

The Holocaust as history and human rights: A cross-national analysis of Holocaust education in social science textbooks, 1970–2008

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Abstract This article examines Holocaust education in secondary school social science textbooks around the world since 1970, using data coded from 465 textbooks from 69 countries. It finds that books and countries more connected to world society and with an accompanying emphasis on human rights, diversity in society and a depiction of international, rather than national, society are more likely to discuss the Holocaust. Additionally, textbooks from Western countries contain more discussion of the Holocaust, although the rate is increasing in Eastern European and other non-Western countries, suggesting eventual convergence. We also find a shift in the nature of discussion, from a historical event to a violation of human rights or crime against humanity. These findings broadly support the arguments of neo-institutional theories that the social and cultural realms of the contemporary world are increasingly globalized and that notions of human rights are a central feature of world society.

Keywords Human rights · Holocaust education · Textbooks

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Introduction

The historical legacy of anti-Semitism and the on-going conflict in Israel and Palestine contribute to the emotionally and politically charged discussions surrounding Holocaust education worldwide. As a result, those involved in education may not feel well equipped to handle the subject and avoid it entirely, while others support the inclusion of Holocaust education in schooling. Advocates are deeply divided on their basic conceptualization of the Holocaust. One view promotes a focus on the Holocaust as embedded historical knowledge, while a more recent alternative perspective emphasizes its importance for civic education, particularly as linked to teaching about universal human rights. Despite the potential contribution of teaching about the Holocaust for history and human rights education, few studies have analyzed the cross-national and longitudinal trends: How many countries include the Holocaust in their curriculum and do they depict it in historical or human rights terms?

Using a unique dataset constructed through a content analysis of 465 high school history, civics, and social studies textbooks from 69 countries from 1970 to 2008, we provide a macro-level overview of trends in Holocaust education. Our research addresses three inter-related questions: (1) Is the prevalence of Holocaust education increasing or decreasing over the period of our study? (2) Is Holocaust education a primarily Western phenomenon, or is it found in countries worldwide over time? (3) To what extent is the Holocaust framed in terms of universal human rights in textbooks? To address these questions we describe the trends in mentions of the Holocaust in textbooks around the world over time; we also conducted a quantitative multilevel analysis to empirically consider the properties of textbooks and countries associated with the likelihood of discussing the Holocaust.

In what follows we first discuss the rise of Holocaust education in society and describe two main conceptual understandings of the Holocaust. Next, we outline the theoretical perspective that motivates our questions and arguments, and describe our data and measures. We then report our descriptive findings and the results of our multilevel analysis. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for a broader sociological understanding of social science instruction and the place of the Holocaust within it.

The rise of Holocaust education in society

Existing studies show that for several decades following World War II, there was a lack of public awareness and education about the Holocaust in North America and Europe (Short and Reed 2004). Beginning in the 1970s, however, the Holocaust emerged as a topic in school curricula in Western countries, primarily in the US, Canada, Germany, and the UK (Fallace 2008; Rathenow 2000, 2004; Schweber 1998; Short and Reed 2004; Keren 2004).

A confluence of several events has made the Holocaust increasingly visible in society and schools. For example, the apprehension and subsequent trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 was widely reported in countries around the world. This event, along with the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and neighbouring Arab nations, heightened awareness of Israel and led to increased visibility of Holocaust survivors. In the US, the 1993 release of *Schindler's List*, the opening of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and the development of a Holocaust curriculum by the non-profit group, Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO), increased the prominence of the Holocaust, instituting Holocaust remembrance as an integral part of American culture (Fallace 2008).

As the Holocaust became more important within mainstream culture, Holocaust education was firmly established in several Western countries by the early 1990s.

Going beyond the Western world, international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, have launched programmes that reflect a view of the Holocaust as having global relevance. For example, the UN General Assembly designated an International Holocaust Remembrance Day starting in 1995, and FHAO works to spread Holocaust education worldwide. FHAO works globally with 1.8 million students and 25,000 educators per year, primarily in the US, Canada, Northern Ireland, Israel, Rwanda, and South Africa. Then, in 2000, the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust (2000) drew representatives from 46 nations to discuss education about and remembrance of the Holocaust; they included heads of state, diplomats, NGOs, religious leaders, academics, and survivors.¹

Conceptions of the Holocaust

Initially, the Holocaust was conceptualized in society as a historical event central to the moral narrative of the Western world. This view is best described by Maier (2000), who argues that one account of the Holocaust is a Eurocentric story focusing “on the Holocaust and/or Stalinist Communist political killing as the culminating historical experience of the century” (p. 826). Gregory (2000, p. 52) also holds this perspective, claiming the Holocaust is “the most important single event of the twentieth century”.

A contrasting perspective conceptualizes the Holocaust as having universal moral relevance. Alexander (2009a, b) traces the transformation of the Holocaust into a global cultural symbol of evil. Levy and Sznajder (2002) describe this process as the formation of a “cosmopolitan memory” and argue that “memories of the Holocaust facilitate the formation of transnational memory cultures, which in turn, have the potential to become the cultural foundation for global human rights politics” (p. 88). Similarly, Dunne and Wheeler (2002) characterize the experience of the Holocaust as directly leading to the establishment of an international human rights regime. Notions of the Holocaust as an element of global human rights are intricately tied to visions of modern human society, of rational progress towards contemporary notions of progress and justice. While one could think of the Holocaust as an aberration in the modern world, Bauman (2000, 2001) argues that it is a product of modernity, a point to which we will return in our discussion. His key insight is that the Holocaust is crucial to our understanding of all modern bureaucratic societies, which we would argue includes all formal nation-states, “because it reminds us (as if we needed reminding) just how formal and ethically blind is the bureaucratic pursuit of efficiency” (Bauman 2001, p. 243). Whereas the historical view of the Holocaust is linked to (primarily Western) history, this new view is tied to the depiction of universal moral lessons, especially notions of human rights.

