Diamant

[From: Gissing, V (1994) *Pearls of Childhood* London: Robson Books, p 44]

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