The question of whether it is best to conceptualize the Holocaust in embedded historical or universal human rights terms is controversial (see, for example, the debates in Alexander et al. 2009). As Maier (2000) writes, in light of growing recognition of other atrocities committed worldwide, such as in Bosnia or Rwanda, it seems increasingly parochial to emphasize the uniqueness of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust relative to other human tragedies. But he takes a critical view of linking the Holocaust to

¹ For more about the forum, see http://www.manskligarattigheter.gov.se/stockholmforum/2000/conference_2000.html.

human tragedies elsewhere, arguing that it is a weak and ineffective strategy to maintain the contemporary relevance of a Eurocentric perspective. Instead, he asserts, the Western narrative, and the Holocaust, have lost their dominance as the central moral story of the twentieth century, replaced by an emphasis on the legacy of global inequality left by colonization and deepened by economic globalization.

Debates within education

Conflicting conceptions of the Holocaust emerge as debates over how it should be taught in schools. Some argue that the main purpose of teaching about the Holocaust should be to teach students to become historians rather than to reduce incidents of racism and to prevent future atrocities (Kinloch 2001). Similarly, others (such as Novick 1999) question the alleged civic, moral, and historical lessons learned from the Holocaust in light of the extremity of the event. In this view, the Holocaust should not be abstracted globally because it cannot be understood outside of the specific confluence of circumstances that created it.

In contrast, Short and Reed (2004) view the purpose of studying the Holocaust as preventing future human rights violations; this view assumes that through the study of atrocities like the Holocaust one can draw general lessons across space and time. According to Salmons (2003, p. 139), “a key motivation for teaching about the Holocaust is that it can sensitize young people to examples of injustice, persecution, racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred in the world today”.

Looking directly at textbooks, one finds many clear examples that show both the historical and human rights conceptions of the Holocaust. For example, a tenth-grade history textbook from India (Dev and Dev 2005) provides a map of Europe marking all the concentration camps and states, “Concentration camps were set up and anti-fascists and Jews were sent there and many of them were killed” (p. 132). Similarly, a US history textbook, *Our land, our time: A history of the United States from 1865*, gives this relatively factual account of the Holocaust:

In Germany, this belief in a “master race” led to the massive and brutal persecution of German Jews. Hitler’s government stripped Jews of their civil rights and seized or destroyed their property. During World War II, the Nazis systematically murdered Jews of conquered lands, and other groups such as gypsies, handicapped people, and all dissidents and resistance fighters. (Conlin 1986, pp. 425–426).

The discourse is certainly normative, using strong language such as “murdered” and “stripped of civil rights,” but the Holocaust is presented as a contextualized historical event that took place in Germany and neighbouring countries. These books contain no explicit conceptualization of the Holocaust as a violation of universal principles of human rights, nor are there any direct connections to global implications for proper civic behaviour.

In contrast, a book for senior secondary students in Malawi, *Social and development studies*, explicitly links the Holocaust to global human rights principles (Fabiano and Maganga 2002). In a chapter titled “Social and ethical values for international life,” the authors state:

Closely connected to the idea of universal human rights is the idea that all people are equal, regardless of their race or ethnic group [...] You have seen in this course some

of the effects of racism. You have seen how it became a system of government in apartheid South Africa; you have seen how the Nazis of Germany in the 1930 s and 1940 s had such a strong belief in their racial superiority that they carried out a policy of genocide against the Jews. What is important to remember is international reactions to these events. South Africa was isolated from the rest of the world because of its racist policies. A war was fought throughout the world to defeat the forces of Nazism. (pp. 109–110).

In this Malawian book the Holocaust is an example of a vicious ethnic conflict that violates the principles of the international community. It is presented as parallel to other violations of international norms: apartheid in South Africa, the caste system in India, and racism in the United States. All these negative phenomena are depicted as global aberrations for which the perpetrators are brought to justice by the international community.

The history textbook currently used for grade 11 in South Africa (Bottaro et al. 2009) also ties the Holocaust directly to human rights. It says, “The Holocaust and other atrocities during the war led to a reaction against ‘Scientific Racism,’ Social Darwinism, and eugenics. After the war there was a greater awareness of the need to protect human rights” (p. 265). The authors go on to link the post-World War II reaction to international social movements against racism, including the civil rights movement and anti-apartheid movement.

In the historical examples above, the Holocaust is presented as important for students to know about because it is a central moral event in the Western story. But when linked to human rights, the Holocaust is presented as an instance of globally unacceptable behaviour, important for teaching universally-relevant lessons in tolerance and peace. Our goal is not to take sides in this debate, but rather to contribute to the discussion by providing empirical evidence of cross-national trends in Holocaust education over time.

Theory and arguments

The conceptions of the Holocaust presented above suggest several propositions about what we may find as we examine discourse in textbooks. Our approach starts from the observation that, particularly since World War II, many of the world’s key actors, especially nation-states, behave as though many aspects of social and cultural life are governed by a set of universal principles applicable worldwide (Meyer et al. 1997). This “highly rationalized and universalistic” world society results in the convergence of many features of nation-states around the world in the absence of direct coercion or obvious functionality (Meyer et al. 1997, p. 153). In education, for example, studies show that a surprisingly standard curriculum has emerged worldwide (Meyer et al. 1992a, b).

Our primary argument in this paper is that the Holocaust is emerging as a central symbol of world society. Our view is elegantly captured in the opening speech at the Stockholm Forum, given by Professor Yehuda Bauer (2000):

An amazing thing has happened in the last decade—in fact, during the last few years: a tragedy that befell a certain people, at a certain time and certain places, has become the symbol of radical evil as such, the world over.

Hence, as Dubiel (2003) asserts, the Holocaust has become a meta-narrative of evil, pain and suffering—a “symbolic repertoire” that has been embraced globally (p. 61). Similarly, Alexander (2009a, b) describes the social construction of the Holocaust as a free-floating, universal symbol of evil.

Working from a body of research that shows that education systems reflect global patterns and universal principles, over and above distinctive national histories (Meyer and Ramirez 2000; Ramirez and Meyer 2002), we expect to observe the following changes in Holocaust education:

Proposition 1 *To the extent that the Holocaust has become a central symbol of world society, we expect the following changes in education as world society expands:*

- 1a. Textbooks will increasingly mention the Holocaust over time.*
- 1b. Mentions of the Holocaust will increasingly appear in a range of countries around the world.*
- 1c. The Holocaust will be increasingly framed in terms of universal human rights.*

Holocaust as a symbol of world society

A second set of ideas explore the role of the Holocaust as a constitutive symbol of world society in more depth. Here, the core theme is that Holocaust education becomes a way to teach the student that he/she is a human person in a global society where certain civic rights and responsibilities are universally applicable. The opposition is with nationalist themes that stress corporate nation-states governing a culturally homogenous citizenry, and the subordination of individuals and civic behaviour to the unified nation-state. Our line of argument reflects the point that the main theme of Holocaust education, worldwide, is increasingly a universal doctrine rather than a reflection of immediate local circumstances. Thus:

Proposition 2 *Holocaust education in textbooks reflects a general set of dimensions stressing the student's individual human membership in a global society and de-emphasizing the nation-state as a unitary polity. Holocaust education should be greater in books that are:*

- 2a. More focused on universal human rights,*
- 2b. More focused on depictions of society as diverse,*
- 2c. More focused on international, rather than national, society.*

Holocaust education as contingent on national characteristics

The propositions above focus on the expansion of global society and its associated culture. However, this line of thought is not inconsistent with classic theories of education in general and the curriculum in particular stressing the importance of national economic and political factors as well as national cultural heritages. Rather, it emphasizes global linkages in addition to national characteristics. Contemporary notions of human rights stem from Western political philosophy and documents such as the Declaration of the rights of man and the bill of rights. In addition, although world society is increasingly global, it has its roots in ideologies of progress and justice stemming back to the Enlightenment (Meyer et al. 1992a, b; Chabbott 2003). Further, as Maier (2000) describes, the Holocaust itself is a core feature of the Western moral narrative. As a result of this social and cultural legacy, countries with a Western cultural heritage may be more closely linked to world society and to the Holocaust and therefore more likely to discuss it in textbooks.

Proposition 3 *Holocaust education may be more prevalent in countries more closely tied to world culture.*

In sum, we argue that the Holocaust has emerged as a symbol of the principles of a world society. We hypothesize that as world society expands over time, countries and textbooks are increasingly likely to discuss the Holocaust, and a greater range of countries are likely to include the Holocaust in their curricula. We expect the increase to be most pronounced among the countries and books most closely tied to world society. Furthermore, the nature of Holocaust discussion is likely to be shifting towards human rights discourse as the human rights movement emerges as a key facet of world society. We tested these propositions using the data and methods described in the next section.

Data, measures and analyses

Finding books

One of the key reasons for the dearth of cross-national, longitudinal research on Holocaust education is the difficulty of finding adequate data. Curricula are poorly tracked and recorded, particularly over time. Ministry of education reports, such as those found in the International Bureau of Education, sometimes indicate what should be in mass educational curricula (see the uses of these reports in Benavot and Braslavsky 2006; Benavot and Amadio 2005; Meyer et al. 1992a, b), but data for early time points are rare and data are available for only a limited number of countries. Detailed cross-national, longitudinal information on textbooks is even more difficult to obtain. It is sometimes possible to acquire current lists of approved textbooks, but historical records are rarely kept and earlier books are hard to find. Thus, despite the valuable source of data that textbooks can provide on longitudinal, cross-national education systems, it is difficult to collect books systematically.

As the source of data for this study we draw on a sample of history, civics, and social studies textbooks collected and analyzed as part of a multi-year study on human rights and citizenship education. These books come mainly from the library of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig, Germany. A secondary source of textbooks, particularly those from developing countries, is a network of comparative education researchers and practitioners. Appendix A provides a list of the countries and books covered by the data set over time.

Some important caveats should be mentioned. It is not possible to obtain representative samples of textbooks from many countries over time in multiple subjects. In four cases we have just a single textbook from a country and our data cover only about a third of the extant countries in the world. Further, we do not know how extensively any given book was used in classrooms. Thus, our findings cannot be generalized beyond the books and countries that actually enter into our analyses.

Measures

For our core dependent variables, we employed two measures. First, to capture whether the Holocaust was discussed we asked whether the book contained “at least a paragraph” related to the Holocaust. We examined this variable both descriptively and through quantitative analyses. Second, to capture the nature of Holocaust discourse, we asked whether the Holocaust was “discussed explicitly as a human rights violation or crime against humanity” and we examined descriptive trends in this variable. Of the books in our sample, 25% mention the Holocaust, and 12% talk about the Holocaust using human rights

discourse. [Appendix B](#) provides a list of countries that have at least one textbook that discusses the Holocaust and the Holocaust in relation to human rights.

At the country level, we relied mainly on a variable for Western cultural heritage as a proxy for cultural, political, and economic characteristics of countries. We compared the likelihood that books from Eastern Europe and other non-Western, non-Eastern European countries would discuss the Holocaust, compared to countries with a Western cultural heritage (Western Europe plus the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand).

As a methodological check, we also tested standard measures used in cross-national analyses: GDP per capita and secondary school enrollment from the World Development Indicators (World Bank 2008), the log of memberships in international non-governmental organizations, taken from the Yearbook of International Organizations (Union of International Associations 1980), ethno-linguistic fractionalization (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005), and human rights violations (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005). Our analytic model, described below, requires fixed country characteristics, so values are equivalent to a country's score in 1980 (for example, GDP/capita in 1980). We used these variables primarily to check our initial proposition that linkage to the world society will explain the likelihood that a book mentions the Holocaust. Many of these predictors, such as GDP/capita, overlap substantially with our West variable and thus could not be included in the same model.

We used four measures to characterize books: (1) the date they were published; (2) an indicator of the degree to which the book's content is international in focus (a five-point item asking the coder to note the proportion of the book addressing international issues); (3) a measure of the amount of the book that discusses human rights (also on a five-point scale)²; and (4) a count of the number of diverse groups mentioned (such as children, women, minorities, indigenous groups, and the elderly). These measures were developed as part of a broader study aimed at explaining the rise of human rights education but were used here to predict a parallel trend in Holocaust education (see Meyer et al. 2010 forthcoming, for additional discussion of the data and measures).

As control variables, we also included the length of the book in pages and the grade level. In addition, we controlled for whether a book is in history versus social studies or civics. Prior studies using this data found a difference between history and social studies or civics books in the rise of human rights (Meyer et al. 2010 forthcoming) and student-centered pedagogy (Bromley et al. 2010 forthcoming).

Analytic model

We present descriptive findings for the data, and then shift to a hierarchical generalized linear model (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Hierarchical models are appropriate because we hypothesized that mentions of the Holocaust in textbooks are influenced by both textbook-level and country-level variables. In addition, the data is clustered by country, as [Appendix A](#) indicates. Modeling the outcome using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression underestimates the error that arises from the commonalities of textbooks within particular countries, violating the assumptions of OLS regression. Because hierarchical models incorporate both textbook-level and country-level error, they allowed us to use the fullest range of information available. To account for the binary nature of our outcome, we used a logit link function to transform our predicted values into the log odds of success (i.e. of a textbook answering “yes” to the question of whether they discuss the Holocaust or

² The book had to include the exact phrase “human rights” (or a translation of it).

Holocaust as a human rights violation).³ The results can be interpreted simply as a positive coefficient indicating an increase in the likelihood that a book will mention the Holocaust, and a negative coefficient indicating a decrease in that likelihood.

Results and discussion

Descriptive findings

Figure 1 presents descriptive findings on the extent of discussions of the Holocaust in textbooks and countries over time.⁴ We see a general increase from about 12% of books in any given year discussing the Holocaust to over 25%, with most growth taking place in the 1970s and early 1980s. Similarly, the proportion of countries with a book discussing the Holocaust in any year increases from about 11 to 25% over the period, with the rate rising early on and remaining stable beginning in the mid-1980s. Thus, we see a general increase in discussions of the Holocaust in textbooks over time, in support of our first proposition.

Figure 2 shows some support for our proposition 1b. The increase in discussion of the Holocaust in textbooks over time is not spread equally among Western, Eastern European, and other countries, but comes mainly from a rapid rise in its inclusion into books in post-Communist Eastern Europe. Surprisingly, the rate at which the Holocaust is mentioned in textbooks among Western countries and other non-Western, non-European countries appears relatively flat over time. So, although the average proportion of books mentioning the Holocaust is higher in the West, the rate does not appear to increase over time. Discussions of the Holocaust were previously rare in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe but have been increasing rapidly to a level that today is nearly on par with that of Western countries. For countries outside the West and Eastern Europe, the trend appears to be flat over time; however, as the quantitative analyses will show, we found that the rate is actually increasing significantly relative to the West, once we controlled for characteristics of books and countries.

Most strikingly, Fig. 3 strongly supports proposition 2c, as it shows a steep increase in the proportion of books and countries that discuss the Holocaust specifically as a human rights violation. In the 1970s very few books or countries used human rights language to discuss the Holocaust. But by 2008, nearly 20% of textbooks and over 15% of countries include discussion of the Holocaust using human rights language. Considered another way, in the 1970s and 1980s, few textbooks discussed the Holocaust, and, of those that did, about one-third used human rights language. In contrast, by about 2000 roughly 70% of

³ Our hierarchical model consists of textbook (level 1) and country (level 2) equations. The constant of the textbook-level equation and the effect of publication date are modeled as functions of country characteristics. Thus, the interpretation of the constant is of utmost importance. We constructed the variables such that the constant in the textbook-level equation should be interpreted as the estimated likelihood that a textbook that is average on all independent variables will discuss the Holocaust. We accomplished this through grand-mean centering of all textbook-level variables. The equations for our final model (Model 4) were:

(1) Log odds of Mentioning Holocaust = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{High Grade, 11-13}) + \beta_2(\text{N. Pages, log}) + \beta_3(\text{History}) + \beta_4(\text{Publication Date}) + \beta_5(\text{Human Rights}) + \beta_6(\text{Diversity}) + \beta_7(\text{Internationalization}) + r_{ij}$

(2) $\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$

(3) $\beta_4 = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}(\text{Communist or Post-Communist}) + \gamma_{11}(\text{Non-West, Non-Communist}) + \mu_{0j}$.

⁴ The data lines in Figs. 1, 2, and 3 have been smoothed using a 10-year running average.

Fig. 1 Average percent of books and countries discussing the Holocaust over time

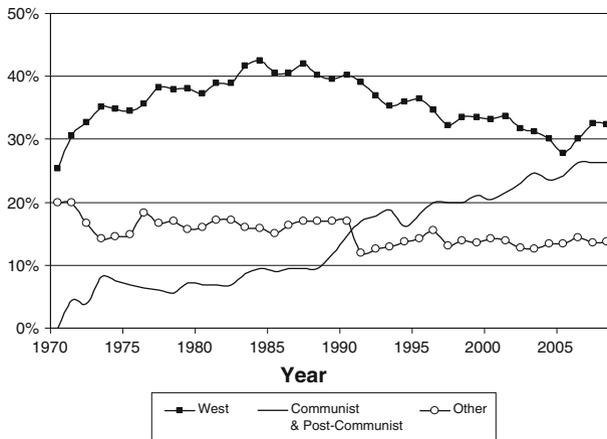
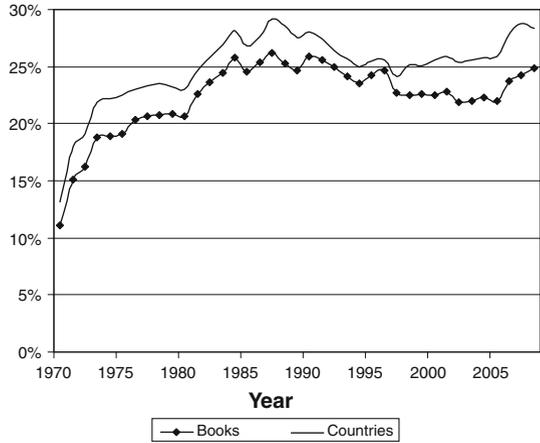


Fig. 2 Average percent of books discussing the Holocaust over time by country type

books with some discussion of the Holocaust used human rights terms. This increase is found in texts on history, civics, and social studies. If we roughly split the entire body of books into those published before and after 1995, the proportion of history books that discuss the Holocaust using human rights discourse increases from 14 to 20%; for civics and social studies the proportion increases from 2 to 11%. This strongly supports our contention that the Holocaust discourse has shifted over time, from a matter of historical fact to a violation of human rights. In the next section we move to quantitative analyses of the prevalence of Holocaust education worldwide.

Quantitative findings

We find general support for our descriptive findings and hypotheses in a quantitative analysis of Holocaust curricula. Table 1 presents the results of our hierarchical generalized linear model for the likelihood that a book will have a mention of the Holocaust.

Model 1 is simply our control variables: number of pages, grade level, and subject. As expected, we found that history books are more likely to discuss the Holocaust than civics or social studies books. Grade level turned out to be an unimportant factor, and longer books may be slightly more likely to discuss the Holocaust. Our substantive analysis began with the textbook-level indicators in Model 2. We entered the variables individually and together and found the same results; only the full models are presented here.

Our second set of propositions reflects our view of the Holocaust as a global cultural symbol. We proposed that books that de-emphasize the nation-state as a unitary, bounded polity reflect a view of society as global, and are therefore more likely to talk about the Holocaust. These are books that focus on universal human rights and diversity in society, and discuss international social and cultural organizations. In support of these hypotheses, Models 2 through 7 show a positive, significant effect for discussion of human rights, mentions of diversity, and a book's level of internationalization.

Our third proposition considers the argument that countries more linked to world society are more likely to discuss the Holocaust. One key indicator of linkage is a Western cultural heritage. Model 2 shows that relative to those from Western countries, books from the countries of Eastern Europe are less likely to mention the Holocaust, although the difference is not significant. The lack of a significant Eastern European effect is likely due to a rapid increase since the mid-1990s, which was illustrated in Fig. 3. On average, books from other non-Western, non-Eastern European countries are significantly less likely to discuss the Holocaust, compared to books from Western countries.

We also tested several other country properties using alternative measures of linkage. Model 4 uses a standard measure of linkage to world society: the log of memberships in international non-governmental organizations. This measure has a positive and significant association with the likelihood that a textbook mentions the Holocaust. Model 5 uses a measure of development, GDP per capita, and also has a positive and significant correlation with discussion of the Holocaust. We argue that the effect of GDP per capita on mentions of the Holocaust is not due directly to wealth per se. Rather, in the stratified world system, wealth and Western culture overlap substantially. We tested several other measures of development, including level of democracy, secondary enrollment, foreign investment, and aid per capita, and found that they had no significant association with the outcome.

Fig. 3 Average percent of books and countries discussing the Holocaust as a human rights violation over time

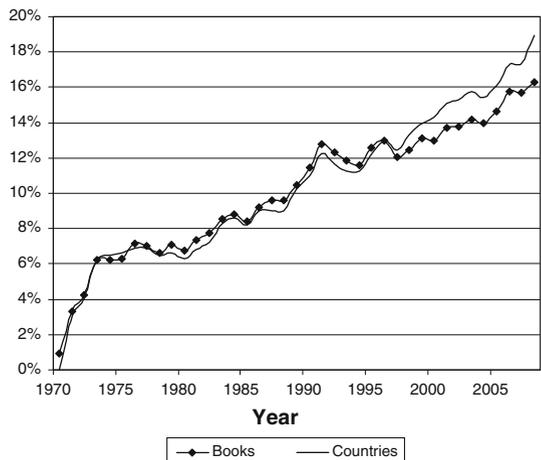


Table 1 HGLM models predicting discussion of the Holocaust

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Textbook-level controls							
School grade (11–13)	0.313	0.103	0.058	0.079	0.094	0.057	0.046
Number of pages (log)	0.510	0.544*	0.504*	0.452	0.511	0.542	0.604*
History	1.458****	1.692****	1.637****	1.689****	1.696****	1.659****	1.796****
Textbook-level core variables							
Year		-0.006	0.000	0.005	0.003	-0.002	-0.054**
Human rights		0.360****	0.363****	0.364**	0.364****	0.336**	0.385****
Diversity		0.123****	0.107**	0.102**	0.093*	0.117**	0.124**
Internationalization		0.543****	0.540****	0.543****	0.545****	0.543****	0.558****
Intercept	-1.233****	-1.616****	-1.169****	-1.797****	-1.685****	-1.645****	-1.805****
Country level (Predicting avg.)							
Eastern Europe			-0.284				
Non-West, Non-Eastern Europe			-0.979**				
INGO memberships (log)				4.896**			
GDP/capita (log)					0.045*		
Ethnolinguistic fractionalization						-1.708**	
Country level (predicting year)							
(Post-) communist							0.112*
Non-West, Non-Eastern Europe							0.088**
Level 1 variance explained (%)	23	29	22	29	32	34	45

N at level 1 is 465; *N* at level 2 is 69. We report robust standard errors

**** $p < .001$, *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$, two-tailed tests

In Model 6, as a measure of distance from world society, we tested ethno-linguistic fractionalization. This phenomenon is commonly used as an indication of the number of corporate groups in society that could potentially come into conflict. Nations with a higher number of competing ethnic and linguistic groups may be less integrated into an overarching world culture, and thus less likely to discuss the Holocaust. From the opposite perspective, it is also plausible that more fractionalized countries are the ones most in need of the lessons of peace and tolerance that Holocaust education could provide. In support of our first argument, we found that ethno-linguistic fractionalization had a negative effect on mention of the Holocaust in textbooks. A parallel measure, human rights violations, had no effect and the results are not discussed here. Together, Models 4 through 6 show that alternative measures of linkage to world society support our argument that those countries more closely connected to the world society are more likely to discuss the Holocaust.

Our final analysis, in Model 7, was designed to provide a more rigorous test of the first set of propositions regarding the expansion of Holocaust education to a broad range of countries over time. Although our descriptive data in Fig. 1 show an overall increase in the proportion of books discussing the Holocaust, our quantitative analysis did not find that a book's publication date had significant effects. This finding leads us to suspect that, rather than expanding worldwide at an equal rate, mentions of the Holocaust are increasing outside the West as the Holocaust becomes a global symbol, while the number of mentions remains constant in the West. The regional differences illustrated in Fig. 2 also suggest that mentions of the Holocaust may be increasing in Eastern Europe in particular, and remaining stable elsewhere.

To explore this idea, in Model 7 we tested an interaction between *Year* and a country's geographic location in one of three broad world regions: Eastern Europe, West, or Other. In models 2 through 6 the *Year* coefficient represents the rate in all countries, but in Model 7 we added controls for country type, changing the interpretation of the *Year* coefficient to the rate for Western countries. Surprisingly, the negative and significant effect of *Year* shows that, among the Western countries in our sample, the rate of Holocaust discussion is decreasing significantly over time. The magnitude of the effect is so slight, however, that given our sampling limitations, we make a conservative interpretation: the proportion of textbooks in Western countries that mention the Holocaust has been relatively flat in recent decades, following the increase in the 1970s and early 1980s that is shown in Fig. 3. The positive and significant coefficients for Eastern Europe and other non-Western, non-Eastern European countries indicate that over time they are increasingly likely to discuss the Holocaust relative to Western countries. The magnitude of this effect is largest for Eastern Europe, supported by the increase we see in their rate over time in Fig. 3. Finally, in Model 7, we controlled for change over time in different country types and found that it explains 45% of the variance in the likelihood that a book mentions the Holocaust; this is a larger proportion than in any of our previous models.

Discussion

Our analyses show that in earlier periods, the Holocaust was a more Western concern; increasingly, however, it is being recognized in countries worldwide. We argue that interpreting the worldwide spread of Holocaust education and the increasing tendency to frame teaching about the Holocaust in human rights terms, as linked to the emergence of a world society, helps explain why we see teaching about the Holocaust in countries as

diverse as Malawi, El Salvador, and South Africa, rather than finding it only in expected countries such as Israel, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Our interpretation of the Holocaust as increasingly adopted into curricula worldwide as a universal symbol of human rights leaves open the normative questions of whether this trend is positive or effective. An optimistic interpretation argues that understanding the Holocaust can help foster civic and democratic values in society (Lindquist 2008; Stevick 2007; Misco 2009) and can be a means to promote tolerance, peace, and justice (Misco 2009; Salmons 2003). Short and Reed (2004) argue that studying the Holocaust will “help secure the future against further violations of human rights whether based on ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability” (p. 2).

However, countries may have alternative, complex reasons for incorporating Holocaust education into their curricula. As a symbol of world society, the Holocaust has powerful ideological appeal as a signal of conformity with international norms. For example, Stevick (2007) finds that Estonia adopted a Holocaust Day as a way to signal solidarity with the European and transatlantic community in advance of its entry into NATO. Much research by world society scholars emphasizes the decoupling between formal policies and actual practices; that is, countries adopt formal policies to conform symbolically, but such policies are unlikely to lead to actual changes (Meyer et al. 1997). Additionally, claiming the universality of any social or cultural principles is certainly open to criticism as a form of hegemony. Segesten (2008) describes Romania’s experience of feeling cultural pressure to mimic European values by incorporating the Holocaust into its curriculum despite the absence of direct coercion and notes that the international norms implied by Holocaust education have yet to be institutionalized.

In other cases, references to the Holocaust may provide a way for countries to indicate that egregious human rights abuses occur beyond their borders, or to keep the principles of human rights so abstract as to delink them from reality. Tunisia, for instance, has been the target of many highly critical reports charging the government with human rights violations such as arbitrary arrest, torture and physical abuse of prisoners, and severe media restrictions (US Department of State 2008). At the same time, recently published Tunisian history textbooks include extensive discussions of human rights abuses elsewhere in the world, such as colonial occupation, or poverty in the United States. In reference to the Holocaust, a 2006 Tunisian history textbook asks students to consider why France, the country with perhaps the longest tradition of human rights, collaborated with the Nazis in exterminating Jews:

France is the land of human rights, renowned throughout the world for its tradition of welcoming foreigners, but during the Second World War the Vichy government collaborated in the extermination of European Jews even before it received orders from her Nazi occupiers. Why and how was this policy possible? (Brisson and Martin 2006, p. 154).⁵

Although countries’ motivations for incorporating the Holocaust into high school education are complex, their rationales are tied to an understanding of the importance of the Holocaust as a global symbol. Both the desire to instill proper global civic values of

⁵ The original French text is: Alors que la France est le pays des droits de l’homme, qu’elle se singularise dans le monde par sa tradition d’accueil des étrangers, pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, sans attendre les ordres de l’occupant nazi, le gouvernement de Vichy a collaboré à l’extermination des Juifs d’Europe. Pourquoi et comment cette politique a-t-elle été possible?

respect for human rights, peace and tolerance, and the goal of signaling support for these norms (perhaps especially using an example removed from a country's own history, as in the case of Tunisia) indicate awareness of a broader world community.

Interestingly, not all human rights violations become equally recognized as global symbols in world culture. For example, just 3% of textbooks in our sample (16 books) mention the Armenian genocide, and one-third of those (five books) come from Armenia. Similarly, atrocities committed by the Japanese in Nanjing are mentioned by just 2% of books. In contrast, the Holocaust, apartheid in South Africa, slavery, the abuses of colonization, and the mistreatment of indigenous groups are mentioned by 15 to 25% of books. Why do some events become global cultural symbols while others remain primarily national issues? This remains an open question and a valuable area for researchers to explore in the future. Obvious possible explanations include the scope and scale of the atrocity, the particular group subject to suffering, and perhaps the length of time since an abuse took place.

Bauman (2000) provides another possible explanation for why the Holocaust would become a symbol of world society over other human tragedies. For Bauman, the Holocaust is a product of the modern, rational world: "Modern civilization was not the Holocaust's *sufficient* condition; it was, however, most certainly its *necessary* condition" (p. 13). The products of modern society—institutionalized and bureaucratic forms—increased the likelihood that an event such as the Holocaust would occur; without modern industrial forms and highly rationalized thought, it would not have occurred. Hence, the Holocaust is a product of the modern rationalized world, perhaps explaining its centrality in world society.

Our findings should not be interpreted as a judgment of particular education systems or approaches to Holocaust education. A debate continues, far beyond the scope of our research, over whether the Holocaust should be taught in historical or human rights terms. We do not argue that one method of presenting the Holocaust is inherently better than the other: both perspectives cast the Holocaust in critical terms. We do, however, provide some evidence that speaks to the debate by showing that the Holocaust is increasingly discussed in human rights terms, even within history texts. In addition, although textbooks in Western countries tend to include more discussion of the Holocaust, the rate for post-Communist and other countries is increasing. We have aimed to explain why so many countries include the Holocaust in their curricula and to document a shift towards portraying the Holocaust in global human rights terms.

Conclusions

A key limitation of our study is that textbooks are only one aspect of the many factors that influence student learning. We do not know how teachers implement Holocaust education in the classroom, or the effect their teaching has on students. Studying the effects of Holocaust education, particularly cross-culturally, is an important area for future research. Considering these more specific measures will facilitate a deeper exploration of the mechanisms that promote or inhibit Holocaust education at the country level. Further, through an in-depth analysis of a very few textbooks, one could explore whether changing textbook emphases co-vary with individual-level knowledge, beliefs and attitudes regarding to the Holocaust. Such a study would, of course, require much more fine-grained data than that used in this study but could provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between conceptions of the Holocaust in textbooks and society more broadly.

Despite these limitations, we were able to identify broad changes in Holocaust education worldwide over time. Existing research on Holocaust education largely focuses on case studies, primarily from the US, UK, Canada, and Germany. Our research complements these studies by providing a rare cross-national, longitudinal view of trends in Holocaust education. The Holocaust is increasingly taught about in terms of human rights, in history as well as civics and social studies, and is widely used in the curricula of non-Western countries. Books that portray society as more international and diverse, and that place more emphasis on human rights are more likely to discuss the Holocaust. At the country level, those nation-states more linked to world society are more likely to discuss the Holocaust; Eastern European countries are rapidly approaching a level on par with the West. Understanding these worldwide trends helps explain how cultural globalization is influencing Holocaust education, why we find education about the Holocaust in countries worldwide, why it is more prevalent in some countries than others, and why we see a global shift towards teaching about the Holocaust in human rights terms.

Appendix A

See Table 2.

Table 2 List of textbooks by country over time

	1970–1984	1985–1994	1995–2006	Total
Argentina	1	2	4	7
Armenia	0	1	6	7
Australia	2	4	2	8
Austria	5	4	3	12
Belarus	0	1	3	4
Belgium	2	3	2	7
Bolivia	0	5	0	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	1	8	9
Bulgaria	8	4	4	16
Canada	4	4	3	11
Colombia	1	6	0	7
Costa Rica	0	0	4	4
Croatia	0	1	1	2
Czechoslovakia	3	1	0	4
Denmark	2	2	2	6
Ecuador	0	1	4	5
El Salvador	0	0	1	1
Ethiopia	0	2	0	2
Finland	2	2	0	4
France	5	5	5	15
Georgia	0	0	5	5
Germany	2	2	2	6
Ghana	0	8	6	14
Greece	1	2	2	5

Table 2 continued

	1970–1984	1985–1994	1995–2006	Total
Guatemala	0	0	2	2
Guyana	0	0	1	1
India	3	2	9	14
Indonesia	0	0	12	12
Iran	2	2	0	4
Ireland	3	2	4	9
Israel	1	4	0	5
Italy	1	2	2	5
Japan	2	2	3	7
Kenya	0	6	0	6
Latvia	0	0	3	3
Macedonia	0	1	1	2
Malawi	0	0	2	2
Mexico	1	3	2	6
Namibia	0	3	0	3
Nepal	0	0	7	7
Nicaragua	0	1	0	1
North Korea	0	2	4	6
Northern Ireland	0	0	2	2
Norway	2	2	2	6
PR China	0	1	1	2
Pakistan	0	0	3	3
Panama	0	1	2	3
Philippines	0	4	2	6
Portugal	2	2	2	6
Puerto Rico	0	0	1	1
Romania	1	2	2	5
Russia	0	4	23	27
Serbia	0	1	2	3
Singapore	0	2	0	2
Slovenia	0	1	2	3
South Africa	2	2	0	4
South Korea	3	3	4	10
Spain	3	2	6	11
Sweden	2	2	2	6
Switzerland	2	2	1	5
Taiwan	0	1	12	13
Tanzania	0	0	8	8
Tunisia	0	0	3	3
Turkey	2	1	4	7
USA	3	6	3	12
USSR	14	12	0	26
United Kingdom	7	5	11	23

Table 2 continued

	1970–1984	1985–1994	1995–2006	Total
Venezuela	0	1	1	2
Yugoslavia	3	2	0	5
Total	97	150	218	465

Appendix B

See Table 3.

Table 3 Countries discussing the Holocaust and Holocaust as human rights violation

Discuss Holocaust	Discuss Holocaust as human rights violation
Argentina	Argentina
Armenia	Armenia
Australia	Australia
Austria	Belarus
Belarus	Bulgaria
Belgium	Canada
Bulgaria	Croatia
Canada	Czechoslovakia
Croatia	Denmark
Czechoslovakia	El Salvador
Denmark	France
El Salvador	Georgia
Finland	Greece
France	India
Georgia	Indonesia
Germany	Ireland
Greece	Norway
India	Romania
Indonesia	Russia
Ireland	Serbia
Ireland	Slovenia
Israel	Spain
Italy	Sweden
Japan	Taiwan
Latvia	Tanzania
Malawi	Tunisia
Mexico	United Kingdom
Norway	United States

Table 3 continued

Discuss Holocaust	Discuss Holocaust as human rights violation
Philippines	
Romania	
Russia	
Serbia	
Slovenia	
South Africa	
Spain	
Sweden	
Switzerland	
Taiwan	
Tanzania	
Tunisia	
United Kingdom	
United States	

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